GENDERED PRECARITY AND THE POLITICS OF CARE:

HISTORIES OF HOMELESSNESS, HOME, AND

COMMUNITY-MAKING IN DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE VANCOUVER

by

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Abstract

By the 1960s, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside was a space of poverty, precarious housing, homelessness, violence, and mortal risk for women residents, many of whom were Indigenous. Between the 1960s and 1980s, women of diverse class and cultural backgrounds, including White women, Indigenous women, and other women of colour, identified these conditions as a problem and responded by developing new social services. Through feminist analysis of documentary and oral historical sources related to women's poverty in this neighbourhood and responding development of a new service infrastructure, this dissertation offers a new history of gendered precarity and politics in late-twentieth-century urban Canada. Specifically, this work connects social work, philanthropy, Christian charity, and community-based labour to political activism to situate what I call a politics of care as an important aspect of late-twentieth-century social movements. By bringing together the concepts of care and precarity in a unique framework, this dissertation illuminates entangled structures of inequity that precipitated, shaped, and entrenched women's poverty, homelessness, and vulnerability to violence, poor health, and untimely death in the city, but also the creative ways women endured, resisted, challenged, and changed these conditions. Women's organizing, however, had complex, even contradictory, outcomes: this history shows that care work mitigated but also sustained inequity. Limited in material ways, these women addressed only the conditions, and not the causes of precarity. Nevertheless, through their activism, these women remade this neighbourhood: they transformed the social and physical geographies of the Downtown Eastside to be more responsive to the immediate material needs of marginalized women and families, and thus laid the foundation for a community-oriented neighbourhood. This historical study has present-day implications. It demonstrates that until structures of poverty are attended

to with large-scale political will and state investment, precarity will persist. Most significantly, it shows that an empowerment model of care that equips people with the resources in place to create change in their own lives, is what is most effective at producing different, more hopeful futures.

Lay Summary

This dissertation is a history of women's poverty and activism in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside between the 1960s and 1980s. It analyses women's experiences of poverty, violence, inadequate housing, and homelessness, alongside the diverse women who responded to these conditions by developing new social services, including the neighbourhood's first women's shelters, drop-in centres, and community centres. This study shows that women's work to establish and provide services was activism that helped build community. This history matters to understanding this city's present and shaping its future. Knowing the history of those who sought to solve problems related to social inequity that continue today, including homelessness, housing precarity, and violence against Indigenous women, can inform more effective solutions. Notably, this research provides examples of efforts to create change in the past that show that efforts from below which put power in the hands of the people work more effectively than outside interventions.

Preface

This dissertation is the original, unpublished, and independent work of the author, Meghan Elizabeth Longstaffe. The research was designed and conducted by the author under the supervision of Paige Raibmon. The interviews conducted by the author for Chapter Four were covered by UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board Certificate number H15-02765. Use of restricted archival materials at the Simon Fraser University Archives were covered by Research Agreement No. P2014-001. Use of restricted archival materials at the British Columbia Archives were covered by Research Agreement No. 14-0022.

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Acknowledgements

It brings me such joy to now be sitting down to write these final words of acknowledgment. But as I sit here in reflection, I realize that words are not enough to express my deep appreciation and gratitude for all those who have helped bring this work into being.

I am so thankful for my committee. My supervisor, Paige Raibmon, has challenged, guided, and supported me through this process with patience and kindness. Her ideas and insightful critiques have expanded and sharpened my thinking and perspective, and her steady reassurance ensured I got to this point. Tamara Myers has believed in me from the beginning. She took me under her wing as a budding historian when I first started graduate studies as a master's student, and with big heart and encouragement, has been with me every step of the way since. Laura Ishiguro has been a most generous mentor. Her intuitive and incisive pedagogy helped me formulate my ideas when I couldn't see the forest for the trees, and her genuine enthusiasm for my research helped me believe in its importance myself. The incredible care these three have taken with me has meant so much.

I could not have asked for more enthusiastic and engaged examiners for my dissertation defence. Our conversation was robust and energizing. External examiner Nancy Janovicek and university examiners Mona Gleason and Tina Loo offered such thoughtful and considered reading of my work, opening exciting possibilities for where I might take this research going forward. It was an honour and a privilege to have these accomplished historians connect with my work at this culminating stage.

This work has been shaped by the place where I have learned, worked, and lived for more than a decade now. It is, then, with deep respect that I acknowledge the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people, on whose traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories UBC sits. I further acknowledge the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilw̓ətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples, for I have made a home as a settler living and working on their unceded territories, in the place now called Vancouver, the city this dissertation is about.

This dissertation is in honour of the women of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, past and present: I am driven by your endurance, courage, determination, and imagination. I would especially like to thank all those who generously shared their memories of Raymur. I was honoured that you trusted me with your and your families' stories. Your contributions were critical for my understanding of this history, as you taught and reminded me of women's strength and resilience. I continue to be inspired by the stories you shared with me.

For my parents

Content Note

This dissertation contains content related to: sexual assault and harassment; sexism and misogyny; settler colonialism; racism; extreme poverty and homelessness; premature death and murder; substance dependency and addiction; mental illness; the social welfare system; and policing and the criminal justice system.

Introduction
From Heartbreak to Hope:
Reframing Stories in a History of the Present

> Like me, most people here carry deep scars. It is hard to describe all the different experiences that women have, for example the history of abuse that has brought many of us here to the DTES [Downtown Eastside], the brutality of child apprehensions that many of us have borne as a direct result of poverty, the fact that many of us do not know our parents because of the legacy of residential schools and colonization has destroyed our families, the chronic and often fatal illnesses such as AIDS and Hepatitis C that break our bodies, the grief of living through the deaths of our missing and murdered sisters, and much more. People who drive by us every day to work have no idea what nightmares we live with. My heart wants to shatter when I hear some of the stories about why people have turned to drugs and alcohol.[1]
> ~ Stella August, Downtown Eastside Vancouver, June 2011

When I first heard stories like Stella August's, they also broke my heart. But after many years of working on this project, I now hear August's words differently. As she speaks of these stories of tragedy, I still hear her heartbreak, but I also hear her resilience and strength. I hear her standing up for her friends and community members. I hear her speaking out against injustice, calling out the structures of inequity that created those deep scars and which feed those ongoing nightmares. In this place, the oldest settler neighbourhood in Vancouver, British Columbia, a Canadian city on the edge of the Salish Sea, women, and especially Indigenous

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[1] Stella August with the Downtown Eastside Power of Women Group, "Residential Schools and My Journey to the Downtown Eastside," *In Our Own Voices* (series), *Vancouver Media Co-op (Local Independent News)*, June 8, 2011, http://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/story/residential-schools-and-my-journey-downtown-eastside/7441. August is a Nuu-chah-nulth elder from Ahousat, a long-time resident of the Downtown Eastside, a community activist, and a member of the February 14th Women's Memorial March committee. I first accessed August's writing via the Vancouver Media Co-op, which published a total of twelve stories from women in the Downtown Eastside Power of Women Group's *In Our Own Voices* writing series in 2011. Her story, from which I quote here, has since been re-published in Debra Leo, Beatrice Starr, and Stella August (Downtown Eastside Power of Women Group), "Voices from the Downtown Eastside," in *Keetsahnak: Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters,* eds. Kim Anderson, Maria Campbell, and Christi Belcourt (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2018).

women, live in extreme poverty where tragedy is commonplace. As August conveys, women's precarity in this economically depressed neighbourhood – the Downtown Eastside – is simultaneously hyper-visible and invisible to most privileged outsiders looking in. These women's bodies are made visible in public spaces through extreme poverty, homelessness, and/or street-level sex work. But invisibilized to many outsiders passing by is their full complexity as human beings – including their daily lived and living experiences of loss and trauma, but also their richness as people who love and are loved.[2]

Linked to this state of hyper-visibility and invisibility, many outsiders to this community have misunderstood and misrepresented this neighbourhood in ways that have stigmatized its residents or normalized their precarity. When I first started this project, I wanted to contribute to ongoing community work to challenge these stigmatizing narratives. I sought to denaturalize gendered and racialized precarity in Vancouver's present by showing it has a history, and through showing that history, surface its structural roots. However, I now see the ideas that originally brought me to this work as limiting; I did not then see the ways in which my own perspective upheld the narrow views of the Downtown Eastside that I sought to contest, shaped as they were through the lenses of tragedy and empathy. But over the many years I have worked on this project, my own perspective has shifted. The stories I have listened to and the histories I have learned have been transformative. I have come to understand that when community outsiders, myself included, frame the Downtown Eastside through narratives

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[2] This argument about marginalized women's hyper-visibility/invisibility in the Downtown Eastside is made by feminist anthropologists Leslie Robertson and Dara Culhane in their introduction to their edited collection of women's life stories from the Downtown Eastside, and by Culhane in other related work pertaining to women, poverty, and violence in Downtown Eastside Vancouver. Leslie Robertson and Dara Culhane, eds., *In Plain Sight: Reflections on Life in Downtown Eastside Vancouver* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 2005)*,* 7, 13; Dara Culhane, "Their Spirits Live within Us: Aboriginal Women in Downtown Eastside Vancouver Emerging into Visibility," in *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women's Activism in Urban Communities,* eds. Susan Applegate Krouse and Heather A. Howard (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 76-92.

of empathy and pity, when we focus only on loss and trauma, we are unable to see survival, resilience, power, and love.

Truly, what many privileged outsiders miss about the Downtown Eastside is that amid conditions of precarity, despite and against structures of inequity, there exists a vibrant and mutually-supportive community, one with a long and rich tradition of activism. I have, thus, ended somewhere different from where I began – this is a different history of women in the Downtown Eastside than the one many outside the community might expect. While this is a history that begins with tragedy, it is, ultimately, a history of resilience and empowerment by women in the margins. This is a history that may begin by breaking your heart, but which should end by inspiring you.

By centering women living in the margins and their supporters as meaningful subjects and actors, this dissertation tells a new history of precarity and activism in late-twentieth-century urban Canada. Over the course of four related case studies, I tell a history of SROs (single room occupancy hotels), shelters, drop-in centres, and social housing in late-twentieth-century Vancouver, and of the women who resided in, used, made, and re-made these spaces. Moving conceptually from precarity to community, these chapters – each of which focuses on one of these spaces – collectively analyze women's experiences and understandings of housing, homelessness, home, and community. Grounded in the local, these four case studies individually and, especially, together, are generative of new information and perspectives about gendered and racialized poverty, violence, and activism in Vancouver. These histories also reverberate beyond the city's borders. With these four case studies, I bring together the concepts of care and precarity to illuminate the entangled connections between settler colonialism, patriarchy, poverty, and violence in the city, but also the creative ways in which

women of diverse class and cultural backgrounds challenged, changed, and mitigated urban precarity. These case studies complicate expected narratives about women and poverty. Placed together, they show that when we read stories commonly received as tragedy through a different lens, what becomes clear is women's endurance and creative resilience within and against conditions not of their own choosing.

A Geography of the Present

In an essay on the politics of researching and writing feminist history, Adele Perry, an historian of settler colonialism, gender, and the family, asks historians to be more reflective about the scholarship they produce, their relationship to it, and the point of it all. Framed as a reflection on the continued resonance of Sylvia Van Kirk's foundational research on Indigenous women in the fur trade to the fields of Indigenous and women's history, Perry begins her essay, titled "Historiography that Breaks Your Heart: Van Kirk and the Writing of Feminist History," with thoughts on the call by Cuban-American feminist anthropologist Ruth Behar for a research practice that is "located, embodied, and empathetic."[3] Perry indicates that Behar acknowledged limits and risks of a scholarly practice grounded in tragedy, but explains that the anthropologist ultimately determined that an imperative to document trauma necessitated the risk. Perry quotes Behar's piercing conclusion: "Call it sentimental, call it Victorian and nineteenth-century, but I say that anthropology that doesn't break your heart just isn't worth doing any more."[4] While Perry tempers Behar's conclusion, using her essay to

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[3] Adele Perry, "Historiography that Breaks Your Heart: Van Kirk and the Writing of Feminist History," in *Finding a Way to the Heart: Feminist Writings on Aboriginal and Women's History in Canada,* eds. Robin Jarvis Brownlie and Valerie J. Korinek (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012), 81. (Perry's phrase.)

[4] Ruth Behar, quoted in Adele Perry, "Historiography that Breaks Your Heart," 81. Original source: Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 177.

show Van Kirk's work as "an enduring example of the possibilities as well as the risks, of historiography that breaks your heart," she nonetheless argues that historians could take direction from feminist ethnographers like Behar and be more vulnerable in and to their research.[5] Researcher vulnerability, Perry explains, does important work to challenge a notion that some historians still maintain of scholarly objectivity: that researchers are removed somehow from their work and their processes, and that research and scholarship should not be embodied and affective.[6]

While such arguments for a more empathetic and engaged scholarly practice are part of a larger feminist literature that has informed my thinking and brought me to this work, calls to tell and analyse what Perry calls "vulnerable histories" – those that may break your heart – also exist in tension with desire-based approaches to research advocated by Indigenous, feminist scholars like Eve Tuck.[7] Tuck, an Unangax̂ scholar in Urban Education and Indigenous Studies and an enrolled member of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island, calls for researchers to cease what she calls "damage-centred" research, and to instead reframe and reimagine research around desire. As Tuck explains, while damage-centred research once had a purpose – to document and expose to a broader public the precarious conditions in which marginalized and disenfranchised people lived and still live, and, perhaps, to support community efforts to hold oppressors accountable – she argues that it is now necessary to transit to something else. The risk of trauma-based approaches research, Tuck explains, is that

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[5] Perry, "Historiography that Breaks Your Heart," 82-83.

[6] Perry, "Historiography that Breaks Your Heart," 82-83.

[7] Perry, "Historiography that Breaks Your Heart," 92; Eve Tuck, "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities," *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 409-427.

it can produce (and has produced) dehumanizing narratives that reduce people and communities to their pain and trauma.[8]

Desire, in contrast, sees people in their full humanness. While an approach based in desire does not deny (and rather, still fully acknowledges) pain and loss, it better allows for the complexities, contradictions, and rich dimensions of human experience. Desire, Tuck argues, interrupts framings and narratives that view people and communities in limited ways, as damaged or broken, or as only these things. A desire-based approach resists the either/or; it holds systemic oppression *and* human strength, resistance, and resilience together, rather than as irreconcilable concepts.[9] Overall, Tuck proposes that re-framing research around desire can produce an "epistemological shift" from despair to hope.[10] As she writes: "Desire, yes, accounts for the loss and despair, but also the hope, the visions, the wisdom of lived lives and communities. Desire is involved with the *not yet* and, at times, the *not anymore…*Desire is about longing, about a present that is enriched by both the past and the future. It is integral to our humanness."[11] Desire moves us beyond heartbreak to imagine different, more hopeful, futures.

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[8] Tuck, "Suspending Damage."

[9] Tuck, "Suspending Damage," 419-420. The need to interrupt this binary is an issue historians Mary Jane Logan McCallum (who is of Lunaape heritage and a member of the Munsee-Delaware Nation), and Susan Hill (an Haudenosaunee citizen from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory), raised and discussed in a published academic conversation on the current field of Indigenous women's history in Canada. In this piece, McCallum and Hill addressed the necessity, but also the challenges, of acknowledging, reconciling, and balancing vulnerable histories with histories of resistance and agency. McCallum explained that there is an imperative to write against or resist a dichotomy often set up in the literature between victims or 'strong women,' but also that it remains necessary to translate to a broader Canadian audience that "the historical and contemporary material realities of many Indigenous women were and are vulnerable." Mary Jane Logan McCallum and Susan M. Hill, "Our Historiographical Moment: A Conversation about Indigenous Women's History in Canada in the Early Twenty-First Century," in *Reading Canadian Women's and Gender History,* eds. Nancy Janovicek and Carmen J. Nielson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 32. On complicating this binary, see also the introduction to and essays in Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, Madeleine Dion Stout, and Eric Guimond, eds., *Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community, and Culture* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2009).

[10] Tuck, "Suspending Damage," 419. See also 413, 415-416.

[11] Tuck, "Suspending Damage," 417. For more of Tuck's critique of, and call to refuse, "pain narratives," as well as the possibilities of desire, see also: Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "R-Words: Refusing Research," in

In Perry's more recent work, co-authored with Mary Jane Logan McCallum, an historian of Lunaape heritage and member of the Munsee-Delaware Nation, Perry and McCallum resolve this tension between trauma-based and desire-based approaches to research by bringing attention to the structures that create and perpetuate inequity. They place the heartbreaking story of the 2008 death of Ojibwa man Brian Sinclair into his wider historical context: McCallum and Perry surface the genealogies and structures of settler colonialism and racism that led to Sinclair's unnecessary and tragic death in an emergency room waiting area of a Winnipeg, Manitoba hospital, where for thirty-four hours he awaited medical care that never came.[12] The story of what happened to Brian Sinclair is devastating, but, as McCallum and Perry deftly and critically show, his death must not be read as a case of triage-gone-horribly-wrong, but as an outcome of deeply seated structures that are violence and which do violence. In direct contrast to the stereotypical racist narratives used by the media and the coroner's inquest to report on and explain his death, these historians tell this heartbreaking story in a way that denaturalizes Sinclair's death. They show him in his historical and social context and, importantly, center him as a person in his own story, a person with a lived life and human connections. McCallum and Perry tell Sinclair's story in a way that restores to him the humanity deprived to him by the systems that informed his life, caused his death, and shaped the stories told about him thereafter. The story of Brian Sinclair's death surely will break your heart, but by showing him in his humanity and by situating his life and death in a context of

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Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities, eds. Django Paris and Maisha T. Winn (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014).

[12] Mary Jane Logan McCallum and Adele Perry, *Structures of Indifference: An Indigenous Life and Death in a Canadian City* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2018).

deep histories and ongoing practices of settler colonialism and systemic racism, pathways for change – for imagining an alternative future – emerge.[13]

In their telling of Brian Sinclair's story, McCallum and Perry provide a sensitive model for the telling and analysis of vulnerable histories that I aspire to emulate in this history of women and poverty in the Downtown Eastside. My research, however, has also been inspired by and builds from a longer body of historical feminist scholarship on women and precarity in Canada. Feminist scholars in Canada have told histories of gendered precarity in a variety of ways that have straddled trauma- and desire-based approaches to research. These scholars have dealt with the historical intersections of women and poverty in a range of contexts, including courtrooms, prisons, institutions for girls, battered women's shelters, and the streets, sidewalks, and homes of urban neighbourhoods. Some of these scholars have focused especially on women and girls' encounters with the state, unveiling the work of police officers, lawyers, judges, and social workers to regulate and discipline low-income women and girls. Others have focused on grassroots activists' efforts to respond to women's poverty and its consequences. Collectively, through critical analyses of the operationalization of power, this feminist scholarship has exposed contexts and structures that have produced and shaped gendered poverty in Canada's past. Moreover, where many of these scholars have foregrounded the ways in which state institutions have produced and upheld inequities related to race, class, and gender, an attention to women and girls' agency within and against systems of oppression has also been a unifying theme in this scholarship. Critically, this body of scholarship also reveals women and girls as active agents in their own lives, showing them as impacted by, but also as having resisted and challenged in their own ways the systems that oppressed them. Overall,

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[13] McCallum and Perry, *Structures of Indifference*.

this feminist scholarship has pinpointed structures that created and sustained women's poverty,

documented the material and everyday realities of poverty, and showcased diverse ways in

which women and girls have survived, resisted, and challenged the inequity that shaped and

often still shapes their lives.[14]

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[14] See, for instance: Constance Backhouse, "'Sordid' But 'Understandable Under the Circumstances': Kohnke, Croft, and Wilson, 1967," chap. 9 in *Carnal Crimes: Sexual Assault Law in Canada, 1900-1975* (Toronto: The Osgoode Society, 2008); Jean Barman, "Aboriginal Women on the Streets of Victoria: Rethinking Transgressive Sexuality During the Colonial Encounter," in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past,* eds. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005); Jean Barman, "Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, and Race in British Columbia, 1850-1900," *BC Studies* nos. 115/116 (Autumn/Winter 1997/98): 237-266; Nancy Janovicek, "'Assisting Our Own': Urban Migration, Self-Governance, and Native Women's Organizing in Thunder Bay, Ontario, 1972-1989," in *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women's Activism in Urban Communities,* eds. Susan Applegate Krouse and Heather Howard (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Nancy Janovicek, *No Place to Go: Local Histories of the Battered Women's Shelter Movement* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Margaret Hillyard Little, "Militant Mothers Fight Poverty: The Just Society Movement, 1968-1971," *Labour/Le Travail* 59 (2007): 179-198*;* Margaret Little, *'No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit': The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1997* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998); Tamara Myers, *Caught: Montreal's Modern Girls and the Law, 1869-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); Tamara Myers, "Regulation, Agency, and the Transformation of Care for "Predelinquent" Girls," in *La régulation sociale entre l'acteur et l'institution/Agency and Institutions in Social Regulation,* eds. Jean-Marie Fecteau and Janice Harvey (Sainte-Foy, QC: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2005)*;* Tamara Myers and Joan Sangster, "Retorts, Runaways and Riots: Patterns of Resistance in Canadian Reform Schools for Girls, 1930-60," *Journal of Social History* 34 (2001): 669-697*;* Mary Anne Poutanen, "Bonds of Friendship, Kinship, and Community: Gender, Homelessness, and Mutual Aid in Early-Nineteenth-Century Montreal," in *Negotiating Identities in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Montreal,* eds. Bettina Bradbury and Tamara Myers (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005); Becki Ross and Rachael Sullivan, "Tracing Lines of Horizontal Hostility: How Sex Workers and Gay Liberation Activists Battled for Space, Voice, and Belonging in Vancouver, 1975-1985," *Sexualities* 15, nos. 5/6 (September 2012): 604-621; Becki L. Ross, "Sex and (Evacuation from) the City: The Moral and Legal Regulation of Sex Workers in Vancouver's West End, 1975-1985," *Sexualities* 13, no. 2 (April 2010): 197-218*;* Joan Sangster, "Criminalizing the Colonized: Ontario Native Women Confront the Criminal Justice System, 1920-60," *Canadian Historical Review* 80, no. 1 (March 1999): 32-60; Joan Sangster, "Domesticating Girls: the Sexual Regulation of Aboriginal and Working-Class Girls in Twentieth-Century Canada," in Pickles and Rutherdale, *Contact Zones*; Joan Sangster, *Girl Trouble: Female Delinquency in English Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002); Joan Sangster, *Regulating Girls and Women: Sexuality, Family, and the Law in Ontario, 1920-1960* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2001)*.*

Feminist historians in Canada have also written about women and poverty in the context of family poverty and the domestic home, as well as in the context of women, families, and the welfare state. See, for instance: Denyse Baillargeon, *Making Do: Women, Family and Home in Montreal During the Great Depression,* trans. Yvonne Klein (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999); Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993); Lara Campbell, *Respectable Citizens: Gender, Family, and Unemployment in Ontario's Great Depression* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Lori Chambers, *Misconceptions: Unmarried Motherhood and the Ontario Children of Unmarried Parents Act, 1921-1969* (Toronto: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 2007); Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); Dominique Marshall, *The Social Origins of the Welfare State: Quebec Families, Compulsory Education, and Family Allowances, 1940-1955,* trans. Nicola Doone Danby (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006); Suzanne Morton, "Women on Their Own: Single Mothers in Working-Class Halifax in the 1920s," *Acadiensis,* 21, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 90-107); Ann Porter, *Gendered States: Women, Unemployment Insurance,*

When I arrived in Vancouver in late August 2007 to pursue a Master's degree in history,

the city was enmeshed in the trial of a serial killer. A newcomer to the city and province, the

media reporting on this trial was my first exposure to systemic injustice and violence faced by

women in the Downtown Eastside, a disproportionate number of whom were and are

Indigenous. The women this man murdered were among the more than sixty-five women who

were murdered or disappeared from this Vancouver neighbourhood between the late 1980s and

2000s. Women in this community know that this predator was only one of many. A 2012 report

from the Provincial inquiry into these disappearances and murders lay bare what people in this

community already knew: the various institutions that claim to serve and protect have treated

violence against women, and especially Indigenous women, who live at the socio-economic

margins as expected, normal.[15]

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and the Political Economy of the Welfare State in Canada, 1945-1997 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

The literature on women and poverty in the American context is larger. See, for example*:* Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (New York: The Free Press, 1994); Lisa Levenstein, *A Movement Without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Annelise Orlek, *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2006); Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles Against Urban Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[15] For information about the murders and disappearances of women from the Downtown Eastside, this specific criminal investigation and subsequent trial, the Province's inquiry, and community memorial practices to maintain women's memories, see: Adrienne L. Burk, *Speaking for a Long Time: Public Space and Social Memory in Vancouver* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010); Stevie Cameron, *On the Farm: Robert William Pickton and the Tragic Story of Vancouver's Missing Women* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2010); Stevie Cameron, *The Pickton File* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2007); Culhane, "Their Spirits Live within Us"; Amber Dean, *Remembering Vancouver's Disappeared Women: Settler Colonialism and the Difficulty of Inheritance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Yasmin Jiwani and Mary Lynn Young, "Missing and Murdered Women: Reproducing Marginality in News Discourse," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31, no. 4 (2006): 895-917; Carol Muree Martin and Harsha Walia, "Red Women Rising: Indigenous Women Survivors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside" (Vancouver: Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, 2019); National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Canada), Chief Commissioner Marion Buller, Commissioner Michèle Audette, Commissioner Qajaq Robinson, and Commissioner Brian Eyolfson, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls,* vols. 1a and 1b (Canada: Privy Council Office, 2019), https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/; Honourable Wally T. Oppal, QC, Commissioner, *Forsaken: The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry,* executive summary and vols. 1-4 (British Columbia, 2012); Geraldine Pratt, "Abandoned Women and Spaces of the Exception," *Antipode* 37, no. 5 (November 2005): 1052-1078; Leslie A. Robertson and Dara Culhane,

More than a decade since I first came to Vancouver, the city is different yet the same. Developed rapidly beginning in the late nineteenth century as the western terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway, chosen principally because of the capitalist potential of the location's orientation westward across the Pacific, wealth abounds in this port city – one need look no further than the dazzling high-rise luxury condo and hotel developments that now line the downtown and waterfront skylines.[16] But mere blocks away, people continue to live within precarious conditions of extreme poverty, where their health, safety, and lives are at risk. Amid ongoing and intensifying crises of homelessness, opioid poisoning, and gendered and racialized violence, the Downtown Eastside is a space where death and tragedy are routine.

What is it like to live in communities where death is normal? What is it like to live surrounded by tragedy? These were two questions posed by Ojibwe journalist Tanya Talaga in one of her 2018 CBC Massey Lectures, which I listened to her deliver in a refurbished East Vancouver theatre, only a kilometer or two from the Downtown Eastside. Talaga was there that October evening to speak specifically about the crisis of death by suicide among youth in Indigenous communities across Canada, but the parallels and connections with crises faced by residents of the Downtown Eastside were not lost on me, nor, I would suspect, Talaga.[17] The Downtown Eastside of Vancouver is what Kwagu'ł geographer Sarah Hunt/ Tłaliłila'ogwa

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introduction to *In Plain Sight*, eds. Robertson and Culhane, 13-14; Maggie de Vries, *Missing Sarah: A Memoir of Loss,* updated since the Pickton trial (Toronto: Penguin Group Canada, 2008).

[16] For details of the early urban development and emergence of Vancouver as a settler city on Musqueam, Squamish, and Tseil-Waututh territories, including the establishment of the townsite (Gastown/Granville) that preceded the official incorporation of the City of Vancouver, see Robert A.J. McDonald, *Making Vancouver: Class, Status, and Social Boundaries, 1863-1913* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996).

[17] Tanya Talaga, "The Third Space," *All Our Relations: Finding the Path Forward,* lecture three, 2018 CBC Massey Lecture Series, Vancouver, British Columbia, 24 October 2018. The book version of Talaga's lectures are published as Tanya Talaga, *All Our Relations: Finding the Path Forward,* CBC Massey Lectures ([Toronto]: House of Anansi Press, 2018).

calls a geography of expected violence.[18] As Hunt argues, within settler societies, many privileged people and institutions commonly treat extreme poverty, insecurity, and gendered, racialized violence experienced by Indigenous peoples, and especially by Indigenous women and girls, as "expected rather than exceptional, regardless of where they live."[19] Alongside other Indigenous and feminist scholars and activists, Hunt calls attention to the ways in which various institutional systems and cultural discourses – including "slow, nonexistent or violent police responses, lack of public outcry, prevalent child apprehension and many other supposed responses to violence which themselves constitute violence" – normalize violence against Indigenous peoples.[20] Often operating in symbiosis, the social welfare, policing, legal, and medical systems, along with mainstream media discourses, have often naturalized – and in turn, accepted – social suffering and inequity experienced by Indigenous and other racially and economically marginalized individuals, families, and entire communities. This happens in Canadian urban centres and rural areas, reserve and non-reserve, alike. Vancouver is no exception. Expectation and indifference are two mutually reinforcing sides of this same coin; shaped by indifference, rather than care, these institutions have failed, and they continue to fail, this city's most vulnerable.[21]

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[18] Sarah Hunt in Cindy Holmes, Sarah Hunt, and Amy Piedalue, "Violence, Colonialism, and Space: Toward a Decolonizing Dialogue," *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 14, no. 2 (2014), 550; Sarah Hunt, "Decolonizing Sex Work: Developing an Intersectional Indigenous Approach," in *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy, and Research on Sex Work in Canada,* eds. Emily van der Meulen, Elya M. Durisin, and Victoria Love (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013); Sarah Hunt, "Representing Colonial Violence: Trafficking, Sex Work, and the Violence of Law," *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture, and Social Justice* 37, no. 2 (2015), 28.

[19] Sarah Hunt, "Paige's Death Results in Damning Report, But Who Will Listen?," *CBC News*, May 18, 2015, https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/paige-s-death-results-in-damning-report-but-who-will-listen-1.3078075.

[20] Sarah Hunt in Holmes, Hunt, and Piedalue, "Violence, Colonialism, and Space," 543.

[21] See, for instance: Constance Backhouse, "'Sordid' But 'Understandable Under the Circumstances'"; Holmes, Hunt, and Piedalue, "Violence, Colonialism, and Space," 539-570; Hunt, "Paige's Death Results in Damning Report"; Sarah Hunt and Naomi Sayers, "Cindy Gladue Case Sends a Chilling Message to Indigenous Women," *Globe and Mail,* March 25, 2015, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/cindy-gladue-case-sends-a-chilling-message-to-indigenous-women/article23609986/; Sarah Hunt, "Tina Fontaine's Death Shows How Little is Being Done For Indigenous Women," *Globe and Mail,* August 20, 2014,

One afternoon, about a year after I arrived in Vancouver, I was perched in front of a microfilm reader in the basement of the University of British Columbia's Koerner Library conducting historical newspaper research for my Master's thesis – from which this dissertation project subsequently grew – when a black-and-white image appeared on the screen that brought an abrupt halt to my scrolling. The image – and its accompanying headline – instinctively told me that something awful had happened here. In 1957, the body of Marie St. Ann Ducharme, a twenty-seven-year-old Cree woman and mother, was found under suspicious circumstances near Vancouver's False Creek flats, about five blocks south of East Hastings Street. Vancouver's major daily presses reported on her death with sensationalist details, and a photograph of the crime scene (the one that stopped me in my tracks) accompanied one of the articles.[22] Several years after I wrote about Marie St. Ann Ducharme in my Master's thesis, her family reached out to me: they wanted to know if I had more information about their relative and her murder. Through my conversations with Ducharme's son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter, I learned more about this woman and the family she was taken from. They shared with me stories and photographs of their loved one. I provided them with the newspaper

https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/tina-fontaines-death-shows-how-little-is-being-done-for-indigenous-women/article20138787/; Martin and Walia, "Red Women Rising"; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Canada), et al., *Reclaiming Power and Place;* McCallum and Perry, *Structures of Indifference*; Oppal, *Forsaken;* Pamela Palmater, "Shining Light on the Dark Places: Addressing Police Racism and Sexualized Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls in the National Inquiry," *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law,* 28, no. 2 (August 2016): 253-284; Sherene H. Razack, *Dying from Improvement: Inquests and Inquiries into Indigenous Deaths in Custody* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Sherene H. Razack, "Gendering Disposability," *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 28, no. 2 (August 2016): 285-307; Sherene H. Razack, "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice," in *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society,* ed. Sherene H. Razack (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002); Sherene H. Razack, "Sexualized Violence and Colonialism: Reflections on the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women," *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 28, no. 2 (August 2016): i-iv; Talaga, "Third Space"; Tanya Talaga, "When You Grow Up Surrounded by Suicide, It Seems Normal. How Do You Heal a 'Broken Spirit'?," *Toronto Star,* October 13, 2018, https://www.thestar.com/news/atkinsonseries/2018/10/13/when-you-grow-up-surrounded-by-suicide-it-seems-normal-how-do-you-heal-a-broken-spirit.html.
[22] "Near-Nude Body Found: Police Find 'Strong Clue' in Woman's Mystery Death," *Vancouver Sun,* March 9, 1957; "Woman's Death Cause Baffles City Police," *Province,* March 9, 1957; "Find Alcohol in Body: False Creek Woman Killed, Says Jury," *Province,* March 13, 1957; "Woman's Death Declared 'Murder': Coroner's Jury in Ducharme Case Blames 'Persons Unknown', *Vancouver Sun,* March 13, 1957.

articles I had found, and all the information they would need to obtain the coroner records into her death, which I was not legally permitted to share directly with them.[23] As they lived in another province, they asked if I would liaise on their behalf with the Vancouver Police Department. I then established a contact in this department who would (and did) provide the family with details of the police investigation directly. Because I am not a direct relative or descendent, I was not privy to further information from the police department, nor would it have been appropriate for me to have been. What happened to Marie St. Ann Ducharme that night in 1957 and who was responsible remains, to my knowledge, unknown – unsolved. But what was abundantly clear to me when I spoke with that family was that their loss reverberates through time and space: it shapes this family's past, and it continues to shape their present. Across Canada, there are innumerable families like this one who are seeking answers, justice, and solace for their disappeared and murdered loved ones. This dissertation is about the past, but this past is one that lives very much in the present.

Marie St. Ann Ducharme has stayed with me. In her own way, she shapes these pages. When I learned through the newspapers of the violence done to her, my path as an historian was altered; she has fundamentally shaped the questions and motivations that led me to pursue this research project, and ultimately, informed my practice as an historian. It was 2008 when I first saw the newspaper reports about Ducharme. As my Master's research progressed that year in a direction led by my learning of her death, I learned of many other Indigenous women in this community who died prematurely in violent and precarious circumstances. I learned that

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[23] The coroner inquest into Ducharme's death is, like all coroner records from this period, restricted. The terms by which I accessed the records into her death at the British Columbia Archives prohibited me from sharing a copy of the records with the family myself (and, of course, from using it in this dissertation in a way that would identify Ducharme). Such restrictions around access and use of sensitive government records illustrate competing tensions in archival practices between safeguarding individuals' privacy and upholding structures that have kept information from communities; the problematics of the fact that I had information about this family that they did not have themselves, but which I was not permitted to share with them, was not lost on me.

in the late twentieth century, the Downtown Eastside was a space of mortal risk for Indigenous women. From the historical newspapers I analyzed, I calculated that from 1957 to 1968, anywhere from seventy-nine to 106 Indigenous women had died in the Downtown Eastside. The *Vancouver Sun,* for instance, reported the deaths of twenty-three Indigenous women in 1961, at least twenty in 1962, and seventeen in 1967.[24] Some of these women had been murdered, and some had died prematurely from health conditions and complications related to poverty or alcohol and drug use and addiction. At the time I first read the news articles reporting on these women's deaths, they appeared to me as a necessary (if ultimately problematic, as I argue elsewhere) questioning of what had happened to these women.[25] Critically, medical causes of death and partial statistics can belie more than they reveal; they signal, but do not fully represent, the nature and scope of this crisis. These women, I would argue, ultimately died from the fatal combination of settler colonialism, racism, patriarchy, and capitalism.

My instinct in 2008 that here lay a critical historical question for the present was a product both of Vancouver of the late 2000s and my own privileged social position within that context. As I read these articles reporting Indigenous women's deaths in the Downtown Eastside, the recently completed trial of that serial predator was never far from my mind. This project, then, originated with questions not so far removed from the ones those concerned journalists had been asking four-plus decades prior: what were the conditions in which Indigenous women experienced disproportionately violence, poor health, and untimely death

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[24] I previously reported these statistics in Meghan Longstaffe, "Indigenous Women as Newspaper Representations: Violence and Action in 1960s Vancouver," *Canadian Historical Review* 98, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 231-232. I developed that article out of my master's research. (Meghan Longstaffe, "The Death and Life of Aboriginal Women in Postwar Vancouver" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 2009).

[25] For my argument and analysis of these newspaper articles, see Longstaffe, "Indigenous Women as Newspaper Representations."

in the city, and how did structures of inequity underlie and fuel this crisis? Perhaps most urgently, moreover, I wanted to know what answers to these historical questions might tell us about the crisis of violence faced by marginalized women in this neighbourhood in the present.

This was where I started. However, I came to realize through my research that my initial guiding questions, while important, were themselves limiting. Through my research I found violence and unspeakable tragedy, yes, but I also found something inspiring. I found people asserting the humanness of the women they had lost, who were taken from them. I found women fighting for other women whose lives were shaped but not determined by precarity. I found women fighting for themselves, for their families, and for their community. Ultimately, I learned that by starting with trauma, what can be missed is human connection, and an enduring spirit of resistance, resilience, and love. Marie St. Ann Ducharme may be gone, but her family still loves and misses her. Stella August may have a broken heart, but she is not broken; though she may bear scars, she is still a strong person and an activist who continues to work toward and fight for a better future for her community.

Women, disproportionately Indigenous, who live in poverty in the Downtown Eastside experience many struggles and hardships, often fighting for survival daily. The violence of precarity they experience is an outcome and manifestation of social inequities related to neoliberal capitalism, patriarchy, racism, and settler colonialism. Settler colonialism, moreover, underlies all women's precarity. Indeed, as anthropologist Dara Culhane explained in the context of her contemporary research on women and poverty in the Downtown Eastside, "[c]olonialism saturates social, economic, and political relations; public culture; natural and built environments; and all aspects of "health and housing" and research."[26]

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[26] Dara Culhane, "Domesticated Time and Restricted Space: University and Community Women in Downtown Eastside Vancouver," *BC Studies* no. 140 (Winter 2003/04): 95.

But women, especially Indigenous women, in this community have never been silent or passive in the face of injustice. For instance, every year since 1992, family members, community members, and their supporters have gathered and walked through the streets of the Downtown Eastside on February 14 – Valentine's Day, a day of love – to remember the women murdered or disappeared from this community, as well as those who died prematurely from health issues related to poverty and/or addiction. This memorial is also a very public act of resistance. As family and community members walk to maintain the memory of their loved ones, they assert a powerful message about survival, about continued presence, about endurance, and about love.[27] This annual Women's Memorial March is only one example of this community's activism, albeit a publicly visible example. Indeed, as Culhane has further argued,

> Despite numerous barriers and obstacles, many [women in the Downtown Eastside] use their time creatively and constructively to create spaces for community well-being. The amount of organized resistance to social injustice and the widespread commitment to social change among residents of the Downtown Eastside puts the complacency and apathy of the sheltered, privileged university community to shame.[28]

As I will show in this dissertation, this prevailing spirit of community power and caretaking has roots in the care politics of an earlier generation of Downtown Eastside residents and service providers, both those from within and those from outside the community. As "low-income, community-based women have much to teach university-based women about activism and resistance," as Culhane remarks, so too, I argue, do the women who challenged injustice and built and cared for community in this neighbourhood's past.[29]

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[27] Culhane, "Their Spirits Live within Us."
[28] Culhane, "Domesticated Time," 105.
[29] Culhane, "Domesticated Time," 105.

This history is not the one I thought I was going to write, nor is it the history many readers may expect. And that is precisely the point. By reframing the history of women and poverty in the Downtown Eastside around desire, by beginning from a place of community love and power, I hope that this research will destabilize ideas and narratives that uphold the Downtown Eastside as a space of expected violence, and in confronting the normalization of that violence, help produce new ways of thinking that will, in turn, challenge that violence itself.

The Ethics of Historical Practice

This project reflects my political and ethical commitment to social responsibility in the present. My own perspectives on the politics of place, settler responsibility, and the ethics of privilege developed as a student of history.[30] My studies of history, especially as a graduate student, changed my way of thinking about, understanding, and relating to my own past and the geographies I inhabit. My father's paternal ancestors immigrated to Canada from England in 1903, when my great-great grandparents moved their young family across the Atlantic in pursuit of new economic opportunities, settling initially in Toronto. As a young man, my great grandfather moved west to Winnipeg, Manitoba, where he and my great grandmother raised their family. Their son – my grandfather – met my English grandmother overseas during the Second World War, and following the war, raised their young family first in Winnipeg, and later, in a small Southwestern Ontario city. When my parents' own path took them west (or

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[30] For thoughtful meditations on colonial genealogies and settler responsibility see: Paige Raibmon, "Unmaking Native Space: A Genealogy of Indian Policy, Settler Practice, and the Microtechniques of Dispossession," in *The Power of Promises: Rethinking Indian Treaties in the Pacific Northwest,* eds. Alexandra Harmon and John Borrows (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008); Dean, *Remembering Vancouver's Disappeared Women*; Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

back west, in my father's case), I was born in Edmonton, Alberta, where I lived the first years of my life. But while my older siblings have memories of our home in Edmonton, my earliest memories are of the family "Century Farm" in rural Southwestern Ontario, where we moved in the late 1980s. My maternal ancestors were among the earliest Scottish settlers of Caradoc Township, having arrived in the area in the 1820s. My family has resided in and farmed an acreage of these lands ever since. While I now live in Vancouver, this place I call home is the modern traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg of the territory of Deshkaan Ziibing (Chippewas of the Thames First Nation), as well as the modern territory of the Minisink Lunaape (Munsee-Delaware Nation), on land governed by the Longwoods Treaty.[31] Mount Elgin Industrial Institute, one of the first Indian residential schools in Canada, operated nearly continuously from 1851 to 1946 on the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation reserve, about twenty-five kilometers southeast of the family farm, during the same time several generations of my relatives, including my grandparents, were children themselves.

During my youth, the settler colonial histories and practices of displacement, dispossession, alienation, and violence in and of this place was not a history we talked about; this history was not one we learned in the local public school classrooms I attended. Nor did we learn about the histories and cultures of these and other Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Attawandaron peoples who had, and still have, time-honoured relationships to the land and waterways of this region. Rather, my own understanding of the politics of this

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[31] The Longwoods Treaty (Long Woods Purchase/Treaty #21) was negotiated between 1818 and 1822 with the Chippewas of the Thames. There are three written versions of this treaty (1819, 1820, 1822). The Oneida Nation of the Thames are also close geographic neighbours of the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation and the Munsee-Delaware First Nation. Following forced removal from their ancestral homelands in what is now New York state, Onyota'a:ka (Oneida) peoples purchased land in what is now known as Delaware Township and established the Oneida Settlement in 1840. The Oneida Settlement became the modern territory of the Oneida Nation of the Thames. The Lunaape-speaking people of the Munsee-Delaware Nation also came to the region following forced displacement from their ancestral homelands in what are now the American states of Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, and New Jersey.

place developed later, as I came to the dedicated study of Canadian history as a graduate student, after I moved four and a half thousand kilometers away to the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilw̓ətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples, territories of which the City of Vancouver now occupies. It was here, away from home – having followed a pattern of settler colonial migration westward not uncommon in my family – that I became more attentive to the tangled and often violent histories of place, and to my own relationship to these histories and their legacies in the present.

As feminist and critical race scholars have argued now for more than a generation, the pages that follow would be different if researched and written by someone else. A White settler Canadian with academic, class, and racial privilege, I come to this historical research from a temporal, physical, and social distance. I live outside both the spatial and social geographies of the Downtown Eastside and neighbourhoods like it. I live in a cozy but comfortable garden suite in another East Vancouver neighbourhood, one directly adjacent to, yet distanced socially from the Downtown Eastside. The daughter of a university professor and elementary school teacher, my privileged background has informed not only my way of viewing the world, but also my decision and material ability to pursue higher education, especially graduate studies. My social position invariably informs this work through all its stages, from the way I first became exposed to this subject, my questions that followed, my analysis that developed through research, and surely, in myriad other ways that I do not realize or cannot know. While I often visit or pass through the Downtown Eastside in the routines of my daily life, like those people Stella August describes who drive by her and her friends on their way to work, I am an outsider to this community, one who cannot know, or know fully, what it is I see.

In researching and writing this history, then, I had to confront my own discomfort with the substantial differences of privilege and power between myself and the women I write about in this dissertation. It feels complicated to do this work in an abstract way, removed from the daily realities of poverty.[32] But while there are, certainly, risks in a project such as this produced by someone outside the community, if scholars are overly cautious, the result can also be the continued ignoring or silencing of women's voices from the margins. Anthropologists Leslie Robertson and Dara Culhane explain that in the process of publishing a collection of women's oral testimonies produced as part of a community-based research project with low-income women in the Downtown Eastside, reviewers expressed concerns that they "had not sufficiently protected women from the moralising scrutiny that their stories of drug use, trouble mothering, and illegal economic activities would elicit."[33] The participant-researchers who had shared their life stories and experiences pushed back against this protectionist attitude, explaining to Robertson and Culhane that they understood it necessary to share their stories in ways that reflected their realities. As Tamara, one of the contributors, explained, "In that introduction put down that we've been incredibly honest. Things get covered up down here to pacify those who want to believe everything is fine. Things get polished a little to make it appear better when in fact it's not."[34] As other contributing narrators also explained, stories about women in their community that gloss over struggle minimize the issues they face in ways that can limit, and have limited, social and policy responses. These women, however, also explained to Robertson and Culhane that stories about women in the

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[32] Dara Culhane describes this uneven dynamic in the context of academic research done in collaboration with marginalized women in the Downtown Eastside, and acknowledges the privileges (especially material) of most "university-based women" vis-à-vis their community-based collaborators and co-researchers. Culhane, "Domesticated Time," 97-98.

[33] Robertson and Culhane, introduction to *In Plain Sight*, eds. Robertson and Culhane, 11.

[34] Tamara (pseud.), quoted in Robertson and Culhane, introduction to *In Plain Sight*, eds. Robertson and Culhane, 11.

Downtown Eastside that are told *only* in the context of suffering, those which paint *only* a picture of hardship and pain, obscure women's dynamic realities in ways that dehumanize them.[35] Listening to these women, I thus planned and structured my research in ways that responded to these concerns. In particular, to avoid reproducing the very stigmatizing gaze I seek to dismantle, or, conversely, sanitizing women's experiences, I took steps to locate and incorporate community members' voices throughout this dissertation. As I hope will be clear to readers, the community voices in this dissertation simultaneously document difficult experiences *and* challenge narrow or privileged perspectives that might otherwise reduce these individuals to their adversities and traumas.

Contesting Narratives and Historical Silences

Existing outsider narratives have framed the Downtown Eastside in ways that have obscured women from the neighbourhood's history and erased their subjectivity in the literature. In part, this is because the Downtown Eastside has been a space where the idea of British Columbia as a male space has been preserved. As Adele Perry has argued, British Columbia has been framed in White settler imaginations as a frontier male space since the time of empire.[36] Indeed, as historian Robert McDonald has shown, the City of Vancouver developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a town of mostly young working men, starting in the space now known as the Downtown Eastside.[37] Built upon the Coast Salish seasonal gathering places of q̓əmq̓ə́mələłp/ K'emk'emláy̓ (Big Leaf Maple Trees) and Luq'luq'i/ Lek'Lek'i (Maple Trees Falling-Grove of Beautiful Trees), the Downtown

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[35] Robertson and Culhane, introduction to *In Plain Sight*, eds. Robertson and Culhane, 10-11.
[36] Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).
[37] McDonald, *Making Vancouver*.

Eastside has maintained this masculine frontier image in the minds of city elites from the time urbanization began in the late nineteenth century to the present day. This place was the emergent town's first settler neighbourhood on the south shore of Burrard Inlet, where, in 1867, "Gassy Jack" Deighton opened the first saloon for the men who worked the lumber at the newly-established nearby sawmill. Through the twentieth century, city elites viewed the neighbourhood as a space of 'hard-living' single men who were on rest from, underemployed in, or retired from the region's seasonal resource extractive industries – those who came to stay in the area's inexpensive hotels and rooming houses, and frequented its beer parlours, brothels, opium dens, and nightclubs. Today, this place holds a reputation as 'Canada's poorest postal code' and 'epicentre' in the province's opioid poisoning crisis. Through all this time, the Downtown Eastside has been viewed by privileged outsiders as both a space of men and a place of disrepute.[38]

Indeed, as historians of Vancouver, as well as urban geographers and cultural anthropologists of poverty and gentrification, have shown, outsider narratives of the Downtown Eastside typically used the "Skid Road" (or "Skid Row") trope to frame the neighbourhood. Linked to prevailing ideas of rugged frontier masculinity, this trope framed the neighbourhood as working-class, and later, economically impoverished, male space, one characterized by issues of urban poverty, disease, crime, violence, gambling, drinking, drug use, and prostitution. This trope was used by outsiders to stigmatize and pathologize both the

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[38] For information and details about the urbanization of Burrard Inlet, especially Vancouver's emergence as a settler town (officially Granville, popularly Gastown) following the establishment of a mill on the south shore of Burrard Inlet in the mid-1860s, and then its rapid development into a city following the Canadian Pacific Railway's (CPR) announced plan to make Coal Harbour (in present-day Vancouver) the western terminus of the railway in the mid-1880s, see McDonald, *Making Vancouver.* See also: Jean Barman, *Stanley Park's Secret: The Forgotten Families of Whoi Whoi, Kanaka Ranch, and Brockton Point* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2005); Jean Barman, *The Remarkable Adventures of Portuguese Joe Silvey* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2004); Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia,* Third Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

neighbourhood and its residents as 'derelict'.[39] This othering of the neighbourhood, moreover, was linked not only to class, but also to racialized ideas, fears, and anxieties held by the city's White Anglo-Saxon elite. From the time of non-Indigenous settlement, the people who worked, stayed, or lived in the area were ethnically and racially diverse; these people and communities were often targeted as a source of concern by the White Anglo elite.[40] While community activists have pushed back against stigmatizing representations of their neighbourhood, many outsiders still maintain an image of the neighbourhood that is shaped by stereotypes, often racialized, about men and poverty.[41] Overall, exclusionary and masculinized tropes have shaped White middle-class and elite Vancouverites' imagining of this neighbourhood from the late nineteenth to early twenty-first centuries, ultimately imposing a social boundary between the Downtown Eastside and the rest of the city.

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[39] Nicholas Blomley, *Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004); Sikee Liu and Nicholas Blomley, "Making News and Making Space: Framing Vancouver's Downtown Eastside," *Canadian Geographer* 57, no. 2 (2013): 119-132; Jesse Proudfoot, "The Anxious Enjoyment of Poverty: Drug Addiction, Panhandling, and the Spaces of Psychoanalysis" (PhD diss., Simon Fraser University, 2011); Jesse Proudfoot, "The Derelict, the Deserving Poor, and the Lumpen: A History of the Politics of Representation in the Downtown Eastside," in *Stan Douglas: Abbott & Cordova, 7 August 1971,* ed. Stan Douglas (Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2011), 88-104; Robertson and Culhane, introduction to *In Plain Sight*, eds. Robertson and Culhane; Gordon W. Roe, "Fixed in Place: Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and the Community of Clients," *BC Studies* no. 164 (Winter 2009/10): 75-101; Jeff Sommers and Nick Blomley, "'The worst block in Vancouver,'" in *Stan Douglas: Every Building on 100 West Hastings,* ed. Reid Shier (Vancouver, BC: Contemporary Art Gallery and Arsenal Pulp Press, 2002); Jeff Sommers, "Men at the Margin: Masculinity and Space in Downtown Vancouver, 1950-1986," *Urban Geography* 19, no. 4 (1998): 287-310; Jeffrey D. Sommers, "The Place of the Poor: Poverty, Space and the Politics of Representation in Downtown Vancouver, 1950-1997," (PhD diss., Simon Fraser University, 2001).
[40] Daphne Marlatt and Carole Itter, editors, *Opening Doors in Vancouver's East End: Strathcona* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2011); McDonald, *Making Vancouver;* Kay Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991); Jordan Stanger-Ross and Landscapes of Injustice Research Collective, "Suspect Properties: The Vancouver Origins of the Forced Sale of Japanese-Canadian-Owned Property, WWII," *Journal of Planning History* 15, no. 4 (2016): 271-289.
[41] Notably, the neighbourhood is only known officially as the Downtown Eastside because neighbourhood activists in the 1970s challenged the nomenclature of "Skid Road," as the neighbourhood had been called in popular discourse until then. Robertson and Culhane, introduction to *In Plain Sight*, eds. Robertson and Culhane, 17.

Historical scholarship both reflects *and* informs social discourse. This imagining of British Columbia as 'the west beyond the west,' and the Downtown Eastside as an urban extension of that masculine frontier with all its attending tropes, has extended to historical study and understanding of the city.[42] Within the historical scholarship on Vancouver, women's lives and experiences remain under-examined, particularly of those who lived in poverty in the Downtown Eastside.[43] This is an oversight by historians that, one might assume, has been shaped by, but which also shaped, masculinized discourses about the neighbourhood. Ample narratives, however, now exist from inside the community that centre women's experiences. These women's stories, told from within stress, challenge and contest outsider narratives that have centred men and men's experiences.[44] These community voices, though,

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[42] Phrase from the title of Jean Barman's foundational text in British Columbia history: Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia,* 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

[43] There are, of course, exceptions. There is some, if still limited, excellent historical scholarship on Vancouver that centres women, and especially women's activism. Most of this research, however, is not focused on the Downtown Eastside. See, for example: Jamie Lee Hamilton, "The Golden Age of Prostitution: One Woman's Personal Account of an Outdoor Brothel in Vancouver, 1975-1984," in *Trans Activism in Canada: A Reader,* eds. Dan Irving and Rupert Raj (Toronto: Canadian Scholars, 2014): 27-32; Steve Hewitt and Christabelle Sethna, "Sex Spying: The RCMP Framing of English-Canadian Women's Liberation Groups during the Cold War," in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties,* eds. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Gregory S. Kealey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Jo-Anne Lee, "Gender, Ethnicity, and Hybrid Forms of Community-Based Urban Activism in Vancouver, 1957-1978: The Strathcona Story Revisited," *Gender, Place and Culture* 14, no. 4 (August 2007): 381-408; Janet Mary Nicol, "'Unions Aren't Native': The Muckamuck Restaurant Labour Dispute, Vancouver, B.C. (1978-1983)," *Labour/Le Travail* 40 (Fall 1997): 235-251; Lisa Pasolli and Julia Smith, "The Labor Relations of Love: Workers, Child Care, and the State in 1970s Vancouver, British Columbia," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History* 14, no. 4 (December 2017): 39-60; Becki L. Ross, *Burlesque West: Showgirls, Sex, and Sin in Postwar Vancouver* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Becki L. Ross and Jamie Lee Hamilton, "Loss Must Be Marked and It Cannot Be Represented: Memorializing Sex Workers in Vancouver's West End," *BC Studies* no. 197 (Spring 2018): 9-38; Becki L. Ross, "Outdoor Brothel Culture: The Un/Making of a Transsexual Stroll in Vancouver's West End, 1976-1984," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 25, no. 1 (March 2012): 126-150; Ross, "Sex and (Evacuation from) the City"; Ross and Sullivan, "Tracing Lines of Horizontal Hostility," 604-621; Christabelle Sethna and Steve Hewitt, "Clandestine Operations: The Vancouver Women's Caucus, the Abortion Caravan, and the RCMP," *Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (September 2009): 463-495; Julia Smith, "An "Entirely Different" Kind of Union: The Service, Office, and Retail Workers' Union of Canada (SORWUC), 1972-1986," *Labour/Le Travail* 73 (2014): 23-65.

[44] Chili Bean, Emily Boyce, Shurli Chan, Linda Economy, Pat Haram, Diane Letchuk, and Lisa Weeks (authors and editorial collective), *Reflections of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre* (Vancouver: Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, c. 2007); Downtown Eastside Power of Women Group (with writings by B., Charlene, Courtney, Debbie V., Diane, Joan Morelli, Karen Lahey, Madeline A., Patricia D. Haram, Pearly May, Shurli Chan, and Stella August, and edited by Harsha Walia, Nassim Elbardough, and Dawn Paley), *In Our Own Voices,* 2011, Vancouver Media Co-op, http://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/author/dtes-power-women-group; Leo, Starr, and August, "Voices from the Downtown Eastside"; Martin and Walia, "Red Women Rising"; Robertson and

are not historical. While these women's voices and knowledge are expanding and deepening understanding of women's experiences of urban poverty, we still know little about women in this neighbourhood historically.

My research responds to this silence in existing historical scholarship. By beginning from a place where I take seriously the lived conditions and configurations of women's poverty as an important topic of historical study and analysis, possibilities open up for creating new ways of thinking about the past and present in this city and the nation more broadly. Indeed, the feminist idea that the personal is political, however trite this point may now seem, is an underlying premise of this project. From this feminist starting point, this research brings together scholarship in settler colonialism, urban history, gender history, and social and political movements in an innovative way that builds from, connects, and expands literature in these fields. In doing so, this research confronts certain ways of organizing knowledge. In particular, I locate points of connection between issues, topics, and themes that are related but which are not usually paired directly in the literature. Certainly, while the subjects of shelters, drop-ins, precarious housing, and social housing have received some, if still limited, attention from historians, this study addresses them together, rather than in isolation. By both centering women and pairing these case studies, this research connects themes of settler colonialism, violence, social welfare, and activism to offer a different lens with which to understand gendered poverty and politics in Canada's past.

Culhane, eds., *In Plain Sight*; WISH Drop-In Centre Society Participant/Peer Researchers, *Change in Our Back Yard: A Peer Study About the Lives of Sex-Workers in the DTES* (Vancouver: WISH Drop-In Centre Society, 2015); The Women's Coalition: Women Serving Organizations in the DTES, *Getting to the Roots: Exploring Systemic Violence Against Women in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver: Report* (Vancouver, British Columbia: November 2014).

In particular, this research denaturalizes gendered precarity in the present by showing it has a history. Significantly, I suggest that the ways in which hyper-visible urban precarity has come to be expected and normalized have, paradoxically, contributed to those circumstances being invisibilized in the historical literature. Certainly, for instance, despite homelessness and housing precarity being one of the most urgent issues in Vancouver today, this issue has received little attention from historians.[45] This research, then, begins to address these silences in the literature. I use historical analysis to develop new critical understanding of contemporary local and national crises related to social inequity that shape the present, including homelessness, but also gendered, racialized violence, especially against Indigenous women and girls.

This research, moreover, sheds new light on an important but little-understood form of grassroots activism in late-twentieth-century Canada, what I call a politics of care. The ways in which precarity has become expected and normalized has also worked to invisibilize the agency of marginalized women, including the ways in which community members and their supporters have actively fought to change these conditions. Indeed, while the late twentieth century is widely known for its social and political movements, we still know little about anti-poverty efforts during this period.[46] In this dissertation, I show that through their care politics,

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[45] Historian Jill Wade has examined histories of housing in early to mid-twentieth century Vancouver, including precarious housing, but otherwise, there is remarkably little historical scholarship about housing and homelessness in this city. Jill Wade, *Housing for All: The Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-50* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994); Jill Wade, "Home or Homelessness? Marginal Housing in Vancouver, 1886-1950," *Urban History Review* 25, no. 2 (March 1997): 19-29.

[46] While there is a growing American literature on the subject, within the expansive scholarship on social movements in Canada, grassroots anti-poverty activism has (with a few exceptions) been little-investigated. Certainly, while the historical scholarship on activism in late-twentieth-century Vancouver is both excellent and extensive, anti-poverty activism and what I am calling care politics remain under-examined. For more on other late-twentieth-century social movements in Vancouver, see for instance: Michael Boudreau, "'The Struggle for a Different World': The 1971 Gastown Riot in Vancouver," in Campbell, Clément, and Kealey, *Debating Dissent*; Susan Boyd, Donald MacPherson, Bud Osborn, *Rise Shit! Social Action Saving Lives* (Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2009); Michael Bruce, "'A New Breed of Group'": Community Activism in Vancouver's Strathcona Neighbourhood, 1968-1972" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 2005); Will Langford,

women challenged poverty and its consequences by creating new services, safer spaces, and community for marginalized women and their families. Through analysis of this history, this research expands historical understanding of the actors involved in creating social change, as well as the shape of activism itself. Notably, this research reveals the pivotal role of women of diverse class and cultural backgrounds in building community, creating social change, and making the city. While the actors I centre in this dissertation may not have necessarily or always understood themselves or their work as political, I show that their innovative responses to gendered precarity – what I categorize as care work – was urgently needed activism within these contexts.

This history of women's care politics is also part of a larger history of Indigenous community-making in the city. Of course, Indigenous people have always lived in cities, and cities are themselves Indigenous lands. But the mid- to late twentieth century was a period of marked Indigenous urbanization. This was a time when Indigenous people from across the province and country moved to cities in rapidly increasing numbers. Indigenous men and women moved from their home communities to cities across Canada for various reasons, many of which were linked to the negative social and material impacts of settler colonial policies and practices. For instance, in a context of deepening poverty and limited social opportunities on reserves, some men and women moved to cities seeking expanded educational, vocational,

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"'Is Sutton Brown God?' Planning Expertise and the Local State in Vancouver, 1952-1973," *BC Studies* no. 173 (Spring 2012): 11-39; Lee, "Gender, Ethnicity, and Hybrid Forms of Community-Based Urban Activism"; Tina Loo, "A Fourth Level of Government"? Urban Renewal, State Power, and Democracy in Vancouver's East Side," chap. 5 in *Moved by the State: Forced Relocation and Making a Good Life in Postwar Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019); Travis Lupick, *Fighting for Space: How a Group of Drug Users Transformed One City's Struggle with Addiction* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2017); Eryk Martin, "Burn It Down! Anarchism, Activism, and the Vancouver Five, 1967-1985" (PhD diss., Simon Fraser University, 2016); Eryk Martin, "The Blurred Boundaries of Anarchism and Punk in Vancouver, 1970-1983," *Labour/Le Travail* 75 (Spring 2015): 9-41; Nicol, "'Unions Aren't Native'"; Hewitt and Sethna, "Sex Spying"; Pasolli and Smith, "Labor Relations of Love"; Sethna and Hewitt, "Clandestine Operations"; Smith, "An "Entirely Different" Kind of Union."

career, or other personal opportunities. Others lived in urban areas because they had become alienated from their home communities and families because of residential schooling or child apprehensions. Some women who had fled circumstances of domestic violence and abuse sought social services in the city. And, finally, some people lived in cities because settler law forbade them from living on reserves. Until it was amended in 1985, the federal Indian Act of 1876 stripped legal Indian status from women who married men without status, and denied status to their children with those men. These Indigenous women and their children lost their band membership and, thus, their rights to live on reserves. Forced to move from their reserves by Indian agents or, sometimes, their own community members, or never allowed to live there at all, many of these Indigenous people made new homes in urban areas. It was within and because of these contexts that Vancouver – and especially Downtown Eastside Vancouver – became an increasingly diasporic Indigenous space in the second half of the twentieth century. Indigenous men and women from many places came to live in Vancouver, the home and ancestral territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səl̓ilw̓ətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples.[47] The history of women's poverty and organizing that I

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[47] I write about this context of Indigenous migration to cities and urban activism in an article published elsewhere. Longstaffe, "Indigenous Women as Newspaper Representations," 235-237. For references that provide details regarding the social, economic, and legal contexts that shaped patterns of Indigenous migration and movement to cities in Canada following the Second World War, as well as census and other statistics for Vancouver's Indigenous population in the postwar period, see the scholarship referenced in notes 11-14 in that article. On this subject, see also: Mary Jane Norris, Steward Clatworthy, and Evelyn Peters, "The Urbanization of Aboriginal Populations in Canada: A Half Century in Review," in *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation,* eds. Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013); Evelyn J. Peters, "'Our City Indians': Negotiating the Meaning of First Nations Urbanization in Canada, 1945-1975," *Historical Geography* 30 (2002): 75-92. For further detail on the gendered, familial, and geographic impacts of the 1876 Indian Act, see also: Yvonne Boyer, "First Nations Women's Contributions to Culture and Community through Canadian Law," in *Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community, and Culture,* eds. Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, Madeleine Dion Stout, and Eric Guimond (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2009); Corinne George, "'If I Didn't Do Something, My Spirit Would Die…': Grassroots Activism of Aboriginal Women in Calgary and Edmonton, 1951-1985" (master's thesis, University of Calgary, 2007); Colleen Glenn with Joyce Green, "A Métis Feminist in Indian Rights for Indian Women, 1973-1979," in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism,* ed. Joyce Green (Black Point, N.S.: Fernwood Publishing, 2007); Joyce Green, "Balancing Strategies: Aboriginal Women and Constitutional Rights in Canada," in Green, *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*; Raibmon, "Unmaking Native Space," 72-74.

examine in this dissertation is directly informed by the broader settler colonial contexts that

contributed to Indigenous urbanization in the second half of the twentieth century, and by that

urbanization itself. Notably, many of the new social services I write about were intended for

and, in many cases, delivered by Indigenous women. As I will show, the history of women and

the Downtown Eastside is a history of settler colonialism, but, critically, it is also a history of

Indigenous presence, resilience, and resurgence in this urban context.[48]

Finally, this study is intentionally local. My focus on women's experiences within a

single urban neighbourhood, as opposed to within a regional, national, or transnational context,

permits greater attention to and understanding of the particular intricacies and dynamics of

gendered poverty and activism that may otherwise be missed. A local history is better

positioned to reveal and attend to the complexities and interplay between damage and desire,

loss and community, pain and resilience because these dynamics reveal themselves both in

their contradictions and hopeful possibilities more acutely at the micro level. Indeed, the value

of local histories to understand women's experiences of poverty, violence, and activism has

been well-articulated by feminist historian Nancy Janovicek. In her research on the history of

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[48] Indeed, this study contributes to growing historical scholarship about Indigenous peoples and communities in urban settings. See, for instance: Jean Barman, "Aboriginal Women on the Streets of Victoria"; Jean Barman, "Erasing Indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver," *BC Studies* no. 155 (Autumn 2007): 3-30; Jean Barman, *Stanley Park's Secret;* Brenda Child, *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community* (New York: Viking, 2012); Brenda Child, "Politically Purposeful Work: Ojibwe Women's Labor and Leadership in Postwar Minneapolis," in *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labour to Activism,* ed. Carol Williams (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Penelope Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th-Century Pacific Rim Cities* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010); Corinne George, "'If I Didn't Do Something'"; Susan Applegate Krouse and Heather A. Howard, editors, *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women's Activism in Urban Communities* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Bonita Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004); Rosalyn LaPier and David R.M. Beck, *City Indian: Native American Activism in Chicago, 1893-1934* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015); McCallum and Perry, *Structures of Indifference;* Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen, eds., *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013); Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007); Cheryl Lynn Troupe, "Métis Women: Social Structure, Urbanization, and Political Activism, 1850-1980" (master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2009).

the battered women's shelter movement in late-twentieth-century Canada, Janovicek argues that local histories of women's activism usefully inform contemporary efforts to create change because they "demonstrate that strategies for change can work only if the people who are strategizing pay attention to local politics and circumstances."[49] Following from Janovicek, then, through its attention to histories of activism on the ground, this local history of women's care politics provides critical insights that will be useful for community members, other activists, service providers, and policy makers engaged in the work of creating change today. Overall, local histories of women's activism are useful in the present because they reveal what strategies for social change have had greater or lesser success.

But local histories of activism also allow for – indeed demand – greater nuance in assessing a movement's significance. Drawing from the arguments of feminist scholar of poverty Ruth Lister, Janovicek also posits that the extent to which activists meet their aims is not an entirely useful measure of their success. Rather, in the context of her work on the battered women's shelter movement, Janovicek explains that the very act of women coming together with purpose was in and of itself significant because it empowered women and developed "their sense of themselves as political agents."[50] The women involved in that grassroots feminist movement, Janovicek explains, "did not end violence against women, but they did help many women understand that the abuse was not their fault."[51] Similarly, the women I write about in this dissertation who fought gendered and racialized homelessness and violence in their own similar and diverging ways, did not solve these problems, but their work still made a difference. Via their projects of care, these women remade the social and physical

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[49] Janovicek, *No Place to Go,* 18.
[50] Janovicek, *No Place to Go,* 19.
[51] Janovicek, *No Place to Go,* 19.

geographies of the Downtown Eastside to make the city more responsive to the needs of its most vulnerable, and in the process, they created a more community-oriented neighbourhood and city. Although their politics of care could, ultimately, treat only the conditions and not the causes of gendered poverty, as they engaged in this work, these women changed individual lives, communities, and the city itself.

Sources: Limits and Possibilities

To confront and challenge existing narratives and narrative silences to tell a new history of the Downtown Eastside, I weave together a range of diverse documentary and oral history sources. These include, but are not limited to, papers from charitable and community organizations, major daily and community newspapers, state records, research reports and surveys, pre-existing oral histories, and new interviews I conducted myself with selected participants. Significantly, many of the collections I use have been previously un-accessed by historians because they are protected by confidentiality and privacy restrictions; I accessed these collections through research agreements with the institutions that hold those records. New access to these archival sources, alongside targeted interviews I conducted, has made possible the writing of a history of the Downtown Eastside that de-centers men to transform our understanding of this neighbourhood and the city at large. Overall, my analysis of this specific constellation of documentary and oral history sources provides critical new understanding of women's precarity and care politics during the late twentieth century.[52] By

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[52] Certainly, while these sources created new possibilities for history writing and telling, as with all sources, there are limits to what these records can offer us. For example, there is a hetero-normativity and gender binary implicit in the archives I use, which ultimately has meant that by using these particular sources, I have not been able to offer analysis of how sexuality or how non-cis gender identities shaped experiences of precarity. These are both important avenues of inquiry, for which other archives and oral histories would be necessary.

bringing together these varied written and oral history sources, including community voices, this research tells a history about the more privileged women who developed new social and community services in the Downtown Eastside, as well as a history about marginalized women who sometimes used, and who sometimes developed and delivered services themselves.

And yet, poverty shapes the archives, and those archives have, in turn, shaped and imposed certain parameters around this project and the history I write here. Low-income women are present and absent in the archives in particular ways that shape what we can and cannot know and understand about their lives and experiences in the past. Margaret Little, an interdisciplinary scholar of poverty, welfare reform, and anti-poverty activism, explains that we "know so little about the history of poor people's organizing" in part because "[t]hose with little resources and many personal crises have little time to write their memoirs, keep daily journals, and store all political correspondence in their filing cabinets."[53] Middle-class women involved in charitable societies, on the other hand, had greater resources at their disposal to preserve their own organizational, and thus their political, history. That such societies in Vancouver made and preserved extensive written (and even oral history) records of their organizations' activities, and that they were, ultimately, available to me as a researcher, is an outcome related to the privileged status of the women involved in such groups.

In contrast, women who lived in poverty in Vancouver's late twentieth century are present in the written record primarily through the observations of others, including those involved with these charitable groups, social workers, and journalists, and less so as vocal actors themselves. For instance, marginalized women and girls more often appear in the documentary record in instances in which they came into contact or conflict with the state, both

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[53] Little, "Militant Mothers Fight Poverty," 180.

during their lives and after their deaths, such as in social worker case files, juvenile institution case files, criminal records, death registrations, and coroner's inquiries and inquests. These sources often tell us more about the perspectives and biases of those who produced those records than they do about the women who are their subjects. Where it is possible to read such state records 'against the grain' to locate women and girls' subjectivity and agency, as feminist historians and interdisciplinary scholars have skillfully done in other geographic contexts, these kinds of sources nonetheless offer only a limited perspective into their lives. Overall, gendered precarity informs the archives: contexts of marginalization created, limited, and shaped the sources available. Indeed, the particular ways in which women living in extreme poverty are both present and absent in traditional archives is itself telling of a history of marginalization, and an institutionalized legacy of that marginalization today.

And so, while I draw from these traditional archives, especially the papers and pre-existing oral histories of philanthropic organizations, I have also taken steps to counter-act their limits. This project is not exclusively an oral history, nor a collaborative project, but it reflects a commitment to centering community voices inspired by the collaborative ethical oral history practices and methodologies of scholars in Indigenous women's history and ethnography including Julie Cruikshank, Dara Culhane, Paige Raibmon, and Leslie Robertson.[54] As one means of confronting the limiting way in which the archive organizes and produces knowledge, then, I actively sought to locate community voices in other places, such

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[54] Julie Cruikshank with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned, *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990); Elsie Paul in collaboration with Paige Raibmon and Harmony Johnson, *Written As I Remember It: Teachings (ʔəms taʔaw) From the Life of a Sliammon Elder* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014); Paige Raibmon, "Listening to ʔəms taʔaw," introduction to *Written As I Remember It,* by Elsie Paul, in collaboration with Paige Raibmon and Harmony Johnson (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014); Robertson and Culhane, eds., *In Plain Sight*; Leslie A. Robertson with the Kwagu'l Gix̱sa̱m Clan, *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las: Jane Constance Cook and the Politics of Memory, Church, and Custom* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012).

as community newspapers and other pre-existing oral history projects. Further, I conducted

new oral history interviews with selected participants whose memories, stories, and knowledge

drive the fourth chapter of this dissertation, which focuses on single mothers' experiences of

housing and activism.[55] I have also prefaced each chapter with preludes that explicitly feature

community voices. These preludes foreshadow the story of the chapter that follows, but more

than that, they offer flashes of women's experiences and perspectives as told in their own

words. These women's voices remind us of the power and silences of traditional archives,

including the ones that I use throughout this dissertation. These community voices provide a

counter-weight to the traditional archives where these voices are less present, offering a

different angle with which to understand gendered precarity.[56]

      These community voices, however, also exist in a particular context – the women I

feature in the preludes, for example, were likely speaking or writing with their own community

as their audience. This meant that they could talk about their experiences in ways that they

might not have if they had been speaking with someone outside their community, a social

worker or an academic researcher, for example. Certainly, people tell stories for different

reasons and in different ways depending on their purpose and their intended or imagined

audience.[57] In the case of these preludes, while the women featured explicitly raise both

personally-experienced and systemic poverty, violence, and trauma, they may have felt more

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[55] There are, undoubtedly, other archives that I could have used and other oral history interview I could have conducted. My decision to not conduct additional oral history interviews was informed by logistical and overlapping factors, including the financial and time constraints of a single-authored PhD dissertation, ethical considerations, and the sobering fact that an outcome of precarity is that many women in this community died prematurely and thus are no longer here to share their experiences directly. Nevertheless, future oral history research done in an ethical and collaborative way with, by, and for women in this community is critical to the ongoing work of remedying silences that have obscured women from this neighbourhood's history.

[56] For instance, these preludes offer stories that would have been reported differently in mainstream dailies, if reported at all.

[57] Robertson and Culhane, introduction to *In Plain Sight*, eds. Robertson and Culhane, 10.

willing to speak to these issues because they knew that their community audiences would know that they were not defined by, or reduced to, those tragedies.

But what should still be clear in the community members' words I have foregrounded, both in the preludes and in the chapters themselves, is that at the same time as they shared stories of poverty, hardship, trauma, and loss, they also pushed back against stereotypes and dominant narratives that have either ignored, stigmatized, sanitized, or otherwise misrepresented women in poverty. Within this project, community voices from the archives, as well as those of the individuals who shared their stories with me directly, matter: they show that women living in poverty were not only or always victims, but tenacious, creative, and resilient people.

Finally, in addition to my concern to centre community voices, my own legal responsibilities and personal ethics further shaped how I interacted with my sources and the archives. Notably, working with sensitive (and often confidential) material, particularly across a social distance, I strove to practice the principle of 'do no (more) harm'. As a result, there are entire source collections I accessed and read, but which I have not directly analyzed in this dissertation. These include, most notably, social welfare case files and coroner inquiries and inquests into women's untimely deaths and murders.[58] These government records are restricted

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[58] The British Columbia Archives (the repository of the provincial government), houses several restricted collections relevant to this research that I accessed but which do not directly use throughout this dissertation, including: case files for the Willingdon School for Girls (a prison/detention centre for girls, previously called the Provincial Industrial Home for Girls); social welfare case files; and coroner inquiries and inquests into untimely deaths. The files for coroner inquires and inquests also contain within them additional records, including, but not limited to, medical reports into women's deaths, photographs of the scenes of death, witness testimonies related to women's lives, and, in the case of women with criminal records and histories of incarceration, copies of police reports, sentencing details, and their records. Willingdon School for Girls- case files, registers of pupils, and other material, British Columbia Archives [hereafter cited as BCA], GR-2897; Social Assistance case files, BCA, GR-0936; Department of Human Resources case file samples, BCA, GR-0130; Inquisitions/inquests conducted by coroners, BCA, GR-1502; Inquiries conducted by coroners in Vancouver; BCA, GR-1504, Inquiries, BCA, GR-1503.

because they contain sensitive and personal information. I gained access to them through a research agreement. The terms of this agreement confined the ways in which I could use information from these records. Although there are ways I could use them and maintain confidentiality, I decided in the end not to do so. In the early years of my research, I focused attention on these sources. But this focus, I now realize, was because I began from a place of tragedy. As my own perspective evolved through my research, I determined that these records should not form the primary evidentiary base for this project. I realized that this project was about something else: these coroner inquiries and inquests are about death, when this dissertation is, ultimately, about life. While these records can provide answers to certain historical questions about women and poverty, including the embodied physicality of settler colonial, racial, and structural violence, it became increasingly clear to me that to centre them in this work could reinforce and reproduce the kinds of reductive narratives that normalize and make those deaths expected. I worried that to focus on these records might reduce women, and especially Indigenous women (who were overrepresented among those who died prematurely in the Downtown Eastside), to passive victims and this history to one of tragedy. I was, in short, concerned that use of these records could constitute an inappropriate gaze, and thus, a breach of my ethical responsibility to the individual women in these sources and their descendants.

This decision, however, was and remains complicated for me. It feels counter-intuitive to not use information to which I had gained access, that in making this decision, I am somehow participating in or upholding institutional practices and power structures that have removed or kept information from communities. With continued reflection and ongoing engagement in broader scholarly conversations around the ethical use of records of violence, I may reconsider

this decision and return to these records. Or I may not. The ethical concerns for historians of how to use, analyze, and share or not share information or how much, and in what ways, remain moving questions and dilemmas with real, consequential stakes for individuals, families, and communities in the present.[59]

While I do not, then, use these sources directly or explicitly in this dissertation, I acknowledge my research process here because my reading of these government records has undoubtedly shaped my understanding of this subject. I cannot unknow or unsee the tragedy documented in the text and images contained in those files, and what I learned has informed how I have approached, understood, and analyzed my other sources: it has shaped the history I have written here. Most significantly, my knowledge of that tragedy has made, for me, the examples I found of women's courage, resilience, activism, and community all the more powerful. I read these stories of women's survival, mutual-support, and community care against this backdrop of settler colonial, racial, gendered, and structural violence. I see women's resilience within and despite precarity. Ultimately, the stories that I have chosen to centre in this work show that tragedy and community co-existed. The stories in this dissertation document violence, but they also ask us to recognize human love, compassion, and care.

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[59] Other historians likewise grapple with ethical questions and implications regarding power structures, access to information, and the use of vulnerable records. I appreciate seeing more open conversations about these difficult subjects among historians. For instance, see: Hill and McCallum, "Our Historiographical Moment," 34-37; Jane Nicholas, "A Debt to the Dead? Ethics, Photography, History, and the Study of Freakery," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 47, no. 93 (May 2014): 139-155; Robertson with the Kwagu'l Gixsam Clan, *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las*; Tuck and Yang, "R-Words." My intentional act of refusal in using these records in this dissertation, however, does not mean that similar kinds of sources cannot be used ethical and critical ways. For example, in her recent work, critical race scholar and sociologist Sherene Razack skillfully and sensitively analyzes coroner inquiries and inquests into the untimely deaths of Indigenous people in custody to expose, name, and critique the violence and ongoing work of settler colonialism, including the inquest itself as a tool of settler state violence. Razack, *Dying from Improvement.*

Hope in the Present

Writing in the context of her own research with women in the Downtown Eastside, Dara Culhane noted that "The question most frequently asked of researchers working with marginalized people, and the question we persistently ask ourselves, is the obvious one: 'Will doing this research change anything? Who will benefit from it?'"[60] Throughout the process of researching and writing this history, I too grappled continuously with these questions, which are, fundamentally, questions about the ethics and value of scholarly research. I settled upon hope. I cannot know whether this research will change things for the better, but I hope that it will. There are three main things that I hope it achieves. First, I hope that it will sow a seed of doubt in the certainty of would-be helpers and do-gooders who believe that they are the ones who need to help save people on the Downtown Eastside and other marginalized neighbourhoods from themselves. Second, I hope that it will provide grassroots activists with a history that strengthens their arguments for the power of change from below by showing a history of where this has worked in the past. And third, I hope that it will provide policy makers with an example of change from below that worked more effectively than outside interventions, and thus encourage policy that distributes power to people to help themselves. Overall, I hope that by offering a story that demonstrates with empirical evidence that people do not need to be saved by outsiders and that grassroots is what is most effective, that this history might *inspire* community activists who may not know this history but who look for examples of past successes; *validate* their work; and *support* their claims to power.

This is a history of and for the present. When I walk through the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood of my adopted city, the past and present blur. I see the past in the present, and

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[60] Culhane, "Domesticated Time," 103.

the present in the past. Historians are never outside their research, the present is always made by the past, progress is not always, and all those who live in the places now known as Vancouver/British Columbia/Canada inherit this history today.[61] This study of women, poverty, and activism in the Downtown Eastside matters to understanding this city's present and shaping its future because without knowing the history of those who have sought to solve the problems that we still see today – housing precarity and homelessness, addiction and opioid poisoning, and gendered, racialized violence, especially against Indigenous women and girls – we cannot truly understand these pressing social crises as they occur here and across the nation. This dissertation, which tells a new history of precarity and politics in late-twentieth-century Vancouver, shows that if we accept commonly received outsider narratives and tropes about poverty, we will stop at the level of tragedy. But by telling a story that many people already know, or rather think they know, through a different lens, this research interrupts that received history and asks readers to rethink any preconceived notions or expectations they may hold. For this history is not only a story of pain. Encapsulated within this heartbreaking story of trauma and loss, are stories of community strength, love, and resilience at the margins. Ultimately, the power of unfamiliar stories is that they might move us beyond our original frameworks for understanding the world, and in doing so, generate new possibilities for creating a different – a more hopeful and a more just – future.

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[61] Raibmon, "Unmaking Native Space"; Dean, *Remembering Vancouver's Disappeared Women.*

Rose Minnie Peters

Rose, you stand on the corner
of your own death, your pricelessness
pruned to thirty dollars, hoping
you've been insured against the tricks
of fate by registering over your heart
your synonym – this rose
whose livid petals reflect your blood.
This crimson is your scream
made visual – the tattoo
of death's drum beating
In the darkened car-lot
where the John masturbates
blood-lust, before consummating
with the knife.
Society also grafts you
with the label, "whore,"
and some buried part of you
accepts this mutilation,
allows the John
will slash your flowering
off by the root; your hands falling
like torn petals
before the knife.

You said,
"This rose is tattooed on my breast,
so that when I'm killed,
they'll know who I am,"
and on that morning, those careful
to insist they do not know you –
police and politicians –
will play jig-saw –
puzzle your bloodied anonymity together
piece by piece, while justice
haemorrhages between their
fingers;
and gentlemanly society will bluster
they never did nor ever will
know you, claiming,
"A thirty-dollar rose, so shopworn,

is overpriced;"
and those who you leave behind
in this safe house,[1]
want to know you
as you are now; not
as you might be;
sacrificed sister,
dead night-flower,
the silenced music
of a rose tattoo.

~ Janice M. Andrews, "Murder Is the World's Oldest Profession…"[2]

This poem appeared in the *Carnegie Newsletter* in July 1988. The *Carnegie Newsletter* was a community newspaper written and published by and for the Downtown Eastside community. While I do not know who Janice Andrews is, her poem offers a window into her rage and raw feelings over the murder of her friend, Rose Minnie Peters. Andrews' act of writing this poem for Rose Peters shows that she cared about this woman, was angry about what had happened to her, and wanted to memorialize her through the creative outlet of poetry. This was a poem for the community to remember and mourn their friend and community member.

Rose Peters, a Nuu-chah-nulth woman, was also a cherished sibling and the mother of a six-year-old boy.[3] Nearly twenty-five years after she was murdered, her brother Gordon Peters expressed to a reporter the family's enduring grief over the tragic loss of their beloved

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[1] This is likely a reference to the Women's Information and Safe House (WISH), a frontline service and space for women involved (or who had formerly been involved) in street-based sex work, then located at the First United Church in the Downtown Eastside. As of 2020, WISH continues to provide essential services to women involved in Vancouver's street-based sex trade.

[2] Janice M. Andrews, "Murder Is the World's Oldest Profession…," *Carnegie Newsletter*, July 15, 1988.

[3] "Killed on the Street: Rose Peters," *Vancouver Sun,* April 6, 1988, reprinted in *Carnegie Newsletter,* April 15, 1988; "Rose Minnie Peters," Registration of Death, Registration No. 005714, Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Health, Division of Vital Statistics, British Columbia Archives, Genealogy Indexes and Images; "Rose Marie [sic] Peters," Coroner's Medical Certificate of Death, Registration No. 005714, Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Health, Division of Vital Statistics, British Columbia Archives, Genealogy Indexes and Images.

relative and their continued disquiet over the unresolved status of her case: "My sister was a very unique person. She was the one that I really looked up to. I loved her very much…I was devastated [when she was killed]. I was crushed. I was very close with her… I'd like to find out who he is so my brother and sister and myself can move on and say it's over and done with now…We'd like to find out who it is."[4]

Rose Peters foreshadowed her own murder. She lived and worked in a space of expected violence, where death had become normalized. Her life and her death were shaped by structures of inequity. We know from the limited public archival record that Peters experienced poverty and homelessness throughout much of her life; that she was physically disabled, the result of being injured by a RCMP bullet as a bystander during a police incident when she was eighteen-years-old; that her son had been taken from her by the state and placed in the child welfare system (foster care); that she struggled with addiction to drugs; that she worked as a sex worker in the Downtown Eastside; and that she had a history of conflict with the law, including a history of criminal incarceration. At the time of her death, Rose Peters had been staying in an SRO (single room occupancy hotel) on East Cordova Street in the Downtown Eastside. A form of precarious housing, her residency there indicates that she likely was experiencing extreme poverty. On April 3, 1988, Rose Peters' body was found in a lane about five kilometers from the Downtown Eastside, with evidence that she had been violently assaulted and then murdered by a person unknown. She was twenty-eight years old.[5] Workers at the First United Church outreach said that she had many "ideas and plans" to create change in her life, to create a different future for herself: "to live straight and get her child back, to get

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[4] Jon Woodward, "Third Serial Killer Preyed on Vancouver Prostitutes: Police," *CTV BC News,* February 16, 2012, https://bc.ctvnews.ca/third-serial-killer-preyed-on-vancouver-prostitutes-police-1.768608.
[5] "Killed on the Street"; "Rose Minnie Peters," Registration of Death; "Rose Marie [sic] Peters," Coroner's Medical Certificate of Death.

into a really decent (drug) treatment program, to liberate herself from the web… But her dreams were always put on hold."[6]

Janice Andrews writes from a place of strength, even as she underlines tragedy. In her poem, which is saturated with anger and grief, Andrews demonstrates powerful understanding of systems of oppression, as she simultaneously shows that she did not see Rose Peters only as a victim of these systems or of the man who killed her, but as a community member, a friend whose life had value and meaning. Gordon Peters speaks of a dear sister, the loss of whom pulses always. Rose Peters' family and her community in the Downtown Eastside knew that she was more than a victim, more than a stereotype, more than the labels those who did not know her may have assigned to her. Janice Andrews' act of writing this poem for her friend and publishing it for the community to grieve with her shows that Rose Peters was loved and cared for, mourned and missed.

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[6] Rev. Barry Morris of the First United Church quoted in "Killed on the Street."

Chapter One
Single Room Occupancy Hotels as
Spaces of Women's Homelessness

Vancouver! It was raining when we arrived. The city was beyond my wildest imagination! It seemed to go on without end. As we drove along in the cab, I pressed my face against the window and drank everything in around me. There were miles and miles of flashing signs and street lights and the tallest buildings in the world. The people all looked rich and well-fed. The store windows were full of beautiful displays, lots of food, clothes, and all the things a person could possibly need to be happy.

I sat back and thought, "Maybe it's possible now to bring the kids here, where everything will be clean and good for them." My childhood dreams of toothbrushes and pretty dresses, oranges and apples, and a happy family sitting around the kitchen table talking about their tomorrow came to an abrupt end as I looked out of the window again and saw that we were now in an older part of the city. The buildings kept getting dirtier and dirtier. I had lived in poverty and decay but nothing like what surrounded me now.

The cab pulled up in front of a grimy old apartment block and as Darrel paid the driver I looked about. The street was filthy and I shivered and felt sick as I saw the people who were there. They looked poorer than anyone I'd seen at home; there were drunks, and men who walked aimlessly and seemed not to see anything or anyone; women who appeared as though they had endured so much ugliness that nothing could upset them; and pale, skinny, raggedy kids with big, unfeeling eyes who looked so unloved and neglected. Small as they were, they were frightening.

The apartment was up two flights of garbage-littered stairs, and the whole place smelled of stale food, dirty bodies and mould. Our apartment had a small living room with a broken-down chesterfield that served as our bed, and a few pieces of old dirty furniture. The kitchen was just big enough for a folding table, a hot plate, a sink, and an old fridge. The bathroom was down the hall and we shared it with all the other tenants on that floor.

I tried my best to clean the place but it made no difference. The kitchen was full of cockroaches which scattered when the light was switched on. Sometimes I had to wait half an hour to use the bathroom. Just waiting was an experience in itself. The most rejected looking people would be waiting their turns with me. Some tried to be friendly but mostly they were so lost in a world of their own that I doubt if they even saw me. I wondered, as [I] waited, whether any of them had parents who loved them, or if they had ever laughed, or loved, or hated."[1]

~ Maria Campbell, 1973

After she left Saskatchewan in the late 1950s, Métis writer Maria Campbell lived

temporarily in Downtown Eastside Vancouver. In her memoir *Halfbreed*, she describes her

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[1] Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), 114-115.

initial impressions of Vancouver, with her first point of arrival being one of the neighbourhood's single room occupancy (SRO) hotels. As in the urban cores of other North American cities, the presence of low-cost hotels in the Downtown Eastside worked to concentrate poverty in this neighbourhood because they were the only form of housing that many people on welfare or other low-incomes could afford.[2] But where Campbell arrived in Vancouver with a place to live – a roof-over-head – ultimately, this place she arrived was a place of homelessness. Through analysis of women's experiences in SROs like the one Campbell describes, I argue that the precariously housed in late-twentieth-century Vancouver experienced a form of homelessness. SROs were spaces of housed homelessness because structural and gendered violence within this housing environment shaped and compounded poverty for women like Campbell.

As today, homelessness in Vancouver's past took myriad forms, often hidden from public view. Indeed, political scientist Alison Smith explains that contemporary "[g]roups seeking to raise awareness of homelessness will often use an image of an iceberg to send the message that what we see on the streets is a mere fraction of the broader problem of homelessness."[3] To understand and address this issue, Smith thus advocates thinking about different types of homelessness including, but not limited to, sleeping outside, staying in emergency shelters or transition houses, and staying with friends. This is particularly true for understanding and addressing homelessness experienced by women.[4] Smith notes, for

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[2] There is a small literature on SROs and poverty in other North American cities. See for example: Kenneth Kusmer, *Down and Out, On the Road: The Homeless in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 151-154, 163-164, 225-226.

[3] Alison Smith, "Filling the Gap: Cities and the Fight Against Homelessness in Canada" (PhD diss., Université de Montréal, April 2016).

[4] Alison Smith, "Results of Montreal's First Point in Time Count Released," July 19, 2015, *Mouvement pour mettre fin a l'itinerance a Montreal,* http://www.mmfim.ca/results-of-montreals-first-point-in-time-count-released/.

example, that service providers maintain that street homelessness is "too dangerous" for women and so they "will often hide their homelessness; they will stay in violent relationships, exchange sex for shelter, or live in situations of extreme overcrowding or inadequate housing."[5] Ultimately, as Smith stresses, "service providers and people with lived experience insist that women experience homelessness differently than men; fear of physical and sexual violence often lead women to avoid streets and shelters as much as possible."[6] The result is that "women who are experiencing homelessness tend to be hidden."[7]

This chapter begins from the premise that a gendered historical perspective is critical to develop greater understanding of the structures that create and shape women's homelessness. "It is trite to repeat that homelessness is a crisis in this city," wrote activist Harsha Walia in a November 2018 letter to Vancouver City Council. But, as Walia underscored, despite a widespread acknowledgment that a housing and homelessness crisis is one of the most pressing issues faced by this city today, "the specific gendered and colonial underpinnings of homelessness is often missing in how our City understands and imagines solutions to homelessness."[8] Historians have contributed to this obfuscation. In the limited historical scholarship on the subject, historians assume a relatively narrow definition of homelessness. As a result, we know little about the gendered history of homelessness. Overall, historical scholarship has tended to focus primarily on the more visible manifestations of homelessness, specifically street homelessness (where people sleep outside without physical structures of housing) or emergency sheltered homelessness (where people spend nights in

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[5] Smith, "Filling the Gap," [no pp].
[6] Smith, "Results of Montreal's First Point in Time Count Released."
[7] Smith, "Results of Montreal's First Point in Time Count Released."
[8] Harsha Walia, "Letter to Council: 100% Social Housing at 58 W Hastings," November 14, 2018 (posted date), *Downtown Eastside Women's Centre*, https://dewc.ca/news/letter-council-100-social-housing-58-w-hastings.

emergency shelters). This narrower focus has inadvertently lent itself to a disproportionate consideration of men's – and especially single White men's – experiences of homelessness, and as such, often obscured the experiences of women and families.[9] Ultimately, the limited portrait of homelessness produced through existing historical scholarship has contributed to processes of invisibilizing women's experiences of homelessness in both past and contemporary imaginings; in obscuring a gendered history of homelessness, historians have informed the lenses through which policy makers have understood and responded to this issue in the present.

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[9] One exception to this pattern is Eoin Kelly's master's thesis on homelessness in early-twentieth-century Vancouver and Victoria. Kelly likewise frames residents of rooming houses and hotels as part of the population of people experiencing homelessness. Kelly argues that historians should move "beyond a literalist interpretation" of homelessness, explaining that "[a] broader definition of homelessness allows us to not only examine other experiences of homelessness but to also engage in a critique of the very notion of "housed" living and adequate housing." Eoin Kelly, "The Unhoused: Homelessness in Early-Twentieth Century British Columbia" (master's thesis, University of Victoria, 2018). On additional histories of homelessness in urban North America from the nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries, see for example: John C. Bacher and J. David Hulchanski, "Keeping Warm and Dry: The Policy Response to the Struggle for Shelter Among Canada's Homeless, 1900-1960," *Urban History Review* 16, no. 2 (1987): 147-163; Todd DePastino, *Citizen Hobo: How a Century of Homelessness Shaped America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Ariel Eisenberg, "'A Shelter Can Tip the Scales Sometimes': Disinvestment, Gentrification, and the Neighborhood Politics of Homelessness in 1980s New York City," *Journal of Urban History* 43, no. 6 (2017): 915-931; Leonard C. Feldman, *Citizens Without Shelter: Homelessness, Democracy, and Political Exclusion* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004); Jonathan Greene, "Urban Restructuring, Homelessness, and Collective Action in Toronto, 1980-2003," *Urban History Review* 43, no. 1 (Fall 2014): 21-37; Lisa Helps, "Bodies Public, City Spaces: Becoming Modern Victoria, British Columbia, 1871-1901" (master's thesis, University of Victoria, 2002); Ella Howard, *Homeless: Poverty and Place in Urban America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Darcy Ingram, "Saving the Union's Jack: the Montreal Sailors' Institute and the Homeless Sailor, 1862-98," in *Negotiating Identities in 19th- and 20th-Century Montreal,* eds. Bettina Bradbury and Tamara Myers (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005); Daniel Kerr, *Derelict Paradise: Homelessness and Urban Development in Cleveland, Ohio* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011); Kusmer, *Down and Out*; Thomas J. Main, *Homelessness in New York City: Policymaking from Koch to de Blasio* (New York: New York University Press, 2016); Todd McCallum, *Hobohemia and the Crucifixion Machine: Rival Images of a New World in 1930s Vancouver* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2014); Todd McCallum, "*Vancouver Through the Eyes of a Hobo:* Experience, Identity, and Value in the Writing of Canada's Depression-Era Tramps," *Labour/Le Travail* 59 (Spring 2007): 43-68; Ralph da Costa Nunez and Ethan G. Stribnick, *Family Poverty and Homelessness in New York City: The Poor Among Us* (Hampshire, UK and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Mary Anne Poutanen, "Bonds of Friendship, Kinship, and Community: Gender, Homelessness, and Mutual Aid in Early-Nineteenth-Century Montreal," in *Negotiating Identities in 19th- and 20th-Century Montreal,* eds. Bettina Bradbury and Tamara Myers (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005); Anna Shea and Suzanne Morton, "Keeping Men Out of "Public or Semi-Public" Places: the Montreal Day Shelter for Unemployed Men, 1931-34," in Bradbury and Myers, *Negotiating Identities*; Jill Wade, "Home or Homelessness? Marginal Housing in Vancouver, 1886-1950," *Urban History Review* 25, no. 2 (March 1997): 19-29.

This chapter surfaces hidden homelessness in the past to better identify and then understand its gendered contours in the present. To identify and understand women's experiences of homelessness in the past, it is necessary to think past socio-cultural equations of homelessness with people asleep on city sidewalks or park benches. Women who experienced homelessness in Vancouver were not always *hyper*visible to passerbys on the street. Rather, they were *hypo*visible. While some women who experienced homelessness slept in city parks and streets and, as I will discuss in the next chapter, in the period's new emergency shelters for women, women's homelessness also manifested in less visible ways. Drawing from women's housing activists, I use a more nuanced framework of homelessness that includes the precariously housed. Since at least the late 1980s, women's housing activists have argued that women who live in Downtown Eastside SROs experience a form of housed homelessness. For instance, based on their findings about women's housing needs and experiences, the authors of a 1989 survey and report concluded of SROs: "It cannot be said that a woman in such circumstances has a home. If she is without a home, then she too must be included in the group we call homeless."[10] A decade later, the local Bridge Housing Society invoked the United Nation's concept of relative homelessness in their fight for affordable housing for women in the Downtown Eastside.[11] Relative homelessness is a category defined by the United Nations

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[10] [author unknown], "Survey of Downtown Eastside Women and Their Housing Needs," report, 1989, 3-4, Simon Fraser University Archives [hereafter cited as SFUA], East Enders Society fonds [hereafter cited as EES fonds], F-59-6-0-0-2. While it is unclear which organization(s) or individual(s) prepared this report, the objective of their informal survey – which included sixty women who were living in the Downtown Eastside in spring 1989 – was to identify basic information about women who lived in the area and their housing needs. The researcher(s) spoke to women at a variety of spaces in the Downtown Eastside, including the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, the First United Church, WISH Drop-In Centre, Kettle Lookout, Oppenheimer Park, hotel bars, and residential homes and rooming houses. With this range of survey locations, the researcher(s) understood their sample to include a reasonable a cross-section of women who lived in the area, rather than only of those who used one or two of the area's social services.

[11] Bridge Housing Society for Women, "Housing for Women in the Downtown Eastside: A Place to Call Home," draft research paper in memo from Sheena Campbell of Bridge Housing Society to Dara Culhane, 26 April 1999, 1-2, Community Health Online Digital Archive and Research Resource [hereafter cited as CHODARR], Health and Home collection, https://chodarr.org/sites/default/files/chodarr0007.pdf.

to include people who have physical shelter, but that which does not meet basic standards of health and safety.[12] More recently, advocates from the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre critiqued the 2017 Vancouver Homelessness Count because "it [did] not address the particular vulnerabilities of women who are in unsafe housing but not street homeless."[13] They argued that a focus on street homelessness "results in an under-representation of women in the homeless count" and, as a consequence, leads to the overshadowing of women's specific housing needs and vulnerabilities in housing policy.[14] In this chapter, I apply and build from these activists' arguments to develop a historical perspective on homelessness that better accounts for and foregrounds women's experiences.

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[12] The United Nations' definition of homelessness includes and differentiates between *absolute* and *relative* homelessness. *Absolute homelessness* refers to those who live on the streets without physical shelter of their own, and includes individuals who spend nights in emergency shelters. *Relative homelessness* includes people who have physical shelter but that which does not meet basic standards of health and safety including: "protection from the elements; access to safe water and sanitation; security of tenure and personal safety; affordability; access to employment, education and health care; and the provision of minimum space to avoid overcrowding." See: Bridge Housing Society for Women, "Housing for Women in the Downtown Eastside: a Place to Call Home"; The City of Calgary, Community and Neighbourhood Services, Social Research Unit, "Fast Facts #02: Definitions Related to Homelessness," *Affordable Housing Calgary,* revised July 15, 2008, 3, 9, Homeless Hub library and information centre, https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/dgrne2pl.pdf. A proposed Canadian Definition of Homelessness similarly entails a spectrum that encompasses four typologies – "Unsheltered Homelessness"; "Emergency Sheltered"; "Provisionally Accommodated"; and those "At Risk of Homelessness." These typologies range from those who are experiencing street-based homelessness to those who have physical housing, but that which is precarious and/or fails to meet basic standards of health and safety. S. Gaetz, C. Barr, A. Friesen, B. Harris, C. Hill, K. Kovacs-Burns, B. Pauly, B. Pearce, A. Turner, A. Marsolais [Canadian Observatory on Homelessness], *Canadian Definition of Homelessness* (Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press, 2012), https://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/COHhomelessdefinition.pdf.

[13] Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, "Women's Safety Remains a Crucial Need: On the Balmoral Eviction," June 8, 2017, *Downtown Eastside Women's Centre,* http://dewc.ca/news/womens-safety-remains-crucial-need-balmoral-eviction.

[14] Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, "Women's Safety Remains a Crucial Need." In 2018, the official Vancouver Homeless Count reported that women represented only twenty-four percent of the city's homeless population, but the authors acknowledged that given the limits of their methodology (a "Point in Time" count), women may have been undercounted; they noted that community agencies have argued that "women tend to be part of the hidden homeless population, often staying with families and friends or in unsafe situations rather than stay on the streets or access services for the homeless." See: Urban Matters CCC and the BC Non-Profit Housing Association for the City of Vancouver, *Vancouver Homeless Count 2018* (Vancouver, British Columbia, 26 July 2018), 1 (note 6), https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/vancouver-homeless-count-2018-final-report.pdf.

To make this intervention into the historical literature, I use a range of oral history and documentary sources, including housing surveys, reports, and interviews produced by various non-profit organizations, community service providers, and researchers who worked in the Downtown Eastside between the 1960s and 1980s. Among these sources, I draw most extensively from a 1979 report prepared by researchers Jo-Anne Lee and Corrinne Angell for the new Society for Women's Residences, as well as from Angell's 1982 master's thesis in community planning that built upon that initial research. In 1979, these researchers conducted a series of interviews with women residents of the Downtown Eastside and with service providers in this community. At the time of the interviews, the women residents interviewed were staying in an SRO, or had stayed in one recently, while the community service providers were women who had worked directly with other women experiencing housing challenges in the neighbourhood. Four of the residents were staying at an emergency shelter at the time of their interviews.[15] Because the original recordings or transcripts of these interviews are unavailable, I use the extensive interview excerpts contained within this report and thesis as essential oral history sources. While these two related studies are valuable sources in their own right – they are indicative, for example, of shifting and increased attention to the specific housing needs of women in the neighbourhood where previous studies focused almost exclusively on men – the oral history excerpts they contain are especially valuable because

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[15] Corinne Angell, "Residential Alternatives for Women on Vancouver's Skid Road" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1982), 26-27, 35-37; Jo-Anne Lee with Corinne Angell, *Study on Housing Needs of Single Women in the Downtown Eastside* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Society for Women's Residences, January 1980), 5. Note: The East Enders Society – who are a primary subject of chapters two and three of this dissertation – was part of the Society for Women's Residences. Furthermore, some of the individual women who were part of the Society for Women's Residences, presumably in the context of their professional work as social workers, were also members of the East Enders Society (eg. Marie-Luise Vail, Mary Kelly).

they offer a rare window into the history of women's precarious housing as told by those with lived experience.[16]

That said, as with all sources, there are limits to my secondary use of these oral histories. For instance, some of the terms and conditions of the original interviews are unclear; the excerpts are partial, removed from their narrator and the context of the complete interview; and the selection of interview passages reflects the analysis and arguments of these other researchers. In other words, these sources are filtered, fragmented, and distanced from their narrators through other researchers' processes of interviewing, transcription, translation, and analysis. Further, in part because of confidentiality reasons, these reports do not include information about specific individuals' backgrounds or identities, such as their age, race, ethnicity, family status, or the circumstances which initially brought them to the Downtown Eastside.[17] The absence of this information limits intersectional analysis of women's experiences of this housing environment. We know, for instance, that a settler colonial context of Indigenous displacement and dispossession both underlies and infuses the history of women's poverty and homelessness in Vancouver. As I will discuss in subsequent chapters,

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[16] See Jeffrey Sommer's work for analysis of postwar and late-twentieth-century studies and narratives of the Downtown Eastside, which, as Sommer's notes, tended to centre men and obfuscate women. Jeffrey D. Sommers, "The Place of the Poor: Poverty, Space, and the Politics of Representation in Downtown Vancouver, 1950-1997" (PhD diss., Simon Fraser University, 2001). Two examples of such historical studies that framed the Downtown Eastside as male space include: City of Vancouver Planning Department, "Downtown – East Side: A Preliminary Study," W.E. Graham, Director of Planning, June 1965, University of British Columbia libraries; Sub-Committee of the Special Joint Committee of the Vancouver City Council, "Skid Road: A Plan for Action," September 1965, University of British Columbia libraries.

[17] The authors anonymized all participants in their written reports because they guaranteed confidentiality to interviewees, both residents and service providers. Accordingly, the authors do not name the women or provide personal details or background information that might identify them or, in the case of service providers, the agency for which they worked. The authors, however, provided some statistical data for their interview participants. Of the sixty-four women in the study, 73% (47) were White, 19% (12) were Indigenous, 6% (4) were Chinese, and 2% (1) were listed as "other" (presumably a Black woman or an Asian woman who was not Chinese.) The women ranged in age from nineteen to fifty-five, with a fairly even distribution across this range. Fifty-two percent were under age thirty-nine and forty-seven percent were over age thirty-nine (one percent without an age recorded). Lee with Angell, *Study on Housing Needs,* 13.

other sources – such as newspaper articles, death registrations, coroners' records, philanthropic organizations' records, and oral histories – make clear that Indigenous women were overrepresented among those who lived in precarity in the Downtown Eastside during this period, including in its SROs.[18] Underscoring the problematics of a colonial archive, the non-Indigenous researchers who produced housing reports during the 1970s and 1980s largely – but not entirely – obscured this colonial context. The majority (seventy-five percent) of the women interviewed for Lee and Angell's studies were White women, but nineteen percent (or twelve of a total sixty-four women) were Indigenous, a disproportionately high rate considering that Indigenous people comprised only a small proportion of the city's population.[19] The general exclusion of information about the cultural backgrounds of the individual women these researchers interviewed, however, precludes using these specific

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[18] I made this assessment following review of sources in the following collections: East Enders Society fonds, F-59, Simon Fraser University Archives; Inquisitions/inquests conducted by coroners, British Columbia Archives [hereafter cited as BCA], GR-1502, Reels B04938, B04941; Inquiries conducted by coroners in Vancouver, BCA, GR-1503, Reel B4983; Inquiries, BCA, GR-1504, Reels B05064 – B05080; Author's selected sample (partial) of registrations of death from Vancouver, B.C., 1960-1970, Vital Events Registrations, Province of British Columbia, Division of Vital Statistics, BCA; *Vancouver Sun* (newspaper), and the *Province* (newspaper). See also Meghan Longstaffe, "Indigenous Women as Newspaper Representations: Violence and Action in 1960s Vancouver", *Canadian Historical Review* 98, 2 (June 2017): 230-260. For example, one report from 1968 indicated that there were 170 women in the Downtown Eastside who received social assistance, and that forty of those women were Indigenous. This would mean that about twenty four percent of women living in the Downtown Eastside and receiving welfare in the late 1960s were Indigenous women. Of course, this statistic would have been fluid, and would not have accounted for those living in the area but who did not receive or who were not eligible for social assistance. Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests that most residents of the Downtown Eastside in this period were recipients of some form of social assistance. Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 10 January 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2.

[19] Lee with Angell, *Study on Housing Needs,* 13. There are limits to using census data to determine the population of Indigenous people in cities, but they nonetheless provide a marker. The Canadian census indicates that 239 Indigenous people lived in Vancouver in 1951, 530 in 1961, 3000 in 1971, and 16,080 in 1981. (Evelyn Peters, "Aboriginal People in Urban Areas," in *Urban Affairs: Back on the Policy Agenda,* edited by Caroline Andrew, Katherine A. Graham, and Susan D. Phillips (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 54). Using these census statistics in relation to census statistics for the population of Vancouver, Indigenous people comprised less than one percent of the city's population in 1951, 1961, and 1971, and just under four percent in 1981. For additional census and other statistics on Vancouver's Indigenous population during the late twentieth century, see Longstaffe, "Indigenous Women as Newspaper Representations," 237, note 14; Mary Jane Norris, Steward Clatworthy, and Evelyn Peters, "The Urbanization of Aboriginal Populations in Canada: A Half Century in Review," in *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation,* eds. Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 37-39; and Peters, "Aboriginal People in Urban Areas," 53-5.

sources to analyze distinctive ways in which racism and colonialism shaped Indigenous and other racialized women's experiences of poverty, housing, and homelessness in SROs. Nevertheless, the overrepresentation of Indigenous women in those studies, which reflected the demographics of the neighbourhood, signal that one cannot disentangle this history of women's housing precarity in the Downtown Eastside from histories of racial and settler colonial violence.

Despite these limits, however, these reports and the oral histories they contain remain valuable. They offer greater understanding of gendered poverty and homelessness from the perspectives of those with lived experience. Because women who lived in the Downtown Eastside during these decades are present in the archives predominately through the observations, opinions, and representations of others (including journalists, social workers, coroners, and municipal officials), it is imperative to listen when their voices are present, even if they are present only in partial and mediated ways.

These sources reveal violence and injustice in the everyday to illuminate that SROs were sites of housed homelessness. To demonstrate how SROs were sites of homelessness, the first section of this chapter focuses on quotidian structural violence, the kind Maria Campbell alluded to when she described the substandard material conditions of her new place of living. Then, the second section focuses on systemic and individually-experienced gendered violence, including sexual harassment, assault, and the experience of living in hypervigilance. Although I analyze structural and gendered violence in separate sections, my analysis also reveals that these two forms of violence were mutually constitutive: the structural violence of, and incurred by, the built environment negatively impacted women residents' personal safety. Overall, in myriad separate, overlapping, and correlated ways, the precariousness of SRO housing shaped

and limited the experiences and possibilities of women living in poverty in this settler neighbourhood and city. Because they were spaces of everyday structural and gendered violence, SROs compounded women's poverty in ways that ultimately meant that those who lived in SROs did not have a home.[20]

Everyday Injustice and the Built Environment: SROs as Sites of Structural Violence

> *This year, it seems, we are into the Year of the Homeless – meaning people living in poor rooms and suites with very high priced rents, with very little protection or legislation against evictions – in other words, with no security of tenure.*
> *Such places are not safe: kicked in doors; people bashing and violent evictions, room crowding and partying from room to room. We talk about poor security, with people walking in off the street any old time whether they live there or not. Rent keeps going up but no safeguards against this or evictions are present – while the quality of housing keeps going down.*
> *You* can *find a good place – if you have lots of cash – and turn it into a good home. If you don't have the bread then this option isn't open to you; you simply 'make do' and then move on to another such non-place. What this pattern really creates is an unstable society and insecure people.*
> *As the song goes, "Build a strong foundation, with brick and stone; throw in some heart and you've got a good home." – but the housing provided to people without much cash is on a weak foundation, with*

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[20] Where this chapter focuses on SROs as spaces of women's homelessness, SROs were also spaces of death. During the late twentieth century, many of the women who died prematurely in the Downtown Eastside from health conditions related to poverty, alcohol, or drug addiction and those who were murdered, died in the SRO rooms where they were living or, in some cases, visiting. These two points – that SROs were spaces of homelessness *and* spaces of untimely death – are not mutually exclusive, but rather constitutive. In this chapter, however, following from Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang on refusing pain narratives, I have chosen to not provide extensive discussion of or details surrounding women's untimely deaths and murders in SROs. Inquisitions/inquests conducted by coroners, BCA, GR-1502, Reels B04938, B04941; Inquiries conducted by coroners in Vancouver, BCA, GR-1503, Reel B4983; Inquiries, BCA, GR-1504, Reels B05064 – B05080; Author's selected sample (partial) of registrations of death from Vancouver, B.C., 1960-1970, Vital Events Registrations, Province of British Columbia, Division of Vital Statistics, BCA; Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "R-Words: Refusing Research," in *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities,* eds. Django Paris and Maisha T. Winn (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014)). Activist and scholar Angela Kruger has written sensitively and ethically about Downtown Eastside SROs as spaces of death and haunting in the present. In this work, Kruger attends to and demonstrates the nuanced complexity of the Downtown Eastside, the space and its people. See Angela Kruger, "Remaining in Death: A Critical Ethnography of Death, Remains, and Community in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside" (master's thesis, Queen's University, 2019).

little or no heart at all. Most of these places are as cold as hell, very dangerous and just one step above sleeping outside – ever present is the danger of quick eviction.[21]
– Dave McConell, *Carnegie Newsletter*, 1987

In this testament published in the *Carnegie Newsletter,* a Downtown Eastside community newspaper, Dave McConnell voiced serious concerns about the housing security and vulnerability of residents, men and women, who lived in single room occupancy hotels in Downtown Eastside Vancouver. By the mid-twentieth century, SROs, like the ones McConnell described, comprised the primary source of low-income housing in Vancouver, including for women. In the pages that follow, I analyze the material conditions and circumstances of this housing environment to demonstrate that everyday structural violence in SROs in the late twentieth century made them places of homelessness. Together, the cost of an SRO room relative to tenants' income, the lack of basic amenities like private washrooms and adequate kitchens, poor maintenance, and overall substandard quality constituted quotidian injustice that shaped, intensified, and entrenched all residents' poverty. Overall, the conditions of SROs led many residents like McConnell to understand that while they had shelter, they did not have homes.

Originally built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, partly as temporary housing for transient labourers who worked in the province's seasonal resource industries and who were on rest or underemployed in the city, SROs were never intended to house people for extended periods of time. They thus lacked the structural amenities of permanent housing. Most rentals were categorized as "sleeping units," which consisted of a small, single room – no more than one hundred square feet – furnished with a single bed, chair, and bureau, with

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[21] Dave McConell, "A Place is a Place is a Place is a …," *Carnegie Newsletter*, June 1, 1987, 1, 3.

washrooms and kitchen facilities shared among all tenants. A minority (about thirty percent)

of rentals had limited cooking facilities, including a small fridge, stove or hot plate, and sink.

These later units were known as "housekeeping" units. However, while housekeeping units

had these basic cooking amenities, they likewise lacked private bathrooms. Nevertheless,

despite their lack of structural amenities, by the late postwar period, these two kinds of SRO

units had become a principal source of low-income housing in the city.[22] Throughout the late

twentieth century, renting a basic room in one of these Downtown Eastside SROs was one of

few options for low-income women living alone.[23]

Indeed, in Vancouver, as elsewhere, poverty circumscribed women's housing options.

High market housing costs, inadequate social assistance rates, and restrictive social housing

eligibility created barriers to low-income women's choices. Although new public housing

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[22] Residential hotels had a license for a pub on the premises, whereas rooming houses (of which there were fewer units) were unlicensed. According to a DERA (Downtown Eastside Residents Association Report), seventy percent of housing in the Downtown Eastside in the mid-1980s was in hotels and rooming houses, comprised of sleeping units (68%), housekeeping units (31%), and self-contained suites (1%). The remaining thirty percent of non-SRO housing in the neighbourhood were private dwellings (e.g. single detached homes, duplexes or row houses, or apartments). For example, there were row houses on Cordova Street (across from St. James' Anglican Church on Cordova at Gore), over the Hastings viaduct, and by the CN depot. Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 26-27, 34; Downtown Eastside Residents Association, *Housing Conditions & Population in the Downtown Eastside* (Vancouver, British Columbia, March 1985), 5-7; The Housing Centre Community Services Group, *Change in the Downtown Core SRO Stock, 1970-1994* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Vancouver Housing Centre, November 1995), 1, 5; Lee with Angell, *Study on Housing Needs*, 2; "A Survey of Downtown Eastside Women and Their Housing Needs," 1989, SFUA, EES, F-59-6-0-0-2; Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society, *Skid Road Housing* (Vancouver, British Columbia, August 1971), 1-2, 4-5, 22, City of Vancouver Archives [hereafter cited as CVA], Urban Design Centre fonds [hereafter cited as UDC], AM989-S2 Subject and Administration Files, 600-C 6 file 6.

[23] Nearly half of women surveyed in the late 1970s by the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, a new drop-in social and resource centre for women in the area, were living in an SRO; a similar survey a decade later indicated that this number had grown to more than sixty percent. Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 30-31; "A Survey of Downtown Eastside Women and Their Housing Needs," 1989, SFUA, EES, F-59-6-0-0-2. For histories of precarious housing and homelessness in Vancouver in an earlier period than that which I discuss here, see: Bacher and J Hulchanski, "Keeping Warm and Dry"; Kelly, "Unhoused"; Todd McCallum, introduction to *Vancouver's Hoboes,* by Andrew Roddan (Vancouver: Subway Books, 2004), i-xii; Robert A.J. McDonald, *Making Vancouver: Class, Status, and Social Boundaries, 1863-1913* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996); Jill Wade, "Home or Homelessness? Marginal Housing in Vancouver, 1886-1950," *Urban History Review* 25, no. 2 (March 1997): 19-29; Jill Wade, *Houses for All: The Struggle for Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-50* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994); Stevie Wilson, "Where Men Live on Hope: Vancouver's Hobo Jungles of 1931," in *Vancouver Confidential,* ed. John Belshaw (Vancouver: Anvil Press, 2014).

complexes were built in Vancouver between the 1950s and late 1960s, including two within

the Downtown Eastside – one of which is the subject of the final chapter of this dissertation –

eligibility was restricted primarily to families and seniors, and waiting lists were often long.

And yet, for women living alone on a low-income, most market housing was beyond what they

could afford. Certainly, most housing outside of the Downtown Eastside exceeded the welfare

shelter allowance, a set rate based on family size, which effectively meant that the only housing

available to many single women living on welfare was a room in an SRO. In the 1960s, the

East Enders Society, a new philanthropic organization concerned especially about issues

related to women's homelessness and housing in the Downtown Eastside and whose origins

and work I discuss in the second and third chapters of this dissertation, drew attention to this

issue. For instance, in their 1965 brief to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, the

East Enders indicated that rental rates in the City of Vancouver "[had] risen beyond the scope

of social welfare recipients. Even with the welfare rental subsidy a woman [was] unable to find

decent accommodation."[24] Pearl Willows, an executive member of the East Enders Society and

a church worker in the Downtown Eastside, underscored that for single women especially,

"there [were] so few places in the inner city where a decent house-keeping room [could] be

had a rental which can be met by low income or welfare cases."[25] Similarly, in 1967, Phyllis

Harwood, the East Enders Society's social worker, likewise reported that social housing

ineligibility and insufficient welfare rates coalesced to restrict housing options for low-income

women who lived alone. She explained that "[w]omen under sixty years of age [were]

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[24] East Enders Society, "Brief to Royal Commission on the Status of Women," March 1968, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, City Social Planning Department Administrative and Operational Files, COV-S571, 77-D-1 file 10.

[25] Pearl Willows, Vice President, draft letter to Mr. Brown from East Enders Society, [c. December 1969-1970], SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-9.

ineligible for low income projects administered by the Vancouver Housing Authority," but at the same time, "[a]n unemployable single woman on social welfare below this age limit [was] hard pressed to find a housekeeping room [with a basic kitchen] of acceptable standards at a rental she can afford."[26] This problem of housing affordability persisted from the 1960s into the 1970s and 1980s. As one woman in the late 1970s explained, she lived in an SRO because it was all she could afford: "When you're only getting $130 a month for a hotel room…you can't afford to pay for [a better place]. You got to buy clothes and everything. I live here because it's cheap."[27] Ultimately, in the late twentieth century, social housing shortages, restrictive eligibility for that which did exist, inadequate welfare rates, and high market housing costs brought many low-income women to live in Downtown Eastside SROs.[28]

However, while an SRO room was considered low cost housing, relative to residents' income, they were not affordable. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation considered that households which spent more than thirty percent of its income on housing had a "core housing need."[29] This was the case for most Downtown Eastside residents. The Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society reported in 1971 that most Downtown Eastside residents paid more than fifty percent of their income on rent, and in 1985, the Downtown Eastside

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[26] "Mrs. Harwood's Report Dated September 30, 1967," social worker's report, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1.
[27] Anonymous woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 62.
[28] Downtown Eastside Residents Association, *Housing Conditions & Population*, 5; East Enders Society, "Brief to Royal Commission on the Status of Women," March 1968, CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, City Social Planning Department Administrative and Operational Files, COV-S571, 77-D-1 file 10.
""Mrs. Harwood's Report Dated September 30, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; Angell, "Residential Alternatives for Women on Vancouver's Skid Road," 74-75; Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society, *Skid Road Housing* (Vancouver, British Columbia, August 1971), 5, 11, CVA, UDC, AM989-S2 Subject and Administration Files, 600-C 6 file 6. For similar issues related to the availability of and eligibility for social housing in the early and mid- twentieth century, see: Bacher and Hulchanski, "Keeping Warm and Dry".
[29] Housing Centre Community Services Group, *Change in the Downtown Core SRO Stock*, 5; "A Survey of Downtown Eastside Women and Their Housing Needs," 1989, 3, SFUA, EES, F-59-6-0-0-2.

Residents Association reported that most paid more than forty percent on this expense.[30] A survey of women residents of the Downtown Eastside in 1989 similarly found that women spent, on average, forty-four percent of their income on housing.[31] By way of contrast, in the mid-1980s, only fifteen percent of Vancouverites living in other neighbourhoods spent proportionately as much of their income in this way – sixty-seven percent spent less than a quarter of their income on rent, a rate matched by only ten percent of rooming house residents.[32] Overall, these statistics reveal a stark disparity in Vancouver's housing affordability.

Given the proportionately high cost of SROs relative to income, paying for this housing limited tenants' economic capacity to meet their other subsistence needs. For instance, in the early 1970s, the maximum welfare allowance for a single person was ninety-five dollars a month, while the average cost of an SRO room was forty-five to fifty-five dollars.[33] Once people receiving welfare had paid their rent, then, they had very little remaining for all other expenses. Indeed, Rosemary Calloway, a nutritionist for the City Social Services Department, told a *Province* reporter in 1971 that after paying for rent and basic living expenses, a single person receiving welfare only had about thirty dollars remaining each month for food.[34] The East Enders Society similarly explained that "[r]ents (in many cases for sub-standard housing)

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[30] Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society, *Skid Road Housing* (Vancouver, British Columbia, August 1971), 8, CVA, UDC, AM989-S2 Subject and Administration Files, 600-C 6 file 6; Downtown Eastside Residents Association, *Housing Conditions & Population*, 6, 17.
[31] "A Survey of Downtown Eastside Women and Their Housing Needs," 1989, SFUA, EES, F-59-6-0-0-2.
[32] Downtown Eastside Residents Association, *Housing Conditions & Population*, 6, 17.
[33] Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society, *Skid Road Housing* (Vancouver, British Columbia, August 1971), 8, CVA, UDC, AM989-S2 Subject and Administration Files, 600-C 6 file 6. Showing that landlords continued to raise the cost of rent over time, in the mid-1960s, the average rent for a one room accommodation (that included a hot plate and a shared toilet) had been $25-44 a month. A place with two rooms had been about $54.50, and three rooms, $60. Hubert Hein, Marcel L'Heureux, Barbara Thomlison, and Margaret Wick, "Skid Road: Vancouver – An Exploratory Study of the Nature and Organization of Skid Road and the Effectiveness of Existing Social Policy" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1966), 145.
[34] Olivia Ward, "The Poor are Always with Us," *Province,* February 26, 1971, 28.

are very high in relation to the low incomes of the residents of this area, leaving little for food and clothing."[35] For low-income residents of the Downtown Eastside, then, paying rent often came at the expense of adequate nutrition and other personal needs.[36]

Physical aspects of SROs exacerbated these material pressures. As high rents constrained residents' abilities to meet basic life needs, insufficient kitchen facilities compounded this problem. For example, issues with communal kitchens created everyday stress related to food security. In what was perhaps his attempt to interject some levity to these exacting circumstances, one resident quipped, "We don't have much in the way of cooking facilities, and most of us store our food out on the window ledges most of the time – which makes it possible to socialize with the local seagulls."[37] More seriously, one woman indicated

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[35] East Enders Society, newsletter, c. fall 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1.

[36] Increases in welfare rates over the years did not resolve this problem because, as noted in note 33 above, landlords raised the rent correspondingly. For example, by 1982, the welfare shelter allowance for a single person had increased to $200, but so too had the average monthly rate of a room. The mode cost of a single sleeping unit c.1982 was $200 (with a mean cost of $179). The mode cost of a single housekeeping unit c. 1982 was $200 (with a mean cost of $172). This pattern continues in the present day. As researcher Angela Kruger notes, in 2018, the average rent in a privately-owned SRO was $663.00 per month, with social assistance (which most SRO tenants receive) being $760.00 per month; this leaves residents with a mere $97.00 on average for food and all other monthly expenses. (Downtown Eastside Residents Association, *Housing Conditions & Population in the Downtown Eastside*, 5, 14-15; Phyllis De L Harwood, "Social Workers Report," [for] Board Meeting of EES, 4 November 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; Stephen Leary, "In Defence of DERA," *Carnegie Newsletter,* December 1, 1989*;* McConell, "A Place is a Place"; Ward, "The Poor are Always with Us"; Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society, *Skid Road Housing* (Vancouver, British Columbia, August 1971), 4, 8, CVA, UDC, AM989-S2 Subject and Administration Files, 600-C 6 file 6; Angela Kruger, "Remaining in Death: A Critical Ethnography of Death, Remains, and Community in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside" (master's thesis, Queen's University, 2019), 36, note 14.)

[37] Interview with unnamed man, excerpt no. 1, interview by Terry Hoffman, c.1975, partial transcript, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery Archives [hereafter cited as MHBAGA], 13.1.197506, Just Like You and Me: Images of Downtown Eastside Vancouver, folder: 13.4-7.238. These interviews, for which there are partial transcripts available (excerpts only), were part of a project by Terry Hoffman and Lynn Phipps. In 1971, Terry Hoffman, a poet, musician, and songwriter, started working in the Downtown Eastside as community organizer. He collaborated with photographer Lynn Phipps to present a 1975 exhibition at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery (then the "UBC Fine Arts Gallery") titled "Just Like You and Me: Images of Downtown Eastside Vancouver." One objective of this exhibit was to challenge some of the myths and stigma surrounding the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood and its residents. As part of this project, Hoffman conducted oral histories with Downtown Eastside residents. In the exhibit, Hoffman and Phipps used photographs, slides, taped interviews, poems, and prose to document the people, living conditions, and space of Downtown Eastside Vancouver. Some photographs and poetry from their project were published in an exhibit catalogue. (Lynn Phipps and Terry Hoffman, *Just Like You and Me: Images of the Downtown Eastside, Vancouver* (Vancouver: Fine Arts Gallery, University of British Columbia, 1975).

that because "you have to share [the kitchen] with everybody in the hotel…you can just forget about keeping anything clean, cause it's dirty the minute you turn around."[38] Moreover, when people did use the shared kitchens, they were vulnerable to theft of what little food they had. As that woman explained, "I tried cooking, but if there's a fridge the food gets stolen."[39] Another woman similarly explained, "[i]f you manage to go out and buy some food for yourself and you have to use the same fridge as somebody else…Say you've got yourself some meat – and it's gone, they just help themselves! You can't stand guard on that fridge for 24 hours to ensure that nobody takes your food."[40] One woman also explained that she wanted to live in a self-contained suite with a kitchen so that she could have more control over her meals: it would mean, in part, that she could "get up and have a snack whenever [she] want[ed]."[41] As these residents' comments suggest, the constant stresses involved in safeguarding, preparing, and managing one's food and meals was a form of daily, if indirect, structural violence that impacted their material and emotional well-being.

Insufficient kitchen facilities, moreover, contributed to food insecurity and entrenched poverty in more concrete ways. While a small number of units ("housekeeping suites") had a half-fridge and a hotplate, those kitchen appliances still limited tenants' options for purchasing, storing, and preparing meals, and compromised budgets. For instance, one woman expressed that she wanted a place with a "stove with an oven" so that she could make her "own bread and a roast that will last…for days."[42] The lack of an oven meant that she was unable to make meals that would stretch a dollar. Further, without full-sized fridges and freezers, people lacked

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[38] Anon. woman quoted in Lee with Angel, *Study on Housing Needs*, 6.
[39] Anon. woman quoted in Lee with Angel, *Study on Housing Needs*, 6.
[40] Anon. woman quoted in Lee with Angel, *Study on Housing Needs*, 6.
[41] Anon. woman quoted in Lee with Angel, *Study on Housing Needs*, 9.
[42] Anon. woman quoted in Lee with Angel, *Study on Housing Needs*, 9.

space to store groceries, which meant that they had to shop more frequently and in smaller portions. As one woman explained, she could "only go stick so much in a freezer, which means I have to go shopping every day or at least three times a week, and that's very inconvenient."[43] In addition to being an inconvenience, the necessity of shopping frequently – as opposed to buying in bulk – meant that people had to pay more for their groceries. One woman indicated that she wanted "a big fridge so [she could] freeze the meat," explaining that with only "a half fridge…I got to shop day by day and you can't save money that way."[44] Moreover, lacking either secure or sufficient space to store groceries, SRO residents did not have the security of knowing they would have enough food to last through the month's end. As one service provider explained, "When you're paid monthly, a lot of people like to stock up on food so they know that for the month they are safe and they are not going to have to worry about eating."[45] For those who were already struggling to put meals on the table, inadequate kitchen facilities exacerbated food insecurity because these conditions limited the kinds of recipes tenants could prepare and made it difficult to shop more economically in bulk. In other words, residents were unable to save money through thrifty meal planning and shopping, or to have the emotional and physical security of ensuring they had enough groceries to last them multiple days or weeks at a time.

Housekeeping units mitigated, but did not solve women's housing problems. Because they had limited cooking facilities, these housekeeping units were more desirable than sleeping units. But because they were both more desirable, and because there were relatively fewer of

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[43] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 51. See also: Downtown Eastside Residents Association, "Housing Conditions & Population," 7; Lee with Angel, *Study on Housing Needs*, 9
[44] Anon. woman quoted in Lee with Angel, *Study on Housing Needs,* 9.
[45] Anon. service provider quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 51.

them, these units had low vacancy rates and long waiting lists.[46] One person explained, for example, that there were "only a few selective ones [hotels] that take women that are all right," but explained that "you can't get into them. They're always filled because they're the only decent housing for women or men in the area."[47] For instance, one service provider expressed that the City-operated New Central was popular "because they have a little stove and a little fridge and if there is a complaint the manager will deal with it."[48] But because this building was better than the others, she explained, it was "very hard to get in. They've got a waiting list."[49] Ultimately, then, although housekeeping units were more desirable, most residents of SROs lived in sleeping rooms. The popularity of housekeeping units for the minority who did rent them, however, did not mean that they met women's housing needs. Housekeeping suites comprised a marginally better option among limited choices, but still constituted precarious housing, most with all the other issues SROs generally presented.

Certainly, for example, the absence of private washrooms in both sleeping and housekeeping units – another carryover of these buildings' original purpose as transient housing – was another aspect of the built environment that manifested structural violence in the everyday. Residents used communal washrooms shared by all residents on a floor (usually at least eight to ten people) which typically failed to meet health standards.[50] For example, the Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society reported in 1971 that these washrooms "are

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[46] Angell, "Residential Alternatives," iii-iv, 74-75; Lee with Angel, *Study on Housing Needs,* 8.
[47] Anon. quoted in Lee with Angel, *Study on Housing Needs*, 8.
[48] Anon. service provider quoted in Lee with Angel, *Study on Housing Needs*, 8.
[49] Anon. service provider quoted in Lee with Angel, *Study on Housing Needs*, 8.
[50] Seventy-five percent of women living in hotels and rooming houses surveyed in 1989 shared toilet and bath facilities with around ten others. Some buildings might have had two washrooms (toilets) per floor, while others had only one. Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 48-49; "A Survey of Downtown Eastside Women and Their Housing Needs," 1989, 3, SFUA, EES, F-59-6-0-0-2; Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society, *Skid Road Housing* (Vancouver, British Columbia, August 1971), 4, 6, CVA, UDC, AM989-S2 Subject and Administration Files, 600-C 6 file 6.

smelly, and it is quite common for cleaning to be done only once every three or four days."[51] Indeed, one woman described how others would "leave [the bathroom] in such a mess that you don't want to go in."[52] Another woman, moreover, described the shared hotel washrooms as "pretty rough," explaining that you might "fight a drunk lying in the bathtub or on the floor."[53] Furthermore, toilets, showers, and sinks often were not in working order, which meant that tenants would have to use washrooms on different floors, adding additional layers of inconvenience and unnecessary complication into their lives.[54] In addition to such concerns about hygiene and operability, women residents also drew attention to privacy issues, highlighting a lack of working locks as a particular concern. For instance, one woman assessed that it was "not a good policy for men and women to share the same bathroom or tub."[55] Explaining her reasoning, she argued that "[s]haring bathrooms is bad. Men and women do share bathrooms and to top it all off there's no locks on the doors… If a woman or man want their privacy, they deserve it. They're paying for it. They should have it. They should have sufficient locks on the doors so they can get privacy."[56] She alluded to the emotional affect that these shared facilities generated, offering the anecdote of a time when a man "walked in on [her]" while she was using the washroom at a friend's place. She explained that she "didn't get angry or anything but I got a little upset because I don't want to go to the washroom and

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[51] Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society, *Skid Road Housing* (Vancouver, British Columbia, August 1971), 6, CVA, UDC, AM989-S2 Subject and Administration Files, 600-C 6 file 6.
[52] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 50.
[53] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 50.
[54] Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society, *Skid Road Housing* (Vancouver, British Columbia, August 1971), 4, 6, CVA, UDC, AM989-S2 Subject and Administration Files, 600-C 6 file 6.
[55] Anon. woman quoted in Lee with Angell, *Study on Housing Needs*, 7. In some buildings, washrooms did not lock, which compromised tenants' security; in other buildings, the washrooms were locked at all times, and so tenants had to get a key from the front desk which added another layer of difficulty in their daily lives. Vancouver Legal Assistance Society, *Skid Road Housing*, 4.
[56] Anon. woman quoted in Lee with Angell, *Study on Housing Needs,* 7.

run into that."[57] As these tenants' comments indicate, because shared washrooms compromised women's health, privacy, and sense of dignity, they formed another layer of injustice in the everyday.

Beyond poorly maintained washrooms, substandard physical conditions more generally also formed everyday structural violence in SROs. Due to landlords' and managers' deferred and lax maintenance and other cost cutting measures, most buildings were poorly maintained.[58] For example, one resident described how "the conditions are pretty poor, I'll say that – most of us got little cubbyhole rooms which we pay a fairly steep price for – they're usually just four bare walls, a bed, table, chair, dresser, one light bulb – got a lot of pets though – that's a little joke – I mean bugs – all different kinds: bedbugs, cockroaches – you name it."[59] Despite joking about his 'pets', his underlying message reflected serious concerns about the inequities of his living environment. Certainly, along with rodent and bug infestations, these buildings displayed many other telling signs of ineffectual or absent maintenance including peeling paint, torn linoleum, worn furniture, overflowing garbage bins, littered stairwells, and mould.[60] Furthermore, despite Vancouver's damp cold winters, many building managers only turned on the heat for a few hours a day, making tenants' rooms "chilly, damp and very

[57] Anon. woman quoted in Lee with Angell, *Study on Housing Needs,* 7.

[58] Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society, *Skid Road Housing* (Vancouver, British Columbia, August 1971), 6-7, 10, CVA, UDC, AM989-S2 Subject and Administration Files, 600-C 6 file 6. For instance, even though the washrooms were shared, residents explained that there were concrete steps that landlords and managers could have taken to better maintain them, including regular cleaning and working locks.

[59] Interview with unnamed man, excerpt no. 1, interview by Terry Hoffman, c.1975, partial transcript, MHBAGA, 13.1.197506, Just Like You and Me: Images of Downtown Eastside Vancouver, folder: 13.4-7.238.

[60] Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 51; Campbell, *Halfbreed*, 114-115; Lee with Angell, *Study on Housing Needs*, 2; Nan Hood, written reflections/memories, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society, *Skid Road Housing* (Vancouver, British Columbia, August 1971), 4, 6-7, 10, CVA, UDC, AM989-S2 Subject and Administration Files, 600-C 6 file 6.

uncomfortable."[61] Overall, these inhospitable conditions produced through neglect made it difficult for residents to make their place of living into a comfortable home.

This environment, moreover, created or exacerbated physical, emotional, and mental health concerns. For example, among residents who already experienced compromised health from other poverty-related conditions, such as malnutrition and tuberculosis, insufficient heating, poor ventilation, and mould produced or worsened severe respiratory illnesses.[62] Furthermore, residents directly linked their housing conditions to issues of depression, anger, and addiction. For example, one man remarked of his living conditions, "these things can be a mite depressing – you know, you can get downhearted about them – but you can't move – most places around here are all about the same anyways."[63] Another man described similar feelings: "Oh, nobody likes these lousy living quarters – that's for damn sure – we'd have to be fools to … you can't even think about it – you know, if you think about your troubles all the time, you end up a touch snaky – yes, I've seen it happen – you go snaky – or wind up starin at the bottom

[61] Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society, *Skid Road Housing* (Vancouver, British Columbia, August 1971), 6-7, 10, CVA, UDC, AM989-S2 Subject and Administration Files, 600-C 6 file 6.

[62] "TB resurfaces in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside," *The National,* television report, December 5, 1984, Knowlton Nash (Host), Georges Tremel (Reporter), with John Blatherwick, Arlene Jackson, and Jim Preveau (Guests), CBC Digital Archives, Category: Health, Disease, Tuberculosis: Old Disease, Continuing Threat https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/tuberculosis-tb-resurfaces-in-vancouvers-downtown-eastside; Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society, *Skid Road Housing* (Vancouver, British Columbia, August 1971), 6-7, 10, CVA, UDC, AM989-S2 Subject and Administration Files, 600-C 6 file 6. In her report on the health status of people living in the adjoining census tracts 57, 58, and 59 (which included the Downtown Eastside), researcher Dr. Rita Bakan reported that the death rate in these areas was significantly higher than that of Vancouver overall. Significantly, she indicated that "[t]he single greatest discrepancy in death rates between the Study Area and Vancouver is the extremely high rate of premature death from respiratory disease in the Study Area," which as Bakan indicated, was related to poor housing, malnutrition, alcohol misuse, and lack of early medical treatment or lack of access to medical care. She concluded that preventable respiratory disease was a significant cause of death for Study Area residents compared to Vancouver, and moreover, the cause of deaths at a much younger age. Bakan also reported that while tuberculosis was not a leading cause of death in the study area, deaths from tuberculosis in Vancouver in 1977 were exclusively from this area. However, while she identified respiratory illnesses as a leading cause of loss of years of life in the area overall, Bakan also indicated that for women, cirrhosis of the liver was a significant cause of early death. Rita Bakan, "Report on Health Status of Census Tracts 57, 58, and 59," Prepared for the City of Vancouver Health and Planning Departments (Vancouver, B.C.: Health Planning Division, Vancouver Health Department, 19 December 1978), 1, 5, 6, 8.

[63] Interview with unnamed man, excerpt no. 1, interview by Terry Hoffman, c.1975, partial transcript, MHBAGA, 13.1.197506, Just Like You and Me: Images of Downtown Eastside Vancouver, folder: 13.4-7.238.

of a beer glass."[64] Another tenant echoed the link this man made between the material

conditions of their housing and alcohol use. He remarked, "I know for a fact that lots are drinkin

cause of these flophouses they're staying in – I mean these rooms aren't exactly what you'd

call a home, are they?...they're dingy, most often crawlin with bugs, paint peelin off, no heat,

firetraps…Christ," he marveled, "it's a wonder to me that everyone ain't on the booze – it is a

wonder."[65] Certainly, these residents' comments indicate that substandard physical conditions

in SROs negatively affected people's health: they fostered or compounded physical and mental

illnesses and overlapping challenges related to substance use and addiction.[66]

Indeed, as residents explained that their housing environment could produce addiction,

they also indicated that it exacerbated pre-existing struggles. Within this environment of

inequity, residents explained that beer parlours – located on the main floor of many SROs –

inscribed alcohol into the neighbourhood's physical and social geography in ways that

challenged their sobriety. For example, one long-term woman resident explained:

> I've lived downtown here for a lot of years. I managed to get away for a while. I lived
> in some of these skidroad hotels and there are a lot of problems. If you're trying to
> stop drinking, there are a lot of men who will knock on your door and try to get you
> to start drinking. I, myself, have an alcohol problem. Voluntarily, I haven't had a drink
> for two weeks and if you'll pardon the expression, there are times when it's been pure
> hell. I live right across the street from the Mar hotel and sometimes it's like there's a
> big hand coming out of the Mar hotel, trying to draw me in…there's probably
> somebody in there who would probably buy me a drink.[67]

As her reflections attest, the social and physical environment of the Downtown Eastside

introduced challenges for those seeking to maintain sobriety.

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[64] Interview with unnamed man, excerpt no. 2, interview by Terry Hoffman, c.1975, partial transcript, MHBAGA, 13.1.197506, Just Like You and Me: Images of Downtown Eastside Vancouver, folder: 13.4-7.238.
[65] Interview with unnamed man, excerpt no. 3, interview by Terry Hoffman, c.1975, partial transcript, MHBAGA, 13.1.197506, Just Like You and Me: Images of Downtown Eastside Vancouver, folder: 13.4-7.238.
[66] On mental health and alcohol and drug addiction as an indicator of mental health among area residents, see also Bakan, "Report on Health Status of Census Tracts 57, 58, and 59," 6, 8.
[67] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 60.

Overall, SROs were places of everyday structural violence that curtailed residents' well-being. Significantly, health issues created or exacerbated through this environment, including mental illness and addiction, would have produced barriers to obtaining or returning to stable employment, ultimately making it more difficult to exit poverty and these living conditions which both fueled ill health and entrenched poverty. The proportionately high cost relative to incomes, inadequate amenities, and substandard physical conditions had both immediate and lasting impacts on residents' financial, physical, mental, and emotional health and welfare, both complicating and compounding their poverty. Because of this, SROs were spaces of homelessness. Collectively, these housing conditions and their impacts contributed to a feeling among at least some SRO tenants that even though they had shelter, they did not have a home. As one contributor to the community-run *Carnegie Newsletter* wrote in 1989, "[o]ne of the problems in the Downtown Eastside is housing…many must put up with cheap hotel rooms, roach-ridden apartments and buildings too old and too far below health and safety standards for average people to make decent homes."[68] Of her living place, one woman expressed that that "it's secure (the lock works) [unlike many SRO units], but I don't call it home because it's just a little room to sleep in."[69] While we do not know what *home* ultimately meant to her, her remark indicates that it was, at the very least, something more than the housing she had.

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[68] Ron Carten, [no title], *Carnegie Newsletter,* August 15, 1989, 14.
[69] Anon. woman quoted in "A Survey of Downtown Eastside Women and Their Housing Needs," 1989, 4-5, SFUA, EES, F-59-6-0-0-2.

"I Don't Feel Safe": SROs as Sites of Gendered Violence

> *The men follow you to your room and then they try to get in. They see you walking down the hall and they say which room is she in and they wait for you and keep coming around…And this isn't just me, it's all the women I know too. They all have this problem. I've had this happen many times. It's been going on for years. They think 'cause you are a woman alone, they can pester you. I get so sick and tired of this attitude. They think because you are here you are for their convenience. Especially at my place. They are all like that. They see a woman walk by their rooms and you hear them saying "hey, what room is she in?" and they think they can go after her. All they think about is how to get her and break down the door or the lock or get in the window somehow.*[70]

Her fury and frustration palpable, this tenant described how SROs were a place of gendered violence, where predatory men felt and acted entitled to do as they pleased. As her account of both individually-experienced and systemic gender violence in SROs indicates, this built housing environment impacted the health and well-being of women in particularly gendered ways. Indeed, analysis of gendered violence in SROs shows that women experienced this environment differently from men because the physical conditions of SROs that constituted everyday structural violence for all residents both intersected with, and was compounded by, gender violence. As I will show in the pages that follow, where all residents of SROs experienced housed homelessness because their shelter failed to meet basic standards of health and affordability, for women, these issues were amplified by the lack of personal safety they experienced and, relatedly, by the ways in which sexism and misogyny heightened their housing insecurity.

Within the social environment of SROs, many women lived in a constant state of hypervigilance. One woman explained that she would have preferred to live in a rooming house

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[70] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 54.

over a hotel because she considered the former to offer more safety. The difference between the two, she explained, was "No bar and No drunks. You can watch TV in a roominghouse, but in a hotel you can't watch TV in a lobby full of drunks and it's not safe to do anything else unless you got a husband."[71] Many residential hotels were licensed and had a pub or a lounge on the premises, whereas rooming houses (of which there were fewer) were unlicensed.[72] Another woman similarly expressed how the SRO atmosphere was both disruptive and dangerous in particularly gendered ways. "The noise is bad," she explained – "Men curse and swear and they're boisterous, loud and all that, you know. And if you're trying to sleep it's very annoying."[73] She understood her experience of this situation to be gendered. She expressed that a woman "can't go and tell a man off or she'll get punched in the eye, or something and so she just can't do it. She has to move or else stay in her room all the time and just tolerate it."[74] As these women's comments indicate, fear of men's violence led women to adjust or change their activities, movements, and, sometimes, places of living to protect their personal safety.

These women's fears were not unfounded. For many women, daily life in SROs consisted of layers of violence. Compounding everyday structural violence, SROs were places of physical violence, sexual harassment, and sexual assault.[75] According to housing researchers Lee and Angell, women SRO residents disclosed sexual violence that "rang[ed] from [men] brushing up against their breasts in the hallways to extreme cases of sexual abuse and battering, some of which…resulted in death."[76] Moreover, forty-three percent of women surveyed in

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[71] Anon. woman quoted in Lee with Angel, *Study on Housing Needs*, 9.
[72] Housing Centre Community Services Group, *Change in the Downtown Core SRO Stock,* 1, 5.
[73] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 59.
[74] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 59.
[75] Angell, "Residential Alternatives," iii, 48, 52-53, 58; Lee with Angell, *Study on Housing Needs*, 6; "A Survey of Downtown Eastside Women and Their Housing Needs," 1989, 3, SFUA, EES, F-59-6-0-0-2.
[76] Lee with Angell, *Study on Housing Needs*, 6.

1989 about their housing needs reported having experienced gender violence or harassment at their residence within the six months prior.[77] The reports of these housing researchers show that in the late twentieth century, SROs were places where women's personal security was compromised regularly, if not daily.

This gender violence was linked to substandard material conditions. For instance, buildings lacked proper security measures, which meant that perpetrators easily accessed women's rooms, sometimes forcing entry by breaking their room locks or kicking in doors. Women residents recounted, for example, that they would leave their room to use the washroom and return to find someone in it.[78] City social worker Marie-Luise Vail explained that the room locks were ineffective and men could break in the doors easily.[79] Another service provider likewise explained that despite the fact women "lock the room every time they leave…sometimes the door lock doesn't work" or assailants will "try again and again" until they break the lock.[80] A different Downtown Eastside service provider similarly described how one client was "constantly harassed, beaten up and in danger all the time cause this guy was always trying to get into her room and very often he was successful in breaking the lock. Like every time she would buy a lock he would get a hacksaw and break it off until she finally got a lock that was so good he couldn't break it."[81] Sometimes these perpetrators were building residents and sometimes they lived elsewhere. Notably, building managers often left building entrances unlocked overnight which made it easy for non-residents to access the buildings; exterior fire escapes also made illicit entry into women's rooms possible through their

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[77] "A Survey of Downtown Eastside Women and Their Housing Needs," 1989, 3, SFUA, EES, F-59-6-0-0-2.
[78] Angel, "Residential Alternatives," iii, 48-49; Lee with Angel, *Study on Housing Needs*, 7; Vancouver Community Legal Assistance Society, "Skid Road Housing," 5.
[79] Marie-Luise Vail, interview, audio recording, 15 October 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-6.
[80] Anon. service provider quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 48.
[81] Anon. service provider quoted in Lee with Angell, *Study on Housing Needs*, 6.

windows. For example, one community service provider described a client who was harassed constantly by a man living in the room adjacent to hers – his pattern of violence escalated to the point where "he climbed out on the fire escape and into her window."[82] Overall, as these service providers' concerns highlight, the inadequate infrastructure and lacking security measures of these buildings were such that would-be perpetrators had little trouble accessing women's rooms if and when they wanted.

In some cases, building managers and landlords could be mitigating forces in this environment. One woman explained that "[i]f you got a good manager you were O.K." because "[i]f they liked you, they would watch out for you."[83] Another woman similarly indicated that some managers "tried to keep [women] as close to the office as possible, that way they [could] keep a close eye on them, so they don't get harassed."[84] But at the same time, she recognized the limits of this approach; she noted, for example, that "if you're up on, say, the 2nd or 3rd floor, [and] you get attacked or somebody kicks in your door…there's very little possibility that the management will be able to hear you yell."[85]

Residents' accounts of their experiences living in SROs reveal this kind of gender violence to be pervasive in ways that caused them to live in hypervigilance. One woman, for example, recounted the everyday threat to her safety and the steps she took to protect herself and her belongings: "When I lived down here I used to have an iron support and bar across my door because it was nothing for a drunk to come in or even a sober man to come in. And you'd be by yourself and they'd be kicking your door down. It wasn't unusual."[86] Another resident

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[82] Anon. service provider quoted in Angel, "Residential Alternatives," 53.
[83] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 52.
[84] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 58.
[85] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 58.
[86] Anon. woman quoted in Lee with Angell, *Study on Housing Needs*, 7.

likewise described that "[t]he men are terrible. They're a pain in the ass. They get drinking. A woman alone you have to watch yourself every minute."[87] As these women's comments indicate, women took various concrete steps to mitigate risk in this environment. For instance, many women avoided using the shared bathrooms during hours when they thought others might be awake because when they used these facilities, or walked down the hallway to them, men often harassed them. One service provider mentioned a client who waited until everyone else was asleep before she used the communal facilities because she had been harassed by men several times previously.[88] In this misogynistic environment, women calculated risk and adjusted their behaviour accordingly, from opting against watching television in hotel lobbies and ignoring noisy neighbours and beer parlour patrons, to self-regulating something so essential to human health and daily living as bathing and using the toilet.

Overall, however, while these accounts make clear some of the ways women residents sought to protect themselves, they simultaneously underscore the emotional, mental, and physical impacts of living in unsafety. This unmitigated and persistent stress of not being or feeling safe within one's own place of living was, as one service provider put it, "incredibly hard to live with."[89] The woman who secured her door with an iron bar explained why she took that measure: "I don't feel safe."[90] Because women SRO residents lived in a constant state of fear and hypervigilance, it is hard to imagine their housing as a place of home.[91]

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[87] Anon. woman quoted in Lee with Angell, *Study on Housing Needs*, 7.
[88] Lee with Angell, *Study on Housing Needs*, 7. See also Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 48-49; Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, 19 October 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.
[89] Anon. service provider quoted in Lee with Angel, *Study on Housing Needs*, 6.
[90] Anon. woman quoted in Lee with Angel, *Study on Housing*, 7.
[91] According to Angell's research, many women were also reluctant to make formal complaints or charges with the police. Some women may have felt like they had few options for recourse or justice, and that if they came forward, would be blamed. For example, one worker, who had "heard of several rapes in the local hotels," believed that many of the women chose to not press charges because they thought it would be "very hard to prove." Another woman who disclosed to a service provider that she was raped in the Pennsylvania Hotel by a

Another outcome of men's violence was increased housing insecurity for women. While, as residents indicated, some managers were concerned about violence against their women tenants and took some steps, however limited, to allay this problem, more commonly, landlords and managers condoned and normalized this violence by casting women as 'trouble-makers.' These landlords and managers naturalized gendered violence by framing women and their presence in SROs as the source of the problem, rather than the perpetrators. "If you tell the landlords," one resident explained, "they say 'Well, what did you do to entice them?'"[92] One woman directly called out this sexism, explaining that "it is men that bother the women, as though men have a right to bother them. It makes my blood boil! The men make the trouble. If there are any women around the men will follow her."[93] Infuriated, she criticized how landlords and managers typically blamed women for this violence: "If you complain to the manager he will just say, "If you don't like it, then shove off." They won't say that to a man. They think women bring the trouble."[94] These women's comments underscore that sexism shaped a tendency for building operators to ascribe blame for men's violence to women, such that most dismissed women's complaints and normalized the violence they experienced.

Significantly, landlords and managers commonly invoked this 'trouble-maker' label as a reason to refuse to rent to women in the first place.[95] One service provider explained that "[w]omen have an unbelievable problem finding housing down here. There are a lot of hotels that will only take men…. They just will not take women in! They will not even let women stay 'cause when you put a woman in the place and the guys start harassing her, they will fight

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man who "broke down her door", said that she did not want to report the sexual assault to the police; this service provider believed that "she didn't want the embarrassment." Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 53.

[92] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 54.

[93] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 56.

[94] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 56.

[95] Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 54-55, 74; Lee with Angell, *Study on Housing Needs,* 7-8, 23; Marie-Luise Vail, interview, audio recording, 15 October 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-6.

each other and try to break down the door."[96] Social worker Marie-Luise Vail likewise explained that when she questioned building operators in the mid-1960s about why they refused to rent to women, they told her it was because women are "trouble"; when she told them her clients were "not trouble to anyone," they responded by claiming "no, but the guys will make trouble for her."[97]

Moreover, landlords and managers who did rent to women commonly employed this 'trouble-maker' label as reason to evict women tenants.[98] One woman explained that it was "always the women they will yell and scream at or kick…out…They never do that to the men…Its [sic] discrimination and its [sic] obvious!"[99] Another woman, who at the time of her interview was staying at an emergency shelter, called out this problem, noting that "[t]here are two sets of rules…Women get thrown out much more often than men."[100] She indicated, for example, that managers often evicted women for drinking alcohol or for bringing men to their rooms. She explained that building managers "will excuse a drunk guy, but if a woman gets drunk she gets chucked out on her ear. This happens in all these places."[101] She also explained that "one by one [women] [get] pushed out by the men. The men get drunk and make advances and one by one, the women go…the fact is that men get excused for this behavior and the women have to pay the price."[102] An outcome of these sexist double standards, she noted, was homelessness: "[y]ou see [women] here [emergency shelter] all the time with their

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[96] Anon. service provider quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 55.

[97] Marie-Luise Vail, interview, audio recording, 15 October 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-6. Vail was referring to hotels along Granville Street, but additional evidence indicates that landlords in the Downtown Eastside had similar attitudes.

[98] N.J. McCallan and Katherine Roback, c/o The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, *An Ordinary Life: Life Histories of Women in the Urban Core of Vancouver*, working paper, ([Vancouver]: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, c.1979), 1; Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 54 and 56.

[99] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 54.

[100] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 56.

[101] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 56.

[102] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 56.

belongings."[103] As these women's experiences underscore, sexism in eviction and tenancy practices was a barrier to women's housing security and fueled shifting forms of homelessness; the normalization of gendered violence both limited women's rental options and made the housing that they did have more insecure.

Where sexist tenancy and eviction practices in the wake of men's violence contributed to women's street- and emergency-sheltered homelessness, gender violence in SROs also fueled women's unhoused homelessness in another way: while eviction by sexist landlords or managers forced many women into the streets, in other cases, women exercised their own control over their housing situation, sometimes opting to leave. That is, women often assessed the risks posed to them by their limited options, and made their own decisions – albeit not within conditions of their own choosing – about staying in or leaving an SRO unit. With limited housing options, women who experienced violence within their place of living faced a difficult choice. One service provider outlined the predicament faced by many women: "Physical violence is so great in some of the rooming houses that [women] want to get out for fear of their lives, but they can't go anywhere."[104] This was, moreover, a reality some landlords weaponized; one community service provider explained that "[t]he landlord is in a situation of power" because "he holds the keys to her…room. That is pretty frightening! The fact that you could be asleep in your room one night and if this fellow is angry or feels like he wants to, he can just open your door and walk in. But you don't want to be out on the street. It's really difficult."[105] Ultimately, without the means to secure other kinds of housing, women who lived in extreme poverty often had to make difficult choices about their housing and personal safety

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[103] Anon. woman quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 56.
[104] Anon. service provider quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 48.
[105] Anon. service provider quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 52.

that no one should have to make. Sometimes women decided of their own accord to leave their SRO to escape violence, and in so doing, moved into a situation of unhoused homelessness, and sometimes women stayed in violent circumstances because the alternatives were or seemed worse.[106]

When assessing women's homelessness in the past, it is imperative to understand it in a fluid state. Certainly, as a working group with the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness indicates, for many individuals, homelessness "is not a static state but rather a fluid experience, where one's shelter circumstances and options may shift and change quite dramatically and with frequency."[107] Gender violence in SROs shaped and informed women's experiences of, and movement between, housed and unhoused homelessness. Indeed, revealing of this relationship between gender violence in SROs and shifting states of homelessness, about seventy-five percent of women who participated in a 1989 survey on women's housing in the Downtown Eastside had moved within the previous year, with concerns about their personal safety being one of the most common factors that drove them to move. Moreover, half (fifty percent) of the women who participated in that survey reported having "been without a safe place to stay for the night at least once in the past year"; slightly more than half had reported having stayed in an emergency shelter at least once, and almost a third of those women arrived at the shelter on "short notice" because they were escaping violence.[108] One service provider

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[106] Anon. service provider quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 53.

[107] S. Gaetz et al., *Canadian Definition of Homelessness.*

[108] Indicating the greater stability provided by social housing, of the twenty-five percent of women who had *not* moved, more than half lived in non-profit housing and said they would not consider moving. Of the 75% of respondents who had moved within the past year, in addition to moving to "flee from or avoid violence," two other reasons they gave for moving were "to search for better quality accommodations" and "financial considerations." "A Survey of Downtown Eastside Women and Their Housing Needs," 1989, SFUA, EES, F-59-6-0-0-2. I will take up the topic of women's emergency shelters in the next chapter.

explained that a climate of pervasive sexism, misogyny, and normalized gender violence contributed to this cycle between housed and unhoused homelessness:

> Women are to be fought over; they are passed around. They are not held in very high esteem at all. Women's lib has not hit this area. Any woman living down here on her own, in maybe all the five or six hotels I can think of, is going to have problems of one sort or another. If they don't want harassment, they have to totally keep [to] themselves above and beyond other tenants in the hotel. Most women can't do that – that is why they end up in a place like Lookout (an emergency shelter)."[109]

Where her analysis problematically, if implicitly, blamed women for men's violence, it nevertheless underscores that gender violence was both a serious issue in SROs and a major cause of women's street- and emergency-housed homelessness. Whether they were forced out of their SRO by an unjust eviction, or made the decision themselves to leave to escape a perpetrator, gender violence within SROs was one key factor that produced women's unhoused homelessness.

Gender violence in SROs made and shaped women's homelessness. Because SROs failed to provide women with safety or security of tenure, they were spaces of housed homelessness. A climate of pervasive, normalized gender violence in SROs meant that this form of shelter failed to meet basic standards of personal safety. Women were unsafe in this environment; they experienced both physical and emotional costs of individually-experienced gender violence and the violence of living in hypervigilance. These conditions made SRO housing a form of homelessness for women. Furthermore, gender violence in SROs also produced women's unhoused homelessness. In the late twentieth century, women living in extreme poverty in Vancouver often moved regularly between different SROs, the streets, and shelters (a subject I take up in the next chapter); significantly, gender-based violence was very

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[109] Anon. service provider quoted in Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 54-55.

often a precipitating factor in these shifting states and experiences of homelessness.[110] Whether women left their unit to escape violent perpetrators, were unfairly evicted, or were refused housing by victim-blaming, sexist landlords, men's violence against women exacerbated women's housing insecurity, often costing them the housing – however precarious – that they did have. Overall, as women residents' and service providers' remarks and analysis of SRO housing shows, gender violence intersected with poverty to shape, compound, and change women's experiences of homelessness in late-twentieth-century Vancouver.

Coda: "Living in Those Hotels, There's No Safety Whatsoever"

> *I was in the [needle] exchange, and she was just comin' out, she just lookin' at me and she had tears in her eyes too. Her eyes were yellow, she was jaundiced, beat up. She says, "I bet you any money I'll die before you." And she's livin' in the Regent [a DTES SRO]. That's when you know you're there. I mean people have been livin' there for a long time. And people know when you're there, that's it. Only next step is death. Or you get murdered, or whether just beat, just die.*
>
> - Simon, Downtown Eastside Vancouver, c.1996[111]

Housing disparity is etched prominently in Vancouver's contemporary urban landscape. As various neighbourhoods continue to be transformed by sparkling new luxury condominium developments – the city of glass – people remain precariously housed and homeless in the Downtown Eastside. Towering displays of capital rise in juxtaposition to the crumbling façades of Hastings Street single room occupancy hotels. The exteriors of these century-old hotels mark

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[110] Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 48, 53; "A Survey of Downtown Eastside Women and Their Housing Needs," 1989, 3, SFUA, EES, F-59-6-0-0-2.

[111] Simon [pseudonym] was staying at the Triage shelter in the Downtown Eastside at time of his interview. Quoted in Tom C. Allen, *Someone to Talk To: Care and Control of the Homeless* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2000), 84.

urban poverty visibly. But less visible, at least to those who do not live there, are the gendered consequences of that poverty, the social and material environments that lie within.

For many women residents of these hotels, personal safety was, and continues to be, a matter of pressing concern. In the mid-1990s, one resident explained the correlation between housing and safety for women living in the Downtown Eastside: "If you're out on the street…there is no safety…You have no idea who's gonna come and take your clothes while you're sleeping or stab you while you're sleeping, inject you with something, you have no idea."[112] But, she further explained, a room in an SRO came with its own risk: "Living in those hotels, there's no safety whatsoever…Same thing. It's like living outside."[113] A fear of violence, regardless of whether she was without housing or housed precariously, is palpable in her remarks. Several years later, other women shared similar experiences of housing, homelessness, and violence with anthropologist Dara Culhane. Culhane explained that women

> sometimes jokingly describe the cockroaches and bedbugs that infest their rooms as their "pets." They talk about doors that have no locks and about dirty bathrooms shared with strangers. Many have trouble sleeping and often fear being attacked by men who sometimes come crashing through locked and unlocked doors. Some women sleep outside in public spaces for either economic, health, or safety reasons.[114]

And nearly a decade after those women shared their experiences with Culhane, Stella August, a member of the Downtown Eastside Power of Women Group, echoed their concerns. August explained that "[l]ow-income housing in the DTES is of such sub-standard quality that many prefer to sleep on the streets."[115] She argued that "[p]roblems in the single-room occupancies

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[112] This woman, Beth [pseudonym]), was staying at the Triage Shelter in the Downtown Eastside at time of her interview c. 1996. Beth quoted in Allen, *Someone to Talk To*, 84.
[113] Beth quoted in Allen, *Someone to Talk To*, 84.
[114] Dara Culhane, "Domesticated Time and Restricted Space: University and Community Women in Downtown Eastside Vancouver," *BC Studies* no. 140 (Winter 2003/04), 98.
[115] Stella August with the Downtown Eastside Power of Women Group, "Residential Schools and My Journey to the Downtown Eastside," *In Our Own Voices* (series), *Vancouver Media Co-op (Local Independent News)*, June 8, 2011, http://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/story/residential-schools-and-my-journey-downtown-eastside/7441.

include: absence of heat, toilets, and running water; presence of mold, bedbug infestations and rats; and illegal practices by landlords including refusal to return damage deposits, entering rooms without permission, and arbitrary evictions."[116] From the 1990s through to the 2010s, these community members spoke out against persistent, un-abating conditions of housing precarity and affiliated gender violence in the Downtown Eastside. Concerns about SRO housing expressed by residents and their advocates from decades prior reverberate in their words. There is something haunting in the similarities – the continuity – in these voices across time and generations.

Today, these conditions of housing precarity persist in both similar and shifting forms. A housing and homelessness crisis continues to grip the city of Vancouver: amid ostentatious displays of wealth, many continue to be excluded from built shelter. Others have shelter, but only that which is precarious. Such precarious housing conditions in Downtown Eastside SROs were brought to wider public attention in the summer of 2017 in an unusual move by the City of Vancouver. On 2 June 2017, the city ruled the Balmoral Hotel on East Hastings Street to be unsafe and uninhabitable, and ordered it evacuated by the 12th of June. The City's Chief Building Inspector determined that, in addition to general disrepair and fire hazards, water damage and rotting had created structural damage that put the entire building at risk of collapse. Just over a year later, on 20 June 2018, the City likewise deemed the Regent Hotel – located directly across the street from the Balmoral and owned by the same family – unsafe and similarly ordered it closed. As at the Balmoral, Regent tenants had to leave within the week. The widespread media reporting of the closure of these two SROs exposed in a very

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[116] August, "Residential Schools and My Journey to the Downtown Eastside."

public way the material conditions that outsiders to the community have so often failed to provide attention, understanding, or care.[117]

And yet, these municipally-ordered SRO closures, and the written and photographic depictions of their conditions that circulated in the press, belied the complicated choices and calculations of risk that women marginalized by poverty have had to, and continue to, make. In the early 2000s, Culhane identified that women living in poverty consistently navigated a series of seemingly impossible options regarding their living circumstances. She explained, "When you don't have money, you are vulnerable to being victimized by private landlords: you are pressured to exchange sexual services for space, to be silent about bugs, to do without repairs, to sacrifice safety and security for basic shelter."[118] The need to make such decisions has been an enduring feature of gendered precarity in the Downtown Eastside. A 2014 study on gender violence in the Downtown Eastside, prepared by a coalition of women-serving

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[117] In December 2020, the City of Vancouver announced that it has expropriated (through purchase) both the Balmoral and Regent hotels. The details of what these hotels becoming publically owned will mean in terms of community consultation, renovation, and/or redevelopment are, at the time of writing, unknown. Nick Eagland, "Advocates Ask How B.C. Could House Balmoral Residents Within a Week, but Others Wait Years," *Vancouver Sun,* June 10, 2017, https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/housing-advocates-question-social-housing-for-sro-evictees-amid-homeless-crisis; Dan Fumano, "Vancouver's Privately Owned Single Room Occupancy Hotels Cause Lion's Share of Problems," *Vancouver Sun,* June 5, 2017, http://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/dan-fumano-vancouvers-privately-owned-single-room-occupancy-hotels-cause-lions-share-of-problems; Max Haberstroh, "Lawyer for Tenants on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside Prepares to Suspend Eviction Order," *CBC News,* June 3, 2017, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/lawyer-considering-injunction-balmoral-eviction-1.4145190; Travis Lupick, "Downtown Eastside's Regent Hotel Becomes Second Sahota Building Declared Too Dangerous for Tenants," *Georgia Straight,* June 21, 2018, https://www.straight.com/news/1093101/downtown-eastsides-regent-hotel-becomes-second-sahota-building-declared-too-dangerous; Gordon McIntyre, "Derelict Rooming House Ordered Closed, Vancouver Threatens Exproriation," *Vancouver Sun* June 21, 2018, https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/derelict-regent-hotel-ordered-closed-residents-being-moved-into-new-homes; Roshini Nair, "City Defends Decisions Leading up to Balmoral Hotel Evacuation," *CBC News,* June 12, 2017, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/city-defends-decisions-leading-up-to-balmoral-hotel-evacuation-1.4156401; Cassidy Olivier, "City of Vancouver Secures 131 Housing Units for Balmoral Tenants Being Evacuated," *Vancouver Sun,* June 9, 2017, http://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/city-of-vancouver-secures-131-housing-units-for-balmoral-tenants-being-evacuated; Government of British Columbia, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, "Province Provides Better Housing as City Closes Regent Hotel," June 20, 2018, press release, https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018MAH0076-001246; Jen St. Denis, "Vancouver Takes Over the Notorious Regent and Balmoral SROs," *The Tyee,* 4 December 2020, https://thetyee.ca/News/2020/12/04/Vancouver-Buys-Regent-Balmoral-SROs/.
[118] Culhane, "Domesticated Time," 99.

organizations, reported that women in the neighbourhood "often feel like they need to endure conditions in their housing that they would otherwise find unacceptable."[119] The reality, these authors stressed, "is that too many women are being forced to choose between two extremely undesirable and unsafe situations."[120] Flash forward to 2017: on the eve of the Balmoral eviction, one tenant, DJ, expressed that her room at the SRO was preferable to a shelter or the streets. She feared what would happen if the mandated closure forced her into a shelter: "'Oh my God. Into a shelter, you nuts? You think it is unsafe here? In a shelter it's a lot worse…I feel safer in my own home…being in a shelter is the worst thing, especially if you're a single woman."[121] In the midst of the Balmoral closure, advocates from the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre (a frontline service and community space for low-income women in the neighbourhood), drew attention to the concerns of women like DJ by highlighting the gendered impacts of this mass eviction: "While the Balmoral is unequivocally not safe for women," they wrote, "forcing people into other unsafe or inappropriate housing so quickly exacerbates tenant concerns."[122] As the City made its relocation plans for Balmoral tenants, the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre thus urged the municipality to "prioritize the safety and timelines *especially* of women given the unique challenges and barriers women face finding safe, appropriate and livable housing."[123] Truly, as the Balmoral eviction underscored, women's housing, health, and safety were, and remain, inexorably linked, complicated, and relative. As

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[119] The Women's Coalition: Women Serving Organizations in the DTES, *Getting to the Roots: Exploring Systemic Violence Against Women in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver: Report* (Vancouver, British Columbia: November 2014), 10.

[120] Women's Coalition, *Getting to the Roots*, 10.

[121] DJ quoted in Tina Lovgreen, "A Look Inside the Balmoral Hotel Where City Says Tenants are in 'Imminent Danger'," *CBC News,* June 2, 2017, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/a-look-inside-the-balmoral-hotel-where-city-says-tenants-are-in-imminent-danger-1.4144801.

[122] Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, "Women's Safety Remains a Crucial Need: On the Balmoral Eviction," June 8, 2017, *Downtown Eastside Women's Centre,* http://dewc.ca/news/womens-safety-remains-crucial-need-balmoral-eviction.

[123] Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, "Women's Safety Remains a Crucial Need."

was the case from the 1960s to the 1980s, SROs do not meet housing needs, but at the same time, within an ongoing context of systemic and sustained inequity, they offer physical shelter among limited options.

Activists, service providers, researchers, and those with lived experience have stressed continuously from the mid-1960s to the present day that the absence of safe, affordable housing is one of the most – if not *the* most – pressing structural barriers to women's health, well-being, and safety in this city. And yet, although there have been some positive, albeit incremental, efforts in recent years by the Province, City, and third-sector toward the establishment of secure and affordable housing, options for women experiencing poverty remain thin.[124] Downtown Eastside SROs remain the primary form of low-cost housing in Vancouver, where the material and social conditions of this environment reflect and reproduce systemic inequity in ways that negatively impact women's health and safety, deepen their poverty, and limit their possibilities.[125]

Conclusions

This gendered history of SROs in the late twentieth century broadens and deepens historical understanding of the cross-cutting relationships between poverty, housing,

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[124] Discussion of the City and Province's efforts in this area are beyond the scope of this dissertation.

[125] On contemporary conditions, structural violence, and gendered violence, including murders in Vancouver's SROs, and community responses, see for example: Angela Kruger, "'In That 'Zact Same Room': The Everydayness of Life and Death in the SROs of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside" (paper presentation, *Intersections: Peoples and Places in British Columbia,* BC Studies Conference 2019, Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops, BC, Secwépemc Territory, 2-4 May 2019); Angela Kruger, "Remaining in Death: A Critical Ethnography of Death, Remains, and Community in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside" (master's thesis, Queen's University, 2019); Denise Ryan, "'Out-of-control' SROs: Everyone Wants to Help, but No One Seems to Have the Tools," *Vancouver Sun,* May 13, 2017 (last updated January 12 2018), https://vancouversun.com/feature/out-of-control-sros-everyone-wants-to-help-but-no-one-seems-to-have-the-tools; WISH Drop-In Centre Society Participant/Peer Researchers, *Change in Our Back Yard: A Peer Study About the Lives of Sex-Workers in the DTES* (Vancouver: WISH Drop-In Centre Society, 2015); Women's Coalition, *Getting to the Roots*.

homelessness, and violence. Through analysis of everyday injustice and gendered violence in Vancouver's SROs, this chapter shows that women who lived in these buildings in the late twentieth century experienced homelessness in a broader sense of the term. This history shows that for women in particular, having a roof over one's head has not always meant that one has a home. Poverty constrained and shaped women's housing choices; with their options limited by their economic circumstances, particularly in the absence of affordable or social housing, SROs were the primary form of housing available to women in poverty who lived alone. However, the built and social environments of SRO housing fostered and compounded women's precarity because they failed to meet standards of affordability, security, health, safety, and well-being. Ultimately, SROs were spaces of women's homelessness because substandard material conditions and gendered violence formed injustice and unsafety in the everyday. The place Maria Campbell arrived when she first came to Vancouver was a place to live, but it was not a home.

Carol Ruby Davis

Dear Editor,

I am very angry over the murder of Carol Davis. Even though Carol was a prostitute, she was a woman and a human being. I am proud to say that Carol was my good friend for 5 years. She was one of the most supportive and understanding people I ever had the privilege of knowing. Now, she is just another statistic in the ever growing "unsolved murder file". The Statistics of crimes against working women are never accurate because of lack of police involvement. The working women try and report crimes and are told by police to forget it.

Every day there is violence against women on the streets of Vancouver; not just simple assaults, but Rape, Stabbings and MURDER. In the past 14 years I have lost a lot of good friends from the streets to violent crimes. In two cases of murder of prostitutes, the men were sentenced to only 3 years. They were eligible for parole in 1 year and both men are now back on the street. These men were allowed to take a life and get away with it, thanks to the justice system.

In the past 5 years, there have been 12 unsolved murders that I know of in the lower mainland. Ten of these women were my friends. …

I have a few things that I would like to say to some people:

To the Moralistic People who have made my friends criminals –
"How do you sleep at night?"

To the Vancouver Police Dept. –
"Even prostitutes have rights.
DO YOUR JOBS."

To the Mulroney Cabinet who introduced Bill C-49 –
"Grow up and remember the Canadian Constitution.'[1]

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[1] Bill C-49 was the *Criminal Code* amendment on prostitution (introduced by Brian Mulroney's Conservative federal government) that came into force December 1985. It repealed the former law against soliciting for the purposes of prostitution and replaced it with a more expansive law that made it illegal to communicate or attempt to communicate for the purposes of either purchasing or selling sex in a public place, or any place open to public view. That is, the amendment criminalized communication for the purposes of prostitution. It also widened the definition of a public place to include motor vehicles in or on public places. This amendment took a law and order approach to prostitution that gave police more discretionary powers to decide who was attempting to sell or buy sex, and thus to physically remove (by arrest) sex workers from public places. Critics questioned the Bill's constitutionality, arguing that because it made any communication between a sex worker and a potential john in public illegal, it infringed upon rights to freedom of expression as guaranteed under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.* Further, feminists, anti-violence activists, and sex worker organizations widely criticized the law because it further exacerbated and compounded street-based sex workers' vulnerability to violence by making it less feasible for them to work in groups or in visible areas. Because it heightened workers' and clients' risk of arrest, this law pushed street-based sex workers into even more isolated – and therefore dangerous – working conditions. In the first two years after the new law came into effect, four sex workers in Vancouver were murdered and at least six others were disappeared. For more about Bill C-49, as well as the relationship between the criminalization of prostitution and violence against street-based sex workers in Canada, see: Cecilia Benoit and Alison Millar, "Dispelling Myths and Understanding Realities: Working Conditions, Health Status, and Exiting Experiences of Sex Workers," (Vancouver: Prostitutes Empowerment, Education, and Resource Society (PEERS), October 2001); Ken Hatt, Tullio Caputo, and Barbara Perry, "Criminal Justice Policy under Mulroney, 1984-90: Neo-Conservatism, Eh?," *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de Politiques,* 18, no. 3 (Sept. 1992): 245-

To the Justice Department who, in their infinite wisdom, let men murder women and get away with it –
    "What is the value of a human life?"

To Mr. Michael Harcourt who, during his term as Mayor of Vancouver, did everything in his power to ensure that working women became criminals and victims –
    "WE TRUE N.D.P.ers NEVER FORGET."

And finally to "Shame the Johns" and other stupid organisations –
    "Christ forgave us. Why can't you?"[2]

And to Power, "Thanks for trying to make the streets safe for my friends."

    Thank you for your time and energy, listening to me vent my anger. Please sign my name as Hurt and Angry.
                                    ~ Hurt & Angry, *Carnegie Newsletter,* 15 July 1987[3]

360; John Lowman, "Deadly Inertia: A History of Constitutional Challenges to Canada's Criminal Code Sections on Prostitution," *Beijing Law Review* 2, no. 2 (2011): 33-54; John Lowman and Chris Atchison, "Men Who Buy Sex: A Survey in the Greater Vancouver Regional District," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 43, no. 3 (2006): 281-296; John Lowman, "Violence and the Outlaw Status of (Street) Prostitution in Canada," *Violence Against Women* 6, no. 9 (September 2000): 987-1011; Sheilagh O'Connell, "The Impact of Bill C-49 on Street Prostitution: "What's Law Got to Do with It"", *Journal of Law and Social Policy,* 4 (1988): 109-145; Prashan Ranasinhe, "Reconceptualizing Vagrancy and Reconstructing the Vagrant: A Socio-Legal Analysis of Criminal Law Reform in Canada, 1953-1972," *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 48, no.1 (2010): 89-91; James R. Robertson, "Prostitution," *Current Issue Review,* 82-2E (Canada: Parliamentary Research Branch), revised 19 September 2003, http://publications.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/CIR/822-e.htm#_ftnref1; "The Rape Relief Files – 1986 – Prostitution: Legal History," *Vancouver Rape Relief & Women's Shelter,* https://archive.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/learn/news/rape-relief-files-1986-prostitution-legal-history.

[2] Mike Harcourt was the mayor of Vancouver from 1980 to 1986. This reference to Harcourt pertains to the City of Vancouver's anti-prostitution agenda of the early 1980s, which targeted the outdoor sex work industry in the West End, and which ultimately resulted in the forced expulsion of sex workers from this neighbourhood. The "Shame the Johns" movement emerged out of a West End neighbourhood group called CROWE (Concerned Residents of the West End), which lobbied politicians to create tougher regulations around sex work and sex workers in the West End, with the goal of pushing on-street sex workers out of West End. The 'Shame the Johns' movement was an arm of CROWE in which those involved employed tactics of aggressive surveillance and community policing to drive clients of sex workers (and with them, sex workers) from the neighbourhood. Outdoor sex work had already been occurring in the Downtown Eastside, but following measures taken by the City and groups like CROWE, it increasingly concentrated in this East End neighbourhood. For details about anti-sex worker politics in 1980s Vancouver and the ramifications, see: Stacey Bishop, "'Livability Is the Victim of Street Prostitution': The Politics of the Neighbourhood and the Rightward Turn in Vancouver's West End, 1981-1985" (master's thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2013); Becki L. Ross and Jamie Lee Hamilton, "Loss Must Be Marked and It Cannot Be Represented: Memorializing Sex Workers in Vancouver's West End," *BC Studies* no. 197 (Spring 2018): 9-38; Becki L. Ross, "Outdoor Brothel Culture: The Un/Making of a Transsexual Stroll in Vancouver's West End, 1976-1984," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 25, no. 1 (March 2012): 126-150; Becki Ross and Rachael Sullivan, "Tracing Lines of Horizontal Hostility: How Sex Workers and Gay Liberation Activists Battled for Space, Voice, and Belonging in Vancouver, 1975-1985," *Sexualities* 15, nos. 5/6 (September 2012): 604-621; Becki L. Ross, "Sex and (Evacuation from) the City: The Moral and Legal Regulation of Sex Workers in Vancouver's West End, 1975-1985," *Sexualities* 13, no. 2 (April 2010): 197-218; Becki L. Ross, "Whorganizers and Gay Activists: Histories of Convergence, Contemporary Currents of Divergence, and the Promise of Non-Normative Futures," in *Red Light Labour: Sex Work Regulation, Agency, and Resistance,* eds. Chris Bruckert, Emily Van der Meulen, Elya M. Durisin (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018).

[3] Hurt and Angry, Letter to the Editor, *Carnegie Newsletter,* July 15, 1987, 3.

In their letter, "Hurt & Angry" expressed outrage over the murder of their friend Carol Ruby Davis as they condemned the institutions and systems of power that condoned, normalized, and perpetuated dehumanizing violence experienced by women living in poverty, including and especially by those who engaged in sex work. "Hurt & Angry" called out those responsible for upholding these systems to take accountability for the murder of Carol Davis and for the murders of other women from their communities.

Carol Davis was a mother of two, a sister of seven, a friend, a Downtown Eastside community member, and a Citizen of the Haida Nation. Haida button blankets that she made were often on display at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, showing both her pride in her culture and her involvement in Vancouver's Urban Indigenous community. Carol lived and worked in the Downtown Eastside apart from her children; however, while her daughter lived with the child's father in Prince Rupert, B.C., Carol often spent time with her son, as he lived in Vancouver with her sister Lori Davis. Lori Davis explained that "[w]hen she [Carol] did have money, she would come by and take him places…she would be so generous to a fault to help with her boy."[4] Describing Carol as a loving and generous mother, Lori explained that she "would always try to make sure that he always had what he needed and what he wished for."[5] In late June 1987, Burnaby RCMP officers knocked on Lori Davis' door to tell her that

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[4] Lori Davis quoted in "Carol Ruby Davis," *Missing & Murdered: The Unsolved Cases of Indigenous Women and Girls,* https://www.cbc.ca/missingandmurdered/mmiw/profiles/carol-ruby-davis, last accessed August 10, 2020. See also: Frances Bula, "Carol Ruby Davis: A Heartbreaking Death, 30 Years Ago Now," *State of Vancouver: Frances Bula on City Life and Politics* (blog)*,* July 6, 2017, http://www.francesbula.com/uncategorized/carol-ruby-davis-a-heartbreaking-death-30-years-ago-now/; Lori Culbert, "Tragic Tales but Hope for the Future at the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women," *Vancouver Sun,* April 2, 2018, https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/tragic-tales-but-hope-for-the-future-at-the-inquiry-into-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women; Lori Culbert, "MMIWG Report: Relatives, Friends Have Cautious Hope for Meaningful Change," *Vancouver Sun,* June 6, 2019, https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/mmiw-report-relatives-friends-have-cautious-hope-for-meaningful-change.
[5] Lori Davis quoted in Culbert, "Tragic Tales but Hope for the Future."

they had found Carol's body in Burnaby, a municipality about fifteen kilometers southwest of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. She was twenty-nine years old at the time of her death.[6] About two weeks after police found her, a poem named for Carol Ruby Davis appeared in the *Carnegie Newsletter* for her Downtown Eastside community to grieve and remember her. The poet, a person named Tora, situated Carol Davis' life and death in a context of precarity, but also within community and family: "Her family & her Tribe did not disown her," wrote Tora in their final line.[7]

More than thirty years later, Carol Davis' family continue to press for her memory to be maintained. As they speak out, they show their unwavering love for their relative and their desire for answers and justice. Lori Davis speaks publicly of her sister often, upholding her memory as she pushes for a different future for Indigenous women and girls. A vocal advocate, Lori Davis spoke of Carol at the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, telling the Inquiry that "I travelled this road – and it has been a very long and lonely road – so I could speak her name."[8] In testifying at the Inquiry in 2018, Lori Davis explained that she also wanted the story of her sister to help drive recommendations that would create change. She explained, "I need to go beyond me and my sister, and think about all the young women coming forward, because we still see stories about what it's like to be a young native woman…I think that for me is the hope…that our young women don't feel scared because of the colour of their skin, that they are not a target."[9] The murder of Carol Ruby Davis remains unsolved, but Lori Davis continues to Speak Her Name – for Carol, for all the other

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[6] Culbert, "Tragic Tales but Hope for the Future."

[7] Tora, "Carol Ruby Davis/1956-1987," *Carnegie Newsletter,* July 15, 1987.

[8] Lori Davis quoted in Lori Culbert, "Tragic Tales but Hope for the Future." See also: Lori Davis, Twitter/@Haida Princess (Lori); "Carol Ruby Davis," in *Missing & Murdered;* Culbert, "MMIWG Report"; Lori Davis, comment (web) on Bula, "Carol Ruby Davis: A Heartbreaking Death," c. 2018.

[9] Lori Davis quoted in Culbert, "MMIWG Report."

Indigenous women and girls who have been taken from their loved ones, and for a different

future for all Indigenous women and girls.[10]

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[10] Lori Davis, Twitter/@Haida Princess (Lori). In what are powerful political acts of remembrance, Davis posts regularly on her Twitter feed: "I Speak Her Name Carol Ruby Davis," with her posts accompanied by a photograph of her sister. In her posts, Davis often tags mainstream media outlets, as well as prominent federal and provincial politicians with portfolios related to MMIWG.

Chapter Two
Structures of Inequity and the Space of Shelters

One girl called me to come and see her, please. So I went down and she really was sick, burning with fever. We had to walk a ways to the car. I was almost carrying her, her suitcase, my purse, her purse. Do you think anyone would help me? They just stood and looked at us. She wouldn't go in the ambulance, she wanted to go in my car. The girls called it "our" car. She died that week.[1]

~ Margaret White*, 1975*

As she recounted this heartbreaking story in which poverty, poor health, and bystander indifference coalesced in the final days of a young Indigenous woman's life, Cree community leader and matriarch Margaret White spoke to the tragic effects of structures of violence in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. In this neighbourhood, this young woman's untimely death was not exceptional. The intersecting and cascading impacts of settler colonialism, racism, patriarchy, sexism, and poverty had long placed women, and especially Indigenous women, at mortal risk in the city. Coroners' records, death registrations, newspaper reports, and oral histories all reveal high rates of early death among Indigenous women who lived in the Downtown Eastside during the 1960s and 1970s.[2]

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[1] Margaret White quoted in "Margaret White," in Canada (Department of the Secretary of State), *Speaking Together: Canada's Native Women,* with an introduction by Jean Goodwill (Ottawa: Secretary of State, 1975).

[2] I made this assessment following preliminary qualitative analysis of a partial sample of death registrations from the City of Vancouver between 1960 and 1970, as well as of a sample of coroner inquiries and inquests into women's deaths in Vancouver between 1965 and 1970. While I have not created statistics from these collections to quantify this assessment, my preliminary analysis of these medical-legal records indicates the overrepresentation of Indigenous women among those who died prematurely in Vancouver in the late twentieth century. Records of the East Enders Society (F-59) at Simon Fraser University Archives, and newspaper reports (*Vancouver Sun, Province)* also support this assessment. (I analyze the records of the East Enders Society extensively through this chapter and chapter three of this dissertation.) Furthermore, in her 1978 study of the health status of residents in three adjoining census tract areas (Downtown, Downtown Eastside, and Strathcona), health researcher Dr. Rita Bakan reported a disproportionately high rate of early death among women in the area. She reported that women living in these areas had an average age of death that was significantly lower than both men in the area and women elsewhere in the city. She reported that the average age of death for women in this study area was fifty-five (55) years, compared to seventy-two (72) for women in Vancouver. The average age of

During this moment in history, however, these women's deaths also became a catalyst for change as they entered broader public consciousness and motivated others to act. A new philanthropic organization, the East Enders Society, played a key role in this process, in part by establishing and running an emergency hostel for women in the Downtown Eastside. Violence against Indigenous women in Vancouver was an issue that Urban Indigenous community leaders and activists had already been working to address, but, as the example of the East Enders Society shows, in the mid-1960s, concerned settler women also became involved. In this case, the Society determined that one way they could help was by creating an emergency shelter for women.[3] In this chapter, I examine the labour and organizing of the East Enders Society to open and run this shelter, or hostel (as they called it), as one angle onto a wider activist response in this period.

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death for men in the study area was sixty-five (65), compared to sixty-nine (69) for men in Vancouver overall. This means that women residents were dying an average of seventeen years earlier than women elsewhere in the city, and ten years earlier than their male neighbours. While Bakan does not break down these statistics by race, other records indicate that a disproportionate number of women who lived in the Downtown Eastside were Indigenous; therefore, it is reasonable to extrapolate from Bakan's findings that the deaths of Indigenous women in this area were premature. My preliminary assessment of these other sources (eg. death registrations, coroner records, records of the East Enders Society) likewise suggest early death of Indigenous women. For further details about Bakan's report, see: Rita Bakan, "Report on Health Status of Census Tracts 57, 58, and 59," Prepared for the City of Vancouver Health and Planning Departments (Vancouver, B.C.: Health Planning Division, Vancouver Health Department, 19 December 1978), 1, 6, 7, 9. On newspaper reports about the deaths of Indigenous women in Vancouver in the 1960s, see: Meghan Longstaffe, "Indigenous Women as Newspaper Representations: Violence and Action in 1960s Vancouver," *Canadian Historical Review* 98, 2 (June 2017): 230-260. The archival collections directly pertaining to women's untimely deaths that I reviewed include: Inquisitions/inquests conducted by coroners, British Columbia Archives [hereafter cited as BCA], GR-1502, Reels B04938, B04941; Inquiries conducted by coroners in Vancouver, BCA, GR-1503, Reel B4983; Inquiries, BCA, GR-1504, Reels B05064 – B05080; Author's selected sample (partial) of registrations of death from Vancouver, B.C., 1960-1970, Vital Events Registrations, Province of British Columbia, Division of Vital Statistics, BCA. Note: The BCA only houses inquests to 1967 and inquiries to 1970; inquests and inquiries from years onward are only available through the Office of the Chief Coroner, Burnaby, BC. For this reason, I have not analyzed inquiries and inquests from the 1970s or 1980s.

[3] On Indigenous activism in Vancouver on this issue from the 1940s to early 1960s, see: William G. Lindsay, "A History of the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre in an Age of Aboriginal Migration and Urbanization" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1998); Longstaffe, "Indigenous Women as Newspaper Representations."

This case study of the East Enders Society's women's hostel reveals a critical, yet often overlooked, example of anti-violence and anti-poverty activism. The East Enders Society was part of a longer tradition of White women's philanthropy, Christian charity, and professional social work from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, particularly as it related to maternalist concerns and anxieties about women and girls in the city; certainly, their operation of this hostel echoed the middle-class urban 'rescue' and supervised boarding homes of generations prior. Indeed, their work shows that gendered and class-based concerns about women and the city had not evaporated by the late twentieth century, but rather, had shifted in focus and tone.[4] However, the connections between White women's philanthropy and activism

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[4] There is a longer history of White middle-class women's charity, philanthropy, and social welfare work that I am not considering directly in this dissertation, including the settlement and neighbourhood house movements. An important and vast literature on this history has shown, for instance, that many practices of "help" either intended to, or had the inadvertent outcome of, disciplining women and girls according to gendered, racialized, class-based, and religious-based ideas about femininity and domesticity. While I do not develop a direct comparison between older models of White, middle-class philanthropy with the late-twentieth-century examples under examination here, one might understand the examples in this dissertation as part of a longer tradition or genealogy of women's care work with both similarities and differences in underlying motivations, intentions, outcomes, and form. Furthermore, similarities and differences in parallel philanthropic work and ventures (such as "homes," shelters, and drop-ins) in which men, rather than women, were the intended recipients of assistance or targets of reform is an issue that I do not consider in this dissertation. For earlier histories of women's philanthropy, private charity, social work, and welfare in Canada, see for example: Magda Fahrni, "A Web of Welfare: The Mixed Social Economy of Postwar Montreal," chap. 2 in *Household Politics: Montreal Families and Postwar Reconstruction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2006); Shelly D. Ikebuchi, *From Slave Girls to Salvation: Gender, Race, and Victoria's Chinese Rescue Home, 1886-1923* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015); Darcy Ingram, "Saving the Union's Jack: The Montreal Sailors' Institute and the Homeless Sailor, 1862-98," in *Negotiating Identities in 19th- and 20th-Century Montreal,* eds. Bettina Bradbury and Tamara Myers (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005); Cathy L. James, "Practical Diversions and Educational Amusements: Evangelia House and the Advent of Canada's Settlement Movement, 1902-09," *Historical Studies in Education* 10, nos. 1/2 (1998): 48-66; Cathy James, "Reforming Reform: Toronto's Settlement House Movement, 1900-20," *Canadian Historical Review,* 82, no. 1 (March 2001): 55-90; Elizabeth Kirkland, "A Home away from Home: Defining, Regulating, and Challenging Femininity at the Julia Drummond Residence in Montreal, 1920-1971," *Urban History Review* 34, 2 (Spring 2006): 3-16; Suzanne Morton, *Wisdom, Justice, and Charity: Canadian Social Welfare through the Life of Jane B. Wisdom, 1884-1975* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014); Tamara Myers, *Caught: Montreal's Modern Girls and the Law, 1869–1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); Tamara Myers, "Women Policing Women: A Patrol Woman in Montreal in the 1910s," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 4, no. 1 (1993): 229-245; Lisa Pasolli, "'A Proper Independent Spirit': Working Mothers and the Vancouver City Crèche, 1910-1920," *BC Studies* no. 173 (Spring 2012): 69-95; Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1924,* with a new introduction (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

have often been disregarded in the literature on late-twentieth-century social movements in Canada. While the efforts of the East Enders Society were organized by ideologies more closely aligned with maternalism than with second-wave feminism, their work should also be situated within a genealogy of women's anti-violence and anti-poverty organizing in late-twentieth-century Canada. The example of the East Enders Society destabilizes notions of philanthropy to show that in this moment of change, their care work via an emergency shelter was a political, activist response to gendered, racialized precarity.[5]

Furthermore, the example of the East Enders Society women's hostel offers important new insight into collaborative care politics across racial and cultural lines. While members of the East Enders Society were predominately White, middle-class, Christian women, many of whom had educations and backgrounds in professional social work and nursing, Indigenous women of diverse backgrounds collaborated with these settler women. Their involvement with the East Enders demonstrates the pivotal role of Indigenous women in the development of a new service infrastructure in late-twentieth-century Vancouver. However, the history of the East Enders Society women's hostel also shows that although these culturally diverse women

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[5] In making this case, this research contributes to recent efforts by historians to add greater nuance to social work histories. Notably, in her work on the life and career of professional social worker Jane B. Wisdom, historian Suzanne Morton makes the astute point that historians' important efforts to write histories that centre voices and stories of the marginalized, while having critically enriched and expanded historical understanding, have "inadvertently created a one-dimensional reformer, intent on regulating, condemning, and generally deprecating those people he or she intended to help." As Morton shows through the example of Wisdom, the story of reformers and social workers is often more complicated than that. Jane Wisdom as an individual, Morton writes, "was also surprisingly original, compassionate, and willing to contest the status quo…Wisdom both conformed to, and deviated from, this reformer image. Despite being a product of her culture and class position, she always worked for something better. She was not famous in her time, outside her professional group, yet she made a difference in the lives of real people." In my analysis in this and the following chapters, I will show that the women involved in philanthropic care work via the East Enders Society, were, like Wisdom, more complicated figures, who in their professional and voluntary social work, both reproduced and challenged the status quo. (Morton, *Wisdom, Justice, and Charity,* 13.) To my knowledge, historians other than myself have not analyzed the work of the East Enders Society, with one recent exception. In her master's thesis, Leigha Smith writes about the East Enders Society, but in the specific context of their representations of women in poverty in the Downtown Eastside (their clientele) to the 1968 Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Leigha A. Smith, "Proxied Perspectives: Vancouver Immigrant and Low-Income Women Represented to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, 1968" (master's thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2017).

had shared concerns about Indigenous women's urban precarity and worked together on this issue, they had different understandings, commitments, and approaches to care work which were shaped by their respective backgrounds and social positions. Overall, their collaborative service work illuminates that different expectations and notions of care could both overlap and exist in tension in this moment of activism.

Drawing from a range of pre-existing oral history and documentary sources, especially those produced by the East Enders Society, I develop the history of the East Enders' women's hostel over five sections. Together, these sections show that women's efforts to provide emergency shelter to women experiencing homelessness was an important activist response to gendered, racialized precarity, one that was both shaped and limited by the organizers' social positions, and by the broader systems of inequity that made their work necessary in the first place. Over these five sections, I analyze in turn: first, the origins of the East Enders Society; second, some of the systems that created and compounded women's precarity; third, the operationalization of the East Enders Society's women's hostel; fourth, the care work of Indigenous women with and separate from the East Enders Society; and, finally, the evolution of the East Enders Society's housing work through the 1970s. Collectively, these different aspects of the history of the earliest emergency shelters for women in Downtown Eastside Vancouver show that women's care work could mitigate but also sustain inequity.

Coming to Care: Origins of the East Enders Society

In the 1960s, the shock some women experienced as their awareness of Indigenous women's precarity in the Downtown Eastside emerged and sharpened pushed them into action. The settler and Indigenous women involved in establishing the East Enders Society and its

women's hostel did so because they identified, and were especially concerned about, Indigenous women's homelessness and vulnerability to violence in the city. While all women who experienced homelessness in the Downtown Eastside were at risk of gendered violence, race heightened this vulnerability for Indigenous women: settler colonialism and racism were underlying and principal factors that created and shaped Indigenous women's urban precarity. Those who founded the East Enders Society determined that providing Indigenous women who were without shelter with a safer place to sleep was a concrete action that they could take within a crisis of systemic violence.

In a local context in which Indigenous women were disproportionately vulnerable to physical and sexual violence, poor health, and untimely death, a group of Downtown Eastside community service providers, including Christian clergy, church workers, and social workers, as well as other concerned individuals, resolved to effect change. They met regularly through the fall of 1964 and early winter of 1965 to determine a course of action. This group had identified the critical need for an emergency shelter for "indigent women in times of crisis" and formed a new organization – what became the East Enders Society – with the initial mandate of opening such a space.[6] In one of their earliest informational and fundraising notices, the East Enders Society was clear about their purpose: "Little is being done to help these

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[6] East Enders Society, "Because Someone Cares," pamphlet, 1968, East Enders Society fonds [hereafter cited as EES fonds], F-59-1-0-0-1, Simon Fraser University Archives [hereafter cited as SFUA]. See also: May Gutteridge, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-2; Mary Kelly, interview, transcript c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; Marie-Luise Vail, interview, audio recording, 15 October 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-6; Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; Minutes of dinner meeting of East-Enders, 6 October 1964, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of East-Enders, 28 October 1964, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of East-Enders, 25 November 1964, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of East-Enders Society [hereafter cited as EES], 4 January 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of EES, 19 January 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of EES, 24 February 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of EES, 24 March 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2. With lawyer Mary Southin's free legal assistance, the East Enders Society incorporated as a registered society in March 1965. Minutes of meeting of EES, 30 March 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2.

women. Let us at least provide a place where they can come for help and find an immediate response."[7]

Driven by a sense of urgency, those involved with the East Enders Society heeded little concern to the long-term sustainability of their plan to open a women's shelter. The new Society discussed different locations before they settled upon an old green-frame house at 883 East Hastings Street near the corner of Campbell Avenue. The house had originally been built and owned by a police inspector but had more recently been used as a rooming house and was in a state of disrepair; the Society thus determined that significant renovations and upgrades would be required to make the house a functioning, comfortable, and inviting space. They also were aware that they would eventually have to vacate the property because the City of Vancouver had plans in place to clear and redevelop this East End block. Nevertheless, the East Enders Society moved ahead with the purchase and renovations because they felt the need for a women's hostel in the area was a pressing matter of life and death.[8] On 11 May 1965, as

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[7] East Enders Society, "The East-Enders Society," information and fundraising notice, c.1964-65, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1.

[8] The East Enders anticipated it would be at least two years before the city required them to vacate the property, and thought that this would be a reasonable amount of time to test the hostel. A private donation of $10,000 from two United Church women enabled the Society to put a down-payment on their house. The records of the East Enders Society suggest that these women wished to remain anonymous, so I am maintaining their anonymity here. May Gutteridge, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-2; East Enders Society, "The East-Enders Hostel," pamphlet, 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of EES, 19 January 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of EES, 24 February 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of EES, 24 March 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of EES, 24 January 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of EES, 1 June 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Simma Holt, "Door Always Open: Old East Hastings Home Haven for 'Lost' Women," *Vancouver Sun,* December 8, 1965, news clipping, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1. On the City of Vancouver's postwar urban renewal plans for the East End and the community activist movements in opposition, see Wayde Compton, *After Canaan: Essays on Race, Writing, and Region* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010); Will Langford, "'Is Sutton Brown God?' Planning Expertise and the Local State in Vancouver, 1952-1973," *BC Studies* no. 173 (Spring 2012): 11-39; Tina Loo, "A Fourth Level of Government"? Urban Renewal, State Power, and Democracy in Vancouver's East Side," chap. 5 in *Moved by the State: Forced Relocation and Making a Good Life in Postwar Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019); Daphne Marlatt and Carole Itter, editors, *Opening Doors in Vancouver's East End: Strathcona* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2011). For further details pertaining to the East Enders' purchase of this house within the context of the City's existing East End urban redevelopment plans (Redevelopment Project No. 2), see also the records in CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, City Social Planning Department Administrative and Operational Files, COV-S571, 77-D-1 file 10, "East Enders Society."

"[t]he house was [still] in a turmoil with cleaning and painting…getting ready to become the East-Enders Hostel," the Society received their first guests.[9] That spring day, two young Indigenous women in need of a place to sleep "walked up the front steps of [the] old green frame house" where they became the first two women to stay at the new East Enders Society women's hostel.[10]

The East Enders Society knew that a women's shelter would be a limited response to this problem – a stopgap solution at best – but understood their initiative to be a critical, if only first, step in the fight against women's homelessness and gendered, racialized violence. Indeed, May Gutteridge, an English parish worker with the Downtown Eastside's St. James' Anglican Church and one of the founders of the East Enders Society, indicated that they realized there were both immediate and long-term limits to what they could achieve within this space, but felt their work was a necessary starting point: "We already know the building is not nearly big enough to fill the need," Gutteridge explained to a *Vancouver Times* reporter in May 1965, "but the important thing is that it is a start."[11]

What became the East Enders Society women's hostel was not the first women's shelter in Vancouver, but it was the first in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood. Before they opened their hostel for women, there were two existing women's shelters, both run by lay Christian associations. The Salvation Army's Catherine Booth Home and the Legion of Mary's Sancta Maria House both provided temporary shelter to women in need, including (and especially) those who had recently been released from prison. Significantly, though, neither

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[9] East Enders Society, "The East-Enders Hostel," pamphlet, 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1. See also: Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 16 June 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2.
[10] East Enders Society, "The East-Enders Hostel," pamphlet, 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1.
[11] Gutteridge quoted in Kay Kelly, "A Place Where Someone Cares," *Vancouver Times,* May 12, 1965, news clipping, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1.

the Catherine Booth Home or the Sancta Maria House were located in the Downtown Eastside where women's homelessness was, or had become, most acute.[12] Pearl Willows, one of the founding members of the East Enders Society, recalled how at the time "[t]here was really nothing in that area for the women off the street."[13] Willows explained that through her parish work as a deaconess with the Downtown Eastside's First United Church, she "realized that what was needed was a home for destitute women in the downtown area."[14] In opening their women's hostel, then, the East Enders built upon and extended the work of the Salvation Army and the Legion of Mary into the Downtown Eastside.

A very specific context of urban precarity underlay the work of the East Enders Society. May Gutteridge began working in the Downtown Eastside in the early 1960s after she observed the challenging circumstances in which many people lived when she came to the neighbourhood to worship at St. James' Anglican Church. Concerned by what she saw, Gutteridge approached the rector about becoming involved in the church's outreach programs. She initially assumed the work of running an existing Pensioners' Club for men, but soon thereafter expanded her parish social work to include welfare cheque administration, a social club for Indigenous women, and various other forms of informal material and monetary aid for

[12] Kay Kelly, "'The House of Hope..'," *Vancouver Times,* September 22, 1964; Robert Neil Crawford, Lloyd Woodrow Dewalt, Ellen Isobelle Esau, and Glenda Elaine Gentleman, "A Research Inventory of Community Welfare Services" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1959): 141, 220, 225, 250.

[13] Pearl Willows in Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4.

[14] Pearl Willows in Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4. Pearl Willows was a professional church worker with a background in social work and education. She received a B.A. and Diploma of Social Work from the University of British Columbia in 1935, graduated from the United Church Training Schools in Toronto in 1938, and from the Normal School in Calgary in 1939. She served many years as a United Church Woman's Missionary Society (WMS) worker. In 1943, she became a Deaconess and continued in various church service appointments. During 1964-65 she took a break from formal church appointments. In 1965, she began an appointment at the First United Church in the Downtown Eastside (which she maintained until her retirement in 1971). Caryn Douglas, "Pearl Willows," June 2013, based on research and writing by Beth Walker in December 2012 for a student assignment at Centre for Christian Studies, *Deaconess History of the United Church of Canada,* https://uccdeaconesshistory.ca/list/by-school/pearl-willows.

women, ranging from help writing letters and filling out forms, to accompanying women with records to court and visiting women in prison.[15] It was through this early parish social work from St. James' that Gutteridge became conscious of the need for a women's hostel. Most notably, she recalled systemic violence against Indigenous women who lived in poverty in the Downtown Eastside, and condemned the institutions that upheld and normalized those conditions:

> [They] were preyed upon by everybody…some of the most terrible things happened to these women! They died and they weren't even reported. And you'd have a mother coming from the reservation looking for their girls, not knowing whatever happened to them. They didn't even make the papers. And you would have rooming houses with men lined up to – waiting to assault the girls. And nobody did anything about it. And if you went over to the police and said, 'A man had assaulted a woman', they just laughed at you – more or less – you know. They didn't take it seriously. You couldn't lay a charge. It was very, very difficult times.[16]

One East Enders Society Board member likewise explained that a crisis of violence against Indigenous women and girls "was all too apparent," describing the 1960s as a "bad period for violence against native women, some very young."[17] Marie-Luise Vail, a social worker with the City Social Services Department, and later a member of the East Enders Society, explained that "[q]uite a number of the young [Indigenous] girls would be found dead at the Stratford

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[15] Gutteridge emigrated to Canada from England in 1955. After three years in Saskatchewan, she moved to Vancouver with her husband and three children. Douglas P. Welbanks, *From Lost to Found: The May Gutteridge Story* (Richmond, B.C.: Chateau Lane Publishing, 2008), 11-18, 109; St. James Community Service Society, *2010/2011 Annual Report to the Community: 50th Anniversary Edition* (Vancouver, British Columbia, 2011)*,* 4, Anglican Diocese of New Westminster Archives [hereafter cited as ADNWA], St. James, Vancouver (Parish Records) [hereafter cited as SJV], St. James Community Services Society, 1998-2011, ACCN D2011-27; Phyllis Reeve, *Every Good Gift: A History of S. James', Vancouver 1881-1981* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press Ltd. for S. James' Anglican Church, 1981), 115, ADNWA, SJV, St. James, Vancouver, ACC D993-30; Carol Roberts, Women's Editor, "Down Payment on $11,000 Hostel Obtained," *Anglican News,* December 1964, news clipping, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; (Mrs.) M.C. Gutteridge, Executive Director, "Annual General Meeting of The East-Enders Society – 25th January, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Minutes of meeting of EES, 28 October 1964. For more on the history of the St. James' Social Services Society, see chapter three of this dissertation and Welbanks, *From Lost to Found.*

[16] May Gutteridge, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-2.

[17] [Unknown, possibly Jean Crowley or Mary Ross], "East Enders Society," written reflections/memories, [June, c. 1990-92], SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; [Unknown, possibly Jean Crowley or Mary Ross], "East Enders," (written reflections), c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

hotel [a Downtown Eastside SRO]. They were very young and it was quite obvious that they had been abused."[18] These settler women's recollections make clear both the scale of violence against Indigenous women in the Downtown Eastside during the 1960s, as well as a racist and sexist culture of indifference that was perpetuated and reinforced by the media and the police.[19]

The East Enders Society's care work thus emerged out of a specific concern about the heightened vulnerability of Indigenous women to violence and untimely death in the Downtown Eastside. It was within and because of this context of gendered, racialized violence that Gutteridge wanted to establish a hostel for women, and thus, with other community service providers, spearheaded the establishment of the East Enders Society. It was because of this context that additional women subsequently became involved with the new society.[20] Certainly, social worker Mary Kelly – who also volunteered with the First United Church – explained that she was driven to get involved with the East Enders because "[b]odies of women were found indicating that there was no refuge for them."[21] Kelly expressed that she joined the East Enders in this context because it "gave [her] an opportunity for service."[22] These concerns

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[18] Marie-Luise Vail, interview, audio recording, 15 October 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-6. Vail trained and worked as a nurse prior to becoming a social worker. In the early 1970s, she began a social worker position in the Downtown Eastside after having previously worked in other Vancouver neighbourhoods. She joined the East Enders Society in 1972 after Wilna Thomas, her colleague with the City Social Services department and member of the East Enders, retired from the department. As a City social worker for the Downtown Eastside, Vail's role with the East Enders Society was to keep the East Enders informed about issues faced by Downtown Eastside residents. (Vail, interview, audio recording, 15 October 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-6.)

[19] Journalists and reporters for mainstream daily newspapers reported on violence experienced by Indigenous women in Downtown Eastside Vancouver more regularly starting in the early to mid-1960s. I propose there was a correlation between the increase in reporting and the intentional efforts by the East Enders Society to bring public attention to this issue. For instance, the East Enders Society had a publicity committee, and they did public relations work that included contacting the press. See, for example, Minutes of Special Meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 12 May 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of general meeting of EES, 3 November 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 December 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2. On newspaper reporting in mainstream dailies about Indigenous women's deaths in the Downtown Eastside, see Longstaffe, "Indigenous Women as Newspaper Representations."

[20] May Gutteridge, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-2. See also: Marie-Luise Vail, interview, audio recording, 15 October 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-6.

[21] Mary Kelly, interview, transcript, c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4.

[22] Mary Kelly, interview, transcript, c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4.

likewise motivated public health nurse Mary Ross to join the Society. Ross recalled that "[m]any women had died down there. Many women had been murdered – a great many, sixteen or seventeen."[23] Ross expressed that while many people were "shocked" by these murders, she and the others involved with the Society wished to translate that shock into action: "I think the reason we got so heavily involved with the East Enders was…the people dying down there…That was my motivation in joining to help to do something to help these women, particularly native women."[24] As their reflections indicate, these women's developing awareness of Indigenous women's experiences of violence in the Downtown Eastside drove them and others to become actively involved in the work of the East Enders Society. From across a social and geographic distance, these mostly White, middle-class professional women wanted to do something to help.

In the beginning, however, the East Enders Society faced a major challenge. While the Provincial government and City later supported the East Enders Society – the Province principally with a grant that covered the salary of a social worker, and the City Social Services Department with a per diem for each shelter guest it referred – in the early and mid-1960s, there was very little public money available for this kind of work. As Gutteridge later explained, "it's not like it is now – there wasn't government funding…we really were doing it

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[23] Mary Ross in Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4. In the early 1960s, Mary Ross was a Senior Public Health Nurse for the Burnaby Health Department. She retired as Public Health Supervisor for that department in 1976, following a three-decade career in the profession. Ross explained that her work in public health focused primarily on issues related to poverty, tuberculosis, sex work, and alcohol addiction. (Ross in Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; [no author], "Presidents and Secretary-Treasurers of the Provincial Affiliates of the Canadian Public Health Association," *Canadian Journal of Public Health,* 53, no. 7 (July 1962), 12; "Mary Ross," photograph, published May 31, 1976, Peter Battistoni (photographer), City of Burnaby Archives, Columbian Newspaper collection, Item No: 480-1198, Accession Number: 2003-02.
[24] Ross in Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4.

from scratch."[25] Thus, while the East Enders lobbied for (and eventually received some) state support, their work depended largely upon private contributions.[26]

One way they overcame this financial challenge and secured donations was by publicizing their work in ways intended to raise public awareness and concern about issues faced by women in the Downtown Eastside. For example, they prepared and sent letters and brochures about their work to churches, women's clubs, and organizations; spoke at meetings of those organizations; held public meetings; organized 'open houses' at the hostel; and enlisted journalists who then reported the Society's work in print and radio.[27] One strategy the

[25] May Gutteridge, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-2.

[26] See notes 30-34 below. The Legion of Mary similarly depended upon external support (donations) to run the Sancta Maria House. Kelly, "'The House of Hope..'"; "Skidroad story brings in dollars," *Vancouver Times,* October 7, 1964.

[27] Minutes of Special Meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 12 May 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 September 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of EES, 13 September 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 October 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of general meeting of EES, 2 November 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 December 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 February 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of general meeting of EES, 1 June 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 September 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 February 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 May 1968, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2, SFUA; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 4 September 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 October 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 4 February 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; East Enders Society, "Have YOU read about --," informational and fundraising notice, c. 1964, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; East Enders Society, *The East-Enders Bulletin,* newsletter, Fall Edition 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Phyllis C. Dale, President, East Enders Society, "Dear Friends," *East-Enders Society Newsletter,* No. 3, September 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Minutes of annual meeting of EES, 20 April 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Phyllis C. Dale, President, "President's Report", Annual Meeting of EES, 25 January 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; May Gutteridge, "Open House – The East-Enders Hostel, September 29, 1965," letter for participants of open house, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "The East-Enders Hostel," pamphlet, 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Because Someone Cares," pamphlet, 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Nikki Moir, "The Door Is Always Open at Skid Road Haven," *Province,* 19 November 1965; Shirley Lynn, "Going more than half way," *Province,* news clipping, c. October 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; Holt, "Door Always Open"; Kelly, "A Place Where Someone Cares"; Pat Horrobin, "Skid Road Hostel: City Group Starts Home For Destitute Women," *Vancouver Sun,* 14 May 1965, news clipping, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1.

When they were starting the hostel, the East Enders Society decided that for purpose of the press, only May Gutteridge's name should be used if reporters required a specific reference. This, in part, explains why newspaper reports about the East Enders Society center May Gutteridge in their narratives about the East Enders Society's hostel, and we learn less about the other women involved from these reports. Minutes of Special Meeting of the Board of Directors of the East Enders Society, 12 May 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2.

East Enders used in their own publications to grow support was the use of narratives intended to illicit empathy. For instance, in one informational and fundraising pamphlet, the Society relayed a story about a twenty-four-year old Indigenous woman, a mother of two, who had come to Vancouver seeking work. They wrote that smaller hotels in the West End refused to rent to her, and so the only place she could secure a room was the East End, and that a man had assaulted her within a day of her arrival there. The Society used this story to try to convince others that there was a "desperate need for a hostel for girls and women similar to the Central [C]ity Mission for men," arguing that "[s]uch a hostel would prevent young girls and women (especially Native Indian) from having to roam the streets with all the consequences that this can entail."[28] Although such discursive tactics were problematic – this language of "roam[ing] the streets," for example, reproduced particular racist and paternalistic ideas about Indigenous women, and, furthermore, they relied on negative associations their 1960s audience would have had of the "East End", associated as it was by community outsiders with stereotypes of "Skidroad" – their intent was to cultivate public awareness and concern, and through that concern, the support required to make their shelter possible.[29]

Their tactics to grow support were successful. For example, within a few months after the formation of the Society, Gutteridge had received numerous phone calls from individuals who wished to donate their time, money, or other resources. Building upon this momentum of support, the East Enders then established a 'dollar-a-month' club that helped cover operating costs: by May 1965, the club had sixteen members, and 240 by the following November.[30]

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[28] East Enders Society, "Have YOU read about --," informational and fundraising notice, c. 1964, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1.

[29] I take up the problematics of similar narratives and language in the context of media reporting on the deaths of Indigenous women in the Downtown Eastside in a related article published in the *Canadian Historical Review*. See Longstaffe, "Indigenous Women as Newspaper Representations."

[30] The dollar-a-month-club remained a major source of support for the Society throughout the years they provided services to women in the Downtown Eastside; they maintained the club until October 1974, when they began

Moreover, Gutteridge indicated that "citizens were most generous," as "groups came to help clean up, paint, [and] furnish," and "[s]ewing machines, carpets, and curtains just appeared."[31] She recalled that so much "[m]oney came in" that the Society "immediately set up a post office box and bank account for issuing receipts;" Gutteridge expressed that they received assistance from so many people that "in the end, [they] gave up trying to thank people."[32] As her anecdotes indicate, the East Enders were able to furnish the house, complete needed upgrades, and operate the hostel because of private donations and volunteer labour.[33] Indeed, by the fall

plans to phase out their day centre for women. East Enders Society, "The East-Enders Hostel," pamphlet, 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of EES, 24 March 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of Special Meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 12 May 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of general meeting of EES, 3 November 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; East Enders Society, "Newsletter and Invitation to Annual Meeting, October 18th, 1974," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1.

[31] May Gutteridge, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-2.

[32] May Gutteridge, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-2.

[33] Most of the initial furnishings for the hostel were donated. For example, a Hastings Street furniture store donated eight beds, the IODE provided bed linens, and several individuals provided other furnishings, including a dining room set and bedroom sets. Certainly, over the years the East Enders Society worked in the Downtown Eastside, church and other community groups (including, but not limited to, the United Church Women, the Anglican Women Auxiliary, the Soroptimists, the Lion's Club, the Vancouver Foundation, the IODE, Vancouver General Hospital employees, and B.C. Telephone employees), local businesses, and individuals all supported the Society's work through financial and material (eg. furniture, linens) donations. East Enders Society, "The East-Enders Hostel," pamphlet, 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of EES, 24 March 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of Special Meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 12 May 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of EES, 26 May 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of general meeting of East-Enders Society, 3 November 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 April 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 27 April 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; L. Phillips, Treasurer [Jubilee Hospital Alumnae Association, Vancouver Branch] to P. Willows, East Enders Society, 16 June 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-2-0-0-2; J.J. Volrich of Gardom & Volrich, Barristers and Solicitors to The East Enders Society, 17 March 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-2-0-0-2; Pearl Willows, President [East Enders Society] to J.J. Volrich of Gardom & Volrich, 1 April 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-2-0-0-2; J.E. Kania, Truster for [redacted] to East-Enders Society, 10 March 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-2-0-0-2; W.F. Osburn, Trust Officer, Canada Permanent Trust Company to East Enders' Society, 24 March 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-2-0-0-2; Pearl Willow, President [East Enders Society] to W.F. Osborn, Canada Permanent Trust Co., 6 April 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-2-0-0-2; Pearl Willows, President [East Enders Society] to A.K. Thompson, Barristers and Solicitors, White Rock, B.C., 15 July 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-2-0-0-2; A.K. Thompson of Thompson & McConnell, Barristers and Solicitors, White Rock Office to East-Enders Society, [c. July 1971], SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-2-0-0-2; G. Peter Kaye, Executive Director, Vancouver Foundation to Mrs. Everett Crowley, President, The East-Enders Society, 21 November 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-2-0-0-3; Ruth Vivash, Corresponding Secretary [East Enders Society] to Peter Kaye, Executive Director, Vancouver Foundation, 3 December 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-2-0-0-3; Pearl Willows, President, East Enders Society to Alec Scott, 26 May 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-9; P. Willows, Vice-President, East Enders Society to W. Camozzi, Regional Director, Department of Social Welfare [Province of British Columbia], 13 November 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; Horrobin, "Skid Road Hostel"; Holt, "Door Always Open"; May Gutteridge, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-2.

of 1966, the Society estimated they had received donations of money, furniture, appliances, bedding, clothing, linen, and household goods from more than 900 individuals, businesses, organizations, churches, and other community groups, which collectively made the hostel possible.[34] Overall, this widespread support from across the city demonstrates that the East Enders Society did critical work to increase public knowledge of and concern for a pressing issue which many in the city may have been previously unaware or unconcerned, and moreover, reveals the ongoing significance of private charity in the era of the growing 'welfare state.'

The establishment of the East Enders Society and the opening of their women's hostel shows that in the mid-1960s, rising awareness by more privileged women of Indigenous women's urban precarity in the Downtown Eastside became a catalyst for change. In a time and place where Indigenous women disproportionately experienced homelessness, poor health, violence, and untimely death, the women of the East Enders Society and their supporters were compelled to intervene where the state had not. In this case, these women decided that an emergency shelter for women was a project of care that would help.

Converging Structures of Inequity

The issues that made the East Enders women's hostel necessary were created and compounded by broader systems of inequity. In 1970, Phyllis de L. Harwood, the East Enders Society's social worker, gestured toward cross-cutting factors that contributed to and shaped women's precarity when she wrote about the women who stayed at their hostel: "All guests have problems…Most of them have many. All are destitute, anxious and afraid. To attempt to

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[34] Phyllis C. Dale, President [East Enders Society], October 1966, *The East-Enders bulletin,* Fall Edition 1966, newsletter, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1.

list cases under a single file is futile…There is so much interrelationship with causes of stress that no one facet throws a true light."[35] As her remarks indicate, and as I will show in the pages that follow, during the 1960s and 1970s, various intersecting structures and systems underlay, contributed to, and entrenched women's homelessness and vulnerability to violence in the Downtown Eastside.

One factor that converged with women's homelessness was mental illness and psychiatric institutionalization. Accelerated processes of de-institutionalization between the 1950s and 1970s from Riverview Psychiatric Hospital (formerly Essondale) and the psychiatric wards of general hospitals contributed to an increase in former patients living in the Downtown Eastside. Many former patients experienced homelessness because there was an absence of sufficient community health, housing, and employment resources. As scholars Geertje Boschma, Megan Davies, and Martina Morrow explain, during this period, many patients who left psychiatric hospitals or general hospital psychiatric wards had few places to go for support.[36] Certainly, in Vancouver, social service providers who worked in the Downtown

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[35] Phyllis de L. Harwood, "Statistics re Lodge Guests, June and July 1970," in "Social Worker's Report," Minutes of meeting of Board of EES, 9 September 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1.

[36] Located in Burnaby – part of the Lower Mainland, and directly to the east of Vancouver – Essondale/Riverview was the primary psychiatric hospital in the province. Essondale was renamed Riverview in 1965. On the history of psychiatric de-institutionalization and the transition to community mental health in Canada between the 1950s and 1980s, see: Geertje Boschma, "Deinstitutionalization Reconsidered: Geographic and Demographic Changes in Mental Health Care in British Columbia and Alberta, 1950-1980," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 44, no. 88 (November 2011): 223-256; Geertjie Boschma, Megan Davies, and Marina Morrow, "'Those people known as mental patients…": Professional and Patient Engagement in Community Mental Health in Vancouver, BC in the 1970s," *Oral History Forum/d'histoire orale* 34 (2014): 1-20; Chris Dooley, "The End of the Asylum (Town): Community Responses to the Depopulation and Closure of the Saskatchewan Hospital, Weyburn," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 44, no. 88 (November 2011): 331-354; Chris Dooley, "'The Older Staff, Myself Included, We Were Pretty Institutionalized Ourselves": Authority and Insight in Practitioner Narratives of Psychiatric Deinstitutionalization in Prairie Canada," *CBMH/BCHM* 29, no. 1 (2012): 101-123; Catherine Duprey, "La révolution psychiatrique au Québec, 1950–1962: De l'Asile à la Psychiatrie Communautaire et l'Open-door," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 44, no. 88 (2011): 355-83; Erika Dyck, "Dismantling the Asylum and Charting New Pathways into the Community: Mental Health Care in Twentieth Century Canada," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 44, 88 (November 2011): 181-196; Erika Dyck and Alex Deighton, *Managing Madness: Weyburn Mental Hospital and the Transformation of Psychiatric Care in Canada* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017); Judith Fingard and John Rutherford, "Deinstitutionalization and Vocational Rehabilitation for Mental Health Consumers in Nova Scotia since the 1950s," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 44, no. 88 (2011): 385-408; Gregory

Eastside expressed that a lack of housing options for women with mental health challenges and psychiatric diagnoses fueled patterns of hospital (re)admission and homelessness; these service providers noted that they often had to refer women to Riverview Hospital because there was little or no supportive housing available. Ultimately, then, in the absence of sufficient supports during this period of de-institutionalization, many women with psychiatric diagnoses and histories of institutionalization experienced cyclical patterns of hospitalization and homelessness.[37]

Another key factor that contributed to women's homelessness were illogical social welfare administration policies, particularly for those transitioning out of hospitals and prisons. For example, when women were released from Oakalla, the provincial prison located in the nearby city of Burnaby, they often confronted harsh economic realities – many lacked the means to either return to their home communities or to secure safe accommodations in the city,

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P. Marchildon, "A House Divided: Deinstitutionalization, Medicare and the Canadian Mental Health Association in Saskatchewan, 1944-1964," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 44, no. 88 (November 2011): 305-329; Megan Davies et al., *Mad City: Legacies of MPA,* Living History Exhibit, Gallery Gachet, Vancouver, British Columbia, 12 January 2018 – 25 February 2018; Megan Davies et al, *After the Asylum: The History of Madness in Canada* (website, https://aftertheasylum.apps01.yorku.ca); MPA Documentary Collective, dir., *The Inmates Are Running the Asylum: Stories From MPA*, DVD and online (Canada: History of Madness Production, 2013); Megan Davies et al, "After the Asylum in Canada: Surviving Deinstitutionalization and Revising History," in *Deinstitutionalization and After: Post-War Psychiatry in the Western World,* eds. Despo Kritsotaki, Vicky Long, and Matthew Smith (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016): 75-95.

[37] Corinne Angell, "Residential Alternatives for Women on Vancouver's Skid Road" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, April 1982), ii-iii, 30, 32, 69-70; Jo-Anne Lee with Corinne Angell, *Study on Housing Needs of Single Women in the Downtown Eastside* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Society for Women's Residences, January 1980), 9-10, 17, 22; "A Survey of Downtown Eastside Women and Their Housing Needs," 1989, SFUA, EES, F-59-6-0-0-2; "Mrs. Harwood's Report Dated September 30, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; Phyllis De L Harwood, "Social Workers Report," [for] Board Meeting of EES, 4 November 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; S. McDiarmid, Director, Health Care & Aging, Welfare and Rehabilitation Department to V. Fraser-Crierie, President, The East-Enders Society 6 October 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1. A note on the language of de-institutionalization: in her research, Geertjie Boschma demonstrates that as major psychiatric hospitals in British Columbia and Alberta downsized between 1950 and 1980, the number of hospitalized patients did not decrease. Rather, there was a corresponding increase in admissions to other institutional settings such as nursing homes, community care centres, general hospitals, and outpatient treatment clinics. Boschma thus argues that this process may be better understood as trans-institutionalization rather than de-institutionalization. (Boschma, "Deinstitutionalization Reconsidered.") Nonetheless, while patients from Riverview may have received ongoing care in other settings, service providers in the Downtown Eastside still observed that a noted number of their clientele seeking services had recent histories of psychiatric institutionalization, especially at Riverview.

and likely struggled to attain work.[38] Underscoring that social welfare policies in the mid-1960s were fundamentally flawed, May Gutteridge explained to a reporter in 1965 that when women were released from Oakalla they had to wait one week before they could receive social assistance, and that support, once received, was inadequate to cover basic expenses.[39] And so, without immediate or sufficient material supports, including the means to attain housing, many women coming out of prison often found themselves in, or back in, circumstances of homelessness. Service providers' recognition of this reality was one of the factors that drove them to form the East Enders Society. Indeed, Gutteridge explained that when they first determined the need for a women's shelter in the Downtown Eastside, they were "thinking especially of the woman released from prison virtually penniless, generally with a bus ticket and less than a dollar."[40] While the Salvation Army's Catherine Booth Home and the Legion of Mary's Sancta Maria house offered transitional housing to women released from prison in the years before the East Enders opened their hostel, these groups did not have the resources to provide housing for all women in need of a bed. For example, in 1958, the Salvation Army reported that requests for beds from the courts, Oakalla prison, and other social welfare agencies were increasing, but that insufficient resources limited their ability to meet that rising need.[41] The opening of the East Enders Society's women's hostel was not then, redundant of existing services, but necessary to meet a demand.

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[38] Service providers also drew attention to the fact that women faced challenges finding employment, making it nearly impossible for them to exit poverty. For example, in 1968, organizations and agencies providing services in the Downtown Eastside held a collective meeting on the topic of "rehabilitation through employment," where they discussed "the great difficulty" middle-aged women faced finding employment. Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of East-Enders Society, 1 May 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2.

[39] Horrobin, "Skid Road Hostel". See also May Gutteridge, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-2.

[40] Gutteridge quoted in Horrobin, "Skid Road Hostel."

[41] Crawford, Dewalt, Esau, and Gentleman, "A Research Inventory of Community Welfare Services," 141, 220, 225.

Shelters that offered transitional housing, however, were not an ultimate solution to the larger structures that created their need. For instance, nonsensical welfare policies continued to reproduce and entrench poverty and homelessness into the 1970s. For example, the East Enders Society reported in 1970 that if one did not have housing, they could not receive welfare; they explained that the Social Service Department had a "policy of not issuing welfare payments to recipients until a fixed address had been established."[42] When the East Enders Society challenged this policy, the Administrator of the Social Services Department informed them that "[t]he flexibility of our procedure is restricted as we do not work with cash and we can obtain a cheque for a girl only after she has found accommodation other than the Hostel. A cheque takes a minimum of 24 hours to produce."[43] Phyllis Harwood, the East Enders Society's social worker, criticized this senseless policy, explaining that "[w]hen it comes to the time for a woman to move out of the lodge, she must have a fixed address before she can have a welfare cheque issues to her. Hostels such as our lodge are not considered a fixed address. How can they get even a sleeping room without money?"[44] While the East Enders Society ultimately developed an arrangement with the Department in which the Society used their own funds to cover their clients' initial rent deposit, which the Department later reimbursed by issuing the client's first cheque to the Society on her behalf, such restrictive policies undoubtedly had substantive material consequences for others experiencing street and emergency-sheltered homelessness.

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[42] Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 April 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2. Further research is required into the details of this policy, when it came into effect, and its implementation.

[43] T. T. Hill, Administrator, Social Service Department to Pearl Willows, President, East Enders Society, 13 March 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-9.

[44] Phyllis de L Harwood, [social worker's report for] "East-Enders Society Monthly Board Meeting April 1 1970," 1 April 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1.

Alongside welfare rates that were too low for people to meet their basic needs, such restrictive welfare administration policies surely only compounded poverty, contributing to cycles of homelessness and incarceration.[45] For example, *Vancouver Sun* reporter Pat Horrobin wrote that Gutteridge explained to her that in the context of such economic pressures, women who had been incarcerated at Oakalla prison often "return[ed] to the Skid Road life that caused them to go to jail."[46] Gesturing, in this case, to the ways in which poverty could push some women into sex work, Gutteridge explained that "[w]hen a woman has nothing, when she's destitute and wants to live, sleep and eat, she does things people in a higher income bracket would never think of…She becomes a prostitute in order to live."[47] While not all women who lived in poverty in the Downtown Eastside participated in sex work, and Gutteridge also overlooked the possibility that women may have had more complicated understandings of their choices and participation in sex economies, sex work was one means through which some women supported themselves.[48] Regardless of their reasons, however, women involved in street-level sex work often came into recurrent conflict with the law. Many women who served sentences at Oakalla did so on charges related to the vagrancy section of the *Criminal Code*, which, during this period, included a broad range of offences including those related to

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[45] This solution was far from perfect, as the Society did not always have enough funds to cover women's rent deposits, especially when multiple women moved out of the hostel at the same time, or when the landlord required the entire month's rent in advance rather than a deposit. Phyllis de L Harwood, [social worker's report for] "East-Enders Society Monthly Board Meeting April 1 1970," 1 April 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1.

[46] Horrobin, "Skid Road Hostel".

[47] Gutteridge quoted in Horrobin, "Skid Road Hostel".

[48] Jamie Lee Hamilton, "The Golden Age of Prostitution: One Woman's Personal Account of an Outdoor Brothel in Vancouver, 1975-1984," in *Trans Activism in Canada: A Reader,* eds. Dan Irving and Rupert Raj (Toronto: Canadian Scholars, 2014): 27-32; Becki L. Ross, *Burlesque West: Showgirls, Sex, and Sin in Postwar Vancouver* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Becki L. Ross, ''Outdoor Brothel Culture: The Un/Making of a Transsexual Stroll in Vancouver's West End, 1975–1984,'' *Journal of Historical Sociology* 25, no. 1 (2012): 126–50; Becki L. Ross, ''Sex and (Evacuation from) the City: Moral and Legal Regulation of Sex Workers in Vancouver's West End, 1975–1985,'' *Sexualities* 13, no. 2 (2010): 197–218; Becki Ross and Rachael Sullivan, "Tracing Lines of Horizontal Hostility: How Sex Workers and Gay Activists Battled for Space, Voice, and Belonging in Vancouver, 1975-1985," *Sexualities* 15, nos. 5-6 (2012): 604-621.

prostitution.[49] But unlike law makers and enforcers who criminalized sex work, Gutteridge

was more thoughtful about women's economic pressures, and thus sharply and directly

criticized both the welfare and criminal justice systems: "Society," she chastised, "literally

condemns these women to a program of returning to jail."[50] Certainly, the criminalization of

women engaged in sex work reflected a moralistic social context in which those wielding

legislative and judiciary power disregarded these women's economic realities.[51] Ultimately,

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[49] Police records contained within some coroner inquiries and inquests into women's deaths in Vancouver during the 1960s make this connection between sex work and criminal incarceration at Oakalla clear. For reasons of confidentiality, I am not including here references to specific inquiries and inquests that support this point. Inquisitions/inquests conducted by coroners, BCA, GR-1502, Reels B04938, B04941; Inquiries, BCA, GR-1504, Reels B05064 – B05080. The provision related to prostitution under the vagrancy section of the Criminal Code was decriminalized in 1972, but solicitation or communication for the purposes of prostitution was introduced as a new criminal offence. The history of women and poverty that I examine in this dissertation intersects with and is part of a larger Canadian history of sex work and the policing of sex work in urban spaces that I do not have space to fully consider here. There is an extensive and growing literature on the social and legal history of sex work in Canadian history, including, but not limited to: Constance Backhouse, "Nineteenth-Century Canadian Prostitution Law: Reflection of a Discriminatory Society," *Social History/Histoire sociale* 18, no. 36 (1985): 387-423; Katherine Crooks, "Profits, Savings, Health, Peace, Order': Prostitution, Urban Planning and Imperial Identity in Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1898-1912," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 46, no. 3 (2018) 446-472; Patrick A. Dunae, "Geographies of Sexual Commerce and the Production of Prostitutional Space: Victoria, British Columbia, 1860-1914," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 19, no. 1 (2008): 115-142; Patrick A. Dunae, "Sex, Charades, and Census Records: Locating Female Sex Trade Workers in a Victorian City," *Histoire sociale/Social history* 42, no. 84 (November 2009): 267-297; Lesley Erickson, *Westward Bound: Sex, Violence, the Law, and the Making of a Settler Society* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011); Michaela Freund, "The Politics of Naming: Constructing Prostitutes and Regulating Women in Vancouver, 1939-45," in *Regulating Lives: Historical Essays on the State, Society, the Individual, and the Law,* eds. John McLaren, Robert Menzies, and Dorothy Chun (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002); Hamilton, "Golden Age of Prostitution"; Rhonda L. Hinther, "The Oldest Profession in Winnipeg: The Culture of Prostitution in the Point Douglas Segregated District, 1909-1912," *Manitoba History* 41 (Spring 2001): 2-13; Renisa Mawani, "The Iniquitous Practice of Women": Prostitution and the Making of White Spaces in British Columbia, 1898-1905," in *Working Through Whiteness: International Perspectives,* ed. Cynthia Levine-Rasky (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002); John McLaren, ""Recalculating the Wages of Sin": The Social and Legal Construction of Prostitution, 1850-1920," *Manitoba Law Journal* 23 (1996): 524-555; John McLaren, "'White Slavers: the Reform of Canada's Prostitution Laws and Patterns of Enforcement, 1900-1920," *Criminal Justice History* 8 (1987): 53-119; Myers, *Caught*; Mary Anne Poutanen, *Beyond Brutal Passions: Prostitution in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015); Mary Anne Poutanen, "Regulating Public Space in Early Nineteenth-Century Montreal: Vagrancy Laws and Gender in a Colonial Context," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 35, no. 69 (2002): 35-58; Prashan Ranasinhe, "Reconceptualizing Vagrancy and Reconstructing the Vagrant: A Socio-Legal Analysis of Criminal Law Reform in Canada, 1953-1972," *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 48 (1) (2010): 55-94; Ross, ''Sex and (Evacuation from) the City'; Ross and Sullivan, "Tracing Lines of Horizontal Hostility"; Amy Wilkinson, "Sex Work and the Social-Spatial Order of Boomtown: Winnipeg, 1873-1912" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 2016).

[50] Gutteridge quoted in Horrobin, "Skid Road Hostel".

[51] Joan Sangster, "Criminalizing the Colonized: Ontario Native Women Confront the Criminal Justice System, 1920-60," *Canadian Historical Review* 80, no. 1 (March 1999): 38.

the legal regulation of sex work converged with material inequities and an insufficient welfare system to create and perpetuate cycles of gendered poverty, homelessness, and incarceration. Because this law-and-order approach of the settler legal system failed to account for women's social and economic contexts, it was part of a direct and cyclical link between the Downtown Eastside, the city jail, and Oakalla prison.

The criminalization of sex work, however, was not the only reason women living in poverty in the Downtown Eastside were more heavily policed. Other arrest patterns also reflected the policing of public poverty and morality that ignored additional and intersecting structures of inequity at work. Alongside the policing of sex work (including prostitution-related charges under the vagrancy section of the *Criminal Code*), many other women were arrested and often incarcerated on alcohol or drug-related offences, including possession of narcotics and State of Intoxication in a Public Place (S.I.P.P.).[52] These arrests and criminal sentences reflected a system in which the police and the courts viewed addiction as a crime, rather than a symptom of social issues. As historian Catherine Carstairs found in her research on the regulation and criminalization of drug use in mid-twentieth-century Canada, many women used drugs and alcohol to cope with emotional difficulties created through or exacerbated by poverty.[53] One could also reasonably connect drug and alcohol use to individual and community traumas connected to experiences of residential schools, child apprehension,

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[52] Sometimes women served 'suspended sentences' rather than time in prison. G.E. Mortimer, "Some Go to Jail 100 Times," *Daily Colonist* (Victoria), October 15, 1958; May Gutteridge, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-2. Police records contained within some coroner inquiries and inquests into women's deaths in Vancouver during the 1960s also make this connection between alcohol and drug use and/or addiction and criminal arrest and incarceration clear. For reasons of confidentiality, I am not including here references to specific inquiries and inquests that support this point. Inquisitions/inquests conducted by coroners, BCA, GR-1502, Reel B04938; Inquiries, BCA, GR-1504, Reels B05064 – B05080.

[53] Catherine Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession: Illegal Drug Use, Regulation, and Power in Canada, 1920-1961* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 14-15, 83-84, 161. See also: Sangster, "Criminalizing the Colonized," 43.

foster care, sexual assault, and domestic violence, issues which also informed and shaped women's poverty. However, as the partial evidence about women's sentencing that I have accessed suggests, the judicial system in late-twentieth-century British Columbia criminalized addiction instead of seeing it as a health issue created by various intersecting social inequities.[54]

Women who were experiencing poverty, moreover, were more likely to be arrested and serve time for their substance use because of their economic contexts. As Carstairs and Joan Sangster have demonstrated, women arrested for alcohol or drug use in twentieth-century Canada commonly were working-class or poor because the more public nature of their consumption made them more subject to regulation.[55] In Vancouver, most women living in the Downtown Eastside did not have the domestic privacy held by middle-class people with their own secure homes; their use of alcohol or drugs thus often took place within public settings (hotel beer parlours, city sidewalks, alleyways, and parks) where police could more easily surveil them. Furthermore, whereas more economically-secure individuals might have paid fines for minor offences instead of serving time, this was not an option for those who were destitute.[56] Within a legal system that criminalized substance use, the social and material conditions of poverty put people struggling with addiction at higher risk of incarceration.

Poverty, then, shaped the ways and extent to which the state disciplined women. But the criminalization of poor women also intersected with and was compounded by racial inequities. Significantly, in British Columbia, as elsewhere in Canada, incarceration patterns made clear not only the policing of poverty, but also the related and overlapping settler colonial regulation of Indigenous bodies in time and space. The cascading social and economic impacts

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[54] See supra note 52.
[55] Carstairs, *Jailed for Possession*, 15, 101-102; Sangster, "Criminalizing the Colonized," 42.
[56] Sangster, "Criminalizing the Colonized," 42.

of settler colonialism created conditions in which Indigenous peoples were at higher risk of poverty and homelessness, circumstances which then made them more likely to be targets of the police.[57] Furthermore, among people experiencing poverty, Indigenous women were also more likely to be criminalized because of racist policing and racism in the courtroom.[58] In a settler colonial state built on White supremacy and premised on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, settler colonialism and racism undergirded settler law. Although more concrete research is required on this subject in this local context, preliminary and partial evidence I have accessed points to the over-incarceration of Indigenous women at Oakalla prison in ways that suggest that racialized patterns of policing and sentencing that occurred elsewhere in twentieth-century Canada more than likely occurred in Vancouver as well. Newspaper reports, partial police records, and oral histories all indicate that Indigenous women were disproportionately represented among those who were incarcerated at Oakalla. Moreover, these sources indicate that many of these women served sentences on alcohol-related charges. For example, a reporter for Victoria's *Daily Colonist* drew attention to these racialized patterns in 1958 when he reported that Indigenous women comprised sixty percent of women incarcerated at Oakalla, even though they made up only two to three percent of the province's population at the time. He indicated that many of these women had been imprisoned on alcohol offences, and that most were serving repeat sentences. Critical of this system, this reporter wrote that "there [were] at least 20 times as many Indian women in jail as there should be."[59] Despite the loosening through this period of discriminatory Indian Act and provincial restrictions pertaining to the purchase and consumption of alcohol by Indigenous people, that

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[57] Sangster, "Criminalizing the Colonized," 40.
[58] Joan Sangster, *Regulating Girls and Women: Sexuality, Family, and the Law in Ontario, 1920-1960* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2001)*, 15.
[59] Mortimer, "Some Go to Jail 100 Times".

Indigenous women were over-incarcerated on alcohol-related charges suggests that even though the letter of the law may have changed, its racist operation continued. For Indigenous women, poverty, homelessness, addiction, and criminal disciplining by the state were all inter-connected issues rooted in White supremacist and settler colonial violence.[60] Those roots of systemic and institutional inequity ran deep – and, in fact, underlay all women's poverty in Vancouver – and this legal system was one supporting branch.[61]

In late-twentieth-century Vancouver, inequity begot inequity. Not all women had histories of sex work, addiction, incarceration, and/or psychiatric diagnoses and institutionalization – certainly, women had diverse and complex histories – but these were some of the patterns connected to structural inequities of race, class, and gender that brought many women into homelessness in the Downtown Eastside and worked to keep them there. When they opened their hostel for women, the East Enders Society responded in its own, if

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[60] For evidence of the over-incarceration of Indigenous women in British Columbia jails, prisons, and other carceral institutions, see, for example: Mortimer, "Some Go to Jail 100 Times"; records of the East Enders Society, SFUA, F-59; Inquisitions/inquests conducted by coroners, BCA, GR-1502, Reels B04938; Inquiries, BCA, GR-1504, Reels B05064 – B05080. My preliminary review of case files of the Willingdon School for Girls (a prison/detention centre for girls) likewise suggests that Indigenous girls were overrepresented among those incarcerated there; more quantitative research with these files remains necessary to substantiate and quantify this assessment, but this over-representation was evident in the limited sample of files I analyzed. Willingdon School for Girls- case files, registers of pupils, and other material, BCA, GR-2897. On the over-incarceration of Indigenous women and girls in twentieth-century Ontario, see Sangster, "Criminalizing the Colonized"; Sangster, *Regulating Girls and Women.*

[61] For analyses of race, racism, and settler colonialism in the Canadian policing and legal systems during the twentieth century, see, for instance: Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History by University of Toronto Press, 1999); Constance Backhouse, "'Sordid' But 'Understandable Under the Circumstances': Kohnke, Croft, and Wilson, 1967," chap. 9 in *Carnal Crimes: Sexual Assault Law in Canada, 1900-1975* (Toronto: The Osgoode Society, 2008); Sherene Razack, ed., *Race Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002); Robyn Maynard, *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* (Black Point and Winnipeg: Fernwood Press, 2017); Renisa Mawani, *Colonial Proximities: Crossracial Encounters and Juridicial Truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009); Sangster, "Criminalizing the Colonized"; Joan Sangster, "Defining Sexual Promiscuity: "Race," Gender, and Class in the Operation of Ontario's Female Refuges Act, 1930-1960," in *Crimes of Colour: Racialization and the Criminal Justice System in Canada,* eds. Wendy Chan and Kiran Mirchandani (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001); Sangster, *Regulating Girls and Women;* Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011); Barrington Walker, *Race on Trial: Black Defendants in Ontario's Criminal Courts, 1858-1958* (Toronto: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History by University of Toronto Press, 2010).

limited way, to these larger and often overlapping structures of violence. Indeed, the East Enders Society made offering safe shelter for women one point of intervention into larger, complex problems of structural violence. Most immediately, the East Enders Society wanted to provide women experiencing unhoused homelessness – including, and especially, those who had just been released from prison or hospital – with a safe place to stay, where they could attain immediate material supports and resources. In so doing, the East Enders Society hoped to begin to break these links, and thus interrupt cycles of deep and deepening poverty.[62]

"A Place Where Someone Cares": Conceptions of Care

> *I got out of the city jail during March 1966, and all I had to my name was the clothes on my back and I was flat broke to boot. At midnight of the same day I went to the East-Enders Hostel where they took me in. The only questions asked were my name and age. They do not pry, but if you want to talk or ask for help to get back on your feet, the person to go to is Mrs. Gutteridge, the Counsellor. Mrs. Gutteridge is always willing to listen and will try her utmost to help you get back on your feet. I asked for food and shelter and got it. I have also asked for help to get myself straightened around, and I am still needing this help. The Hostel is for anybody who needs help, and another good thing about it is, it does not matter from where you come or when, the point is the doors are always open for anybody who needs help. I am truly thankful for the Hostel and for all it has done for me. I have received clothes, the feeling of being wanted and most of all, understanding. I am not the only one who gets this treatment, everybody does. Thank you kindly.[63]*
>   ~ Anonymous, letter printed in "The East-Enders Hostel" (pamphlet), 1966

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[62] For example, Phyllis Harwood indicated in 1967 that "Vancouver agencies dealing specifically with the problems of mental illness, narcotic addiction, and alcoholism have very limited facilities for "in care" treatment. Most of their work is carried out as an "out patient" project. Many of the women referred to our hostel by these agencies, Oakalla, Riverview, or local hospitals have completed their term of incarceration or treatment, but they are homeless." ("Mrs. Harwood's Report Dated September 30, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1.) The Society thus argued that "[w]ithout this accommodation [their hostel] women who had been released from jail or hospital were returning to their former lives on Skid Road, because immediate assistance was not available. Our hostel and day-centre provide[d] a refuge and home for such people." (East Enders Society, "2.," [origins], fundraising informational summaries of East Enders Society programs, c. 1967-1974, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.)

[63] [author not identified], letter printed in East Enders Society, "The East-Enders Hostel," pamphlet, 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1.

With this 'thank you note' – featured in an informational pamphlet for the East Enders Society – a woman testified to the value of the East Enders' Hostel in her life. The Society's inclusion of this letter in their pamphlet, however, perhaps tells us more about how the Society understood their hostel than it does about the woman who wrote it. By showcasing this letter, the Society implicitly framed their hostel as place where women could have their most immediate material needs (food, shelter, clothing) met, but in an environment that was welcoming, inclusive, and supportive. Significantly, the way in which this letter highlights the affective contours of their help intimates that the East Enders came to conceive of their hostel as being important for reasons that extended beyond the provision of a place to sleep, food to eat, and clothes to wear. Their inclusion of this letter shows that they understood their work through a framework of care that centred emotional support as much as material aid. More than providing a physical structure of shelter, the East Enders Society believed that their hostel mattered because of the care, and kind of care, they enacted within and through that space.

The East Enders' primary objective and means of care was meeting the immediate and short-term material needs of the women who came through their doors. Describing their hostel as "a temporary home for women in dire need of a bed, food, and shelter," they sought first and foremost to provide women with a safe place to sleep and nutritious meals.[64] The women shared meals together around a communal dinner table, and volunteers collected and sorted clothing donations that were then distributed to hostel clients. One volunteer recalled, for

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[64] Quotation: East Enders Society, "5. & 6. Hostel Services," fundraising informational summaries of East Enders Society programs, c. 1967-1974, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3. See also: Ross in Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; May Gutteridge, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-2; Mary Kelly, interview, transcript, c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; Minutes of meeting of EES, 28 April 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of EES, 26 May 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 9 June 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 16 June 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; East Enders Society, "Because Someone Cares," pamphlet, 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Horrobin, "Skid Road Hostel"; Horrobin, "Skid Road Hostel"; Lynn, "Going more than half way."

instance, that "there was lots of clothing in the basement" for the women, including "lovely

coats" and other "warm clothing."[65] When she began her position as the Society's social

worker in January 1967, Phyllis Harwood was impressed to "see how quickly the added guests

were cared for."[66] She described how "[b]eds, bedding, meals, and even clothing were provided

with little fuss and great expediency…It was a revelation," she exclaimed, "to find Nightwear,

Underwear, Gowns, Slippers, and Housecoats neatly stored as to size and quickly available."[67]

The Society also sought to connect women with other services and agencies important to their

health and welfare. For instance, the Society liaised with local doctors and dentists to arrange

free medical services for hostel clients, while Harwood provided individual counselling and

further assisted clients in various areas, including securing welfare, housing, legal aid, and

vocational training.[68] Overall, the Society's provision of these ranging services shows that that

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[65] Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, 19 October 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3. See also: Ross in Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; Phyllis Harwood, "East Enders Society Annual Meeting: Social Worker's Report," social worker's report for year 1967, c. December 1967-January 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; M.C. Gutteridge, Executive Director, "Annual General Meeting of The East-Enders Society – 25th January, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5.

[66] Phyllis Harwood, "East Enders Society Annual Meeting: Social Worker's Report," social worker's report for year 1967, c. December 1967-January 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5.

[67] Phyllis Harwood, "East Enders Society Annual Meeting: Social Worker's Report," social worker's report for year 1967, c. December 1967-January 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5.

[68] Before the Society created a full-time paid social worker position in 1967 (whose salary was covered by a grant from the Provincial government), May Gutteridge acted in this capacity. In the fall of 1966, Gutteridge stepped away from her role as Executive Director of the East Enders to focus on her social work with the church. Coinciding with Gutteridge's departure from her direct role as hostel social worker, the East Enders Society hired Phyllis de L. Harwood, who began her position as the Society's social worker starting January 1967. Jean Brander was hired as the Society's social worker in December 1970, following Harwood's retirement. In addition to their work at the hostel, the social workers also provided counselling to women at the East Enders Society Women's Day Centre, a subject of the third chapter of this dissertation. Many women who began counselling at the hostel/lodge continued at the day centre. Phyllis Harwood, "East Enders Society Annual Meeting: Social Worker's Report," social worker's report for year 1967, c. December 1967-January 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; East Enders Society, "Because Someone Cares," pamphlet, 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 9 June 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 September 1965; Minutes of special meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 20 December 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Minutes of Special meeting of the Board of Directors of EES, 29 September 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 November 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2;Phyllis C. Dale, President, "President's Report: East-Enders Society, Annual Meeting Held January 25, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; East Enders Society, "Our Social Worker," East Enders Society notice of annual meeting, January 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; May Gutteridge, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-2.

they wanted to meet the most immediate material needs of their guests and help set them up for their lives after they left the hostel.

But as they strove to meet these concrete needs, the East Enders Society also understood their care to be about providing something less tangible, as well – through the hostel, they also wanted to offer women something that resembled a 'home'. Indeed, they explained that their hostel "provided a refuge and home" for women experiencing homelessness, especially those who had recently come from prison or hospital.[69] Like other middle-class women's organizations that provided similar temporary housing services for women elsewhere in Canada, the East Enders Society presented their hostel as having a "home-like atmosphere" that offered "a warm refuge for guests in their time of difficulty."[70]

However, how the East Enders Society conceived of home was shaped by their own backgrounds and social positions. The East Enders explained to their supporters that "the hostel is run in the same manner you would run your own home. The guests assist, when at all possible, with house work and cooking, much to their own satisfaction."[71] But in making this comparison between the hostel and their readers' "own home[s]," the East Enders Society assumed a shared understanding of what a home entailed.[72] For instance, the East Enders designed the house along their own middle-class and gendered ideas of home as a space of domestic chores, comfort, relaxation, and leisure. For example, the Society set up the physical space of the house to be a place to relax and unwind, with a living room for watching television

[69] East Enders Society, "2.", [origins], fundraising informational summaries of East Enders Society programs, c. 1967-1974, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

[70] East Enders Society, "The East-Enders Hostel," pamphlet, 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1. For example, the Elizabeth Fry Society likewise strove to set up their transition houses for women from prison to have a home-like feel. See: Sangster, "Reforming Women's Reformatories," 236.

[71] "East Enders Society, "5. & 6. Hostel Services," fundraising informational summaries of East Enders Society programs, c. 1967-1974, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

[72] "East Enders Society, "5. & 6. Hostel Services," fundraising informational summaries of East Enders Society programs, c. 1967-1974, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

and socializing, and a designated quiet room for rest and reflection.[73] Further, they understood meals to be about social connection, as much as sustenance, with Society member Mary Ross recalling favourably the "sociability around the table" during dinner times.[74] The Society also organized various domestic leisure activities for hostel guests, including a social club, summer drives, picnics, film viewings, and special holiday dinners.[75] Notably, then, while the very premise of their project destabilized middle-class settler notions of home as being of the private sphere and the domain of the patriarchal, nuclear family, this design simultaneously upheld particular class-based and gendered ideas about domestic space and women's leisure.

Related to the East Enders Society's enactment of their own domestic ideals, maternal support was another integral aspect of the Society's notion and politics of home and care. Indeed, May Gutteridge expressed that the East Enders did not simply or only "offer shelter but shelter given with love and complete generosity."[76] With this ideology, the Society thus understood the presence and role of both the house matrons and the social worker to be at the core of their care. They noted in one of their informational brochures, for example, that "[a]

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[73] East Enders Society, "Because Someone Cares," pamphlet, 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "The East-Enders Hostel," pamphlet, 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Acknowledgments," *The East-Enders Bulletin,* newsletter, Fall Edition 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 19 July 1965, EES fonds, SFUA, F-59-1-0-0-2, SFUA; Minutes of meeting of Board of EES, 13 September 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of EES, 2 February 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 October 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Holt, "Door Always Open".

[74] Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4.

[75] Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 19 July 1965, EES fonds, SFUA, F-59-1-0-0-2, SFUA; Minutes of meeting of Board of EES, 2 September 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of EES, 1 December 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 April 1966; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 May 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 10 January 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 February 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; "Easter at the Lodge," The East Enders Society newsletter, April 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; "East Enders Society, "5. & 6. Hostel Services," fundraising informational summaries of East Enders Society programs, c. 1967-1974, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

[76] M. Gutteridge, "Report of the Hostel," *The East-Enders bulletin,* newsletter, fall 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1. See also: M.C. Gutteridge, Executive Director, "Annual General Meeting of The East-Enders Society – 25th January, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5.

home-like atmosphere is sustained through the kindly interest of the matrons and the social worker."[77] Further showing that emotional support or affect lay at the heart of their approach to service, Gutteridge wrote that "[e]verytime any helper has contact with one of our women, it is a link in the chain of rehabilitation…even if the wom[a]n slips back, nothing can irradicate [sic] love and kindness."[78] The East Enders Society explained that the house matrons "have always shown a loving, kind interest in anyone, regardless of race or color, who needs our help, no matter what time of day or night they may call upon us."[79] The Society, moreover, envisioned this sense of home and care to be lasting, rather than ephemeral. They explained that former guests "are welcome to drop in for a chat or meal. It is hoped that they think of it [the hostel] as a second home."[80] Indicating that the East Enders believed – or at least hoped – they achieved this goal, they explained that "[m]any of the girls feel the hostel is their home and often speak of "going home" for supper, lunch, or Christmas dinner."[81] In sum, the East Enders envisioned and desired that their hostel would provide women experiencing homelessness with a sense of home and emotional support both during the time they stayed there, but also in a more enduring way; they centred the affect of 'home' as essential to their care.

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[77] East Enders Society, "Because Someone Cares," pamphlet, 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1. The Society employed full-time and relief house matrons who remained at the hostel twenty-four hours a day when they were on duty. "East Enders Society, "5. & 6. Hostel Services," fundraising informational summaries of East Enders Society programs, c. 1967-1974, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; Pearl Willows to [anonymized for confidentiality] [re. house matron position], 23 September 1970, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-2, SFUA; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 October 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2.
[78] M.C. Gutteridge, Executive Director, "Annual General Meeting of The East-Enders Society – 25th January, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5.
[79] "East Enders Society, "5. & 6. Hostel Services," fundraising informational summaries of East Enders Society programs, c. 1967-1974, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.
[80] East Enders Society, "The East-Enders Hostel," pamphlet, 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1.
[81] East Enders Society, "The East-Enders Hostel," pamphlet, 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1.

However, just because the East Enders Society understood the relationships between themselves and the women to whom they provided services in these positive ways, that does not necessarily mean that the women who stayed at the hostel felt the same. Certainly, settler politics of maternalism and uses of domestic spaces to regulate women and girls according to specific class, religious, colonial, and racialized understandings of femininity, domesticity, and respectability has a tangled and fraught history.[82] Given this, it is possible that the women who stayed at the hostel may have understood the hostel and their relationships with the women who provided services there differently. For instance, Janette Andrew, a former client of the East Enders Society who stayed at the hostel shortly after it opened, discussed her evolving impressions of May Gutteridge:

> I met Mrs. Gutteridge and thought, 'Oh she sounds so strict, so bossy.' It reminded me about my early years at the Residential School and not to talk back to someone in authority…I grew to like her as she never put anyone down but made you feel important, like, 'Go get it girl' or 'You can do it.' Mrs. G. never judged you for your faults, she always thought the positive and not negative.[83]

While Andrew ultimately came to respect and like Gutteridge, her initial apprehension was shaped by her experiences of residential school, underscoring that care in this context was not

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[82] Jean Barman, "Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, and Race in British Columbia, 1850-1900," *BC Studies* nos. 115/116 (Autumn/Winter 1997/98): 237-266; Sarah Carter, "Creating "Semi-Widows" and "Supernumerary Wives": Prohibiting Polygamy in Prairie Canada's Aboriginal Communities," in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past,* eds., Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005); Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton and Athabasca: University of Alberta Press and University of Athabasca Press, 2008); Kirkland, "Home away from Home"; Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Adele Perry, "Metropolitan Knowledge, Colonial Practice, and Indigenous Womanhood: Missions in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia," in Pickles and Rutherdale, eds., *Contact Zones*; Paige Raibmon, "Living on Display: Colonial Visions of Aboriginal Domestic Space," *BC Studies* no. 140 (Winter 2003/04): 69-89; Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002); Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*; Valverde, *Age of Light, Soap, and Water*; Joan Sangster, "Domesticating Girls: The Sexual Regulation of Aboriginal and Working-Class Girls in Twentieth-Century Canada," in Pickles and Rutherdale, eds., *Contact Zones*; Myers; *Caught;* Sangster, *Regulating Girls and Women.*
[83] Janette Andrew [pseudonym], quoted in Welbanks, *From Lost to Found,* 20. Douglas Welbanks, a former social worker with St. James' Social Services Society (see chapter three) interviewed Andrew for his book on the history of Gutteridge's work with St. James' Social Services Society.

neutral. Certainly, as Andrew's comments suggest, it is not unreasonable to expect that Indigenous women would have been mistrustful of White church workers and social workers given personal and intergenerational experiences of settler colonial policies and practices, especially residential schools. A limit of the sources I have accessed, however, is that they do not provide sufficient evidence to assess how women who stayed at the hostel understood these relationships, or to adequately analyze the operations of power there. Nevertheless, although – as I will detail in the next section of this chapter – Indigenous women service providers were also involved with the work of the East Enders Society, and although Andrew's own impressions of Gutteridge grew positive, it is reasonable to assume that hostel clients may have related to service providers with the East Enders Society in cautious or guarded ways.

What is clear from the available record, is that care – however potentially imbued in unequal relations of power – was the East Enders Society's orienting politics. That their politics was one of care was both subtle and explicit: a 1965 *Vancouver Times* article about the hostel featured the headline, "A Place Where Someone Cares," and the title of their own 1968 informational pamphlet was "Because Someone Cares."[84] Truly, for the East Enders, how they delivered their services mattered as much as the services themselves. For this group of more privileged women, their care entailed not only providing women experiencing poverty with the basic material necessities of life, but to do so with a spirit of intended generosity, love, and kindness, and within spaces that they designed around their own understandings of safety, comfort, and social connection. Overall, the East Enders Society designed the hostel according to their own ideas of home – they wanted it to be a comfortable, supportive place that nurtured human connection, rather than a stark institution.

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[84] Kelly, "A Place Where Someone Cares"; East Enders Society, "Because Someone Cares," pamphlet, 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1.

"I Knew What to Do and How to Help": Power and Limits of Collaborative Politics

The East Enders Society's approach to care was, like all organizing and activism, shaped by who they were and where they came from. To frame the East Enders Society's care politics as exclusively the ideas and work of concerned White, middle-class women, however, would be misleading. This was also a moment of change in which Indigenous and settler women came together in care work. Indeed, while many members of the East Enders Society were White, middle-class professional woman, the work of the East Enders Society was also driven and shaped by the perspectives and labour of Indigenous matriarchs and community leaders. Indigenous women worked with and alongside White settler women in the provision of services, showing that they had overlapping concerns and approaches to care. However, the dynamics and trajectory of cross-cultural collaborations in the provision of shelter services reveal that the backgrounds of service providers shaped their work in ways that impacted their outcomes. In particular, whereas most non-Indigenous members of the East Enders Society were motivated from more of a social and geographic distance, Indigenous service providers and organizers had closer proximity to Indigenous women's urban precarity because of the impacts of settler colonialism and racism in their own lives and communities. Indeed, where the care work of settler women involved with the East Enders Society was, at least for some, shaped by a sense of Christian duty and/or maternalist ideology, Indigenous women were often driven by (or also by) a sense of community responsibility. While this is a point I will develop more fully in the following chapter on social drop-in centres, it is apparent in the example of the East Enders women's hostel as well. As I will show in the pages that follow (as well as the next chapter), the outcomes and evolution of cross-cultural collaborative politics further reveal that women's backgrounds shaped the care they provided in ways that could be both effective

and limiting. Ultimately, Indigenous women's work both with and apart from the East Enders Society suggests that something about the framework of care operationalized at the East Enders Hostel was not quite able to address, or address fully, the issue of Indigenous women's homelessness.

The East Enders Society started, in large part, because of a concern for Indigenous women, but perhaps came up against its own limits when it came to providing services for these women. Relative to their proportion of the city's population, Indigenous women were over-represented among those who stayed at the East Enders hostel. For example, fifty-nine percent of guests in October 1965 were Indigenous women, as were sixty-two percent in November, and fifty-five percent in December.[85] Furthermore, Indigenous women comprised twenty-six percent of hostel guests in 1966, thirty-nine percent in 1967, twenty-six percent in 1968, and approximately thirty percent in 1969.[86] These statistics reflect that Indigenous women continued to experience homelessness disproportionately throughout the decade. That these women stayed at the East Enders hostel shows proof of concept; there was a need for a shelter for Indigenous women experiencing homelessness, and the East Enders hostel provided such a place.[87] However, while Indigenous women remained overrepresented at the East Enders hostel, these statistics also show that there was also a relative decline in the number of Indigenous women who stayed there following its first year in operation. This decline was not,

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[85] I derived these percentages from statistics in East Enders Society, "Report of girls at hostel," c. 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1.

[86] I derived these percentages from East Enders Society, "Hostel Guest Statistics," 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1. See also: Phyllis de L. Harwood, "The East-Enders Society Social Worker's Annual Report, January 29, 1969", SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; Pearl Willows, Vice President, East Enders Society to R.J. McInnes, B.C. Indian Advisory Committee, Department of Provincial Secretary, B.C., 9 December 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1.

[87] A disproportionate number of women who stayed at the Legion of Mary's Sancta Maria House were also Indigenous. According to a 1964 article by Kay Kelly in the *Vancouver Times,* sixty percent of the 300 women who stayed at the Sancta Maria House every year were Indigenous, and forty percent were White. (Kelly, "'The House of Hope..'.")

though, an indication that Indigenous women's vulnerability to street homelessness and violence had lessened; rather, as the East Enders Society themselves acknowledged, this shift was an outcome of additional efforts by Indigenous women, including Margaret White, to provide culturally-specific shelter services.[88]

Margaret White, a Cree woman from Maskwacis (formerly Hobbema), Alberta, was instrumental in the creation of the East Enders Society and in the establishment and early operation of the hostel.[89] However, her pathway to this work was different from the settler women she worked alongside. Margaret White began working with Indigenous women and girls in Downtown Eastside Vancouver in 1962 because of a responsibility to her home community. Prior to moving to Vancouver, White had worked as a hospital nurse's aide and as a physician's receptionist in several different communities in Alberta, including Hobbema (Maskwacis), Morley, and Grimshaw.[90] She explained that after "people from home knew I had moved to Vancouver, they said, 'Would you please, if you have the time, look for our girl. We know she's there somewhere.'"[91] As she upheld her duty to her community and searched for these families' loved ones, her awareness and concern about Indigenous women's urban

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[88] The East Enders Society attributed the decline in the number of Indigenous women who stayed at the East Enders hostel to the opening of other hostels by and for Indigenous women specifically, including those opened by Margaret White. Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 27 April 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Phyllis de L. Harwood, "The East-Enders Society Social Worker's Annual Report January 29, 1969," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1.

[89] Minutes of dinner meeting of East-Enders, 6 October 1964, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of East-Enders, 28 October 1964, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of East-Enders, 25 November 1964, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of EES, 19 January 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of EES, 28 April 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of EES, 9 June 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Kelly, "A Place Where Someone Cares"; White in Canada, *Speaking Together*. Margaret White was born in 1917 on the Erminskin Reserve, Hobbema, Alberta. Hobbema was renamed Maskwacis in 2014. She passed away on 10 February 2004 in the Ponoko Hospital, near Maskwacis. Karie Garnier, *Our Elders Speak: A Tribute to Native Elders* (White Rock, British Columbia: Karie Garnier, 1990); "White, Margaret Dorothy" (Obituaries), *Vancouver Sun*, February 21, 2004.

[90] "Courts, Jails, Hospitals Await Some Girls in Cities," *The Citizen* (Prince George), (Edmonton CP article), February 7, 1967, 5.

[91] White in Canada, *Speaking Together*.

precarity sharpened: "My goodness," she explained, "I didn't find one, I found many – in horrible conditions too."[92] With settler women, including May Gutteridge, White then became involved in establishing the East Enders Society to open a women's hostel. Her pivotal involvement in starting the East Enders Society was central to her own concerted efforts to mitigate these conditions. As White expressed to a *Vancouver Times* reporter, "[w]e just want[ed] to get the door open as soon as possible" because each passing day without the shelter "mean[t] another day girls wanting help are just turned back to the street."[93] When the hostel was set to open, White resigned from her position on the Board of the East Enders Society to take up the role of the hostel's first matron; as matron, she lived at the house and was on-call twenty-four hours a day. She explained her commitment to this position despite the personal sacrifices it would entail: "I don't yet know how I'll manage working those long hours, but even if we can give only one girl a year a new life, it will be worthwhile."[94] Like the settler women involved with the East Enders Society, then, White was committed to this work because of a shared concern about Indigenous women's urban precarity, but her work was differently grounded in a responsibility to her community.

White's social position also differently informed her relationships with Indigenous women who lived in circumstances of poverty and homelessness. As an Indigenous woman, and as someone who lived in the neighbourhood herself, White became a trusted community matriarch and developed and nurtured kin-like relationships with these women.[95] For instance,

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[92] White in Canada, *Speaking Together*.
[93] Margaret White quoted in Kelly, "A Place Where Someone Cares".
[94] Margaret White quoted in Kelly, "A Place Where Someone Cares". On White's work as house matron at the East Enders' hostel, see also: Minutes of meeting of EES, 28 April 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of EES, 26 May 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of EES, 9 June 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of general meeting of EES, 23 June 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 19 July 1965, EES fonds, SFUA, F-59-1-0-0-2, SFUA; Minutes of meeting of Board of EES, 16 August 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2.
[95] White in Canada, *Speaking Together*.

as a reporter for the *Native Voice* newspaper described, "[e]very week [White] [could] be seen driving along a downtown street in her little red car – ready to pick up any Indian girl in trouble," and she regularly "visit[ed] beer parlours, stopping just to chat, and to keep in touch."[96] Certainly, as illustrated by the story of the young woman who telephoned White for help when she was extremely ill – the story with which this chapter began – White developed relationships of love and trust with these women. This meant that she was able to better support them in their time of need.[97]

White's social position and relationships with these women gave her a different perspective on the issue of Indigenous women's precarity than the settler women with whom she worked as part of the East Enders Society. Her different perspective ultimately shaped her working relationship with these other Society members. For instance, White explained her foundational role in establishing the East Enders Society and opening the hostel, noting "I knew what to do and how to help."[98] She indicated, however, that within the first months of the hostel's operation, non-Indigenous members of the Board challenged her expertise and approach to care. She said that "[t]he board was all white people and the minute they got their feet in they became "experts" and started putting down policies."[99] For example, White explained that as house matron, she prioritized providing shelter to Indigenous women and girls, but that this practice became a source of tension. White recalled one Board member who claimed she was "discriminating because [she] was only taking Indian girls."[100] White explained the contradiction, noting that "[w]e got this place going because the public wanted

[96] "Home a Refuge for Indian Girls," *Native Voice,* February 1971, 8. See also: "Vancouver Home Reclaims Girls From "Skid Row," *Indian Record: A National Publication for the Indians of Canada,* Winnipeg, 29, no. 9 (November 1966), 6.
[97] White in Canada, *Speaking Together*.
[98] White in Canada, *Speaking Together*.
[99] White in Canada, *Speaking Together*.
[100] White in Canada, *Speaking Together*.

a place for Indian girls but the board had other ideas."[101] She explained her reason for taking

the approach she did, noting that through her "experience [she] had become convinced that

much more could be accomplished by concentrating on Indian girls in the 16 to 20 age group

than by attempting to help all women with problems."[102] Nevertheless, White's approach and

focus in her work created friction between herself and other members of the East Enders

Society; ultimately, constrained by the Board of the East Enders Society from doing the work

she deemed most critical, in September 1965, White resigned from her position as house

matron.[103] Overall, the initial involvement but then departure of Margaret White from the East

Enders Society shows that while she and the primarily non-Indigenous members of the East

Enders Society had similar concerns that initially brought them together in a shared project,

they also had different perspectives that could, and in this case did, lead to conflicting visions

and operationalization of care.

Margaret White consistently fought to provide the services and resources she

understood to be most necessary, in the ways she thought would be most impactful, even when

that meant departing one project of care and starting another. Certainly, after she departed the

East Enders Society, White continued to work in collaboration with non-Indigenous women to

provide shelter services to Indigenous women and girls. For example, she worked with two

student groups, the Canadian Union of Students and the University of British Columbia's Alma

Mater Society, to open and run the Indian Women's Co-op House and, subsequently, with

another group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to establish the Nasaika Lodge. Both

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[101] White in Canada, *Speaking Together*.
[102] White, "Home Established."
[103] White in Canada, *Speaking Together*. See also: Linda Hossie "Indian Half-Way Houses No Longer Go All the Way," *Ubyssey,* 28 November 1972; Minutes of meeting of Board of EES, 2 September 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of EES, 13 September 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2.

the Indian Women's Co-op House, which opened in April 1966, and the Nasaika Lodge, which opened in October 1967, provided temporary housing exclusively to young Indigenous women and girls. However, as with the East Enders Society, different underlying priorities and principles resulted in tensions between Margaret White and the primarily non-Indigenous boards of those two houses. These competing visions pushed Margaret White to leave the Indian Women's Co-Op house about six months after it opened, and within the Nasaika Lodge Society, to need to consistently and continuously advocate for the delivery of culturally-relevant services from an Indigenous perspective.[104]

Margaret White and other Indigenous leaders in Vancouver strove to provide culturally-specific shelter services because they understood that Indigenous women's experiences of homelessness were shaped and compounded by settler colonialism and racism, and thus required a different approach. Indeed, in Vancouver, as elsewhere in late-twentieth-century urban Canada, Indigenous women's specific work to open reception and boarding houses was intended to mitigate some of the racism and cultural isolation that Indigenous women and girls often experienced upon moving to cities.[105] Certainly, reporters for the *Native*

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[104] "Vancouver Home Reclaims Girls From "Skid Row"; Margaret D. White, "Home Established," (letter to the editor), *Vancouver Sun,* December 6, 1966, 5; Ann Bishop, "A new blow at race prejudice," *Province,* January 26, 1967, 38; "Courts, Jails, Hospitals Await Some Girls in Cities"; "Indian hostel hearing postponed two weeks," *Province,* January 19, 1968, 15; "Nasaika Lodge Society: Tag Day Planned to Aid Indian Girls," *Native Voice,* March 1968, 22, no. 2, 1-4; Kathy Hassard, "Funds Needed to Found Hostel," *Vancouver Sun,* March 15, 1968; Olive E.J. Cousins, "Lodge Sale a Success," *Native Voice,* September 1968; Terry French, "Caring at the Heart of Hostels: An alternative to life of Rita Joe," *Province,* June 6, 1969; "Home a Refuge for Indian Girls," *Native Voice,* February 1971; Doug Campbell (Vancouver Sun), "Vancouver Lodge Helps 'New' Girls," *Native Voice,* November 1971; Hossie, "Indian Half-Way Houses"; White in Canada, *Speaking Together*.

[105] Heather A. Howard, "Women's Class Strategies as Activism in Native Community Building in Toronto, 1950-1975," in *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women's Activism in Urban Communities,* eds. Susan Applegate Krouse and Heather A. Howard (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press); Nancy Janovicek, "'Assisting Our Own': Urban Migration, Self-Governance, and Native Women's Organizing in Thunder Bay, Ontario, 1972-1989," in Krouse and Howard, eds., *Keeping the Campfires Going;* Mary Jane Logan McCallum, *Indigenous Women, Work, and History, 1940-1980* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014). Certainly, Margaret White was not alone in this work; other Indigenous women in Vancouver likewise opened and ran similar boarding and reception houses for Indigenous women and girls in the city during this period. (Longstaffe, "Indigenous Women as Newspaper Representations.")

Voice underscored this point as something that differentiated the Nasaika Lodge from other such houses. For example, writing in 1971, one *Native Voice* reporter situated the importance of the Nasaika Lodge within a continued crisis of Indigenous women's precarity, noting that "[d]uring the last year, more than 20 Native girls have died on skid road. They suffered from its deadly symptoms – malnutrition, alcohol, tuberculosis, drugs, pneumonia – all flourishing in ideal breeding grounds."[106] He explained that within this context, the Nasaika Lodge was "a far cry from a bed under an alley staircase, a hard bench, or a crowded all-night café."[107] And yet, as another reporter argued, the Nasaika Lodge provided Indigenous women and girls experiencing homelessness with something more than a safe bed. That reporter explained that "[t]he YWCA is there but the Y isn't Indian and a lot of the girls have enough hang-ups about white people that they won't stay."[108] As the Lodge's Executive Director Lynda Haskins explained to that reporter, "'They need a place where there is Indian identity and understanding.'"[109] Significantly, then, Indigenous leaders in Vancouver, including Margaret White, provided services for Indigenous women that achieved something that those offered by White service providers alone could not; even while they worked in cross-cultural collaboration, including at the Nasaika Lodge, these women provided culturally-specific services run by and for Indigenous people, from an Indigenous perspective.

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[106] "Home a Refuge for Indian Girls." *The Native Voice* (1946-1968) was a small newspaper, and the official periodical of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia. It published news and articles relevant to Indigenous peoples across the province. On the history and origins of *The Native Voice* see, Eric Jamieson, with a foreword by Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, *The Native Voice: The Story of How Maisie Hurley and Canada's First Aboriginal Newspaper Changed a Nation* ([Halfmoon Bay, BC]: Caitlin Press, 2016).

[107] "Home a Refuge for Indian Girls."

[108] Campbell, "Vancouver Lodge Helps 'New' Girls". The "Bridge Y" hostel opened in 1971. It was owned by the City, but operated by the YWCA. (East Enders Society, "Forward…and a new emphasis," East-Enders News, c. October 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the EES, 6 February 1974, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-4.) At the time Campbell's article went to print, the East Enders had relocated their hostel to the Grandview-Woodlands neighbourhood, where they operated it primarily as a boarding house for former women patients of Riverview psychiatric hospital, rather than as an emergency shelter. This evolution of the East Enders hostel into a boarding house is a subject of the next section of this chapter.

[109] Campbell, "Vancouver Lodge Helps 'New' Girls".

Nevertheless, their perspectives and approaches could, and did, come into tension with non-Indigenous service providers who were less cognizant of the cultural dimensions of homelessness, or who assumed to know best and sought to supersede the leadership of Indigenous people. For instance, showing both a disconnect in perspective but also underlying racial bias, White explained that she had planned the Nasaika Lodge to provide assistance to women and girls coming from prisons and other institutions, but the White majority Board "won't take girls from the prisons….They just want nice little well-mannered educated Indian girls so they won't have to face the problem."[110] Relatedly, White explained that the source of conflicts was that many non-Indigenous board members did not understand what Indigenous leaders were trying to achieve.[111] For example, when the White majority Board of the Nasaika Lodge Society decided in the early 1970s to turn the Lodge into a psychiatric treatment centre, Margaret White was a vocal opponent. Expressing her opposition to this decision and to the power exercised by non-Indigenous people in making it, White explained that "[t]hey give the impression that all Indians need psychiatric help…It would be fine if non-Indians would stay on the financial end of it and leave the social problems up to us, but they think they know what's best for us."[112] Here, she drew attention to systemic racism within Vancouver's developing service delivery infrastructure. This was an issue she made even more explicit when she raised the point that the Executive Director of the Nasaika Lodge Society was non-

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[110] Margaret White quoted in Hossie "Indian Half-Way Houses."
[111] "Vancouver Home Reclaims Girls From "Skid Row"; White, "Home Established"; Ann Bishop, "A new blow at race prejudice," *Province,* 26 January 1967, 38; "Courts, Jails, Hospitals Await Some Girls in Cities"; "Indian hostel hearing postponed two weeks," *Province,* 19 January 1968, 15; "Nasaika Lodge Society: Tag Day Planned to Aid Indian Girls," *Native Voice,* March 1968, vol. xxii. no. 2, 1-4; Hassard, "Funds Needed to Found Hostel"; Olive E.J. Cousins, "Lodge Sale a Success," *Native Voice,* September 1968, 2; Terry French, "Caring at the Heart of Hostels: An alternative to life of Rita Joe," *Province,* 6 June 1969, 34; "Home a Refuge for Indian Girls," *Native Voice,* February 1971, 8; Doug Campbell (Vancouver Sun), "Vancouver Lodge Helps 'New' Girls", *Native Voice,* November 1971, 5; Hossie, "Indian Half-Way Houses"; White in Canada, *Speaking Together*.
[112] Margaret White quoted in Hossie, "Indian Half-Way Houses."

Indigenous even though "there are enough qualified Indians to take the job." As she called out some of these explicit ways in which racism impacted collaborative politics at this time, White also offered a subtler example. She explained that programs at the Nasaika Lodge within the new treatment model were primarily occupational therapy programs, but critiqued those programs because they revealed that "their [the White majority board's] concept of teaching the Indian culture" was limited to having the women "cut out squares of leather" and do other such crafts; she noted that "[i]t's hopeless to try and push any Indian-oriented programs through."[113] Despite her evident frustration, however, Margaret White's critique of the direction of the Nasaika Lodge showcases something important. It shows that Indigenous community leaders at this time worked with non-Indigenous people in the development of a new service infrastructure, but also pushed back against those who undermined or questioned their expertise, authority, and leadership as they fought for and delivered culturally-specific and sensitive services.

Overall, the example of Margaret White's shelter work in community shows that cross-cultural collaboration was an important aspect of care politics in this moment of activism; together, settler and Indigenous women created valuable new temporary housing services for women experiencing homelessness. That said, these collaborations revealed both shared and distinct values at work. While Indigenous and settler women had overlapping concerns about Indigenous women's urban precarity, their social positions and backgrounds informed their approach to service in different ways. As Margaret White's housing work shows, and as I will continue to develop in the subsequent chapter on social drop-ins, while Indigenous leaders strategically worked with non-Indigenous organizations to develop new social services, they

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[113] Margaret White quoted in Hossie "Indian Half-Way Houses."

also actively strove to ensure that the developing service infrastructure would be culturally-specific and relevant for Indigenous people and their experiences of homelessness.

Epilogue

Even as other organizations and individuals, including – and especially – Indigenous women, opened additional shelters, hostels, and boarding homes, occupancy statistics at the East Enders' hostel demonstrated the still pressing need for safe shelter for women experiencing homelessness and the continued role of the East Enders Society in meeting some of that need. One afternoon not long after the hostel opened, Mary Ross received a phone call from the house matron who let her know that "the house was full…she did not have enough blankets, sheets, and …she had put up hammocks for the children."[114] That day was not exceptional. Ross recalled that the hostel was "absolutely crowded" which, she assessed, "show[ed] how great the need was."[115] In its first year, the East Enders women's hostel provided shelter to 225 women, 236 in 1966, 251 in 1967, and 253 in 1968. By December 1969 – four and a half years after they received their first client – the East Enders Society had provided temporary shelter to more than a thousand women.[116] These statistics make clear that

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[114] Ross in Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4.

[115] Ross in Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4.

[116] By fall 1965, there were, on average, twenty new monthly registrations at the hostel. During 1968, there was an average of twenty-four new registrations at the hostel every month, twenty during 1969, and nineteen during 1970. These averages are based on partial data. I calculated these averages from the average number of registrations for the following months: February, March, May, September, and October 1968; March, April, October, November 1969; April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December 1970. M. Gutteridge, "Report of the Hostel," *The East-Enders bulletin,* Fall Edition 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Report of girls at hostel," c. 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; "You Have Been Asking Us," East Enders Society Newsletter*,* April 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Reporting," East Enders Society newsletter, Fall 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Jean Crowley, "The President's Message," East Enders Society newsletter*,* Fall 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; "Monthly Board Meeting – Social Worker's Report," 6 May 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; Phyllis de L Harwood, "Social Worker's Report," Board Meeting of East Enders Society, 3 June 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; J.E. Brander, "Report to East Enders Society Board December 1st-31, 1970," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Hostel Guest Statistics," 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; East Enders Society,

the issues that drove the East Enders Society to create this hostel continued, and that, as a result, such shelters remained critically important.

However, location was crucial to this work; just a couple of kilometers made a difference. In 1969, the City of Vancouver required the Society to vacate the house on East Hastings Street as it planned to clear that block as part of its East End urban re-development plan. Consequently, the Society sold their house to the City and, in December 1969, relocated to East Fourth Avenue just off Commercial Drive in the Grandview-Woodlands neighbourhood.[117] But while only a few kilometers southeast of the Downtown Eastside, Mary

"Statistics re Lodge Guests, June and July 1970," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Statistics re Lodge Guests August 1970," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Statistics re Lodge Guests, September 1970," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Lodge Guest Statistics October 1970," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Statistics re Lodge Guests, November 1970," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of Board of EES, 9 June 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of general meeting of EES, 2 November 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of EES, 1 December 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of general meeting of EES, 1 June 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of EES, 6 March 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 April 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 June 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 October 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 November 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 4 December 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 April 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 May 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 November 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 December 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 December 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2.

[117] Although the Society knew from the time they purchased the Hastings Street house that they would not be permitted by the City to remain there indefinitely, as the City had pre-existing plans to acquire and demolish the property as part of its Redevelopment Project No. 2, this required move was, nevertheless, an example of how external political forces and pressures could and did disrupt social action. The city purchased the lot from the East Enders for $21,500 and, as requested by the East Enders, provided the Society with a further $5,000 grant to cover the down-payment on a new building. The East Enders Society moved into a house at 1656 East Fourth in December 1969. (Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 March 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 April 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 4 June 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of special meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 30 June 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 August 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 November 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 December 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Jean Crowley, "The President's Message," East-Enders Society newsletter, Fall 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; J. Seehuber, Supervisor of Property & Insurance, City of Vancouver to East Enders Society, 9 September 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; Pearl Willows, Vice President, East Enders Society to R.J. McInnes, B.C. Indian Advisory Committee, Department of Provincial Secretary, B.C., 9 December 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; Mrs. E. Crowely, "President's

Ross surmised that this new location was "too far away and we didn't get the people we really wanted to help."[118] Pushed out of the Downtown Eastside by the City, the East Enders were dismayed to then watch their former site lay vacant. One Society member remarked that after the City demolished the green house on East Hastings Street, "the site remained a hole in the ground for several years."[119] Mary Ross explained that seeing the lot sit "empty for years…was a pity because that was where the need was. We had a full house and were meeting a need and serving a purpose."[120]

Once in the Grandview-Woodlands neighbourhood, the East Enders Society's work evolved. They continued to offer emergency housing and counselling services for women in their new location, which they then called the East Enders Lodge. However, given the changes produced by their new location, they shifted their primary focus. Increasingly conscious of a need for housing for women with psychiatric histories, they transitioned away from the provision of emergency shelter toward a model of boarding home care for women who had been discharged from Riverview Psychiatric Hospital. They also made this transition, in part, at the request of the Health Care and Aging division of the City's Welfare and Rehabilitation Department. From June 1971, the East Enders Society operated the Lodge primarily as a long-term boarding house for women from Riverview, who were referred and placed by a medical

Report, East-Enders Society, Fifth Annual Meeting, January 30, 1970," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; "Memo for the Medical Office Assistants of B.C.", 5 December 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-9. For more details on the City's urban renewal (Redevelopment Project No. 2) plan as it pertained to the East Enders Society, see also the records in CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, City Social Planning Department Administrative and Operational Files, COV-S571, 77-D-1 file 10, "East Enders Society."

[118] Ross in Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4. Mary Kelly recalled that "nothing suitable was available" in the Downtown Eastside, and that this was the main reason they moved the hostel to Grandview Woodlands. Mary Kelly, interview, transcript, c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4.

[119] [Unknown, possibly Jean Crowley or Mary Ross], "East Enders Society," written reflections, [June, c. 1990-92], SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

[120] Ross in Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4.

social worker, with a couple of beds reserved for emergency housing. The East Enders continued to operate the house in this new capacity for just over a year and a half. Significantly, the establishment of a boarding house for former Riverview patients was, like their former emergency shelter, an important intervention into women's homelessness during this period of psychiatric de-institutionalization that helped to break cyclical patterns of hospital re-admission, at least in individual cases. Nevertheless, citing difficulties with staffing and administration, the East Enders ultimately decided to phase out the Lodge. They closed the Lodge in February 1973, thus ending their involvement in shelter services.[121]

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[121] By February 1972, the Lodge had seven long-term care beds. Later the East Enders reduced long-term care beds to five so that women could have single room accommodation (the house had five bedrooms). These residents stayed at the Lodge anywhere from a couple of months to a year, where they received ongoing supportive services from the Department's medical social worker, as well as continued psychiatric and general medical care in the community. The East Enders Society also identified the Bridge Y hostel (operated by the YWCA), which opened in 1971 as filling some of the need for emergency housing. The opening of the Bridge Y was one reason they felt more confident re-directing their focus toward boarding home care. Although the East Enders ultimately decided to close the Lodge, they continued to believe in the importance of boarding home care for women from Riverview. They thus decided to sell their house to the M.P.A. (Mental Patients Association), a grassroots patient-led organization (established c. 1970-71) which had already established numerous user-led services (supportive housing, drop-in centre) for people with psychiatric histories, and who intended to continue to operate the Grandview-Woodlands house as a residence for former psychiatric patients. See: Minutes of meetings of Board of Directors of EES for 2 June 1971, 1 December 1971, 5 January 1972, 1 March 1972, 3 January 1973, 7 February 1973, 21 March 1973, 4 April 1973, 11 April 1973, and 5 September 1973, all in SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Pearl Willows, "President's Report," Sixth Annual Meeting of EES, 28 January 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; P. Willows, "President's Report," Seventh Annual Meeting of EES, 2 February 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Minutes of Eighth Annual Meeting of EES, 29 January 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Victoria Frazer-Crierie, "President's Report," Ninth Annual Meeting of the EES, 23 November 1974, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Pearl Willows, President, East Enders Society to Mr. W. Camozzi, Department of Rehabilitation and Social Improvement (Vancouver), 16 June 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-9; Pearl Willows, President, East Enders Society to G.D. Storey, Secretary, Employee Charitable Appeals Fund Committee, Vancouver General Hospital, 26 June 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-9; East Enders Society, "Forward…and a new emphasis," East-Enders News, c. October 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Memo for the Medical Office Assistants of B.C.", 5 December 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-9; V. Frazer-Crierie, President, East Enders Society to W.N. Boyd, Director, Welfare & Rehabilitation Department (Vancouver), 7 January 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; [Health Care & Aging Department of the Welfare and Rehabilitation Department, City of Vancouver], "Suggested Policy and Procedure regarding long term residents at the East Enders Lodge", policy procedures, c. February 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; S. McDiarmid, Director, Health Care & Aging, Welfare and Rehabilitation Department to V. Fraser Crierie, President, the East Enders Society, 28 February 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; D. Toombs, Assistant Director, Welfare and Rehabilitation Department, City of Vancouver to Pearl Willows, President, East Enders Society, 28 February 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; R. Frazer-Crierie, President, The East Enders Society to D. Toombs, Assistant Director, Welfare and Rehabilitation Department, Vancouver, 9 March 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; Eunice Fastable and Mary Ross, "East Enders Society Policy Committee Report – April 1972," EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-7, SFUA; Mary Ross, Secretary, East Enders Society to Sheila McDiarmid,

However, while the closure of their Lodge marked the end of their care work via shelters, it was not the end of their anti-poverty advocacy. In particular, the need for supportive housing for women with psychiatric histories was not the only housing need the East Enders Society came to identify through their earlier emergency shelter work. By the late 1960s, the East Enders Society had identified the lack of safe, secure, and affordable housing (see chapter one) as one of the most, if not the most, significant structural barriers to low-income women's well-being that perpetuated cycles of poverty and homelessness: they identified that the absence of such housing deepened inequity and limited women's pathways out of poverty.[122] For example, when Phyllis Harwood helped guests of the East Enders Society hostel look for

Director, Health and Aging Section, Dept. of Rehabilitation and Social Improvement (Vancouver), 11 May 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; S. McDiarmid, Director, Health Care & Aging, Welfare and Rehabilitation Department (Vancouver) to V. Fraser-Crierie, President, East Enders Society, 6 October 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; Victoria Frazer-Crierie, President, East Enders Society to Hon. Norman Levi, Minister of Rehabilitation and Social Improvement, Government of B.C., Victoria, 6 December 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; Victoria Frazer-Crierie, President, East Enders Society to Sheila McDiarmid, Director, Health Care and Aging Section, Department of Rehabilitation and Social Improvement, Vancouver, 6 January 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; Walter N. Boyd, Director, Welfare and Rehabilitation Department, City of Vancouver to V. Frazer-Crierie, President, East-Enders Society, 22 February 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; East Enders Society to Walter Boyd, Director, Welfare and Rehabilitation Dept., City of Vancouver, 21 March 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; East Enders Society, newsletter, April 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Frances Phillips, Coordinator, Mental Patients Association to The East Enders Society c/o Mrs. V. Frazer-Crearie [sic], 4 June 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; Barry Coull, Project Coordinator, Mental Patients' Association, "Proposal: M.P.A. operation of the East Ender Society house for ex-mental patients", c. 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; Wilna Thomas, interview, audio recording, c. 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-5; [Margaret Walker (possibly)], written reflections, c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

   For information about the history of the Mental Patients Association (MPA), see: Boschma, Davies, and Morrow, "'Those people known as mental patients…'; Megan Davies, Geertje Boschma, and Marina Morrow, "How MPA Re-formed Community Mental Health," *Après l'Asile/After the Asylum*, http://www.historyofmadness.ca, last accessed 22 August 2019; Davies et al., "After the Asylum in Canada"; Davies et al., *Mad City: Legacies of MPA*; MPA Documentary Collective, dir., *Inmates Are Running the Asylum*.
[122] See, for example: Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 April 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of Executive Meeting of EES, 27 September 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 December 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 October 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 10 January 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of Third Annual Meeting of EES, 24 January 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Minutes of the Fourth Annual Meeting of EES, 29 January 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Pearl Willows, "President's Report," Sixth Annual Meeting of EES, 28 January 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; East Enders Society, "Housing," newsletter, c. fall 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; East-Enders Society, "Dear Friends," invitation to annual meeting of East Enders Society, January 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Now….It Is Time For Us To Move On – Another Area of Need – Another Challenge," East Enders Society Newsletter, April 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1.

places to live, she learned firsthand about the substandard conditions and proportionately high

cost of the SRO units that were available to women living in poverty. Harwood connected this

housing to homelessness, explaining that "[m]uch needs to be done for this most pressing need

and I regret not having done more telling work. One thing I do know and that is that it is not

for lack of effort that so many of our women are unable to find accommodation."[123] Ultimately,

where they began their organization with the mandate of creating an emergency shelter, the

East Enders Society came to argue that "adequate housing at a reasonable rent...[was] the

greatest need of women alone, or on low income."[124] Shaped especially by Harwood and other

East Enders' Board members' direct social work with women in the Downtown Eastside, the

East Enders Society developed an understanding that in the absence of accommodations that

met women's housing needs, emergency shelter was an inherently limited response to

homelessness; they came to see permanent housing as a foundational step in the fight against

gendered precarity.[125]

    Thus, as the East Enders Society moved away from their direct involvement in the

provision of emergency housing, they became vocal advocates for affordable housing for

women. Together with other community groups, they directed their energies through the 1970s

to lobby for and actively participate in the development of such housing projects.[126] For

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[123] Phyllis de L. Harwood, "Social Workers Report," Board Meeting of the East Enders Society, 4 November 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1.

[124] Emphasis in original. East Enders Society, "Now….It Is Time For Us To Move On – Another Area of Need – Another Challenge," East Enders Society Newsletter, April 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1.

[125] In the late 1960s (c.1967-68), the East Enders Society also lobbied – albeit unsuccessfully – the City of Vancouver to convert the Fox Apartment building (a former lodging house) into housing for single women and women with children managed by the Society. The City's ultimate rejection of their proposal was tied primarily (but not exclusively) to its urban redevelopment plans (Redevelopment Project No. 2) and agreements with senior governments to acquire and subsequently demolish that block of East Hastings Street. For details, see the records in CVA, City of Vancouver fonds, City Social Planning Department Administrative and Operational Files, COV-S571, 77-D-1 file 10, "East Enders Society."

[126] See, e.g.: Mary Kelly, interview, transcript c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; East Enders Society, "Housing," newsletter, c. 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 June 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1

example, one successful outcome of their collective efforts on the issue of women's housing was the opening in 1976 of the BC Housing-managed Grandview Single Women's Residences (Bauer Villa and Adanac Place), two modestly sized buildings in the Grandview-Woodlands neighbourhood which consisted of subsidized self-contained studio and one-bedroom apartments exclusively for low-income middle-aged and older women living alone. This social housing for women living alone was the first of its kind in Vancouver. Indeed, the East Enders Society advocated for social housing for this demographic of women because – prior to the opening of the Grandview Single Women's Residences – social housing had been restricted primarily to families, seniors, and those with disabilities; most single women under the age of sixty had not previously been eligible for subsidized housing. Through their housing activism, then, the East Enders Society and the other community groups involved in the establishment of the Grandview Single Women's Residences – which included, significantly, prospective future tenants who were consulted and involved in design plans – achieved both broadened eligibility for social housing *and* the construction of new housing units.[127] This evolution of

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December 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 January 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 February 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 March 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 21 March 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors of East Enders Society, 5 September 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; East-Enders Society, "Dear Friends," invitation to annual meeting of East Enders Society, January 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Now….It Is Time For Us To Move On – Another Area of Need – Another Challenge," East Enders Society Newsletter, April 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Dear Friends," invitation to annual meeting of the East-Enders Society, February 1976, SFUA, EES fonds, F-69-6-0-0-2; Pearl Willows, President, East Enders Society to Hon. Grace McCarthy, Parliament Buildings, Victoria, B.C., 26 June 1970, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-2, SFUA; Mary Kelly, Chairman [of] Housing Committee, East Enders Society to A. Geach, Department of Planning and Civic Development, City Hall, Vancouver, 29 June 1973, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-2, SFUA; Victoria Frazer-Crierie, "President's Report," Ninth Annual Meeting of EES, 23 November 1974, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5.
[127] East Enders Society, "Now….It Is Time For Us To Move On – Another Area of Need – Another Challenge," East Enders Society Newsletter, April 1973, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-1, SFUA; "Dear Friends," invitation to annual meeting of the East-Enders Society, February 1976, SFUA, EES fonds, F-69-6-0-0-2; East Enders Society, "Greetings from the Board," invitation to annual meeting of East Enders Society, February 1977, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Mary Kelly, Chairman [of] Housing Committee, East Enders Society to A. Geach, Department of Planning and Civic Development, City Hall, Vancouver, 29 June 1973, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-2, SFUA; Mary Kelly, interview, transcript, c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; A Proud Tenant of Bauer

the East Enders Society's focus from emergency housing to social housing shows their developing commitment to a notion that housing is the first, and foundational step in any plan to end poverty and homelessness.

However, as important as new projects like the Grandview Single Women's Residences were, they were only a start in a larger and longer fight against women's homelessness. Certainly, the Grandview Single Women's Residences created valuable new housing for low-income women that was preferable to SRO housing and which, by providing women with greater housing security, would have better equipped them to empower themselves in other areas of their lives.[128] But, limited by scale, this project could achieve these benefits for a small number of women only.

Significantly, moreover, housing like the Grandview Single Women's Residences was needed on a larger scale because the structural inequities that created poverty and homelessness endured. In the early 1970s, community service providers, including May Gutteridge (who had since left her executive role with the East Enders Society to focus on her parish social work with St. James' Anglican Church), met – as they had a decade prior – to discuss "the urgent need for a shelter for women on the street."[129] A representative from the Vancouver Foundation

Villa, [Name removed for confidentiality purposes], "To the East Enders Society," personal reflections on the Housing for Single Women Committee's participation in the Grandview Single Women's Residences projects, c. April-May 1991, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; Wilna Thomas, interview, audio recording, c. 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-5; Marie-Luise Vail, interview, audio recording, 15 October 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-6; "Single women," *Help Yourself! Vancouver Opportunities Program* (newsletter)*, Vol. 2, Number 3 (April 1975), 3, SFUA, Women's Bookstore Collection, F-111-7-2-27; City of Vancouver, "Recommendations – 2. Housing for Single Women," Second Report by the Standing Committee of Council on Planning and Development, May 6 1971, in Council Meeting Minutes, May 18, 1971, 674-675, CVA, COV-S31-F106.14, Box: 025-D-01 folder 14; City of Vancouver, "Building and Planning Matters - Recommendation: 7. Proposed Public Housing for Single Women," Department Report, March 30, 1973 in Council Meeting Minutes, April 3, 1973, 40-43, CVA, COV-S31-F113.01, Box: 025-B-03 folder 07; BC Housing, "Tenants celebrate 30 years of Bauer Villa," *News For You: Housing Update (Tenant Newsletter),* 21, no. 1 (June 2006), 3.
[128] I develop this argument about social housing in the fourth chapter of this dissertation.
[129] Urban Design Centre, "Feasibility and Proposal for Renovations, Saint James Social Services, 333 Powell Street," c. 1973, CVA, Urban Design Centre fonds [hereafter cited as UDC fonds], AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-E-1 file 6.

explained that "[m]ortality rates, court records, and Social Service data" made the "critical need" for a women's shelter evident.[130] Led by May Gutteridge, the church-affiliated St. James' Social Services Society took up this call to action. When they opened the doors of Powell Place women's shelter (initially called the Sanctuary for Women) on 10 December 1976, it was the only shelter in the Downtown Eastside exclusively for women in crisis.[131] As had been the case at the East Enders Society women's hostel that preceded it, occupancy rates at Powell Place confirmed its need. The first summer after Powell Place opened, Gutteridge explained that "[t]he sanctuary is well used and most of the time we are fully booked."[132] Through the 1970s and 1980s, Powell Place continued to be at capacity most of the time, providing shelter to hundreds of women and their children every year.[133] Ultimately, in late-twentieth-century Vancouver, the need for emergency shelters for women remained because

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[130] Dr. J.D. McGann, Professional Consultant, Vancouver Foundation to V. Frazer-Crierie, 8 November 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1.

[131] St. James' Social Services enlisted the Urban Design Centre (UDC), an activist architectural firm, to convert the upper floor of one of its buildings on Powell Street into a shelter for women, and requested and received financial contributions and support for the project from the City of Vancouver and other community organizations, including significant assistance from the East Enders Society. Urban Design Centre, "Feasibility Study and Proposal for Renovations," c. 1973, CVA, UDC fonds AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-E-1 file 6; Sydney Portner (Urban Design Centre) to May Gutteridge (St. James Social Services), 21 January 1976, CVA, UDC fonds AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-E-1 file 6; G. Blundoff, Inspector, "Appendix III: Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation Inspection Report as given to the Urban Design Centre – September 18th, Mr. Blundoff, 331 and 333 Powell Street", CVA, UDC fonds AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-E-1 file 6; Yvonne Dankowich, "Powell Place," *St James Social Service Society, Annual Report, 1982-83,* 9, ADNWA, SJV, St. James- Vancouver, Annual Reports, D108/2; St. James Community Service Society, *2010/2011 Annual Report to the Community: 50th Anniversary Edition*, 4-5, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Community Services Society, 1998-2011, ACCN D2011-27; May C. Gutteridge, Parish Worker, St. James' Social Service Society to Mary Kelly, East Enders Society, 9 July 1977, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-12, SFUA; East Enders Society, "Invitation to the Annual Meeting of EES," February 1976, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; East Enders Society newsletter, February 1977, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; East Enders Society newsletter, March 1978, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Angell, "Residential Alternatives," 73 and 81; Welbanks, *From Lost to Found,* 86-87.

[132] May C. Gutteridge, Parish Worker, St. James' Social Service Society to Mary Kelly, East Enders Society, 9 July 1977, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-12.

[133] During the shelter's first year, 392 women and 114 children stayed there. Welbanks, *From Lost to Found,* 87. Between the spring of 1980 and 1981, it provided emergency housing to 413 women and seventy-six children; between 1981 and 1982, 506 women and 116 children; and between 1982 and 1983, 522 women and 192 children. Yvonne Dankowich, "Powell Place," *St James' Social Service Society Annual Report, 1981-82*, 5 and 9, ADNWA, SJV, St. James-Vancouver, Annual Reports, D108/2; May Gutteridge (St. James' Social Service Society) to Margaret Walker (East Enders Society), 29 December 1979, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-12.

structural inequities persisted. Within a context of systemic structural violence, where patriarchy, settler colonialism, and racism infused and deepened women's, and especially Indigenous women's, poverty, shelters for women remained an essential service.

In the 1970s, Margaret White expressed resounding sadness about the continued circumstances of precarity that Indigenous women and girls faced in this economically-depressed neighbourhood. She told a reporter for the *Native Voice* in 1971, "What can I do? I feel so frustrated and helpless. I just see them go – gradually, down, down…I don't know as many girls on skidroad as I used to – they've all died."[134] In another interview, White expressed her deep sorrow, explaining that she had

> lived on skid row for practically two years, lived down there and knew the girls. So many of them have died and it's so sad. These young people weren't bad, they'd just had a hard time. They had to do anything to survive, to eat, to live. They weren't bad. They were so good to me, just unbelievable – then to see them die. Oh God![135]

As White expressed her grief, she also conveyed a sense of personal ineffectuality:

> Now things have changed so badly. The girls are heavy into drugs. Sometimes someone will phone me during the night high as anything and not knowing what they're talking about but they're desperate and I just listen. I look back on much of it as a bad experience having to see people live that way and go hungry in a rich land like this. I haven't really done that much to change things.[136]

In her reflections, White expressed profound empathy, grief, and frustration with the structures of violence that continued to shape these women's lives and cause their deaths.

Her dispiritedness and sense of futility amid these continued conditions of women's precarity resonates into the present. However, although these conditions persisted and persist today, this should not be taken to mean that the interventions of women involved with the East Enders Society and other similar organizations that followed did not constitute valuable work.

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[134] White quoted in "Home a Refuge for Indian Girls."
[135] White in Canada, *Speaking Together*.
[136] White in Canada, *Speaking Together*.

Although White's remarks suggest that she had come to question her impact, she mitigated the conditions and consequences of women's homelessness, if only on an individual level. That gendered, racialized precarity continued and continues to shape the lives of women in this neighbourhood reflects not an inherent failing of women's care politics; rather, it marks the strength of the power structures that contributed to and reinforced social inequity.

Conclusions

An understudied model of anti-poverty and anti-violence activism in the late twentieth century, the care work of the East Enders Society to provide emergency shelter services in the Downtown Eastside was an important intervention into Vancouver's urban and social geography of precarity. In this moment of activism, the Indigenous and settler women who established the East Enders Society women's hostel, the first of its kind in the Downtown Eastside, did critical work to mitigate women's urban precarity. However, while the East Enders Society set up their hostel to address women's homelessness, they did not overcome all challenges: in opening this hostel, they lessened, though did not eliminate, women's vulnerability to violence and untimely death. The continued relevance of shelters exposed their limits as a solution to homelessness. Women's shelters were a critical intervention into Vancouver's landscape of precarity, but they addressed a symptom rather than a cause. Caught within its own paradox, because shelters were not designed nor equipped to solve the structures of inequity that brought and kept women, disproportionately Indigenous, into homelessness in the Downtown Eastside, the shelter model of care remained imperative.

Emergency shelters are a barometer of social inequity. During the 1960s and 1970s, gendered precarity in Vancouver was produced and compounded by numerous cross-cutting

factors, including a lack of social and health supports for people with mental illnesses and addictions, carceral regimes that policed women (and especially racialized women) who experienced visibilized poverty, a social welfare system that was inadequate to meet people's most basic material needs, and a capitalist housing market that made safe housing unavailable to those living on low-incomes. Women's outcomes within all of these systems, moreover, were exacerbated by lived and living experiences of settler colonialism, racism, sexism, and misogyny. This history of women's care work through shelters makes these structures of inequity less nebulous: it makes more transparent the patterns and contributing causes of women's precarity, including its settler colonial, racist, and gendered contours. In exposing these structures – however pervasive and deeply rooted they may be – it should be clear that women's past and present vulnerability to precarity, violence, and premature death in the city was not, and is not, inexorable.

I don't see why there is homelessness. The government should see and try sleeping without a blanket in the cold on the concrete. We are on Indigenous land, why are Indigenous women homeless? We should not have to ask for housing, the government owes us housing for taking our lands and stealing our children.

– Elder Louisa Starr, 2018[137]

I see it daily in the Downtown Eastside. I see the women sleeping on the ground, it's like their heart is so close to the cement. They are worthy of having a bed and having clothing and dignity...All Canadians should be aware that our women are strong, they are needed, they are life-givers.

– CeeJai Julian, 2019[138]

[137] Louisa Starr quoted in Harsha Walia, "Letter to Council: 100% Social Housing at 58 W Hastings," November 14, 2018 (posted date), *Downtown Eastside Women's Centre*, https://dewc.ca/news/letter-council-100-social-housing-58-w-hastings.

[138] CeeJai Julian quoted in Lori Culbert, "MMIWG Report: Relatives, Friends Have Cautious Hope for Meaningful Change," *Vancouver Sun,* June 1, 2019, https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/mmiw-report-relatives-friends-have-cautious-hope-for-meaningful-change. Julian is an advocate, frontline peer support worker in the Downtown Eastside, and survivor herself. Julian testified at the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls for her murdered sister Norma George and her many friends who were disappeared from the Downtown Eastside during the 1990s. She also bore witness and offered health support for other women who gave their own testimonies. (Culbert, "MMIWG report"; Chantelle Bellrichard, "Woman Who Survived B.C. Serial Killer Lifts Up 'Sisters' Still on the Streets," *CBC News,* April 8, 2018, https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/survivor-guilt-support-mmiwg-1.4610112.

Nights and Nights Where You Don't Sleep

How did you manage to find the 44?[1]

Well, my girl, when your sons tell you to get the hell out of a suite where you're paying $675 a month rent, buying groceries – and not knowing that they were drawing UIC [Unemployment Insurance Compensation] – they're always broke – tell you to get the hell out – because I did a certain thing – I did not run down and pay the rent when I got my cheque, because I had a feeling, a sense. You know, you get a sense inside that something's wrong. So I told my sons: "Well, you'd better come up with at least $185 each to help me cover this month's rent because I did not get enough on my cheque to cover $675" – you know I'm on H.P.I.A. [Handicapped Person's Income Assistance program], right – so I didn't get enough to cover it – just to see what they'd say and do about it, eh. And there was nothing said. Just told me in plain English to, you know, "F' off."

...

I slept for four nights and four days, I stayed in Stanley Park in October – it was rainy – and two bloody weeks I sat and stayed in the same god damn clothes. I didn't have no clothes because every time I went up there to even get my bloody clothes – "give me a change, give me something" – and what they said to me was: "You can come back and get your clothes when you find a place to live in." Now, where was I gonna get a place to live in when I didn't have ten cents? For one, I didn't have sweet bugger all, you know?! Whooo??! I'll tell you what they did to me – that wasn't enough – they went to the bloody police station and turned me in, said I was supposed to been on dope and all this here bullshittin' story. I'm crossing the street to go see where I can get a free cup of coffee, you know, at that Dugout down on Powell Street, eh. They have a free cup of coffee for the first hour before they start charging you two bits.[2] That's where I used to walk, all the way from Stanley Park up there for a free coffee, and I was just crossing the bloody street and the bulls picked me up. Yeah! And I told them to get off my back, and I told everybody else to get off my back. I said, "If I wanted to be found, I would let everybody know." But I says: "I don't want to be found and just get off my back. I'm not a thief and I'm not a drug addict." He says, well: "Are you packing drugs?" I said: "Yes, I am. But they are medications and it's quite legal." And

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[1] The '44' was a multi-use drop-in centre. Located initially at 44 East Cordova Street, the '44' later moved to 320 Alexander Street where it was known as the Alex Centre. Now the Evelyne Saller Centre (after the community worker of that name), this drop-in centre still exists (2021) in its Alexander Street location. (Paul R. Taylor, "A Great Lady," *Carnegie Newsletter,* February 1, 1989.)

[2] The Dugout opened in the Downtown Eastside in 1967 and, as of 2021, continues as a drop-in centre for neighbourhood residents today. Christine Coulter, "The Dugout Celebrates 50 Years in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside," *CBC News*, December 7, 2017, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/the-dugout-celebrates-50-years-in-vancouver-s-downtown-eastside-1.4437173; *The Dugout: A community living room for the residents of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside since 1967* (website), https://thedugout.org.

I showed him, you know, [the medications] which I have to take. And that's what I showed him I took, the police.

…

Do you know how I had my clothes cleaned after smelling and stinking for two solid weeks? That's how I got involved with the 44 [a drop-in centre] – I went down and I asked Gladys if I could possibly have a shower or a bath – I would have committed murder if she had said no to me, because I couldn't stand my smell and my dirt no longer from Stanley Park and all that. You know, roaming the streets like an idiot, there's been nights and nights where you don't sleep, and there's been days and days where you don't eat, and that's nothing funny.

…

Four nights I slept in Stanley Park. Four nights. And you know where I slept? You know where the bus turns, you know – that there, that the loop – they have that concession there, and there's two phones, you know, side-by-side, and there's benches. I sat up on the bench, like this, with my heavy coat, and I'm leaning up against the phone booth 'cause I'm sleeping – and I'm sleeping – half-asleep – and you know, all the police did to me then, girl, was drive by on their car, that there loop for the bus loop there, eh, [and] they shone their bloody – you know, their big beam light right in my face. And that woke me up.

Was there a shelter that you could have gone to?

What shelter? … Girl … I'm sixty years old. And there's such a little thing, that, I think I was entitled to a little bit of pride. I was too proud. Though maybe it would not have been refused, but I just didn't want to take the time. You know, I was so depressed that I was ready to jump off the bridge.

…

I went to the welfare… When I went down to Dodson Hotel – where I'm living right now, eh – it was my last chance in life. There's a young fellow there that shared a room. He said I could have his room – at that time, he was paying $2 a night. Now mind you, he was not in bed with me, he had a girlfriend which he was living with, but he needed that room for a purpose 'cause he was also on welfare too – but he needed an address, you see. So, that's how I lived for…two weeks. Yeah, it was two weeks I lived there like that. Then, finally I got enough guts and gumption or whatever it was, calmed me down, and I spoke to Glen, the owner of the hotel, and I asked him if it was possible for him to give me a rental receipt for a month's rent, you know, because I'm going to try to live in there. Now I'm still in the same room that I was sharing with the boy – 'course the boy went a long time – him and the girl moved out a long, long time ago – I went to the welfare, and what did the welfare do? She didn't give me no money. She gave me no money for food. She never even gave me a voucher to eat with, girl.

Nothing! She gave me a rental – what do you call – a rent, rental voucher. A rent voucher? I took it. And that's how I got my room. But to eat. Now, where was I to eat? So, I had to go and kiss another bottom. I went over to the 44. I didn't want to show them how *really* poor I was, but I wasn't really rich. So finally, I went and I spoke to Evelyne and Dorothy and I said: "Look, I'm hungry." I says: "If you can, you know, support me food-wise until my cheque, I won't let you down. I will pay it when I got my cheque." Which I did. And after that I kept paying all the time. And they trust me.

~ K.K., Downtown Eastside Vancouver, c. June 1983[3]

In this excerpt from an interview she gave as part of a community oral history project, this woman shared stories of her lived and living experiences of poverty and of becoming street homeless in Downtown Eastside Vancouver. In her interview, she shared stories of her life growing up in Vancouver's East End, but in this part, she spoke to her more recent experiences of homelessness and housing precarity. Her narration is compelling in its layers and nuance. As she told this one part of her life story, she spoke to many overlapping issues and concerns that informed her path into, and coloured her experience of, homelessness. Here, she spoke of

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[3] [K.K.], interview by Laurel Kimbley, June 16, 19[8]3*, Vancouver, British Columbia, digitized audio recording (from original magnetic cassette tape), "Homelessness – Interview with [K.K.]," *This Vancouver* (by the Vancouver Public Library), Carnegie Stories Collection, http://thisvancouver.vpl.ca/islandora/object/islandora%3A573. Transcription by Meghan Longstaffe. This oral history interview was part of an oral history project in the 1980s for the Downtown Eastside community to record and publish its own history. The interviews conducted for that project formed the basis of a book published as: Jo-Ann Canning-Dew, Laurel Kimbley, and Carnegie Community Centre Association, eds., *Hastings and Main: Stories from an Inner City Neighbourhood* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1987). When I began research for this dissertation, I sought to find the original recordings used in *Hastings and Main*. I initially located them as audio cassette tapes preserved in a container shelved in the office of the librarian of the Carnegie Branch of the Vancouver Public Library (located within the Carnegie Community Centre). In the years that have passed since I first started this project, the Vancouver Public Library (VPL) has digitized these recordings and made the interviews publicly available online in the Carnegie Stories collection contained on their website, *This Vancouver*. I acknowledge VPL's important work of preserving the community's history and making it more widely available and accessible to the community, as well as to historical researchers such as myself. A note on the interview date: the citation from the Vancouver Public Library lists the interview year as 1973, but I believe this to be an error. Other interviews in this collection were conducted in the early 1980s as a project of the Carnegie Community Centre, which did not open until 1980; furthermore, personal details the interviewee provided during the interview indicate that the interview occurred in 1983. This woman, who was sixty years old at the time of her interview, was born and raised in Downtown Eastside Vancouver. Her family was ethnically Russian. Although her identity is in the public record as part of the VPL's Carnegie Stories digitized collection, I have chosen to not include her name here given that I do not know the process of consent involved in the original project.

tense family dynamics; of disability; of health issues; of the insufficiency of disability income assistance; of unaffordable rents; of insecure housing; of the policing of homelessness; of being without a safe place to sleep; of being wet and cold; of being without warm, dry, clean clothes; of hunger; of a reliance on drop-ins for a cup of coffee to drink, a meal to eat, and a shower to bathe; of the toil of her material circumstances on her mental health and wellness. She spoke openly and honestly of her precarity. But within her narration, I heard something else, too. When I listened to her interview, I heard her telling a story about her very survival. I heard her tenacity, resilience, and endurance. And I heard her determination to regain and then maintain her pride and dignity in the face of it all.

Chapter Three
Drop-in Centres as Spaces of Community

On a dreary November afternoon, the odor of fallen leaves wafted in the streets as charcoal clouds threatened ominously from above. The sun had not peeked out for days, the city moody in its darkness. Vancouver's damp, seeping cold winter had arrived. But over at 217 Dunlevy Avenue it was warm. Comfortable. Inviting even. Here, in a cozy space on the ground floor of the New World Hotel, three friends sat together knitting afghans of many beautiful colours, while a solitary woman sat pensively at a typewriter in the back corner, tap-tapping away – short stories or poetry, perhaps – the products of her efforts kept closely guarded. This hum of gentle activity later intensified as several more women arrived in time for tea and sandwiches, a light meal soon followed by a few boisterous rounds of bingo. "I'll tell you," recalled former City social worker Wilna Thomas, "after being in some of these dreadful rooming houses, it was very gratifying to open the door and go in and find such a happy atmosphere."[1]

This is how I imagine this place – the first women's centre in the Downtown Eastside – after having read and listened to numerous descriptions of it by the women who organized its programs.[2] Following from their emergency shelter for women, the predominately White, middle-class women of the East Enders Society who established and ran this drop-in centre in the late 1960s and early 1970s had determined that this was one additional and specific project

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[1] Wilna Thomas, interview, audio recording, c. 1992, Simon Fraser University Archives [hereafter cited as SFUA], East Enders Society fonds [hereafter cited as EES fonds], F-59-5-0-0-4. Wilna Thomas was a social worker for the City Social Services Department from 1969 to the early 1970s; she joined the East Enders Society after she started with the Social Services Department.

[2] These descriptions are in the records of the East Enders Society, located at Simon Fraser University Archives (East Enders Society fonds, F-59).

of care that they could enact within a larger crisis of women's precarity. In two successive Downtown Eastside locations, the East Enders Society created a bounded, physical space of community for women in a neighbourhood that was shaped by poverty and populated largely by men. From 1967 to 1973, this organization operated this drop-in social and resource centre for low-income women residents of the Downtown Eastside, which was, like their hostel, the first of its kind in the neighbourhood.

However, as the East Enders women's centre marked an important intervention into the landscape of poverty in the Downtown Eastside, it was just one example of efforts by concerned individuals to address the material and social needs of women living in the area. Notably, as with shelters and boarding homes, Indigenous leaders felt a need to provide services themselves. Bringing together evidence from a wide range of archival documents, pre-existing oral history interviews, and published oral history sources, this chapter thus examines not only the East Enders Society and their continued and evolving care work via their women's centre, but also the parallel and sometimes overlapping activism of Indigenous women. While many Indigenous women were involved in community care work in Vancouver, in this chapter, I focus specifically on the example of 'Nakwaxda'xw elder Catherine Ferry Adams as one pivotal example. Like many of her Indigenous contemporaries, Ferry Adams cared for men, women, and children who experienced the intersecting material, social, and cultural impacts of settler colonialism in the city. In Downtown Eastside Vancouver, Ferry Adams engaged in myriad forms of unpaid labour that ranged from sheltering people within her own home to creating new spaces for Indigenous social gatherings and cultural activities. Significantly, by analyzing the example of Ferry Adams' community service together with that of the East Enders Society to open and run a women's drop-in centre, we can see shared impulses,

overlays, and intersections in these women's work, but also some of the differences. As was the case with women's shelter work, while these women were mobilized by the same problem of women's urban precarity, their understandings of and responses to this issue were shaped by their own social and cultural backgrounds and positionalities. Where the non-Indigenous members of the East Enders Society built from and continued a longer genealogy of (predominately) White, middle-class, Christian maternalism and philanthropy, Catherine Ferry Adams' work was rooted in her Indigenous perspective, shaped by the teachings of her elders and by her responsibilities as a Noblewoman. Ultimately, although the East Enders Society and Catherine Ferry Adams worked on similar kinds of projects – and sometimes the same projects – and generally served the same population of women, Ferry Adams had an Indigenized response to women's homelessness that meant her approach to care differed from her non-Indigenous counterparts even when they overlapped.

Building from the previous chapter, the examples of the East Enders Society and Catherine Ferry Adams connect and expand historical knowledge about social welfare and women's voluntary labour to broaden understanding of late-twentieth-century social movements to include care. Furthermore, while historians have examined social welfare as a gendered institution often administered by middle-class White women, and there is a growing literature on Indigenous women's community-based labour and activism, an opportunity has been missed in the literature to establish the connections between and among social welfare, philanthropy, and social movements. Placing these examples together reveals these connections. In particular, this chapter shows that separately and sometimes together, these diverse women generated valuable new social spaces in which community could emerge and flourish amid and despite circumstances of extreme poverty. Where their projects ultimately

addressed the symptoms, rather than the causes of inequity, through their care politics, these women lay a critical foundation for a community-oriented service infrastructure in the Downtown Eastside that has lasted.

The East Enders Society Day Centre as a Response to Homelessness

In the 1960s, the East Enders Society sought to address what they saw as a broader public failing on the issue of women's homelessness. They did so first, as I outlined in the previous chapter, through their emergency hostel for women. But as the East Enders operated their shelter, and as members engaged in other social work in the neighbourhood, these women became increasingly conscious of and concerned about broader and ongoing patterns and circumstances of women's homelessness, and the inherent limits of their hostel as a response. Through their social work both at the hostel and in other capacities, service providers involved with the East Enders Society realized that once most women left their shelter, the only accommodations they could afford was a room in a single room occupancy hotel or rooming house. As they developed deeper awareness of the conditions in which women lived in Downtown Eastside SROs, the East Enders wanted to do more to help. They implicitly understood that from their own position as a volunteer-based organization they could not solve women's homelessness, but they were determined to at least lessen its effects.[3] Ultimately, having identified that the built and social environments of the Downtown Eastside shaped and compounded poverty, the East Enders Society determined that providing a new social setting for women living in the neighbourhood was one way they could mitigate gendered precarity.

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[3] "Mrs. Harwood's Report Dated September 30, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1.

Building from their hostel, the East Enders Society's continued and evolving response to women's homelessness was to open and run a drop-in day centre for women and their children. In January 1967, the Society began renting a storefront in the Hazelwood Hotel at 342 East Hastings Street and immediately commenced renovations into a day centre for women. Executive members Phyllis Dale and Pearl Willows explained that "acquiring… [the Hastings Street] site at a nominal rent was an opportunity that could not be ignored because of the tremendous needs of the women that seek our help in this area of the city."[4] Throughout the winter and early spring of 1967, Society members and volunteers worked diligently on the project. The Society invested considerable time and finances into the project: they constructed an office and kitchen, installed new curtains and floor coverings, gave the walls a fresh coat of paint, and furnished the space comfortably. One Board member recalled their earliest efforts on this project: "We worked very hard for the opening of the day centre in the Hastings St. site, and quite a substantial sum was spent to make it a safe and warm place for women in that area."[5] On 20 March 1967, the East Enders Society officially opened the doors of this new drop-in centre for women, the first of its kind in the Downtown Eastside.[6] They operated this

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[4] Phyllis Dale (President) and Pearl Willows (Recording Secretary), "Invitation to annual meeting of the East Enders Society," 11 January 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1.

[5] [Unknown, possibly Jean Crowley or Mary Ross], "East Enders Society," written reflections/memories, [June, c. 1990-92], SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

[6] Many of their furnishings and appliances (e.g. chairs, chesterfields, desks, tables, television, refrigerator, etc.) were donated by Society members, friends, and other supporters. Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; Jean Crowley, "House Committee to the East Enders Society Annual Meeting Jan. 25, 1967," EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-7, SFUA; Mrs. E. Crowley, Chairman, "Report of the House Committee: Women's Centre," *East-Enders Society Newsletter,* No. 3, September 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; R. Vivash, "Report of the Volunteer Chairman," *East Enders Society Newsletter,* No. 3 (September 1967), SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 4 January 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 11 January 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 March 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 8 March 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Phyllis Dale (President) and Pearl Willows (Recording Secretary), "Invitation to annual meeting of the East Enders Society," 11 January 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; Phyllis C. Dale, President, "President's Report: East-Enders Society, Annual Meeting Held January 25, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; M.C. Gutteridge, Executive Director, "Annual

women's centre out of the Hazelwood Hotel until an unexpected rent increase in the summer of 1969 forced them to relocate a few blocks away to the back of the New World Hotel at 217 Dunlevy Avenue, directly across from Oppenheimer Park. They continued to operate the drop-in for several additional years at the Dunlevy location, until they closed the centre permanently in 1973.[7]

The East Enders Society's records provide little information about who used the drop-in centre during these years, but there are some inferences and generalizations that can be made. First, although their records do not provide clear indication of the race or ethnicity of drop-in centre visitors, it is reasonable to presume that many were Indigenous women given that other records, including the Society's own, indicate that Indigenous women were over-represented among those who lived in poverty in the Downtown Eastside during this period. Second, many women who used the centre were mothers. Many women brought their young children with them to the centre, and toys and games were available for the little ones; children's presence at the centre suggests a relationship between single motherhood and poverty, because limited childcare services would have impacted mothers' abilities to secure or maintain waged work.[8] Moreover, poverty and motherhood intersected in another crucial

General Meeting of The East-Enders Society – 25th January, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; "Mrs. Harwood's Report," 30 September 1967, 2, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1.

[7] Mary Kelly, interview, transcript, c.1990, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; Ross in Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; [Unknown, possibly Jean Crowley or Mary Ross], "The People That Work Together", written reflections, c.199x, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-6, SFUA; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 4 June 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 August 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Ruth Vivash (Corresponding Secretary, East Enders Society) to Gin Ah Wong (Hazelwood Hotel), 4 June 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-4; Pearl Willows (Vice President, East Enders Society) to George Cook (New World Hotel), 12 June 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-4.

[8] Minutes of meeting of Fifth Annual Meeting of EES, 30 January 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; "Day Centre Services," c. 1967-1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; East Enders Society, "Day Centre Program," c. 1967-1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 January 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; East Enders Society, "Because Someone Cares," pamphlet, 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3. Feminists have for generations now argued that affordable, state-funded childcare is essential to women's

way. Part of the history of women and poverty in the Downtown Eastside is the history of child

apprehensions by the state. Oral histories with East Enders' volunteers and members indicate

that some mothers who used the centre were apart from their children because they had been

taken by the state.[9] Finally, many women who visited the centre were in their later stages of

life. Wilna Thomas, then a social worker for the City of Vancouver Social Service Department,

indicated that many of those who used the centre were older women who, "by and large, had

already completed a fair number of years of their lives."[10] The East Enders believed that many

older women came to use the day centre because health and mobility issues made it more

challenging for these women to work at the physically demanding jobs they held formerly.[11]

For example, day centre volunteer Augusta Martin, a graduate nurse with a background in

district nursing, assessed that many of their clients "were burnt out, maybe fisheries workers,

factory workers, sewing factory workers…[who] were too old now to do that work."[12] Martin

assessed that their centre "reached the older women who…could no longer do factory work,

who could no longer trek out to the fish packing plants in Steveston [a fishing port and village

about twenty kilometers south of the Downtown Eastside]."[13] Overall, this partial sense of the

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equitable access to education and employment opportunities. In her historical research, for instance, Lisa Pasolli has examined the gendered history of social policy and advocacy in British Columbia pertaining to working mothers and childcare. Pasolli analyzes the public debates and discourses on the issue of state-funded childcare throughout twentieth-century British Columba, including the challenges and stigma working mothers have faced in the struggle for this service and right. Lisa Pasolli, *Working Mothers and the Child Care Dilemma: A History of British Columbia's Social Policy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).

[9] Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3. On the history in Canada of state policies and practices of child apprehension, and the intersections of this history with poverty (and especially gendered poverty) and race, see, for example, Veronica Strong-Boag, *Fostering Nation? Canada Confronts Its History of Childhood Disadvantage* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2011). (See esp. chap. 5, "First Families and the Dilemma of Care.")

[10] Wilna Thomas, interview, audio recording, c. 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-5.

[11] Minutes of meeting of Fifth Annual Meeting of EES, 30 January 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; "Day Centre Services," c. 1967-1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; East Enders Society, "Day Centre Program," c. 1967-1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 January 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; East Enders Society, "Because Someone Cares," pamphlet, 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

[12] Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

[13] Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

demographics of day centre clients indicates that they were diverse in some ways, but that they also had commonalities. Notably, these demographic indices suggest that intersecting barriers related to race, colonialism, childcare, employment, age, health, and state violence were factors that contributed to and shaped women's poverty in this time and place.

The very premise of the East Enders' drop-in, however, was to be a salve, not a solution to the precarity experienced by these women. In particular, a context of housed homelessness in SROs precipitated and shaped the East Enders Society's planning for a drop-in centre. For example, when Phyllis de L. Harwood, the East Enders Society's social worker, helped hostel clients find a place to live, she was "shocked" to discover the substandard conditions of SRO housing.[14] Likewise, Wilna Thomas, a City social worker and member of the East Enders, also learned first-hand of the injurious state of SRO housing through her social work: "I knew a number of single women who were living in deplorable situations. Some of them were down in rooming houses off Hastings Street on Cordova and some of those streets."[15] She recalled that Powell Street, in particular, "had some of the worst rooming houses…and Dunlevy…there was one down there [on] Dunlevy [which had] one small room with a hot plate and the bathroom a way down the hall…Some of them had a sink in the room," she noted, but "some of them didn't….Those places," she criticized, "were just *deplorable* and yet the rents were fairly high."[16] As members of the East Enders Society learned of the material conditions in which women lived in SROs, they developed a new plan: they decided that they could help by creating an alternate space for women to spend time. In their early planning stages, they

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[14] For example, one attic suite she located for a client was unfurnished and did not have its own sink, but still rented for one hundred dollars even though the average rent of a "poorly furnished" housekeeping room at the time was fifty to fifty-five dollars. Phyllis De L Harwood, "Social Workers Report," [for] Board Meeting of EES, 4 November 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1.

[15] Wilna Thomas, interview, audio recording, c. 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-5.

[16] Wilna Thomas, interview, audio recording, c. 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-5.

described how they intended the centre to be "a place to meet the basic needs of those women who know only dingy dark rooms and endless blocks of pavement."[17] Indeed, the Society designed and intended their drop-in centre as a temporary respite from the living conditions of SROs. Significantly, then, while the East Enders Society also became a vocal advocate for the establishment of improved and affordable housing for low-income women, they intended their drop-in centre as a stop-gap to a larger housing crisis. Perhaps understanding that they were limited in material ways from solving women's homelessness, the East Enders Society wanted to at least mitigate its consequences.

The East Enders Society assessed that a social centre for women could mitigate the conditions of women's homelessness because residents staying in SROs lacked living space and places for socializing in the Downtown Eastside were sparse. Significantly, aside from beer parlours, there were few social and recreation spaces available for people to evade the circumstances of their places of living and spend time with others; as the East Enders Society observed in 1967, "[t]he focal point for a social life in the district is the beer parlor."[18] That the

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[17] Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 8 March 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2.

[18] "Mrs. Harwood's Report Dated September 30, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1. Part of a longer history of working-class male leisure, beer parlours in this neighbourhood originally catered to male resource industry workers who stayed in the adjacent hotels when on rest in the city. Beer parlours continued to form the primary locus for social life in the Downtown Eastside into the late twentieth century. Through the mid-twentieth century (and likely into the late twentieth century), beer parlours were also exclusionary and disciplinary spaces: various laws, policies, privileged social norms, and racist attitudes operated to exclude and/or regulate the presence of women, Indigenous people, Asian people, and Black people. On legal and social regulation and exclusion along lines of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class in beer parlours in mid-twentieth-century Vancouver, see Robert A. Campbell, "Managing the Marginal: Regulating and Negotiating Decency in Vancouver's Beer Parlours, 1925-1954," *Labour/Le Travail* 44 (Fall 1999): 109-27; Robert A. Campbell, *Sit Down and Drink Your Beer: Regulating Vancouver's Beer Parlours, 1925-1954* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). On racialized alcohol laws in British Columbia in an earlier period (late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries) see, for example, Mimi Ajzenstadt, "Racializing Prohibitions: Alcohol Laws and Racial/Ethnic Minorities in British Columbia, 1871-1927," in *Regulating Lives: Historical Essays on the State, Society, the Individual, and the Law,* eds. John McLaren, Robert Menzies, and Dorothy E. Chunn (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002). On additional Canadian social and legal histories of alcohol use and regulation, see, for example: Craig Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003); Craig Heron, "The Boys and Their Booze: Masculinities and Public Drinking in Working-Class Hamilton, 1890-1946," *Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 3 (September 2005): 411-452; Sarah E. Hamil, "Liquor Laws, Legal Continuity, and Hotel Beer Parlours in Alberta, 1924 to c.1939," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 49, no. 100 (November 2016): 581-602.

East Enders Society identified the centrality of the beer parlour as a problem likely reflected their own middle-class ideas about respectable leisure, but Downtown Eastside residents themselves also saw the dominating presence of beer parlours as a barrier to equity. For example, one man in the early 1970s expressed his frustration with this geography:

> [Y]ou know what we got for recreation around here? – thirty or forty-odd beer parlours within walking distance – all of which will gladly take your money, even though you ain't got much to begin with – a man has to have the will of Jesus to pass all those by – besides, even if you ain't drinkin, it's the only place to set [sic] a spell and shoot the breeze with a friend[.][19]

Another resident similarly described how "there ain't a hell of a lot in the way of recreation around here except the beverage rooms and clubs – and a guy that's getting welfare ain't gonna have a lot of extra cash for shows [or] that sort of thing, is he?"[20] One resident further detailed that, in conjunction with improved housing first and foremost, investment in leisure and recreation facilities would go a long way toward improving the health and welfare of people living in the area:

> You see now, there's the portion that most folks miss…and I'll say this right out in the open – if those sonsofbitches workin up there in the city hall would get off their asses and give us some of them things they been promisin for so long – you know, housing, some recreation and other stuff – you know we might have quite a neighbourhood around here – we really might – but they never do."[21]

This man connected social and recreation facilities to idea of a neighbourhood – a community – identifying that the absence of the former precluded the later. Overall, these residents raised both individual and collective concerns about the lack of opportunities and spaces for people

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[19] Interview with unnamed man, excerpt no. 5, interview by Terry Hoffman, c.1975, partial transcript, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery Archives [hereafter cited as MHBAGA], 13.1.197506, Just Like You and Me: Images of Downtown Eastside Vancouver, folder: 13.4-7.238. For details about the provenance of these interviews by Hoffman, see chapter one, note 37.
[20] Interview with unnamed man, excerpt no. 3, interview by Terry Hoffman, c.1975, partial transcript, MHBAGA, 13.1.197506, Just Like You and Me: Images of Downtown Eastside Vancouver, folder: 13.4-7.238.
[21] Interview with unnamed man, excerpt no. 4, interview by Terry Hoffman, c.1975, partial transcript, MHBAGA, 13.1.197506, Just Like You and Me: Images of Downtown Eastside Vancouver, folder: 13.4-7.238.

living on low incomes in SROs to meet or spend time with friends away from the hotel beer parlour; they identified the centrality of the beer parlour as a problem because it fostered social isolation, centered drinking in their lives, and cost them money that they did not have to spend.

While these men had their own issues with SRO beer parlours, the East Enders Society had additional reasons for concern. The East Enders also connected the centrality of the SRO beer parlour to the criminalization of poor women, identifying this as another reason an alternative social space for women would be significant. For example, Phyllis Harwood reported that "[t]he lonely, single woman gravitates towards these establishments and even to the vicious circle of repeated charges of drunkness [sic] and vagrancy."[22] While there is an underlying tone to Harwood's comments that verged on maternalist censure of beer parlours, her comments also show that she understood women's encounters with the law to be both a consequence and symptom of structures of poverty. For instance, she expressed that "the record of law infringements by these women…emphasizes rather than diminishes her need for help, and…also reflects the inadequacies of the programs and services available to her."[23] As Harwood's comments indicate, the East Enders Society's understanding of beer parlours contributed to their belief that a drop-in centre for women was a valuable project, in part because it would, in their estimation, serve to reduce women's conflicts with the law.

Intended, then, as a response to the conditions and outcomes of housed homelessness, the East Enders Society designed the drop-in as a community living room or home-space for those without their own.[24] Certainly, however, as with the settlement and (related)

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[22] "Mrs. Harwood's Report Dated September 30, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1.
[23] "Mrs. Harwood's Report Dated September 30, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1.
[24] On a day centre for homeless men in Depression-era Montreal that similarly blurred the lines between public and private, home and not-home, see Anna Shea and Suzanne Morton, "Keeping Men Out of "Public or Semi-Public" Places: The Montreal Day Shelter for Unemployed Men, 1931-34," in *Negotiating Identities in 19th- and 20th-Century Montreal,* eds. Bettina Bradbury and Tamara Myers (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005).

neighbourhood house movements of earlier generations of White, middle-class women charity

and social workers, the East Enders' drop-in reflected and reproduced their own class and

cultural understandings of domesticity and 'respectable' leisure.[25] In particular, they

envisioned the drop-in as a more comfortable place for women living in SROs to spend time

in domestic leisure pursuits away from the beer parlour, where they could enjoy the company

of other women. For instance, women at the centre could play records, listen to the radio, watch

television, read, or play a game of cards or table tennis. The centre also had supplies available

for various sewing and handicraft projects, as well as a typewriter for personal, business, or

creative pursuits.[26] Moreover, the Society organized other events and programs intended to

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[25] This history of social drop-ins in the Downtown Eastside is related to, but separate from the earlier settlement and neighbourhood house movements. Certainly, beginning with the Alexandra Neighbourhood House, and followed by Gordon, Cedar Cottage, Kiwassa, South Vancouver, Mount Pleasant, and Little Mountain Neighbourhood Houses, Vancouer has its own specific twentieth-century history of neighbourhood houses that I am unable to address in this dissertation. For instance, during the 1960s and 1970s, the Kiwassa Neighbourhood Services (which originated with the Kiwassa Club in 1949), served the Downtown Eastside/Strathcona community in and around Raymur Housing (see chap. 4, this diss.), primarily providing services for children in the neighbourhood. While historical scholarship on settlement and neighbourhood houses in Vancouver remain slim, a 1981 planning thesis by Sarah Llewellyn Bassett Mellor provides an overview of the origins and operation of these Vancouver neighbourhood houses. Sarah Llewellyn Bassett Mellor, "The Neighbourhood House as a Social Work Agency" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1981). Where Diane Purvey and Lisa Pasolli touch on the origins and history of neighbourhood houses in Vancouver, the scholarship based in other Canadian urban centres, most notably Toronto, is more developed. Lisa Pasolli, *Working Mothers and the Child Care Dilemma;* Diane Barbara Purvey, "Alexandra Orphanage and Families in Crisis in Vancouver, 1892-1928, in *Child and Family Welfare in British Columbia: A History,* Diane Purvey and Christopher Walmsley, eds. (Calgary: Detslig Enterprises, 2007); Sara Z. Burke, *Seeking the Highest Good: Gender and Social Service at the University of Toronto, 1888-1937* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006); Cathy James, "Reforming Reform: Toronto's Settlement House Movement, 1900-20," *Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 1 (March 2001): 55-90; Cathy L. James, "Practical Diversions and Educational Amusements: Evangelia House and the Advent of Canada's Settlement Movement, 1902-09," *Historical Studies in Education* 10, nos. 1/2 (1998): 48-66; Suzanne Morton, *Wisdom, Justice, and Charity: Canadian Social Welfare Through the Life of Jane B. Wisdom, 1884-1975* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

[26] Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; Mary Ross in Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; "Day Centre Services," c. 1967-1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; "Day Centre Program," c. 1967-1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; "Reporting", East Enders Society Newsletter*, Fall 1969, EES fonds F-59-4-0-0-1, SFUA; "The Women's Centre," East Enders Society newsletter, c. 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Because Someone Cares," pamphlet, 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Shirley Lynn, "Going more than half way," *Province [Woman's Province],* news clipping, c. October 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; "A happy birthday!", *Vancouver Sun,* news clipping. c. May 1971, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-5, SFUA; Mary Brown, "East Enders Society Programme Report," 2 February 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-4; M.C. Gutteridge, Executive Director, "Annual General Meeting of The East-Enders Society – 25th January 1967," SFUA, EES

foster a specific kind of leisure and sociability. Most notably, there was daily afternoon tea, which Society member Mary Kelly described as a social time "enjoyed by friends in the community and volunteers."[27] The East Enders also organized birthday parties – reportedly a highlight of each month – and various seasonal celebrations, such as an annual Christmas dinner and party, and arranged small excursions for the women, including picnics and trips to local and regional attractions, such as Stanley Park, the conservatory, Point Roberts, and Birch Bay.[28] Overall, the East Enders endeavoured to create a homey environment for those without

fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Phyllis C. Dale, President, "President's Report: East-Enders Society, Annual Meeting Held January 25, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 4 January 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 May 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 June 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 September 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 4 October 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 November 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 December 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 March 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 April 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 May 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 4 December 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 4 June 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 January 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 April 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 October 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 March 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 April 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 October 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 November 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 December 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 January 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 June 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 September 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of the Seventh Annual Meeting of EES, 2 February 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5.

[27] Mary Kelly, interview, transcription, c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4.

[28] Mary Ross in Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; Lynn, "Going more than half way"; East Enders Society, "Because Someone Cares," pamphlet, 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; East Enders Society, newsletter, April 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Phyllis Harwood, "Social Workers Report," [for] East-Enders Society Board Meeting, 4 March 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; "Monthly Board Meeting- Social Worker's Report," 6 May 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Summer Events," *News!,* newsletter, September 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "The Women's Centre," East Enders Society newsletter, c. 1971, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Christmas Dinner," *East Enders Society [Notice of Annual Meeting/Newsletter],* January 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Day Centre Program," c. 1967-1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; Mary Brown, East Enders Society Programme Report, 2 February 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-4; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 May 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 December 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 10 January 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting

a home, but the space they created reflected their own middle-class and gendered ideas about the domestic home and leisure.[29]

However, while the East Enders' aimed to create home-like space, they also wanted to use that space to address women's material needs. For example, while in part a social affair, the afternoon tea may, for some women, have meant the difference between eating that day or

of Board of Directors of EES, 3 April 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 May 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 June 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 October 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 November 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 4 December 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 March 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 April 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 May 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 June 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 November 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 December 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 January 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the East-Enders Society, 30 January 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 4 March 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 April 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 May 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 June 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 9 September 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 October 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 4 November 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 December 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the East-Enders Society, 28 January 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 May 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 June 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of regular meeting of EES, 1 September 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 October 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 November 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 December 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 January 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of the Seventh Annual Meeting of EES, 2 February 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 April 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 June 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 September 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 December 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3.

[29] It is possible that the day centre was also a space in which East Enders members and volunteers strove to regulate or impose hetero-normative and heterosexist ideas about sexuality, family, and the home, but my sources do not provide evidence for me to sufficiently analyze these issues. In her analysis of Toronto's Street Haven, a similar kind of social service drop-in centre for economically marginalized and homeless women in 1960s Toronto, historical sociologist Becki Ross better attends to the complex gendered and sexual politics of regulation in such spaces. See: Becki Ross, "'Down at the Whorehouse?': Reflections on Christian Community Service and Female Sex Deviance at Toronto's Street Haven, 1965-1969," *Atlantis* 23, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 1998): 48-59; Becki L. Ross, "Destaining the (Tattooed) Delinquent Body: The Practices of Moral Regulation at Toronto's Street Haven, 1965-1969," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 7, no. 4 (1997): 561-595.

not.[30] Volunteers served sandwiches, cookies and other baked goods, and, when available, fruit; one of those volunteers, Nan Hood, speculated that "[p]erhaps it was their main meal."[31] Furthermore, the East Enders also designed the drop-in as a space where women could attend to basic personal care. For example, a wash basin, electric hair dryers, and curlers were available for women to wash, dry, and style their hair, likely welcome facilities given the challenges of privacy, safety, and hygiene in communal SRO washrooms. Additionally, the East Enders provided steam irons, ironing boards, sewing machines, and cutting tables for women to press, mend, and make clothing. They also collected donations of clothing, household and personal care items (e.g. linens, bedding, kitchenware, shampoo, soap), and groceries that they re-distributed to women. The Society later formalized and expanded that service through a venture they called the "Pantry Shelf," which one Board member described as "a thoughtful arrangement…where a needy woman moving into a room could count on basic china…and food for a start-up."[32] The Society explained that they used the 'Pantry Shelf' to

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[30] Mary Kelly, interview, transcript, c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; Nan Hood, memories of involvement with East Enders Society (written reflection), [no date, c.1990-92], SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4.

[31] Nan Hood, memories of involvement with East Enders Society (written reflection), [no date, c.1990-92], SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; Nan Hood, written reflections, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3. These food items were made and/or donated by centre volunteers, churches, local supermarkets, and other donors. (Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; Mary Ross in Pearl Willows and Mary Ross, interview, transcript, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4.)

[32] [Unknown, possibly Jean Crowley or Mary Ross], "East Enders Society," written reflections/memories. See also: Winnie Wilson, interview, audio recording, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-5; Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; East Enders Society, "Day Centre Program," c. 1967-1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; "Something New – The Pantry Shelf," East Ender Society *News!,* newsletter, September 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Enders Society, news bulletin, January 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; East Enders Society, *East-Enders News,* newsletter, c. 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; (Mrs R.) Frazer-Crierie (President, East Enders Society) to Mr. D. Toombs (Assistant Director, Welfare and Rehabilitation Department, Vancouver), 9 March 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; Phyllis de L Harwood, "Social Worker's Report," East Enders Society Board Meeting, 3 June 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; Phyllis de L Harwood, "Social Workers' Report," Board Meeting East Enders Society, 9 September 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; Phyllis de L Harwood, Social Worker's Report, East-Enders Society Board Meeting, 7 October 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of EES, 6 October 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of EES, 1 September 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 November 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3;

help clients get established in a new place and to provide other women with groceries "to tide them over until they…receive[d] social assistance."[33] Overall, then, while the East Enders sought to create a space where women could find respite from their precarious places of living, they also sought to create a place where women could go when they needed help meeting immediate material needs.

Central to this work was the East Enders Society's social worker. The Society had a paid social worker who offered various forms of formal and informal support to women from the centre (as well as from the hostel), including individual counselling. "Any woman," the Society indicated, "may come [to the centre] and be assured of a warm and friendly interview to discuss her problems."[34] From their office at the drop-in, these women – Phyllis de L. Harwood and, following Harwood's retirement in 1970, Jean Brander – helped women secure housing and employment, complete government paperwork (e.g. applications for medical care, pensions, welfare), and address any other issues as needed. As Society member and social worker Mary Kelly recalled, "Mrs. Harwood, our social worker, was a warm person who welcomed women in need, [and] searched for community resources for them whether it was

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Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 December 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 January 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; "Seventh Annual Report – February 2, 1972 – President – Miss Pearl Willows," Excerpts from Minutes of Annual Meetings, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 March 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 April 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 June 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 September 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 11 October 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 8 November 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 December 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 January 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3.
[33] Phyllis de L Harwood, "Social Workers' Report," Board Meeting East Enders Society, 9 September 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; Phyllis de L Harwood, Social Workers Report, [for] East-Enders Society Board Meeting, 7 October 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; The East-Enders Society, *News!,* September 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1.
[34] East Enders Society, "Counselling Services," informational and fundraising notice, c. 1967-1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

food, clothing, shelter, or personal problems."[35] Harwood and Brander also worked closely with various health and welfare organizations, referring women to these agencies as appropriate, arranging appointments on their behalf, and accompanying women to these appointments if they desired.[36] Ultimately, then, not a home, the drop-in was a social service led by those from outside the community who provided a particular form of help to women living in poverty. This was a frontline model of social work centred around the direct and immediate provision of assistance and support.

Notably, then, this model of care offered by the East Enders Society responded to the outcomes rather than the causes of gendered poverty. Reflective of how the day centre offered temporary relief rather than structural change, Augusta Martin recalled how a visitor of the drop-in explained to her that there was "no place to go at night".[37] Further, in lobbying for continued public support of their project, Phyllis Harwood underscored its inherent limits. In September 1970, she appealed to the public for their ongoing support, explaining that while the "Pantry Shelf" was mostly well-provisioned from recent donations of food, blankets, and

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[35] Mary Kelly, interview, transcript, c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4.

[36] For example, Harwood made contacts and liaised with other social service, community, and health agencies including, but not limited to: Centre Unit City Social Service; Vancouver General Hospital Social Service; Sancta Maria House; Catholic Children's Aid; Vancouver Children's Aid; Vancouver Indian Centre [Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre]; and Canada Manpower. East Enders Society, "Counselling Services," informational and fundraising notice, c. 1967-1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; "Mrs. Harwood's Report Dated September 30, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; Mrs. R. Frazer-Crierie (President, East Enders Society) to D. Toombs (Assistant Director, Welfare and Rehabilitation Department), 9 March 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; Phyllis de L. Harwood, "Social Worker's Annual Report," 29 January 1969, 2-3, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 September 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 5 April 1967, EES F-59-1-0-0-2, SFUA; R. Vivash, "Report of the Volunteer Chairman," *East-Enders Society Newsletter,* No. 3, September 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; "Staff," *The East Enders Society [newsletter],* April 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Because Someone Cares," pamphlet, 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Wilna Thomas, interview, audio recording, c. 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-5; Mary Kelly, interview, transcript, c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

[37] Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3. Recognizing this problem, the East Enders kept the drop-in open during the evenings for a short period of time, but Martin indicated that those extended hours were unsustainable for the Society in the long-term.

towels, that would not remain the case: "Now that the colder days are just around the corner," Harwood stressed, the Society "shall be receiving many more requests for help. I do hope," she implored readers, "you will all keep the Pantry shelf in mind in the coming months."[38] Ultimately, as Harwood's plea for continued public support reveals, without structural change at a broader level, the kinds of services offered by the East Enders Society from their day centre would remain important.[39]

Nevertheless, while, like shelters, this helping model of care did not address the root causes of women's poverty, nor readily equip women with the resources to help themselves, limited evidence from the perspective of the women who used the centre signal that it was a valued, mitigating force in their daily lived experiences of precarity. In a rare letter that has been preserved in the traditional archive, a core group of clientele expressed the importance of the centre in their lives. In the summer of 1970, the East Enders Society planned to close the centre for two weeks when Phyllis Harwood, the social worker, was going to be on holiday. With news of this temporary closure, these women typed a letter to the President of the East Enders Society, then Pearl Willows, imploring her to keep the centre open:

> In due course of Mrs. Del Harwood going on vacation on the 27th of July 1970, we would like very much for the East Enders to remained open for us to have our daily friendship meeting every afternoon we will miss the East Enders club if it closes up for two weeks.. [sic] We will miss Mrs. Harwood When she will not be here we all like her very much as well as we all like you too. PLEASE KEEP THE CLUB OPENED we all need the East Ende[r]s Club as I've said before all the girls that attended the club will be lost if it should close down even if it is only for two weeks we would miss it we miss it when it is closed on Saturdays & Sundays…We hope you will see it our way PLEASE… We all thank you for everything you have done for us and we thank Mrs. Harwood for keeping us in good spirits and watching over us to make sure we act like grown women and not like rangatangs and she has done a beautiful and wonderful job. We all need the club it's the only thing that keeps us

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[38] Phyllis Harwood, Social Worker's Report, East Enders Society Board Meeting, 9 September 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1.

[39] Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 October 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2.

from going down hill we would all miss the club terribly and without it what would we do?????? We all beg of you to keep it remaining open.[40]

The fact that fifteen women collectively wrote and signed this letter, concerned about even a temporary closure of the centre, shows that this place mattered to them.[41] That they used language that evokes paternalistic and racialized understandings of women and poverty does not necessarily indicate that they subscribed to or internalized these ideas; rather, these women may have been performing a particular kind of dependent or deferential role as a means to achieve their own ends. Ultimately, while there is much that we do not know about how these women used and understood the East Enders drop-in centre or about their relationship with the Society's members, staff, and volunteers, their letter tells us unequivocally that the drop-in was important to them.[42] Their letter indicates that the drop-in was a space where women could – and did – make and nurture social relationships, and it tells us that the day centre mattered in

[40] The word 'PLEASE' was typed in red in the original letter. I have not included the names of the letter writers here for confidentiality reasons, as per a research agreement between the author and Simon Fraser University Archives. Participants of East Enders Society Women's Centre [anonymized for confidentiality] to President of East Enders Society, 20 July 1970, EES Society fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1, SFUA.

[41] Participants of East Enders Society Women's Centre [anonymized for confidentiality] to President of East Enders Society, 20 July 1970, EES Society fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1, SFUA.

[42] Significantly, the East Enders' records also contain a second letter written by a women who regularly used the drop-in centre. Penned in March 1971, that letter contrasts the tone of the one I have reproduced above in that it was a letter of complaint. In that letter, the client – signed, "An Ex Member" – issued a complaint about the operation of the day centre under the new leadership of social worker Jean Brander, who replaced Harwood in December 1970. In her letter, this woman expressed that she and her friends liked Phyllis Harwood and respected her work, but were dissatisfied with the way the centre was being run since Harwood had retired. The very act of writing a letter of complaint shows that the centre mattered to her, and that she was willing to lobby on behalf of herself and her friends to ensure the space remained useful and meaningful to them in the ways they understood. This letter also indicates that women who used the centre may have had competing ideas about the space relative to the women who ran it, and shows that they were willing to assert their interests and opinions even when they conflicted. That is, they did not always assume the deferential tone as taken in the letter I reproduced above. Indeed, a letter in response from Pearl Willows (President) to the woman that the East Enders believed wrote this letter of complaint, suggests that she had written more than one anonymous letter raising issue with the centre's recent operation. Further, some of the women named in the protest letter are among the women who signed the 1970 letter reproduced above. This overlap in signatories suggests both continuity in the day centre's core clientele, but also a change in its social environment, including a possible erosion in the relationship between the East Enders and some of their clientele. An Ex Member, "To Whom It May Concern," letter to East Enders Society, 25 March 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; P. Willows to [redacted for confidentiality], 20 July 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1.

their lives, even if all the reasons for why it mattered to them are obscured in the preserved records.[43]

Through this drop-in model of care, the East Enders Society believed they offered women the warmth, comfort, safety, connection, and companionship that they supposed SROs and the streets to not. For example, Pearl Willows, then president of the East Enders Society and a deaconess at the neighbourhood's First United Church, explained to a *Province* reporter that their space "afford[ed] women some relief from their miserable rundown rooms on Powell and Cordova Streets."[44] Willows assessed that "[i]n the winter, their rooms are cold and at all times they lead a lonely life," but that at the centre, they "get fellowship."[45] Former City social worker Wilna Thomas held a similar view. She recalled how she "used to drop in there for a cup of tea in the afternoons" when she had been visiting clients in the area.[46] Thomas, who recommended the centre to many of her clients, described that "it provided them with somewhere to go where they were welcome and where they could get out of their room where the four walls were really closing in, where there was a cup of tea and…always goodies."[47] Volunteer Nan Hood reflected upon how the East Enders' "tea place seemed to be the only kind spot in the women's lives" and so "they seldom missed, and truly enjoyed the food."[48] Ruth Vivash, the chairwoman of volunteers, similarly assessed that "[t]he women and children attending the Centre have appreciated a comfortable and friendly atmosphere where they could

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[43] Overall, a limit of this archival record is that we know more about how the East Enders Society understood this space, and less about the perspectives of the women who used it.
[44] Lynn, "Going more than half way". For more details about Pearl Willows, see chapter two, note 14.
[45] Lynn, "Going more than half way."
[46] Wilna Thomas, interview, audio recording, c. 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-5.
[47] Wilna Thomas, interview, audio recording, c. 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-5.
[48] Nan Hood, memories of involvement with East Enders Society (written reflection), [no date, c.1990-92], SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4; Nan Hood, written reflections/memories, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

rest, talk and have tea."[49] Volunteer Augusta Martin also remembered one woman who came to the drop-in daily to use the typewriter. As Martin recalled, she "stayed the whole day and sometimes didn't feel she had time to stop for tea…We never saw anything that she produced," Martin recalled, "but she typed away…she was going to write stories and be a journalist…she was perfectly happy doing it."[50] In sum, the East Enders wanted to create a space for women experiencing housed (and unhoused) homelessness to relax, socialize, and form human connections. As these members' reflections on the drop-in indicate, from their perspective, they believed that they achieved this goal.

The East Enders women's day centre did not address nor change broader structures of precarity; it was not designed to end homelessness, but to alleviate its conditions and consequences. Although the East Enders Society did not set out to solve poverty, nor, realistically could they have, with their day centre for women, they did critical work to mitigate its lived and embodied impacts in the everyday. Moreover, while the East Enders may have established the centre to mitigate gendered experiences of homelessness, it ultimately did more than that. While the women who used the centre may have understood its social significance differently than the more privileged East Enders social workers and volunteers who operated it, the limited evidence we do have from the perspective of women in the community signals that the opportunities for connection the centre provided mattered to them. Truly, as I will develop in the next section of this chapter, this model of care which created new spaces for women to make connections mattered because it offered new opportunities for women to create and nurture community. The connections that women themselves then created from within

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[49] R. Vivash (Chairman of Volunteers), "Report of the Volunteer Chairman," East-Enders Society Newsletter, No. 3, September 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1.
[50] Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

such spaces shows that, contrary to privileged expectations, they lived a life not defined by precarity, but a life lived in community.

"I Did It for the Love of My People": Catherine Ferry Adams and Community Care

White women involved with the East Enders Society were not the only ones who shaped this transformation of the neighbourhood. The history of the development of a new social service infrastructure in Downtown Eastside Vancouver is also a history of Indigenous activism. As primarily non-Indigenous groups like the East Enders Society became active in the delivery of frontline services to women in the Downtown Eastside, Indigenous people also provided services themselves both within and apart from such organizations. In what follows, I explore the community labour of 'Nakwaxda'xw elder Catherine (nee Henderson) Ferry Adams (Ubumpa) who offered another model of care work that was activism in the Downtown Eastside.[51] Her model of care both overlapped with and differed from the model provided by the East Enders Society through their women's day centre. As I will show, Ferry Adams offered an Indigenized response to homelessness that addressed not only the material, but also the cultural, spiritual, and community dimensions of Indigenous homelessness.

Building from recent scholarship by historians and anthropologists who have both centered and reframed Indigenous women's community work as activism, Ferry Adams' example continues to generate more expansive thinking about the means through which social change occurs and the actors who drive it. I centre Ferry Adams here because she is an

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[51] Her given English surname was Henderson, but in most archival records from the 1960s that I accessed, she is usually referred to by her first married name Ferry (in some places spelled Ferrie). In records from later years, she appears as Adams after she remarried. Because she was known as both Catherine Ferry and Catherine Adams, I have chosen to use both names together so that she is identifiable to people who knew her by either name. Some records also indicate that some people close to her called her Katie and/or Kittie, probably a name reserved for friends and family. These are her English names used in the archival records I accessed. Some contemporary web sources, including those produced by her relatives, also refer to her as Ubumpa, which likely is also her name.

important figure in the history of anti-poverty activism in Vancouver. But her story is important beyond the city borders, as well. Ferry Adams' labour in service of community is also representative of, and tells us more about, Indigenous women's labour that was also activism across British Columbia and Canada. Certainly, Ferry Adams was not alone among her Indigenous contemporaries in Vancouver and elsewhere in building and caring for community in the city. From Indigenous-run boarding homes and shelters to Friendship Centres, Ferry Adams' work was part of broader patterns of Urban Indigenous activism through service provision during the late twentieth century. Through various collaborative and independent measures, both within and apart from Indigenous and non-Indigenous social welfare institutions and organizations, Indigenous people across North America developed their own culturally-specific social programs, services, and opportunities for Indigenous people in cities.[52] Historians Mary Jane Logan McCallum (Munsee-Delaware Nation) and Adele Perry

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[52] See, for example: Grant Arndt, "Indigenous Agendas and Activist Genders: Chicago's American Indian Centre, Social Welfare, and Native American Women's Leadership," in *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women's Activism in Urban Communities,* eds. Susan Applegate Krouse and Heather A. Howard (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Brenda J. Child, *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community* (New York: Viking, 2012); Brenda Child, "Politically Purposeful Work: Ojibwe Women's Labor and Leadership in Postwar Minneapolis," in Carol Williams, ed. *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labour to Activism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Corinne George, "'If I Didn't Do Something, My Spirit Would Die…': Grassroots Activism of Aboriginal Women in Calgary and Edmonton, 1951-1985" (master's thesis, University of Calgary, 2007); Heather A. Howard, "Dreamcatchers in the City: An Ethnohistory of Social Action, Gender and Class in Native Community Production in Toronto" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2004); Heather A. Howard, "Women's Class Strategies as Activism in Native Community Building in Toronto, 1950-1975," in Krouse and Howard, eds., *Keeping the Campfires Going*; Nancy Janovicek, "'Assisting Our Own': Urban Migration, Self-Governance, and Native Women's Organizing in Thunder Bay, Ontario, 1972-1989," in Krouse and Howard, eds., *Keeping the Campfires Going*; Nancy Janovicek, *No Place to Go: Local Histories of the Battered Women's Shelter Movement* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Susan Applegate Krouse and Heather A. Howard, introduction to Krouse and Howard, eds., *Keeping the Campfires Going*; Susan Applegate Krouse, "What Came Out of the Takeovers: Women's Activism and the Indian Community School of Milwaukee," in Krouse and Howard, eds., *Keeping the Campfires Going;* Will Langford, "Friendship Centres in Canada, 1959-1977," *American Indian Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 1-37; Molly Lee, "How Will I Sew My Baskets?": Women Vendors, Market Art, and Incipient Political Activism in Anchorage, Alaska," in Krouse and Howard, eds., *Keeping the Campfires Going;* William G. Lindsay, "A History of the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre in an Age of Aboriginal Migration and Urbanization" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1998); Susan Lobo, "Urban Clan Mothers: Key Households in Cities," in Krouse and Howard, eds., *Keeping the Campfires Going*; Meghan Longstaffe, "Indigenous Women as Newspaper Representations: Violence and Action in 1960s Vancouver," *Canadian Historical Review* 98, 2 (June 2017): 230-260; Sylvia Maracle, "The Eagle Has Landed: Native Women, Leadership, and Community Development," in *Strong Women Stories: Native Vision*

distinguish that these new services and opportunities for Urban Indigenous peoples were significant because they were "delivered by Indigenous people and reflect[ed] Indigenous priorities."[53] In developing and offering these services, Indigenous leaders helped to combat racialized poverty, discrimination, and other social problems often experienced by Indigenous peoples in urban settings. Moreover, through these services, Indigenous leaders lay the building blocks for Urban Indigenous communities which were generative of self-empowerment and cultural revitalization.[54]

Indigenous women, especially, were crucial to this work. As Susan Applegate Krouse (Oklahoma Cherokee) and Heather Howard argue, along with and adjacent to more typically-recognized forms of direct political and social activism, Indigenous women's "roles behind the scenes, as keepers of tradition, educators of children, and pioneers of city life…provided the strength and foundation for the networks and organizations that are often the backbones of urban Native communities."[55] Indeed, as Krouse, Howard, and other scholars have shown, Indigenous women in cities adapted culturally-based roles and responsibilities to provide people with shelter and food, care for children, tend to the sick, educate youth, and transmit

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and Community Survival, eds. Kim Anderson and Bonita Lawrence (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2003); Mary Jane Logan McCallum, *Indigenous Women, Work, and History, 1940-1980* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014); Anne Terry Straus and Debra Valentino, "Gender and Community Organization Leadership in the Chicago Indian Community," in Krouse and Howard, eds., *Keeping the Campfires Going*; Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2007), 162-183; Cheryl Lynn Troupe, "Métis Women: Social Structure, Urbanization, and Political Activism, 1850-1980" (master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2009); Joan Weibel-Orlando, "Telling Paula Starr: Native American Woman as Urban Indian Icon," in Susan Krouse and Howard, eds., *Keeping the Campfires Going;* Mary C. Wright, "Creating Change, Reclaiming Indian Space in Post-World War II Seattle: The American Indian Women's Service League and the Seattle Indian Center, 1958-1978," in Krouse and Howard, eds., *Keeping the Campfires Going.*
[53] Mary Jane Logan McCallum and Adele Perry, *Structures of Indifference: An Indigenous Life and Death in a Canadian City* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2018), 56.
[54] See supra note 52.
[55] Krouse and Howard, introduction to Krouse and Howard, eds. *Keeping the Campfires Going,* x.

cultural knowledge.[56] For example, as historian Brenda Child (Red Lake Ojibwe) explains, "[r]ather than abandon cultural ideas about work, [Indigenous women] reimagined and restructured labor in ways that were of greatest worth to the community."[57] Similarly, anthropologist Susan Lobo has written of "urban clan mothers," Indigenous matriarchs who headed "key households" through which they met people's immediate material needs, but also, significantly, generated and sustained urban kinship, community, and connection to homelands.[58] In Vancouver, Catherine Ferry Adams was one such community matriarch. Ferry Adams reimagined and repurposed her labour to carry out culturally-specific work and responsibilities in an urban context.

The central role of culture to individual and community well-being was long recognized by Ferry Adams. Indeed, her work in Vancouver was part of a longer personal commitment to community health and welfare through cultural connection and revitalization. Before coming to Vancouver, Ferry Adams had supported individuals and families in myriad ways, including through the teaching of children. For example, during the 1950s in Campbell River, British Columbia, Ferry Adams and her adult daughter Elizabeth Glendale Quocksister organized a dance group for Indigenous children, through which the children learned and performed Kʷakʷəkəʔwakʷ songs and dances.[59] This dance group was one way Ferry Adams pushed back against settler colonialism's assimilatory aims. Following more than a half century of blunt repression under the Indian Act's "potlatch law" (which, from 1885 to its removal from the Indian Act in 1951, criminalized ceremony and cultural practices) Ferry

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[56] On Indigenous women's gendered leadership and activism, cultural adaptation, innovation, and community care in cities, see supra note 52.
[57] Brenda Child, "Politically Purposeful Work," 240.
[58] Lobo, "Urban Clan Mothers," in Krouse and Howard, eds. *Keeping the Campfires Going.*
[59] City of Campbell River, "Community Builder Biography: Kimtalaga, Elizabeth Glendale Quocksister (1925-1981)," *Community Builder Honours,* awarded 2008, http://www.campbellriver.ca/docs/default-source/your-city-hall/community-builders-honours.pdf?sfvrsn=4, last accessed 3 December 2020.

Adams and Quocksister enacted vital work of cultural education, rejuvenation, and public celebration.

Throughout her life in and beyond Campbell River, Ferry Adams maintained her personal commitment to support the welfare of individuals, families, and communities who were experiencing the entwined material, social, and cultural impacts of settler colonialism, and continuously adapted her care work to the different contexts in which she lived.[60] In Vancouver, an overarching context of women's urban precarity motivated and shaped her efforts. When Ferry Adams moved to Vancouver in the early 1960s following the passing of her husband, she discovered people living in ways and in conditions that troubled her. As she walked through her new Vancouver neighbourhood in the East End, she was distressed by what she saw. She explained:

> I went to Vancouver and I'd take a walk to pass the time. When my first husband passed away it was anything to forget about my sorrows, and I'd take a walk around. That's when I'd see the way our people were acting. People from all over, not just from here – they were from villages all over, even the United States. I used to go home and wonder if there was anything I could do to get them to live a life the way they should live a life. Because we didn't know what alcohol was until the White man

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[60] The East Enders Society fonds at Simon Fraser University Archives contains an audio recording of an interview with Catherine Ferry Adams (c.1990) in which she discusses her community service work in Vancouver and elsewhere. This interview provides additional detail about her work, motivations, and personal background than I offer in this dissertation. As with the other oral history interviews with members of the East Enders Society contained in the East Enders Society fonds, I accessed this interview under the terms of a research agreement. Many of the records of the East Enders Society, including these interviews, are restricted by the Archives in order to protect the privacy of individuals in these records who were clients of the Society, as well as these interviewees. With respect to the oral history interviews, there were no consent or release forms for the interviewees included in the donation of the records to Archives. Because the interviewees expectations of confidentiality thus are not clear, the Archive has placed restrictions of these interviews. Because much of the content of this interview constitutes personal information, to maintain confidentiality, I have not used this interview with Ferry Adams extensively in this dissertation. Rather, I have instead relied primarily on information about her life and work that is available in the public record, and information about her work with the East Enders Society and St. James' Social Services Society that I accessed through the research agreement but which does not constitute personal information. I have used information from this interview only in instances where doing so does not violate confidentiality. Even though I am only able to use this interview in this dissertation in limited ways, I nevertheless bring attention to its existence because my own process of listening to and analyzing Ferry Adams' interview has informed my understanding of her service and labour in Vancouver, and thus, shaped how I have analyzed publicly available information about her community work. I also note the existence of this interview because her descendants, relatives, community members, and others who were close to her may wish to know of this recording. Catherine Ferrie Adams, interview, audio recording, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-1.

came…I used to run into people that I had known were raised on the reserve where I'd been – and to see them living that life.[61]

As her reflections highlight, Ferry Adams understood these entwined social issues of poverty, homelessness, and addiction to be an outcome and symptom of settler colonialism and the dislocation and alienation it produced.

Witnessing people in Vancouver living in these outcomes drove Ferry Adams to get involved in service provision, much like Indigenous women elsewhere who also became active in the creation and delivery of urban social welfare services in response to precarity and discrimination experienced by Indigenous people in cities.[62] These women's community service work was a direct response to the impacts of settler colonialism. In Ferry Adams' case, she started first, by inviting people to her house to share nourishing meals and conversation, and to sleep, if they needed a place to stay. From her home, she also organized a dance class and group for Indigenous children, adults, and elders, and a sewing club for Indigenous women.[63] Ferry Adams explained that her reasons for providing these and other services correlated directly to the crisis of Indigenous women's precarity. She explained: "I felt so bad, I felt so hurt. I'd be walking down the street and there'd be a girl passed out right in the sidewalk on Hastings or on Powell St. – some girl that I'd know and I'd feel so bad. That's why I started the sewing group, to entertain them and to keep their minds on something else."[64]

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[61] Catherine Adams, oral history in David Neel, *Our Chiefs and Elders: Words and Photographs of Native Leaders* (Vancouver and Seattle: UBC Press and University of Washington Press, 1992), 26.
[62] Child, "Politically Purposeful Work," 249.
[63] Adams in Neel, *Our Chiefs and Elders*, 25-27; "Navigating Identity," *Kwi'lank: The Feasting Season,* November 27, 2014, https://kwilanx.wordpress.com, accessed 31 October 2017; Martine J. Reid, ed., preface to *Paddling to Where I Stand: Agnes Alfred: Qwiqwasutinuxw Noblewoman,* by Agnes Alfred, ed. and annotation by Martine J. Reid, trans. Daisy Sewid-Smith (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), viii and 231n2; M.C. Gutteridge, Executive Director, "Annual General Meeting of The East-Enders Society – 25th January, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Minutes of Third Annual Meeting of EES, 24 January 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; East Enders Society, "Because Someone Cares," pamphlet, 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Catherine Ferry, "Indian Women's Sewing Club," *East-Enders Society Newsletter,* No. 3, September 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1.
[64] Adams in Neel, *Our Chiefs and Elders*, 25-27.

Seeing Indigenous people, and especially Indigenous women and girls, living in and experiencing circumstances of poverty, homelessness, substance misuse, and addiction – circumstances that Ferry Adams connected to dislocation from culture and community – moved her to action: "That's why I started inviting them to my place to slowly talk to them about what real Indian life is – that we didn't have to follow the White man's way of living. We had our own life, we had a beautiful life. And I used to talk about these things…I wanted to keep them going."[65] Understanding Indigenous women's precarity to be a symptom and consequence of alienation from Indigenous cultures, knowledge, and communities, Ferry Adams thus approached her care by creating spaces and opportunities for people to repair the connections and relationships that had been harmed through settler colonialism.

As a 'Nakwaxda'xw Noblewoman, Ferry Adams' politics of care was rooted in her upbringing. Shaped by the teachings of her elders, Ferry Adams understood her service work to be a responsibility. Born in 1903, "away up the coast," she had learned from childhood tenets of sharing and tending to the well-being of others.[66] The daughter of Kenneth Henderson, a Scottish engineer, and Lucy (nee Johnson) Henderson, a high-ranking 'Nakwaxda'xw woman, Ferry Adams and her siblings spent much of their childhood with their mother's family in Ba'as (Blunden Harbour) and other communities along the coast, where she received teachings from her elders that she carried throughout her life.[67] She described how her maternal grandmother, in particular, was a significant figure in her life: "My grandmother lived to be

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[65] Adams in Neel, *Our Chiefs and Elders*, 25-27.

[66] Catherine Adams quoted in Karie Garnier, *Our Elders Speak: A Tribute to Native Elders* (White Rock, British Columbia: Karie Garnier, 1990, 58; Adams in Neel, *Our Chiefs and Elders*, 25; Reid, ed., *Paddling to Where I Stand,* viii and 231n2.

[67] Ferry Adams spoke fluent Kʷakʷ̓ala, several regional dialects, and English. Adams in Neel, *Our Chiefs and Elders*, 25-27; Photograph caption for "May and Sam Henderson" (photograph), *Museum at Campbell River*, Elizabeth Quocksister Collection, Elizabeth Quocksister (photographer), Catalogue Number: 20391-289, date unknown, http://campbellriver.crmuseum.ca/photograph/may-and-sam-henderson (last accessed 30 October 2017); Reid, ed., *Paddling to Where I Stand,* viii and 231n2.

120, and I learnt a whole lot from her. My mother used to let me sleep with her, and she used to talk to me to sleep, and I loved it. She used to tell me Indian stories. Her name was Naknagim, 'handling the daylight.'"[68] Through her life, Ferry Adams viewed service with and for others as a fundamental praxis of love and respect, one that she had learned from her grandmother and other elders as a child growing up at Ba'as. She explained:

> We were told that if anybody comes from another village we were to treat them nicely, call them up to our house and feed them because they had travelled a distance in a canoe to reach this village that we're living in. This is what was taught to us – how we were to be kind, and how we were to share…if the other person hasn't got it, share it.[69]

As Ferry Adams indicated, her elders shared with her the stories, traditions, and teachings that shaped her way of relating to others: "[W]e were taught right from the beginning…how we were to treat people, to be kind to people."[70] These teachings informed and underlay her service throughout her life, including during the time she lived in Vancouver.

Ferry Adams thus held as a core value a responsibility to teach, share, and care for others in her communities. Her understanding of this responsibility included not only tending to people's material needs, but also uplifting and supporting people in other ways, too. For instance, during their weekly gatherings, sewing club members worked on various handicraft projects, played games, socialized, and shared refreshments in good company.[71] Ferry Adams

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[68] Adams in Neel, *Our Chiefs and Elders*, 27.
[69] Adams in Neel, *Our Chiefs and Elders*, 26-27.
[70] Adams in Neel, *Our Chiefs and Elders*, 26.
[71] Catherine Ferry, President, [Indian Women's Sewing Club], "Indian Women's Sewing Club," *East-Enders Society Newsletter,* No. 3, September 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Minutes of meeting of East Enders, 28 October 1964, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; Carol Roberts (Women's Editor), "Down Payment on $11,000 Hostel Obtained," *Anglican News,* December 1964, newspaper clipping, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; P. Willows, Recording Secretary, Minutes of the Second Annual Meeting of EES, 25 January 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; M.C. Gutteridge, Executive Director, "Annual General Meeting of The East-Enders Society – 25th January 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Minutes of the Third Annual Meeting of the East-Enders Society, 24 January 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Mary Ross, Recording Secretary, Minutes of the Fifth Annual Meeting of EES, 30 January 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5.

explained that "[o]n some occasions instead of the usual sewing the members played games and enjoyed a social time."[72] The value Ferry Adams ascribed to the sewing club showed that she believed connection to be intricately connected to people's well-being. Notably, then, through the sewing club, much like her dance groups, Ferry Adams created new opportunities and spaces for women to create social and cultural connection and re-connection. Overall, her focus on offering such spaces and opportunities reflected an Indigenized response to homelessness, one that understood physical, social, emotional, and cultural well-being as interconnected.[73]

Although much of her work to create these opportunities was informal, as Cree matriarch Margaret White had also done (see chapter two), Ferry Adams often worked strategically with non-Indigenous women in the development of a more formalized social service infrastructure. Certainly, Ferry Adams at times worked together with other Indigenous community leaders in Vancouver, including Margaret White, but she also worked with and alongside settler women, especially with May Gutteridge, to develop new social services. Notably, Ferry Adams was an active member of the East Enders Society. From September 1966 through at least December 1970 she was a Director on the Board of the East Enders Society, and her leadership underlay many of its programs and services. For instance, the women's sewing club that met at her own home became affiliated with the East Enders, and

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[72] Catherine Ferry, "Indian Women's Sewing Club," *East-Enders Society Newsletter,* No. 3, September 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1.

[73] Métis-Cree scholar Jesse Thistle offers a definition of Indigenous homelessness that includes twelve dimensions. Thistle outlines that Indigenous homelessness is not solely about being without the physical structures of housing. Rather, as Thistle argues, Indigenous homelessness is rooted in and composite of alienation from relationships to self, family, community, land, water, animals, culture, and language, relationships that were disrupted by the practices of settler colonialism. Thistle underscores that "a lack of home…is a culturally understood experience." Thistle's definition informs and shapes my analysis of Ferry Adams' commitment to cultural practice, knowledge transmission, and community as a critical response to Indigenous homelessness in late-twentieth-century Vancouver. Jesse Thistle, *Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press, 2017). (Quotation from Thistle, *Indigenous Definition,* 8.)

items made by women of the group were displayed and sold at the Society's fundraising events. Starting in November 1968, the sewing club also began holding meetings at the East Enders women's day centre under Ferry Adams' continued direction. Moreover, in addition to Ferry Adams' ongoing role as one of the Directors of the Board of the East Enders Society and her leadership with the sewing club, she also was involved with the Society's work in additional ways. For instance, she filled in temporarily for matrons (including Margaret White) at the East Enders' hostel when they were unavailable; organized occasional evening programs for Indigenous women at the East Enders women's day centre; and organized an annual Christmas party and dinner for Indigenous women in the Downtown Eastside.[74] Furthermore, in addition to her leadership and work with the East Enders Society, Ferry Adams also went on to have a pivotal role in the establishment and operation of another parallel social service organization,

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[74] "The East-Enders Hostel," pamphlet, 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Because Someone Cares," pamphlet, 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-1; East Enders Society, "Open House" and "Home-Craft" in *The East-Enders bulletin,* Fall Edition 1966, newsletter, Simon Fraser University Archives, East Enders Society fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Catherine Ferry, President, [Indian Women's Sewing Club], "Indian Women's Sewing Club," *East-Enders Society Newsletter,* No. 3, September 1967, newsletter, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; "East Enders Society, "5. & 6. Hostel Services," fundraising informational summaries of East Enders Society programs, c. 1967-1974, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; Minutes of General Meeting of EES, 23 June 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of EES, 16 August 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of general meeting of EES, 3 November 1965, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of Board of Directors of EES, 7 September 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of a Special Meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 29 September 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of a Special Meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 12 October 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 2 November 1966, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 4 January 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 11 January 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of East Enders Society, 7 June 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 September 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 November 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 December 1967, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 February 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 1 May 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 4 December 1968; Minutes of the Second Annual Meeting of EES, 25 January 1967, SFU, EE, F-59-5-1-0-0-1; Minutes of Third Annual Meeting of EES, 24 January 1968, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Minutes of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the East Enders Society, 30 January 1970, SFU, EE,F-59-1-0-0-5; Phyllis C. Dale, President, "President's Report: East-Enders Society, Annual Meeting Held January 25, 1967," SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; May Gutteridge, interview, audio recording, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-2; Catherine Ferrie Adams, interview, audio recording, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-1.

the St. James' Social Services Society, which, from the 1970s, offered a broad range of social, community, and housing services in the Downtown Eastside.[75]

The St. James' Social Services Society developed, in part, out of May Gutteridge's parish social work from St. James' Anglican Church, but Ferry Adams was instrumental in its founding, and directly shaped the kinds of programs it offered. In particular, one key program of the St. James' Social Services Society was a community space known as the Gastown Workshop. With parallels to the urban Friendship Centres established and run by Indigenous leaders in many North American cities, including Vancouver, through the Gastown Workshop, Ferry Adams secured a more formal space for the kinds of services that she had already been

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[75] The available record indicates that Ferry Adams was active on the Board of the East Enders Society from the mid-1960s to about 1970, but starting in the late 1960s, her work concentrated more with St. James' Social Services Society. For example, starting in the fall of 1968, Ferry Adams started working with Indigenous women and girls at St. James' every Tuesday. Some of the many programs St. James' Social Services came to offer included, but were not limited to: meals; groceries; laundry, shower, and bathroom facilities; emergency housing; welfare case management; counselling; legal assistance; assistance locating housing; assistance obtaining medical care; home care services (cleaning and shopping for the elderly and those with mobility restrictions); and hospice care. The St. James' Social Services Society received financial support from a range of sources, including, for example, the St. James Anglican Church, the Provincial government, the Alcohol and Drug Commission, the City of Vancouver, and various private individuals and organizations. The St. James' Social Services Society is still active as of the time of writing, now as the Bloom Group. Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 November 1968; Catherine Ferrie Adams, interview, audio recording, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-1; "Catherine Adams," in David Neel, *Our Chiefs and Elders*, 26; Garnier, *Our Elders Speak*, 58; Rev. C.G.L. Wright, "Christ Has Two Hands – One is Red, One is White," *Whitsunday, S. James' Parish Family Newsletter*, May 1970, Anglican Diocese of New Westminster Archives [hereafter cited as ADNWA], St. James, Vancouver (Parish Records) [hereafter cited as SJV], St. James Church, Vancouver, B.C., Occasional Paper, D108/8; J.M., "Home Help Service," S. James Social Service and Christian Action, newsletter/report, January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8; St. James' Social Services Society, *St James Social Service Society, Annual Report, 1981-82,* ADNWA, SJV, St. James- Vancouver, Annual Reports, D108/2; St. James Social Service Society, *St James Social Service Society, Annual Report, 1982-83,* 3, ADNWA, SJV, St. James- Vancouver, Annual Reports, D108/2; St. James Community Service Society, *2010/2011 Annual Report to the Community: 50th Anniversary Edition*, 5, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Community Services Society, 1998-2011, ACCN D2011-27; Urban Design Centre, "Feasibility Study and Proposal for Renovations," c. 1973, 2-3, City of Vancouver Archives [hereafter cited as CVA], Urban Design Centre fonds [hereafter cited as UDC fonds], AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-E-1 file 6; Urban Design Centre, "Feasibility and Proposal for Renovations, Saint James Social Services, 333 Powell Street," c. 1973, CVA, UDC fonds AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-E-1 file 6; Monty Wood, "Report on the Proposal of a Community Centre for Residents of Skid Row," April 1971, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5 file 2; Douglas P. Welbanks, *From Lost to Found: the May Gutteridge Story* (Richmond, B.C.: Chateau Lane Publishing, 2008); Phyllis Reeve, *Every Good Gift: A History of S. James', Vancouver 1881-1981* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press Ltd for S. James' Anglican Church, 1981), ADNWA, SJV, St. James, Vancouver, ACC D993-30.

providing in a more informal and temporal way.[76] Notably, the Workshop had its origins in

Ferry Adams' sewing club. The women in Ferry Adams' sewing club had long expressed that

they wished for there to be a larger and more formal space that would provide their group with

a gathering place for their sewing work *and* which would also serve as a social centre for the

wider community.[77] When it became overcrowded at her own house, the sewing club started

holding its meetings regularly in the basement of the St. James' Anglican Church.[78] Then, in

January 1970, the more expansive space envisioned by the women became a reality when the

St. James Social Services Society transformed an old noodle factory on East Cordova Street

into a social and work centre open to all neighbourhood residents.[79] A few months after it

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[76] For example, Indigenous leaders successfully established the Vancouver Indian Friendship Centre (now the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre) in 1963, following years of organizing. This centre had roots in the earlier Coqualeetza Fellowship Club, through which Urban Indigenous leaders provided services to Indigenous people in Vancouver from the early 1950s. The first location of the official Friendship Centre was at 1200 West Broadway in the Fairview neighbourhood, and through the 1970s at 1855 Vine Street in the Kitsilano neighbourhood. In the early 1980s the Friendship Centre moved to 1607 East Hastings Street, closer to the Downtown Eastside, where it still exists as of the time of writing. Because the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre was not in the Downtown Eastside during the period when the Gastown Workshop first opened, its geography might have been a barrier to use by Downtown Eastside residents, thus adding to the importance of the Gastown Workshop as another space of Urban Indigenous community. For more on the history of the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, see Lindsay, "History of the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre"; Longstaffe, "Indigenous Women as Newspaper Representations." On the broader postwar history of Friendship Centres across North America, and the services and community they offered, see: Langford, "Friendship Centres in Canada, 1959-1977"; Howard, "Dreamcatchers in the City"; Leslie Hall, "The Early History of the Winnipeg Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, 1951-1968," in *Prairie Metropolis: New Essays on Winnipeg Social History,* eds. Esyllt Wynne Jones and Gerald Friesen (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2009); Scott M. Kukurudz, "'Three Mere Housewives' and the Founding of the Brandon Friendship Centre," *Manitoba History* 56 (2007): 44-51; Pamela Ouart and the Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, "Laying the Groundwork for Co-Production: The Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, 1968-82," in *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation*, ed. Evelyn J. Peters and Chris Andersen (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013); Thrush, *Native Seattle,* 165-173.

[77] Rev. C.G.L. Wright, "Christ Has Two Hands – One is Red, One is White," *Whitsunday, S. James' Parish Family Newsletter*, May 1970, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, B.C., Occasional Paper, D108/8.

[78] Catherine Ferrie Adams, interview, audio recording, c. 1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-1.

[79] Rev. C.G.L. Wright, "Christ Has Two Hands – One is Red, One is White," *Whitsunday, S. James' Parish Family Newsletter*, May 1970, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, B.C., Occasional Paper, D108/8. The Gastown Workshop moved from its original location a couple of times, but by 1972 secured a longer-term home in the 300-block of Powell Street with other St. James' Social Services programs; in the fall of 1971, the St. James Social Services moved the Workshop to the old Catholic Seamen's Mission at 373 East Cordova Street, where it shared facilities with the Downtown Community Health Centre, and again, in the summer of 1972 to the 300-block of Powell Street. 331 Powell Street became the site of the Gastown Workshop, a cafeteria, laundry, shower, and washrooms, while 329 Powell became the administration office for the Society. 329 Powell later also became the site of the St. James Store, and the Society subsequently built a new cafeteria at 333 Powell. Urban

opened, St. James' Anglican Church's Reverend Wright described how the Gastown Workshop "is now the centre once dreamed of and Mrs. Ferry is in charge of a very active group of Indian ladies engaged in many activities."[80] He further described how, on Thursday evenings, a group of about fifteen Indigenous women met in the new space "to sew, knit, and crochet," with "time for social activity always."[81] Ferry Adams' dance classes also met in this new space, and the Rev. Wright highlighted that on Tuesday mornings there was "instruction in wool weaving" and that "another time during the week a non-Indian lady [came] to teach alterations to men's and women's clothing."[82] This was just the beginning. Over the course of the next two decades, the Workshop came to accommodate many additional activities and programs, everything from quilting, weaving, beadwork, leatherwork, and carving, to television, furniture repair, and hairdressing.[83]

Design Centre, "Feasibility and Proposal for Renovations, Saint James Social Services, 333 Powell Street," c. 1973, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-E-1 file 6; May Gutteridge, "St. James' Social Service – Gastown Workshop", in S. James Social Service and Christian Action, newsletter/report, January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8; Rev. C.G.L. Wright, "Christ Has Two Hands – One is Red, One is White," in *Whitsunday, S. James' Parish Family Newsletter*, May 1970, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, B.C., Occasional Paper, D108/8; Welbanks, *From Lost to Found,* 33-37.

[80] Rev. C.G.L. Wright, "Christ Has Two Hands – One is Red, One is White," in *Whitsunday, S. James' Parish Family Newsletter*, May 1970, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, B.C., Occasional Paper, D108/8.

[81] Rev. C.G.L. Wright, "Christ Has Two Hands – One is Red, One is White," in *Whitsunday, S. James' Parish Family Newsletter*, May 1970, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, B.C., Occasional Paper, D108/8.

[82] Rev. C.G.L. Wright, "Christ Has Two Hands – One is Red, One is White," in *Whitsunday, S. James' Parish Family Newsletter*, May 1970, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, B.C., Occasional Paper, D108/8.

[83] Welbanks, *From Lost to Found*, 28-29, 33-37; Rev. C.G.L. Wright, "Christ Has Two Hands – One is Red, One is White," in *Whitsunday, S. James' Parish Family Newsletter*, May 1970, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, B.C., Occasional Paper, D108/8; Trevor L. Fisher, "Gastown Workshop," Annual Report of St. James Social Service Society, 1981-82, ADNWA, SJV, St. James- Vancouver, Annual Reports, D108/2; "St. James Store," *Carnegie Crescent,* Vol. I, No. 2 (December 1980), 3, Vancouver Public Library, Special Collections, SPE-NW-REF 790.068 C289 1980-85; "What the Opportunities Programme Means to Me – Some comments by people on the Workshop's programme," S. James Social Service and Christian Action, newsletter/report, January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8; "St. James Social Service Society," Annual Report of the St. James Social Service Society, 1982-83, ADNWA, SJV, St. James- Vancouver, Annual Reports, D108/2; St. James' Social Service Financial Statement, January 1971-December 1971, S. James Social Service and Christian Action, newsletter/report, January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8; May Gutteridge, "St. James' Social Service – Gastown Workshop," S. James Social Service and Christian Action, newsletter/report, January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8; May C. Gutteridge, Parish Worker/Director, letter in Annual report of St. James Social Service Society, 1981-82, May 1982, ADNWA, SJV, St. James- Vancouver, Annual Reports, D108/2; Urban Design Centre, "Feasibility and Proposal for Renovations, Saint James Social Services, 333

In addition to its social and cultural benefits, the programs offered at the Workshop also provided valued economic opportunities. In particular, through a government-sponsored grassroots anti-poverty initiative known as the Vancouver Opportunities Program, Workshop participants could receive financial compensation for up to thirty hours of work a month, thus supplementing the income they received from social assistance. Through their work, they also developed practical experience and training that would help them improve their future economic possibilities.[84] For example, one young mother described how the Gastown Workshop "helped [her] in many ways."[85] She started working at the Gastown Workshop after her husband sustained an injury in a car accident. She explained how the small income earned through the program enabled her to better support her family, but also that the training and experience she acquired improved her means to do so moving forward: "I have five children,

Powell Street," c. 1973, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-E-1 file 6; "St. James Store," *Carnegie Crescent,* Vol. I, No. 2 (December 1980), 3, Vancouver Public Library, Special Collections, SPE-NW-REF 790.068 C289 1980-85. St. James' Social Services (SJSS) received some grant money from the City of Vancouver for operation of the Gastown Workshop, as well as for renovation of their leased buildings on Powell Street. City of Vancouver, "Delegations, and Board of Administration & Other Reports – C. Grant: St. James' Social Services – Gastown Workshop," Council Meeting Minutes, 20 June 1972, 175-176, CVA, COV-S31-F110.08, Box: 25-B-1 folder 10.

[84] May Gutteridge estimated in 1972 that Workshop participants could increase their income by as much as fifty percent. May Gutteridge, "St. James' Social Service – Gastown Workshop," S. James Social Service and Christian Action, newsletter/report, January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8; Urban Design Centre, "Feasibility and Proposal for Renovations, Saint James Social Services, 333 Powell Street," c. 1973, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-E-1 file 6; Rev. C.G.L. Wright, "Christ Has Two Hands – One is Red, One is White," in *Whitsunday, S. James' Parish Family Newsletter*, May 1970, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, B.C., Occasional Paper, D108/8; "What the Opportunities Programme Means to Me – Some comments by people on the Workshop's programme," S. James Social Service and Christian Action, newsletter/report, January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8; Trevor L. Fisher, "Gastown Workshop," *Annual Report of the St. James Social Service Society, 1981-82*, ADNWA, SJV, St. James – Vancouver, Annual Reports, D108/2; Welbanks, *From Lost to Found,* 33-37. The Vancouver Opportunities Program (VOP) is a subject for my further research and analysis of grassroots anti-poverty and welfare activism in late-twentieth-century Vancouver. During the late twentieth century, there were also other similar government-supported welfare supplementation work programs, such as the C.I.P. (Community Involvement Program). On the origins of the VOP see, for instance, Kathy Tait, "Welfare Group Launches Own Manpower Agency," *Province,* 23 September 1970; CVA, AM1380, Margaret Mitchell fonds, 623-C-8, file 15, "Vancouver Opportunities Program," 1970-1973; SFUA, Women's Bookstore Collection, F-111-7-2-27, "Vancouver Opportunities Program and 'Help Yourself', 1969-1975."

[85] "What the Opportunities Programme Means to Me," S. James Social Service and Christian Action, newsletter/report, January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8.

all attend school, which gives me a chance to work 30 hours. I would not be able to work full-time but it prepares me for full-time work in the future."[86] Another participant similarly explained that the Workshop supported their career aspirations and future economic security. They indicated that its hairdressing department provided them with necessary experience to re-establish themselves in the profession after their certification had lapsed: their position at the Gastown Workshop, they explained, "really helped me to get back on my feet as a hairdresser" and "helped me to go through another exam."[87] The young hairdresser accredited the Workshop with helping them achieve their own personal goals and recommended this model as one that could effect change in the lives of many others:

> If it weren't for the Workshop, I don't know where I'd be today. Working in the Workshop has been a considerable help in overcoming my problems. It has shown me a new way of life. I am twenty-eight years of age and I feel if there were more places like the Workshop, more people of this area could be helped.[88]

As these participants' analyses and experiences attest, the Gastown Workshop's programs offered people opportunities and resources to create change in their own lives.

While it is less clear from the public record how or to what extent Anglicanism also shaped Ferry Adams' sense of responsibility to community, her work with the St. James' Social Services Society showcases that Christian philanthropy and Indigenous activism were not necessarily or always mutually exclusive.[89] Rather, Ferry Adams' key leadership with the St.

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[86] Unidentified woman quoted in "What the Opportunities Programme Means to Me," S. James Social Service and Christian Action, newsletter/report, January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8.

[87] Unidentified person quoted in "What the Opportunities Programme Means to Me," S. James Social Service and Christian Action, newsletter/report, January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8.

[88] Unidentified person quoted in "What the Opportunities Programme Means to Me," S. James Social Service and Christian Action, newsletter/report, January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8.

[89] Ferry Adams discusses religion, spirituality, and epistemology in her interview located in the East Enders Society fonds at the Simon Fraser University Archives. However, I am not able to disclose those details from the interview because this interview is restricted by the Archives to protect the privacy of Ferry Adams, whose expectation of confidentiality in doing this interview are not clear. For nuanced approaches to the study of

James' Social Services Society shows that Christian philanthropy and Indigenous activism co-existed. Shaped by their own respective backgrounds, Gutteridge and Ferry Adams had different perspectives and ideas about how to help, but together they developed a new service framework that encompassed each of their approaches to precarity within a shared project of care. Where many of the St. James' Social Services' other programs and projects operated on the premise of providing material aid to people in need, and thus reflected elements of a helping model of social work, the St. James' Social Services Society also encompassed an Indigenized perspective and approach to homelessness that simultaneously centred culture and community in care.

Grounded in love and care for her community, this was political work. Notably, while I do not know if Ferry Adams was associated with the Homemakers' Club movement of the mid- and late twentieth century, there are important parallels and connections. Homemakers' Clubs were women's groups on reserves that were initially organized as sewing circles, but which became a central place and means through which Indigenous women developed leadership skills and mobilized politically. As several feminist and Indigenous scholars have argued, Homemakers' Clubs were an important foundation for Indigenous women's political organizing, lobbying, and leadership, and a pivotal locus through which Indigenous women advanced their own communities' causes. Moreover, as these scholars show, not only were Homemakers' Clubs a medium for politicization, the work women did within the groups was

Indigeneity and Christianity, which address the traumas of missionization in Indigenous communities, but also ways in which Indigenous communities and people have engaged and aligned themselves with Christianity meaningfully and in their own ways, see for example, Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton, eds., *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016); Susan Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

also grassroots politics.[90] For example, Tk'emlúpsemc (Kamloops Secwépemc) historian and Indigenous Studies scholar Sarah Nickel, centers women's activities and leadership within Homemakers' Clubs as activism that stands in contrast to male-dominated political organizations and rights discourses and masculinized forms of protest and direct action. As Nickel explains, "[t]he women used their clubs in highly political ways to generate material, knowledge-based, and personal resource networks on and between reserves."[91] While the records I have accessed do not provide enough information to assess whether or to what extent Ferry Adams' sewing group became a place through which women organized politically, building from Nickel, we can still understand their meetings from her home and other neighbourhood spaces as politically significant. Regardless of whether the women involved mobilized beyond the parameters of their group, their meetings themselves constituted a new community resource that provided an opportunity for women to collectively create their own support networks and community within an urban context shaped by individually- and collectively-experienced inequity. Furthermore, where we might interpret Ferry Adams'

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[90] On the history and gendered politics of Homemakers' Clubs, see: Patricia Miranda Barkaskas, "*The Indian Voice* – Centering Women in the Gendered Politics of Indigenous Nationalism in BC, 1969-1984" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 2009); Aroha Harris and Mary Jane Logan McCallum, "'Assaulting the Ears of Government': The Indian Homemakers' Clubs and the Maori Women's Welfare League in Their Formative Years," in *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism,* ed. Carol Williams (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Howard, "Dreamcatchers," 169-173, 184-185; Lianne C. Leddy, "'Mostly Just as a Social Gathering": Anishinaabe Kwewag and the Indian Homemakers' Club, 1945-1960," in *Aboriginal History: A Reader*, second edition, ed. Kristin Burnett and Geoff Read (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2016); Kathryn Magee, "'For Home and Country": Education, Activism, and Agency in Alberta Native Homemakers' Clubs, 1942-1970," *Native Studies Review* 18, no. 2 (2009): 27-49; Sarah A. Nickel, *Assembling Unity: Indigenous Politics, Gender, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019); Sarah A. Nickel, "'I Am Not a Women's Libber Although Sometimes I Sound Like One': Indigenous Feminism and Politicized Motherhood," *The American Indian Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (Fall 2017): 299-335; Sarah Nickel, "'Making an Honest Effort': Indian Homemakers' Clubs and Complex Settler Engagements," in *In Good Relation: History, Gender, and Kinship in Indigenous Feminisms,* eds. Sarah Nickel and Amanda Fehr (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2020); Sarah A. Nickel, "Sewing the Threads of Resilience: Twentieth Century Indian Homemakers' Clubs in Western Canada" in *From Suffragette to Homesteader: Exploring British and Canadian Colonial Histories and Women's Politics Through Memoir,* ed. Emily Van der Muelen (Black Point, N.S.: Fernwood Publishing Co., Ltd., 2018); Cora Voyageur, *Firekeepers of the Twenty-First Century: First Nations Women Chiefs* (McGill and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 6-7, 10-11.

[91] Nickel, "'I Am Not a Women's Libber,'" 304.

sewing club as an informal version of the more institutionalized Homemakers' Clubs, she also formalized and extended the reach of that political work with the Gastown Workshop, another space through which she and other Indigenous women extended their networks of support and community.

Significantly, this community had its roots in the care, and kind of care, provided by Indigenous women. First with the sewing club, and then with its successor, the Gastown Workshop, women created community that began with but extended beyond their physical spaces of gathering. As historian Coll Thrush writes with respect to the American Indian Women's Service League's work to establish the first Indian Centre in Seattle, Washington, "creating community in the city also meant finding a place…In a city where most Indian people were at worst ostracized or at best neglected, the center was a kind of home, where even the poorest of Seattle's Indian community could contribute…Here was self-help, here were grass roots, here were Indian people of many nations, creating a place in the city."[92] In Downtown Eastside Vancouver, the Gastown Workshop was one such place. Indeed, along with the foundational leadership and work of Ferry Adams, the Reverend Wright highlighted for his church parishioners how many other Indigenous women "c[a]me to the Centre often and bus[ied] themselves with the clothes that [were] received for distribution to those who need[ed] them."[93] These women, he explained, "sort[ed] clothes and tend[ed] to the needs of all who come to the Centre – many of them…white men and women and children."[94] The Reverend Wright brought these women's work to the attention of his parishioners because, as he

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[92] Thrush, *Native Seattle,* 167-168.
[93] Rev. C.G.L. Wright, "Christ Has Two Hands – One is Red, One is White," in *Whitsunday, S. James' Parish Family Newsletter*, May 1970, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, B.C., Occasional Paper, D108/8.
[94] Rev. C.G.L. Wright, "Christ Has Two Hands – One is Red, One is White," in *Whitsunday, S. James' Parish Family Newsletter*, May 1970, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, B.C., Occasional Paper, D108/8.

explained, many non-Indigenous people at this time "tend[ed] so often without thinking to imagine non-Indian people doing something for Indian people."[95] Here, the Reverend Wright challenged paternalistic stereotypes of Indigenous people as passive recipients of assistance. He intentionally drew attention to the fact that Indigenous women's labour made many of St. James' services possible. Indeed, the work and commitment of these women was critical to the development and expansion of this new social service infrastructure in the Downtown Eastside; theirs was grassroots care work that tended to individuals and which built and supported a community.

Through spaces they created, Indigenous women created a mutually-supportive community through care. First from within her own home, and thereafter, within other neighbourhood spaces that she helped establish, Ferry Adams did critical work to develop spaces and opportunities for people to create and nurture community within a context of precarity. For instance, one woman spoke of the positive impact of the Gastown Workshop in her life: "I like to work here making quilts. It's a great help to me as it makes me healthier and lets me have somewhere to go and be useful. I'm very happy just being able to come here."[96] As her feelings about the Workshop attest, this place fostered a sense of purpose that improved her overall well-being. Certainly, many of those involved in the Opportunities Program worked significantly more than the thirty hours for which they could receive compensation, suggesting that their participation was about more than money.[97] For example, two Downtown Eastside residents employed as part-time bookkeepers at the Workshop under the Opportunities

[95] Rev. C.G.L. Wright, "Christ Has Two Hands – One is Red, One is White," in *Whitsunday, S. James' Parish Family Newsletter*, May 1970, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, B.C., Occasional Paper, D108/8.
[96] Unidentified woman quoted in "What the Opportunities Programme Means to Me", January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8.
[97] May Gutteridge, "St. James' Social Service – Gastown Workshop," S. James Social Service and Christian Action, newsletter/report, January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8.

Program underscored not only the economic, but also the social benefits of their jobs. They described how mental health conditions and illness restricted their abilities to maintain full-time employment, but that, in contrast, "[t]he Gastown Workshop knowing our nervous condition allows us to work part-time under lenient conditions."[98] They explained that their work "has been very helpful in a monetary way in that it helps us to make ends meet financially."[99] But more than this, they also explained that their participation "has been very beneficial mentally by allowing us to meet and work with other people."[100] In other words, their jobs were valuable to them for reasons over and above the supplementary income they received; the social connections fostered were important to them as well. These participants' comments showcase the significance of the service work of women like Ferry Adams. Indeed, these participants expressed that they "hope[d] to continue working for Gastown workshop and thereby hope a place in the community."[101] For them, the Workshop offered a community. Overall, these participants' reflections on the Workshop make clear that by creating opportunities for social and cultural connection, women – and especially Indigenous women – helped produce community through place.

Catherine Ferry Adams acknowledged, however, that these spaces of care and community did not always mean that tragedy could be prevented. As she reflected on her three decades of service work in Downtown Eastside Vancouver, she mourned Indigenous women's continued vulnerability and mortal risk:

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[98] Unidentified persons quoted in "What the Opportunities Programme Means to Me", January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8.
[99] Unidentified persons quoted in "What the Opportunities Programme Means to Me", January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8.
[100] Unidentified persons quoted in "What the Opportunities Programme Means to Me", January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8.
[101] Unidentified persons quoted in "What the Opportunities Programme Means to Me", January 1972, ADNWA, SJV, St. James Church, Vancouver, BC, Occasional Paper, D108/8.

It was sad—it was no fun. I'd be shaking hands with a girl, or I'd be hugging her and she'd be hugging me. I'd open my door when I got home and my phone would ring right in front of me. I'd answer the phone, 'You're wanted at the city morgue, so and so has died.' The very girl that I'd been loving up and shaking hands with before I'd left the workshop! That was terrible.[102]

As these tragic losses make bare, the Workshop as a project of care was, like emergency shelters and other drop-in centres, unable to address the broader structures of violence and poverty that continued to create and shape precarity.

However, while this reality casts light on the limits of care within a context of inequity produced by settler colonialism, White supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism, it does not undermine the value of care politics at the individual and local level. As Mary Jane Logan McCallum and Adele Perry explain, the history of Indigenous peoples in late-twentieth-century North American cities "is much more than one of loss. It is also a history of remarkable community-building and resistance."[103] These select examples of Catherine Ferry Adams' care politics in Downtown Eastside Vancouver illustrate this critical point. Rooted in the teachings of her elders, Ferry Adams understood it to be her responsibility to share what she had with others, both the material and the immaterial – whether that be food and shelter, cultural knowledge, personal advice, or emotional support in times of hardship, illness, and death. Throughout her life, Ferry Adams thus dedicated herself to build and care for community.[104]

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[102] Adams in Neel, *Our Chiefs and Elders*, 26.
[103] McCallum and Perry, *Structures of Indifference,* 55. There is a growing literature on Indigenous urban territoriality that underscores this critical point made by McCallum and Perry of creative, complex, and resilient Urban Indigenous presence and resurgence. See supra note 52, as well as: Dara Culhane, "Their Spirits Live within Us: Aboriginal Women in Downtown Eastside Vancouver Emerging into Visibility," in Krouse and Howard, eds., *Keeping the Campfires Going;* Heather A. Howard and Craig Proulx, *Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian Cities: Transformations and Continuities* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011); Bonita Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004); Rosalyn LaPier and David R.M. Beck, *City Indian: Native American Activism in Chicago, 1893-1934* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015); Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen, eds., *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013).
[104] Adams in Neel, *Our Chiefs and Elders*, 26.

During her nearly thirty years in Vancouver, Ferry Adams helped cultivate a more expansive

social, cultural, and spiritual life for Indigenous people in the city. She did so, in part, by

purposefully setting up her own home and creating other neighbourhood places to be spaces of

support and teachings. She did this work both independently and in collaboration with non-

Indigenous women who had shared concerns about Indigenous women's precarity. Through

her labours of love, Ferry Adams established a home-away-from-home for Indigenous peoples

as she nourished not only their bodies, but their spirits. In an urban neighbourhood shaped and

marked by inequity, Ferry Adams created spaces of belonging as she reclaimed the Downtown

Eastside as Indigenous space; she both underscored the Downtown Eastside as Indigenous

space *and* envisioned an Indigenous future for those who inhabited it. Within a context of

profound loss, her labour in service of community was survival work and it was the work of

Indigenous revitalization and resurgence. In a recorded family interview, she reflected on her

three decades of service in this neighbourhood: "This is what I've just retired from; I got no

pay for it. I did it for the love of my people, cause I was taught from the time I was small to

love and respect people, and to feed people, and this is what I did."[105]

Coda: Continuations

> *As women living in the Downtown Eastside we feel the DEWC*
> *[Downtown Eastside Women's Centre] is like a "home" to us and to many*
> *other women living in the neighbourhood. The Centre provides a sort of*
> *sanctuary, a place where women can feel safe, secure, cared for, part of*
> *a family and community of women. It is this sense of home that gives us*
> *the strength to branch out and take positive action for ourselves and for*
> *others. By being involved at the Centre – whether as volunteers, members*
> *of groups and programs, or simply talking and supporting each other over*
> *a meal – we are able to give back to the community and contribute positive*

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[105] Ferry Adams' relative shared this excerpt from a family recording of a conversation between her own mother and Ferry Adams in her blog post, "Navigating Identity," *Kwi'lank: The Feasting Season,* November 27, 2014, https://kwilanx.wordpress.com, last accessed 31 October 2017.

change in each other's lives. Being at the Centre can be a very empowering experience and in turn, we help other women empower themselves.[106]
~ Chili Bean, Shurli Chan, Linda Economy, Pat Haram, and Diane Letchuk, *Reflections of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre*, 2007

The history presented in this chapter traces a genealogy of women's activist care work that continues to support and nurture community in the Downtown Eastside today. In late 1972, after nearly six years of operations, the East Enders Society decided to phase out their day centre for women. They made this decision, in part, because they had lost funding from the Province for their social worker position and decided it was unfeasible for them to continue to operate the drop-in without her. But they also made this decision because they identified that several other programs had since opened that met similar needs, most notably, the Gastown Workshop. In the new year, they continued to operate the drop-in on reduced hours before they closed its doors for the final time in February 1973.[107] Nevertheless, although the East Enders Society ended their day centre project that winter, their work had a lasting impact on the geography of the Downtown Eastside: their women's centre helped set an important foundation

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[106] Chili Bean, Emily Boyce, Shurli Chan, Linda Economy, Pat Haram, Diane Letchuk, and Lisa Weeks (Authors and Editorial Collective), *Reflections of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre* (Vancouver: Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, c. 2007), 4.

[107] Some of the programs the East Enders Society identified as offering similar services to their drop-in included: "Happy Hours" (once a week); Second Mile Club (daily); St. James luncheon (daily); Salvation Army (daily); Strathcona School; Pender Y; Gastown Workshop (daily); and the Downtown Health Centre. In particular, the East Enders Society felt that with the establishment of the Gastown Workshop, Indigenous women specifically were "looked after." Meeting of volunteers of East Enders Society, 24 October 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-4; Ruth F Vivash, "Report of the Committee on the Centre," c. fall 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-4; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 6 December 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 January 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of EES, 7 March 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; East-Enders Society, "Dear Friends," invitation to annual meeting of East Enders Society, January 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Minutes of Eighth Annual Meeting of EES, 29 January 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; [Margaret Walker (possibly)], written reflections, c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; Mary Kelly, interview, transcript, c.1990, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4.

for a new infrastructure of social services that centred connection and community, a model for service delivery which has lasted.[108]

Social drop-ins became an integral aspect of the service landscape in the Downtown Eastside. In the 1970s, Downtown Eastside women residents underscored the significance of neighbourhood drop-ins for helping to meet their immediate material needs like food and clothing, but also for the sociability they offered. For example, in 1979, resident Maria Santatori explained that she "went lots of times to the Salvation Army when I didn't have nothing to eat."[109] She described how she "ate with the men. I ate on the side by myself, away from the men but I ate in that crowd you know. There was 2 or 3 other women. I was glad when I saw 2 or 3 other women. You know."[110] Santatori's reflections illuminate that for

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[108] For example, the New Hope Society immediately moved into the former East Enders' space on Dunlevy Avenue with plans to open another similar drop-in. Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 February 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 24 February 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-3; Mrs. Margaret Geoffrey, The New Hope Lodge Society, to Mrs. Frazer-Crierie, 3 February 1973, in SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-4; Mary Kelly, interview, transcript c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-4.

Through the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, other activists and organizations later opened other social drop-ins that continue to serve the community today, such as the Dugout, the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, the '44' (subsequently the Alex Centre and now the Evelyn Saller Centre), and the Carnegie Community Centre. P. Willows, Vice-President East Enders Society to Mr. W. Camozzi, Regional Director, Department of Social Welfare," 13 November 1969, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-3-0-0-1; Invitation to Annual Meeting of the East Enders Society, January 1973, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-4-0-0-1; Vancouver Status of Women, "Guide to the B.C. Women's Movement," [date unknown, c.1974], 14, SFUA, Women's Bookstore Collection, F-111-7-1-25; Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Directors of the East Enders Society, 21 January 1976, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-4; "Carnegie Centre: Now and in the Future," *Carnegie Crescent,* Vol. I, No. 3 (August 1981), 11, Vancouver Public Library Special Collections, SPE-NW-REF 790.068 C289; Michelle Cohen, "Women's Centre: Something for All Women," *Carnegie Crescent,* vol. 111, no. 2 (April 1983), 4, Vancouver Public Library Special Collections, SPE-NW-REF 790.068 C289; "Carnegie Birthday," *Carnegie Crescent,* c. March 1984, 1, Vancouver Public Library Special Collections, SPE-NW-REF 790.068 C289; "Downtown Eastside Women's Centre," *Carnegie Crescent,* March 1984, Vancouver Public Library Special Collections, SPE-NW-REF 790.068 C289 1980-85; Sam Snobelen, "Free Goods and Services on the Downtown Eastside," *Carnegie Crescent,* April 1985, 5, Vancouver Public Library Special Collections, SPE-NW-REF 790.068 C289; Paul R Taylor, "A Great Lady: Evelyn Saller," *Carnegie Newsletter,* February 1, 1989; "The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre", (brochure/pamphlet), May 1991, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-6-0-0-1; Bean, et al., *Reflections of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre*, 6.

[109] Santatori was sixty-four years old at the time of her interview. Maria Santatori [pseudonym], interview, transcription, summer 1979, British Columbia Archives [hereafter cited as BCA], Downtown Eastside Women's Centre Oral History Collection [hereafter cited as DEWCOHC], PR-1858, item AAAB4084, T3689:1-2.

[110] Maria Santatori [pseudonym], interview, transcription, summer 1979, BCA, DEWCOHC, PR-1858, item AAAB4084, T3689:1-2.

women within this male-dominated neighbourhood, the social isolation created through poverty was gendered in specific ways.[111] Her experience of eating a meal at the Salvation Army highlights why the creation of new spaces exclusively for women mattered. Her neighbour Ming Tam, for instance, explained that she made new friends by attending several social centres and clubs in the area. An immigrant from Hong Kong, Tam started visiting these spaces to take advantage of English classes offered. Staff at one of these drop-ins told her about how they also held picnics and tea parties and invited her to participate: "So I joined," she explained, "and had some fun."[112] She expressed that the social opportunities provided by these programs brought her some joy: "I feel happy and I've met some friends."[113]

When the East Enders Society and individuals like Catherine Ferry Adams were no longer able to continue this work, other women carried it on. They still do. In 2007, a small collective of women – community members and volunteers of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre – produced a book about the history and ongoing work of their drop-in centre. These authors were among the women living in the Downtown Eastside, doing this work, *and*, significantly, telling their own history. Their book shows clearly the importance they ascribe to the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre in their individual lives and for their community

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[111] Research reports and other anecdotal evidence in the records of philanthropic groups that worked in the Downtown Eastside (like the East Enders Society) all indicate that women comprised about a significant minority of the neighbourhood's population through the late twentieth century. For example, health research Rita Bakan reported in 1978 that women comprised only twenty-five percent of the Downtown Eastside's population. In contrast, there was a near equal distribution of men to women in the City of Vancouver overall. (Rita Bakan, "Report on Health Status of Census Tracts 57, 58, and 59," Prepared for the City of Vancouver Health and Planning Departments (Vancouver, B.C.: Health Planning Division, Vancouver Health Department, 19 December 1978), 3, i.

[112] Some of the drop-in centres that she mentioned attending included: St. James, Success, St. Francis, the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, and "the church next door." Tam was not born in Hong Kong but lived there for nearly thirty years before emigrating to Canada. She does not indicate her age in her interview, but she was an older woman with children and several grandchildren. Ming Tam [pseud.], interview, transcription (English language trans.), summer 1979, BCA, DEWCOHC, PR-1858, item AAAB4087, T3692:001-002.

[113] Ming Tam [pseud.], interview, transcription (English language trans.), summer 1979, BCA, DEWCOHC, PR-1858, item AAAB4087, T3692:001-002.

more broadly. Drawing from nearly twelve years (1995-2007) of Downtown Eastside Women's Centre newsletters (which showcase news important to the community, as well as creative writing and art of its members), their book highlights the critical work the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre has done and continues to do to support and empower women living within challenging circumstances of poverty, past and present.[114]

The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre reflects the blending and evolution of earlier generations of women's care work. Similar to the first generation of drop-in centres, the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre is a place where women can go to have their basic needs met – meals, showers, and clothing. As the authors explained, since activists established the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre in the 1970s, it has been "a safe space where women can access services that address their immediate needs."[115] But, as they further stressed, the Centre is also an important social space for women in the neighbourhood. Indeed, the book authors explained that in addition to providing important material services, the women's centre "is also a social gathering space, a thriving living room, where friends and family can laugh, share stories, create new experiences, and enjoy a hot meal."[116] Moreover, echoing from the work of Catherine Ferry Adams and her contemporaries like Margaret White in prior decades, the authors expressed the continued and central role of Indigenous elders as community caretakers:

> Our Elders are truly the heart of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre. They guide us, speak wisdom, and teach us about traditional values and customs. The Elders have organized many different arts, activist and Healing activities and programs over the years. They encourage us in our journeys and our mental, emotional, physical and spiritual growth…Our Elders can also be seen on the streets in the evenings and early

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[114] Bean et al., *Reflections of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre,* 2, 4. Significantly, moreover, these women catalogued these newsletters for digitization and inclusion in the CHODARR (Community Health Online Digital Archive & Research Resource) project, demonstrating their pivotal role in writing their community's history *and* in preserving its archive for others. Their work in this digitization project improved accessibility to the community's historical record, and challenged silences of 'traditional' archives through inclusion of more community voices.
[115] Bean et al., *Reflections of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre,* 6.
[116] Bean, et al., *Reflections of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre,* 6.

mornings, taking care of people in the community. They take the time to listen and comfort those who are most vulnerable and hurt on the streets.[117]

As the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre history book authors argue, this drop-in is critically important because it is a safer space where women experiencing extreme poverty can go to meet their most basic and immediate material needs, but for the women who spend time there, it also offers so much more than that. A painting by community member Bea (Beatrice) Starr that the authors feature on their book's front cover forefronts their argument. Starr's art features a geometric pattern designed in the shape of a house, but painted in the four colours and quadrants of the Medicine Wheel – her painting signals the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre as a space of home for women living in the neighbourhood, as Indigenous space, and as a space of healing.[118]

Within circumstances of urban precarity, the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre is a space of home, love, and community. Community member Marie explained this concept as she described the centrality of the drop-in in her life:

> My comfort zone and second home is the DEWC Drop In Centre…. Here, a coalition of women keep a positive atmosphere happening; like a mentor…The 'Centre' may not be able to get you out of your destitute and poverty, but we are all friends here and know how to support each other, and you may rely on us if you want a comfort zone for we are all women learning to stick together…At anytime, my friend, the door is open, like open arms and honest minds with a big heart.[119]

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[117] Bean, et al., *Reflections of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre,* 11. See also 26.

[118] Painting by Bea Starr on front cover of Bean, et al., *Reflections of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre.* Bea (Beatrice) Starr was a Heiltsuk Elder and Downtown Eastside community matriarch. She passed away in 2015. From Bella Bella originally, she resided in Vancouver for thirty-five years. She was a community member, a volunteer at the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, an organizer with the Downtown Eastside Power of Women Group, and a strong community advocate. Her writing was also published Debra Leo, Beatrice Starr, and Stella August (Downtown Eastside Power of Women Group), "Voices from the Downtown Eastside," in *Keetsahnak: Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters,* eds. Kim Anderson, Maria Campbell, and Christi Belcourt (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2018).

[119] Marie, quoted in Bean, et al., *Reflections of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre,* 8.

Marie's framing of the drop-in as a supportive home and community foregrounded a critical point made by the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre history book authors: "Everyday," the authors explained, "we ALL make the Centre happen…We may have too little in the way of resources and funding, but we are always able to work together to find creative ways to do amazing things…Together, we build BIG community, family & home."[120] Through the content and framing of their book – and, moreover, in the powerful acts of researching and writing and telling their own history – these women emit tremendous pride in their centre, and they showcase ever so clearly the creativity, strength, power, and resilience of women in their community, including themselves.[121]

When I read the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre history book, I witness the strength of these women and others in their community whose stories and poems and art infuse the book. I also recognize in their history and present a generation of women who came before. These authors' telling of the past and ongoing work of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre shows that the history of the East Enders Society women's day centre, Catherine Ferry Adams' sewing group, and the Gastown Workshop have enduring legacies into the present. While records of philanthropic organizations like the East Enders Society and the St. James' Social Services Society often obscure the perspectives of those who used their services, in the book written by women of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, we learn from the community's perspective that settler and Indigenous women's care politics in late-twentieth-century Vancouver were mutually entwined and symbiotic histories of women's activism that transpired across lines of class, race, and culture. Overall, the histories of women's care work presented in this chapter amplifies the concepts and arguments of the Downtown Eastside

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[120] Bean, et al., *Reflections of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre,* 10.
[121] Bean, et al., *Reflections of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre,* 54.

Women's Centre book authors. These histories, especially when read alongside the arguments of the women of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, show that in creating spaces of care, women made the Downtown Eastside something more than a space of precarity – they made a loving, supportive, resilient community.

Conclusions: "A Bright Area in an Otherwise Dark Block"

Examining the history of settler and Indigenous women's efforts to create new community-oriented services and spaces in the Downtown Eastside shows that these were simultaneously shared and distinct histories of women's care work that was also activism. Every few weeks, volunteer Augusta Martin changed the dressing in the storefront window at the Dunlevy location of the East Enders Society women's day centre. Her displays, each with its own theme, became a point of interest for the community – "a bright area in an otherwise dark block," as the Society described.[122] One Board member remembered that the "nicely decorated" window "at night drew strollers to a lighted picture scene."[123] Martin herself recalled the positive responses to her displays:

> One day I said to Mrs. Harwood: '[The window] is very much appreciated. People tell me that they drive by here at night and there's always somebody looking in the window.' And Mrs. Harwood says: 'Well, of course. There isn't another storefront down here that's lit up at night!' Which was the truth! [124]

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[122] Minutes of Seventh Annual Meeting of EES, 2 February 1972, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5. See also: Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3; Wilna Thomas, interview, audio recording, c. 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-5; Minutes of Sixth Annual Meeting of EES, 28 January 1971, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-5; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 7 January 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2; Minutes of meeting of Board of Directors of EES, 3 June 1970, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-1-0-0-2.

[123] [Unknown, possibly Jean Crowley or Mary Ross], "East Enders," written reflections, c.1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

[124] Augusta Martin, interview, audio recording, c.1992, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-3.

With their rich offerings of colour and texture, Martin's window displays were representative of the East Enders Society's broader efforts to provide "an attractive…and welcoming place" for women in the neighbourhood.[125] But more than window dressing, new social spaces like the East Enders Society's day centre changed women's experiences of precarity.

Drop-in centres did not solve women's precarity, but they changed its tenor. In the late twentieth century, diverse women transformed the social and physical geography of the Downtown Eastside – a neighbourhood originally built for single working men – to better meet the needs of its women residents. These women came to this work with different backgrounds, which meant they had different approaches to and understandings of how to help. While (primarily White) settler and Indigenous women who engaged in service provision in the Downtown Eastside served the same populations and sometimes worked together in the same organizations on the same projects, this history also shows that an Indigenized response to homelessness differed from settler responses even as they overlapped. Collectively, however, in a neighbourhood where men consistently outnumbered women, these care activists transformed places in the Downtown Eastside – their own homes, church halls, decommissioned factories, storefronts – into safer spaces for women where few existed previously. By creating new spaces for material support, rest, leisure, fellowship, and cultural practice, these women provided a new and welcoming base for the social and cultural life of women in the area. Individually and collectively, these women remade this neighbourhood with attention to the needs and well-being of its women residents, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. As they did so, they helped meet women's immediate material needs, lessened social isolation created through conditions of poverty, and created spaces for community and

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[125] Wilna Thomas, interview, audio recording, c. 1990, SFUA, EES fonds, F-59-5-0-0-5.

culture to flourish. Ultimately, women's care work sparked the transformation of the Downtown Eastside into a community.

There are, then, multiple ways we can assess the legacies of this history. On the one hand, drop-ins mitigated symptoms of gendered, racialized precarity, rather than addressed its causes – the broader structures of inequity that created and perpetuated these conditions. But on the other hand, it was *because* systems of inequity underlay their work that these women were unable to make systemic changes. However, even though their model of service was limited from effecting broad structural change, the care these women provided met critical needs and created vital services that have stayed within the neighbourhood. And so, while one interpretation of the establishment of this service infrastructure could be that this care work entrenched poverty and homelessness in the Downtown Eastside, these same services helped make community. Overall, a crucial legacy of this history is that women's ongoing practices of care continue to flourish, reshape, and nurture this community within and despite conditions of precarity. These services are representative of and responsive to their contexts: the systems of inequity that made these places necessary have not gone away, and so they – and the communities of love and support that people create from within them – remain critically important. Most significantly, the mutually-supportive community that these women helped to create and nourish is an integral aspect of the story of the Downtown Eastside that should be recognized alongside stories of loss. Seeing the development of the Downtown Eastside as a community shows that the history of this neighbourhood is not only one of tragedy – it is also a history of resistance, resilience, and love.

Dear Anyone

Dear Anyone,

    A lot of the time it seems that no one understands what it's like to be a single mom. Everyone has this picture of a woman in the home, raising the kids and doing the housework and being happy and content. In stories on TV maybe, …

    I'm a single mother with 3 kids. I left my husband after going through the hell of be[ing] battered, beaten, used and abused but it was just as frightening to be home as it was thinking of leaving before he killed me or the kids.

    Woman are put in the worst position by having nothing except what they are given by their mate. On welfare the cheque comes for the whole family made out in the man's name. He's the only one who can take it to the bank and bring money home. If he blows it on drinking or gambling, the woman has nowhere to go. If he comes home and beats her for any reason or no reason she can tell him to get out, but the place is rented to him and the landlord won't care what kind of crap she is going through – he gets his money from the guy – and no rent means no place.

    The woman has 3 choices: (1) She can stay, suffer being battered, watch her kids get neurotic and traumatized by the drinking/violence/poverty; (2) She can tell him to get out, which, if he figures she has nowhere to go and no money, will just make him laugh and tell her to get out; and (3) She can pack all of her belongings (dishes, clothes, furniture, toys & the kids' stuff) and move out…really just leave. If it's go or die (staying sure as hell isn't living) she will be looking at the following: no money except what she could borrow or scrape together, storing all the stuff somewhere and probably going to welfare to try and convince someone that she needs help. There will likely be nothing but hassles there; being told to go back, being almost ordered to make the best of it, telling the same thing to 3 or 4 workers until they finally realize she means it. Then she will be told to find housing…she doesn't have near enough money to even make a deposit…to convince some landlord that she will rent from them, get them to sign some paper saying that they will rent to her, bring the paper back to welfare, they'll call to make sure, they'll give her a rent cheque (after a few hours wait with upset kids), she'll take it to the landlord and get the key to her new 'mansion'. She takes the rent receipt back and gets another cheque for food, somehow gets her stored stuff over to the place and starts to take stock of the situation…all the time with all this back and forth having to care for the kids and bus or walk all over.

    The thing that's really missed in this first step is the near impossibility of finding decent, affordable housing. Landlords who will rent to a single mother on welfare with kids with her know that she <u>has</u> to find someplace fast. Because she's on welfare they can rent her the worst dumps imaginable – cockroaches, basements with dripping pipes running across the six foot ceilings, concrete floors, laundry tubs for sinks, mold

growing on the walls from rain leaking in – and she has to take it because there is literally nowhere else to go.

On top of this she now has to raise and provide for her kids with no support from the guy, who will likely just write her off. If anything goes to court, the woman has to appear "fit" or welfare will apprehend her kids for her being "unfit" even though she can't get work because there's no daycare that will take 3 kids of varying ages, especially if one or more are school age. Somehow the kids have to be fed and clothed and taken to school or kindergarten at different times and it just won't happen if she has to go to work somewhere at 7 or 8 a.m. All of this can be happening and the government will step in and <u>cut</u> the assistance cheques by $50 a month – to "provide these women with an incentive to find work" doing God-knows-what and Claude Richmond[1] says we can always babysit:

Welfare is about the only route [available for] a single mother but the whole nightmare can start anywhere, regardless of the income of the 'family'. If you ever wonder why women put up with years of abuse and battering it's because the consequences of getting out of the death cell are almost more frightening than staying.

When that woman killed herself and her kids I felt sick. She saw no light or hope anywhere. The odd wacko vindictively milks the system and people trying to help for anything they can get and puts the other 99% honestly in need through all this crap set up just to stop that odd wacko. The next time you come across a single mother having problems coping, give her a hand. In my mind she deserves being helped.[2]

<div style="text-align:right">

~ An anonymous mother, Downtown Eastside Vancouver

15 December 1988, *Carnegie Newsletter*

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This woman writes powerfully of structures of inequity that created and shaped women's and family poverty. Writing from her own lived experience, she articulated how domestic violence, the welfare system, unaffordable housing, substandard housing, lacking daycare, patriarchy, sexism, and stigma coalesced in a potent, and often violent, package for mothers raising children on their own. Her words are evocative and deeply personal. She

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[1] Claude Richmond was a former Liberal Member of the Legislative Assembly in British Columbia, who held many cabinet portfolios during his time in office. He was the Minister of Social Services and Housing between 1986 and 1989, the time during which this woman wrote this letter (1988).

[2] [Unidentified woman], "Dear Anyone," *Carnegie Newsletter,* December 15, 1988. I thank Angela Kruger for bringing this letter to my attention. Note: the ellipses are in the original letter. I have not removed or omitted parts of her letter, but transcribed it here as it was published in the *Carnegie Newsletter.*

concluded her powerful letter to anyone by asking her imagined reader – those who previously misunderstood, or did not take care to understand, the circumstances she and many other mothers faced – to heed and learn from her analysis of gendered poverty and violence. She wrote this letter, sharing her own challenges, so that others would start to take greater care, become more empathetic, and instead of casting judgment and aspersion upon single mothers, begin to recognize instead how their circumstances are shaped by underlying gendered inequity.

But where she ended her letter with a call to her reader to lend single mothers a proverbial – or perhaps literal – helping hand, the example of a group of single mothers who lived in a Downtown Eastside housing project who are the subject of the next chapter show that 'help' is a complicated concept. In her letter, this mother identified difficulties women faced securing affordable housing as "[t]he thing that's really missed" in understanding and addressing gendered and family violence and poverty. She identified housing as critical to women's equity and safety, pinpointing lack of access to decent and affordable housing as one of the key barriers that worked to keep women in violent home environments and, more broadly, in poverty. The next chapter will show with empirical evidence that this material context of housing matters – it will show that housing makes a difference. Most significantly, though, extending but also complicating the letter writer's argument, the story in the next chapter also shows unequivocally that single mothers living in poverty do not need the benevolent help of others, but rather, the resources in place to help themselves.

Chapter Four
Radical Mothering in Community-Making

Prologue: "We'll Go to Jail If Necessary"

On a cold morning in early January, a group of about twenty-five concerned single mothers stood huddled together on a section of railway tracks in East Vancouver near East Pender Street and Raymur Avenue. They held placards reading: "What Value Has a Child's Life? Tragedy Before Action"; "Petitions Don't Work"; and "Children vs. Profit."[1] It was 1971 and this group of women – residents of the adjacent Raymur Place social housing project – brought an abrupt halt to the movement of freight trains to and from Vancouver's waterfront. Alarmed by the dangers posed to their children by the railway line, these women decided they had do something before a child was killed at this crossing. They were not, as they wrote in their first press release, "prepared to sacrifice the lives of [their] children to the Great Northern Tracks."[2]

Children and teenagers who lived at Raymur Housing had to cross these tracks on their commute to and from school.[3] Frequently, however, as trains waited to be called into port, they would stop on this section of the railway blocking the youth's crossing. The long trains could be stopped there for minutes or for more than an hour, one never did know. Not wanting to be

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[1] "Moms Win the Day," *Province,* January 7, 1971, 6; Moira Farrow, "Raymur Place Train Holdup: 'Save Our Kids,' Yell Moms," *Vancouver Sun,* January 6, 1971.

[2] Raymur Place Concerned Mothers, press release, printed in Tony Tugwell, "Parents Sit on Tracks," *Georgia Straight,* vol. 5, no. 143, January 6-13, 1971, 2. The women's first "sit-in" was at the railway crossing at Pender between Raymur and Glen, just immediately east of Raymur Place. They began their occupation of the tracks on Wednesday, January 6, 1971, at 8:30 a.m. when children began to head to school. See also: Tugwell, "Parents Sit on Tracks"; "Moms Win the Day"; Farrow, "Raymur Place Train Holdup."

[3] Young children attended Sir Admiral Seymour Elementary School, about one block from Raymur, while most teenagers attended Britannia Secondary School, about a kilometer and a half further east of the project. Both schools were on the other side of the tracks. Seymour Elementary School also had two portables for the youngest grades located on a different plot of land on the same side of the tracks as the housing project.

late for school, children would shimmy under the boxcars or between the couplings of stopped trains.[4] One of the mothers and organizers, Carolyn Jerome, explained to a reporter that "[t]he kids get panicky when they hear the school bells ring," and then would crawl under and between the train cars.[5] Obviously, as Jerome indicated, this was "extremely dangerous, as the train could start moving at any time."[6] It was not just young children who felt compelled to engage in this risky behaviour. A teenager at the time, Liisa Atva recalled being late to school her first week living at Raymur because she had "waited and waited" for a train to pass.[7] She quickly learned that this was no excuse. She remembered the secretary at the secondary school informing her in frank terms: "'Well, they didn't just build them tracks just last night, young lady!'"[8] Atva explained that "you quickly learned that's no excuse to be late – because of the train."[9] Anxious to get to school on time, then, not only did the youth climb between the cars of stopped trains, if they were "half a block away" from the crossing and heard a train coming, "everybody'd run like crazy to get across before the train came."[10]

Believing the death of a child to be an inevitable outcome here, a sense of urgency and peril drove this group of mothers to the tracks. They did not take this action lightly. These women had previously attempted to obtain a resolution through conventional channels. They

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[4] Jon Cain, interview by the author, 8 March 2017, Vancouver, British Columbia, digital recording; Toni Graeme, interview by the author, 10 March 2017, Duncan, British Columbia, digital recording; Liisa Atva, interview by the author, 29 March 2017, Vancouver, British Columbia, digital recording; Liisa Atva in "Raymur Mothers Walking Tour for Heart of the City Festival 2014 in Vancouver," November 2, 2014, video, part 4, AHAFilm by AHA Media, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MR7cpQJ9CBk; Shane Simpson in "Raymur Mothers Walking Tour for Heart of the City Festival 2014 in Vancouver," November 2, 2014, video, part 5, AHAFilm by AHA Media, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQG0jntZGY0; Sheila Turgeon quoted in Robert Sarti, "Railway Overpass Promised: Council Yields to Militant Mothers," *Vancouver Sun,* January 7, 1971; Tony Tugwell, "Back to the Tracks", *Georgia Straight,* vol. 5, no. 154, March 24-31, 1971, 3.
[5] Carolyn Jerome quoted in Tugwell, "Parents Sit on Tracks."
[6] Tugwell, "Parents Sit on Tracks." (These are Tugwell's words, paraphrasing what Jerome explained to him.)
[7] L. Atva, interview by the author.
[8] L. Atva, interview by the author.
[9] L. Atva, interview by the author.
[10] L. Atva, interview by the author.

had telephoned and written the railway companies and sent letters and petitions to the municipal, provincial, and federal governments. The women's appeals, however, were met with dismissive attitudes and evasive tactics.[11] As one of the activist mothers Toni Graeme (then Cowlishaw) recalled, "The train companies sort of rebuffed us…and then the Province sent us up to the feds because they control railways, and then the City said it's up to the Province because it's a school…And then everybody would say, 'Well, Raymur's in the city so it's their problem.' Everybody was passing the buck."[12] With their children's lives on the line, the mothers realized they had to take a different approach.[13]

Theirs was an effective tactic. Within only a few hours of occupying the tracks, the women received promises from major railway companies (Canadian National Railway and Burlington Northern Railway) to modify their schedules – that is, to stop running trains during selected morning and afternoon periods, times when children would be walking to and from school. The mothers' action also obtained traction at City Hall. That same afternoon, a delegation of mothers from Raymur appeared before City Council; upon hearing from the women, councillors agreed to investigate the construction of a pedestrian overpass near the project.[14]

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[11] Graeme, interview by the author; "Moms Win the Day"; Farrow, "Raymur Place Train Holdup"; Raymur Place Concerned Mothers, press release, in Tugwell, "Parents Sit On Tracks"; Tugwell, "Back to the Tracks"; Tony Tugwell, "Militant Mothers Lectured," *Georgia Straight,* vol. 5, no. 144, January 13-20, 1971, 4; Carolyn Jerome in "Raymur Mothers Walking Tour for Heart of the City Festival 2014 in Vancouver," part 5; Siegrun Meszaros, January 8, 2011, comment on "Militant Mothers of Raymur," June 25, 2008, *Viaduct: Travels Through East Vancouver* (blog), https://viaducteast.wordpress.com/2008/06/25/militant-mothers-of-raymur/#comments.
[12] Graeme, interview by the author.
[13] Graeme, interview by the author; Jerome in "Raymur Mothers Walking Tour," part 5; Olive Strauman, Carolyn Jerome, and Sheila Turgeon, quoted in Farrow, "Raymur Place Train Holdup".
[14] "Moms Win the Day"; Robert Sarti, "Railway Overpass Promised: Council Yields to Militant Mothers," *Vancouver Sun,* January 7, 1971; Farrow, "Raymur Place Train Holdup"; Tugwell, "Militant Mothers Lectured"; "Mothers," *Georgia Straight,* vol. 5, no. 146, 27 January 27-February 3, 1971, 3; City of Vancouver, "Delegations - Children Attending School from Raymur Housing Project: Track Hazard," Council Meeting Minutes, January 6, 1971, 499, City of Vancouver Archives [hereafter cited as CVA]. COV-S31-F105.14, Box: 025-C-3, folder 22.

The women's victory, however, was short-lived. At 8:32 a.m. on a Monday morning in late March, a train went through as children were on their way to school: not the first time the railway companies had broken the January agreement. A tragedy narrowly avoided, the next day the women returned to the tracks. They arrived this time with Raymur mother Jean Amos's large white tent, prepared to stay for the long haul. They set the tent up across the tracks, determined to maintain an around-the-clock occupation until their conditions were met. The women demanded concrete evidence that land and financing for the pedestrian overpass had been acquired, and further stipulated that the CNR and Burlington Northern post a $50,000 bond to abide by the terms of their original agreement. When railway representatives arrived on site and tried to convince them to move – proposing, for instance, an extension of the hours during which they would not run the trains – the women responded loudly in their silence.[15] They handed the men a copy of their second press release in which they explained that they would "not be lured off the tracks by phony negotiations and personal pledges."[16] Jean Amos explained that the companies had demonstrated through their prior actions that their promises were made to be broken.[17] When even the Pacific Northwest weather challenged the mothers,

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[15] Graeme, interview by the author; Jerome in "Raymur Mothers Walking Tour," part 5; "Militant Mothers Move Again," press release, March 23, 1971, reprinted in Tugwell, "Back to the Tracks"; Kathy Tait, "Mothers' Tent Blockade Stops Trains Dead," *Province,* March 24, 1971, 29; Kathy Tait, "CNR Seeks Tent-in Injunction," *Province,* March 25, 1971, 29; Tugwell, "Back to the Tracks"; "Mothers"; Tugwell, "Militant Mothers Lectured"; "Raymur Place Mothers Back on the Rails," *Vancouver Sun,* March 24, 1971.

[16] "Militant Mothers Move Again," press release, March 23, 1971, reprinted in Tugwell, "Back to the Tracks". This was not the first time the companies had broken their agreement, and so it was also not the first time that the mothers had returned to the tracks: they had stopped the trains again on January 27, 1971 following a breach of the agreement, only to be offered promises that were later broken. ("More Trains Halted by Raymur Mothers," *Vancouver Sun,* January 27, 1971.) The mothers' press releases were not attributed to any one individual, but rather, were issued on behalf of the group. Publicity work, such as these press releases, moreover, was one of many elements of the women's organizing. Indeed, Toni Graeme explained that different women took on different roles in their collective action. For instance, Graeme indicated that because her circumstances meant that she could not be involved on the tracks as much as some of the other women, her role was to help organize media publicity. Graeme explained that she had worked in newspapers before she married, and so, with this prior experience, offered publicity work with the media as a place where she could contribute to the group's efforts. (Graeme, interview by the author; Toni Graeme, personal communication with the author, 20 January 2021.)

[17] Tait, "CNR Seeks Tent-in Injunction."

they remained undeterred. It rained heavily that first night in the tent, but the women persisted: "It's pouring and muddy and uncomfortable," Dianne Robertson told a reporter, "but we won't move."[18]

The women decided to speak the companies' language – and money talks. The number of boxcars moved on these lines filled with grain and pulp was indicative of Vancouver's place as Canada's gateway to the Pacific and hub for the West Coast's resource sector. Thus, when this group of mothers stopped the trains from running, they stopped the flow of capital: the women's action wreaked economic disruption on the Port of Vancouver, causing clear distress among the railway magnates who threatened the mothers with police action, claiming they would get an injunction to have them forcibly removed.[19]

The mothers rejected these capitalist priorities. Despite threats of police action, they remained firm. Jean Amos responded to this intimidation with confident resolve: "That's fine. We'll go to jail if necessary. But others…will come back. In fact, more will come back."[20] Staring down the oncoming trains, these women literally put their own bodies on the line to protest the ongoing danger posed to their children and to provide them with physical protection in that immediate moment. In the face of threatened criminal charges – not to mention the onslaught of patronising remarks hurled at them by politicians and company men – these women stood their ground. They were not, as Carolyn Jerome schooled a railway official, "going to give a kid to the tracks."[21]

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[18] Tait, "Mothers' Tent Blockade Stops Trains Dead." See also: Jerome in "Raymur Mothers Walking Tour," part 5.
[19] Tait, "CNR Seeks Tent-in Injunction"; Tait, "Mothers' Tent Blockade Stops Trains Dead"; Tugwell, "Back to the Tracks."
[20] Jean Amos quoted in Tait, "CNR Seeks Tent-in Injunction."
[21] Carolyn Jerome quoted in Tugwell, "Militant Mothers Lectured." See also: Farrow, "Raymur Place Train Holdup"; Tait, "Mothers' tent blockade stops trains dead"; Tugwell, "Militant Mothers Lectured"; Tugwell, "Back to the Tracks"; Tugwell, "Raymur Mothers Win"; "Mothers Still Camp on Tracks, Injunction Shunted Out of Court," *Vancouver Sun,* March 25, 1971; Margaret A. Mitchell and Cathie Goldney, *Don't Rest in Peace:*

The companies did seek an injunction; they took the women to court. Before their court appearance, the women strategized: a few declared that they would be willing to go to jail, while others offered to look after the jailed women's children if it came to that. Three women who said they would go to jail represented the mothers in the courtroom, while others attended in solidarity.[22] Toni Graeme, who was among the courtroom supporters, recalled that the judge was

> perplexed, like he doesn't know what to do, these three women on welfare from this housing project, and they have kids, and he's sitting there and he says: "Well, you can't represent yourself, you know." And they said, "Why not? ...We have to take care of ourselves and nobody else to do it, and we can't afford a lawyer."[23]

A young lawyer named Bruce McColl overheard this exchange and offered to "act as a friend of the court" to represent the women on a pro bono basis.[24] The women accepted his offer. McColl then argued before the judge that the companies had erred in how they served the legal papers to the women. Judge A.A. Mackoff agreed, and adjourned the case until the following Monday. When the companies returned to court the next day to ask for a temporary injunction until the hearing resumed, Mackoff once again denied their request on a technicality. Keen to

Organize! A Community Development Scrapbook: Reviewing Five Years Experience with Vancouver Citizens (Vancouver, BC: Neighbourhood Services Association of Greater Vancouver, 1975), 52-53. Residents have stories of near tragedies. For example, Siegrun Meszaros told a reporter that her five-year-old son Dennis was nearly killed on the tracks; a tragedy narrowly averted, her husband fortunately heard the train coming and pulled their son off in time. ("Moms win the day"; Meszaros, January 8, 2011, comment on "Militant Mothers of Raymur.") Meg Stainsby also recalled that her brother "was in the process of climbing [over the train coupling] one day when it shuttered and started moving, and he was really scrambling to get off safely." Stainsby believes this near-accident likely was the catalyst for her mother Judith's involvement in organizing and participating in the tracks protests with the other women. Toni Graeme likewise recalled that Judith Stainsby, her friend and Meg's mother, had a clear view of the train tracks from her apartment in the high rise. Graeme remembers that Judith Stainsby called her on the telephone one day to tell her what the children were doing at the train tracks. Graeme recalls this as a catalyzing moment. She recalled that the women at Raymur declared that what the kids were doing just could not happen, and they thereafter began having meetings to get organized on this issue. (Meg Stainsby, interview by the author, 15 March 2017, North Vancouver, British Columbia, digital recording; Toni Graeme, personal communication with the author, 20 January 2021.)

[22] Graeme, interview by the author; Jerome in "Raymur Mothers Walking Tour," part 5.

[23] Graeme, interview by the author.

[24] Graeme, interview by the author. See also: Jerome and Simpson in "Raymur Mothers Walking Tour," part 5; Tony Tugwell, "Raymur Mothers Win," *Georgia Straight,* vol. 5, no. 155, March 31– 7 April 1971, 2.

settle the matter before the weekend, the companies came to an arrangement with the women: they would post two flagmen on the tracks between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. and extend the times during which they would not run trains. What made this arrangement satisfactory to the women was the fact that it was read into court making it legally binding; unlike before, if the companies broke the terms of the agreement, they could face contempt of court charges.[25] While the agreement was only a stop-gap measure, City Council had since approved a pedestrian crossing over the railway tracks at Keefer Street, which was built and ready for use before the start of the next school year.[26]

The mothers who stopped the trains in 1971 did not necessarily do so to protest social inequity as others were doing at the time. Although their direct action was also implicitly about demanding the same protections from harm as wealthier, propertied members of society, for them, it was principally a means to keep their kids safe when other avenues had failed. While the women's occupation of the tracks was a politicized act, they did not take this action for what they would have seen at the time as an explicitly political purpose: their primary concern was the safety of their children. It was "all peaceful," Graeme explained. The women "didn't

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[25] Graeme, interview by the author; "Order Sought By Railways," *Vancouver Sun,* March 26, 1971; Tugwell, "Raymur Mothers Win"; "Women Fold Tent with Deal Wrapped Up," *Province,* March 27, 1971; Christy McCormick, "Two Railways Make Deal with Mothers: 'We Won, We Won,' Train-Stoppers Shout," *Vancouver Sun,* March 27, 1971; Mitchell and Goldney, *Don't Rest in Peace,* 53.

[26] Stainsby, interview by the author; "Women Fold Tent with Deal Wrapped Up"; City of Vancouver, "Board of Administration and Other Reports - B. Children Attending School from Raymur Housing Project: Track Hazard," Council Meeting Minutes, January 26, 1971, 592-593, CVA, COV-S31-F105.17, Box: 025-C-03 folder 25; City of Vancouver, "Board of Administration and Other Reports - F. Keefer Street Pedestrian Overpass: Easement over Lot B, 560 Raymur Street," Council Meeting Minutes, March 23, 1971, 257, CVA, COV-S31-F106.07, Box: 025-D-01 folder 07; City of Vancouver, "Motions - 1. Expropriation: Easement over Lot B 560 Raymur Street," Council Meeting Minutes, March 23, 1971, 260, CVA, COV-S31-F106.07, Box: 025-D-01 folder 07; City of Vancouver, "5. Keefer Street Pedestrian Overpass: Easement over Lot 1, Block 120, D.L. 181, 630 Raymur Street," Meeting of Board of Administration on Property Matters, April 2, 1971, in Council Meeting Minutes, April 6, 1971, 418-419, CVA, COV-S31-F106.09, Box: 025-D-01 folder 09; City of Vancouver, "Recommendation: 1. Keefer Street Pedestrian Overpass, 560 Raymur Street," Meeting of Board of Administration on Property Matters, April 14, 1972, in Council Meeting Minutes, 18 April 1972, 549, CVA, COV-S31-F109.14, Box: 025-D-03 folder 21; City of Vancouver, "Recommendations - 6. Keefer Street Pedestrian Overpass," Meeting of Board of Administration on Works and Utility Matters, July 23, 1971, in Council Meeting Minutes, July 27, 1971, 374-375, CVA, COV-S31-F107.08, Box: 025-D-02 folder 03.

want to damage the railway tracks or trains or throw tomatoes at them or anything, you know. There was none of that sort of stuff ever thought of or discussed or considered in anyway. Nobody would have done anything like that…We just [had] to find the vehicle that [was] going to get us an overpass."[27]

Attaining these results because of procedural violations may have been an anti-climactic end to a dramatic story but it was a victory, nonetheless. Against a powerful opponent, these women held their ground. As Graeme remarked, these single mothers on welfare stood up to "[m]en with power. And men with authority. Men with judgements. And men who were out for their own vested interest, and could care less about these women and children in this community…It was good to see that," she said. "Stand up to it. And say: 'That's what you think. I've got news for you: Not on my watch.'"[28]

Introduction: The Stories We Tell

I begin with this story of the mothers' direct action on the tracks because it was a pivotal moment in the mothers' politicization that would change individual lives, families, and the shape of the Downtown Eastside itself. While the mothers' direct action that successfully led to the construction of a pedestrian overpass is a moment widely celebrated in local 'East Van' community circles, their subsequent organizing in and for their community are less well-known.[29] Significantly, these women also organized in additional ways to re-make their

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[27] Graeme, interview by the author.
[28] Graeme, interview by the author.
[29] The story of the "Militant Mothers of Raymur" blockading the train tracks has been maintained in local circles and grassroots public history. For instance, the Ray-Cam Co-operative Community Centre – which I write about later in this chapter as one of the activist projects of women at Raymur – maintain a history display in their entranceway that features news clippings about the "Militant Mothers," reminding all those who come into this community space of its origins in the mothers' activism. A sidewalk mosaic not half-a-block away on a residential street offers another reminder of this history of women's and community power. The *Black Strathcona* website, a local public history site dedicated to expanding and deepening people's awareness about Vancouver's historical

housing environment to better meet the needs of the low-income families who lived there. In the pages that follow, I shift focus to these later, yet equally significant, chapters of their story. I do so to draw attention to the additional ways these women created change through grassroots organizing and community development. By focusing on these related and successive stories of community activism, this chapter puts the tracks protest into a longer narrative to demonstrate how an urban housing environment that segregated marginalized women became a focal point for their activism. While a powerful moment in its own right, the mothers' direct action on the tracks had a politicizing impact that reverberated widely: for the "Militant Mothers of Raymur," as they came to be known in the press, their blockade was a powerful crucible for subsequent organizing. While these women are not the only parents who have been driven to action out of concern for their children's welfare, and other marginalized and disenfranchised people – Indigenous activists, certainly – have also used blockades, occupations, and other forms of direct action in their own respective movements for justice, what made the mothers' blockade especially significant was the way in which it fostered new

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Black community, includes a short but powerful video about the Militant Mothers' direct action. (http://blackstrathcona.com/#militant-mothers). In 2014, a local theatre company produced an original musical about the mothers, which the company performed at the Russian Hall, a community space located within the boundary of the housing project, sharing a story about the mothers' activism through song. (Bob Sarti and Bill Sample, "The Raymur Mothers: They Wouldn't Take No for an Answer," a musical presented by Theatre in the Raw and dir. by Jay Hamburger.) And, most recently, in early 2020, the pedestrian overpass was renamed 'Militant Mothers of Raymur Overpass,' with a sign and plaque installed to commemorate the women. Moreover, the story of the "Militant Mothers of Raymur" is not just told in these neighbourhood or more grassroots settings. Part of its permanent exhibit about Vancouver during the 1960s and 1970s, the more institutionalized Museum of Vancouver includes a display about the "Militant Mothers of Raymur". These mothers have not, then, been forgotten in public memory. Rather, they have been, and continue to be, the subject of powerful public acts of remembering that provide critical counter-narratives to other, more stigmatizing, stories about women and poverty. Indeed, the story of the "Militant Mothers of Raymur" continues to inspire people across this city. I hope, then, that this chapter contributes to this work in three ways: one, by bringing this inspirational story to an expanded audience; two, by including their story in the academic literature so that historians recognize these women as political actors; and three, by extending and deepening this story beyond the tracks protest itself. For while the tracks was a powerful moment, the history of the Raymur Mothers' organizing is a much larger story, with significance, as I will show, that rippled far beyond the tracks.

consciousness and politicization among those involved: it was a catalyzing force for a new

community movement, rather than its culmination.[30]

This chapter reflects my commitment to the use of historical practice to tell critical

counter-narratives. In centering low-income mothers as powerful agents within conditions not

of their own choosing, this chapter challenges stigmatizing narratives about gendered poverty

and contributes to more nuanced understandings of low-income neighbourhoods.[31] The general

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[30] On other activist movements and politics that have employed direct action tactics in Canada and the United States during the late twentieth century, see for example: Yale D. Belanger and P. Whitney Lakenbauer, eds., *Blockades or Breakthroughs? Aboriginal Peoples Confront the Canadian State* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015); Nicholas Blomley, "'Shut the Province Down': First Nations Blockades in British Columbia, 1984-1995," *BC Studies* no. 111 (Autumn 1996): 5-35; Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Eryk Martin, "Burn It Down! Anarchism, Activism, and the Vancouver Five, 1967-1985" (PhD diss., Simon Fraser University, 2016); Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Anna J. Willows, *Strong Hearts, Native Lands: Anti-Clearcutting Activism at Grassy Narrows First Nation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012); Frank Zelko, "Making Greenpeace: The Development of Direct Action Environmentalism in British Columbia," *BC Studies* nos. 142/143 (Summer/Autumn 2004): 197-239.

[31] In featuring low-income women, and especially mothers, as important political actors in late-twentieth-century social movements, this chapter builds from the historical research of numerous feminist scholars who have taken seriously and foregrounded the labour, grassroots activism, and politics of low-income women in other North American urban contexts. Notably, Margaret Little's work on the Just Society Movement (JSM), an anti-poverty organization active in Toronto between 1968 to 1971, is another Canadian example of the political mobilization of poor single mothers during this period. Organized and led principally by single mothers on welfare (who worked for the organization in a volunteer capacity), the JSM engaged in welfare rights advocacy, organized protests, and otherwise served as a strong voice for the poor in Toronto. (Margaret Hillyard Little, "Militant Mothers Fight Poverty: The Just Society Movement, 1968-1971," *Labour/Le Travail* 59 (Spring 2007): 179-198.) Historian Sean Purdy has also written about tenant organizing at Toronto's Regent Park housing project in the 1960s and 1970s, where the majority of tenant organizers were also women (some of whom were also involved with the JSM). (Sean Purdy, "By the People, for the People: Tenant Organizing in Toronto's Regent Park Housing Project in the 1960s and 1970s," *Journal of Urban History* 30, no. 4 (May 2004): 519-548.)

For scholarship on low-income mothers' activism and organizing in American cities, see, for instance: Adina Back, "'Parent Power': Evelina López Antonetty, the United Bronx Parents, and the War on Poverty," in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980,* eds. Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2011); Robert Bauman, "Gender, Civil Rights Activism, and the War on Poverty in Los Angeles," in Orleck and Hazirjian, eds., *War on Poverty;* Julie de Chantal, "Before Boston's Busing Crisis: Operation Exodus, Grassroots Organizing, and Motherhood, 1965-1967," in *Mothers in Public and Political Life,* eds. Simon Bohn and Pinar Malis Yelsali Parkmaksiz (Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2017); Julie de Chantal, "The Boston Busing Crisis: Black Mothers in the Civil Rights Movement," paper presentation, *Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, Gender, and Sexualities,* Hempstead, New York, June 1-4, 2017; Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Christina Greene, "'Someday…the Colored and White Will Stand Together': The War on Poverty, Black Power Politics, and Southern Women's Interracial Alliances," in Orleck and Hazirjian, eds., *War on Poverty;* Laurie B. Green, "Saving Babies in Memphis: The Politics of Race, Health, and Hunger during the War on Poverty," in Orleck and Hazirjian, eds., *War on Poverty*; Lisa Levenstein, *A Movement Without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar*

absence of affirmative stories in reporting and scholarship about the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood has had consequences: this silence has inadvertently upheld harmful narratives and tropes about people who live within circumstances of poverty. Of course, these kinds of damaging narratives are not monolithic: community activists and community-engaged scholars have long engaged in work to disrupt stereotypes about the Downtown Eastside as they simultaneously cast light on the structural underpinnings of precarity in this neighbourhood.[32] By centering the Raymur Mothers as anti-poverty activists and community caretakers, this chapter builds upon the work of community activists and feminist scholars to position low-income and other marginalized women as critical actors and instigators of change, and to continue to give their leadership more visibility in social movement scholarship. Through my analysis of the Raymur Mothers' organizing in the 1970s, this chapter disrupts harmful tropes by showcasing ways in which women living in the margins actively challenged the status quo to create change for themselves, their families, and their community more broadly.

Sources shape the stories we tell. In this chapter, to tell different stories about the Downtown Eastside, I analyze oral history interviews I conducted with former residents of Raymur housing (including four individuals who are children of Raymur activists and two women who were involved with organizing, activism, and community work at Raymur). These

Philadelphia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Nancy Naples, *Grassroots Warriors: Activist Mothering, Community Work, and the War on Poverty* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998); Annelise Orleck, "Introduction: The War on Poverty from the Grassroots Up," in Orleck and Hazirjian, eds., *War on Poverty;* Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2005); Rhonda Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles Against Urban Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[32] See, for instance: Chili Bean, Emily Boyce, Shurli Chan, Linda Economy, Pat Haram, Diane Letchuk, and Lisa Weeks, *Reflections of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre* (Vancouver: Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, c. 2007); Dara Culhane, "Their Spirits Live within Us: Aboriginal Women in Downtown Eastside Vancouver Emerging Into Visibility," in *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women's Activism in Urban Communities,* eds. Susan Applegate Krouse and Heather A. Howard (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Leslie Robertson and Dara Culhane, eds., *In Plain Sight: Reflections on Life in Downtown Eastside Vancouver* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 2005).

individuals generously shared their memories and experiences with me, and their perspectives intricately shape and inform my understanding of this history, and thus my narrative and analysis here.[33] Furthermore, I also draw from various additional oral history sources and textual documents, including a transcript from a pre-existing oral history interview with a former Raymur tenant and Downtown Eastside community activist, articles in mainstream and alternative newspapers (*Vancouver Sun*, *Province*, *Georgia Straight*), City Council records, and other archival sources written by or in collaboration with Raymur organizers. These additional documentary sources permit further insight into the perspectives of tenants and activists beyond those I interviewed myself.

While these sources help to tell a new history of women and families in the Downtown Eastside, they also contain their own limits and silences. For example, these interviews represent only a small subset of tenants and organizers, and so are not necessarily reflective of the experiences and perspectives of all former residents. Notably, these sources do not permit extensive analysis of the relationship(s) between racial and colonial violence in families' lives and experiences with poverty. The families who lived at Raymur during the 1970s were culturally and racially diverse, and included families from various British, European, and Asian

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[33] There are key people who were involved with organizing and activism at Raymur during the 1970s (and their children) whom I was not able to interview for this dissertation. I hope I will have the opportunity to speak with these individuals during future developments of this project. Moreover, because this chapter focuses primarily on adult women's experiences of poverty and their community work and activism at Raymur Housing, another important subject for further research and analysis are the experiences of children and teenagers who grew up at Raymur. Several people who generously shared their memories with me for this project were children and teenagers at Raymur during the 1970s; they shared with me many rich stories and experiences from their youth, and I regret that I am unable to fully incorporate those stories and experiences into my analysis here. These experiences merit further historical attention. Some possible issues for future analysis include: how youth at the time understood and dealt with poverty; how they adapted to the social dynamics of Raymur Housing; how they experienced, addressed, and/or overcame negative ideas, stigma, and stereotypes about 'project kids'; the ways in which age and other intersectional identities shaped their experiences; the ways their experiences as children and youth shaped their perspectives on poverty and community as adults; and the pride they have in where they grew up. These are some, though not all, of the important issues and themes raised by interview participants that remain under-examined in the historical literature, and regrettably, in this dissertation.

backgrounds, including recent immigrants to Canada, as well as numerous Indigenous families and Black families.[34] The activist mothers were, likewise, racially and ethnically diverse, and included, for example, women with British ancestry, women who had immigrated from non-English-speaking European countries, Black women, and Indigenous women. For example, at least two of the activist mothers, Carolyn Jerome and Barbara Burnett are Black women, and at least one of the mothers, Alice Hamilton (Cree from the Rocky Boy Band) was Indigenous.[35] Presumably, then, for some of these families, their experiences of poverty were entangled with and shaped by racism, White supremacy, and settler colonialism, and for some, the challenges of navigating a new country, culture, and language. However, the sources that I use in this chapter tend to obscure issues of race, ethnicity, and settler colonialism. Generally, the journalists that reported on the mothers' organizing, the Raymur activists in documents they prepared at the time, and most individuals I interviewed framed the women's struggles as a gendered and class issue, one intricately bound to the women's social status as single mothers

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[34] Hilkka Atva, interview by the author, 29 March 2017, Vancouver, British Columbia, digital recording; Cain, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author. Meg Stainsby, who lived many years of her childhood at Raymur during this period, remembered several Indigenous families, some Black families, and only a small number of Asian families living at Raymur. She explained that the larger neighbourhood was more racially diverse, with, for example, many Chinese families living close to Raymur, especially given the project's proximity to Chinatown. Overall, though, she remembered that most families at Raymur were White, but of diverse ethnically European and British backgrounds. Jon Cain remembered his friends at Raymur as a culturally diverse group, and recalled many immigrant and refugee families, including from South and South East Asia. (Stainsby, interview by the author; Cain, interview by the author.) That the "Militant Mothers" themselves were a racially diverse group also indicates that there was diversity among the families living at Raymur at this time.

[35] Along with being one of the "Militant Mothers of Raymur," Alice Hamilton was an Indigenous rights activist, and leader in Vancouver's Urban Indigenous community. For example, she was one of the founders and organizers of the Coqualeetza Fellowship Club in the 1950s, the predecessor to the activist-organized Vancouver Indian Centre (1963) (now the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre); one of the founders of the Unemployed Citizens Welfare Improvement Council; and a long-term board member for Vancouver and District Public Housing. Alice Hamilton was also the mother of the late Jamie Lee Hamilton, who was a dedicated political activist, advocate, and public intellectual in Vancouver, and a strong advocate for her Indigenous, sex worker, and LGBTQ2S+ communities. Jamie Lee Hamilton, "Little Mountain Love-In," December 8, 2008, *Oldtown News*, http://downtowneastside.blogspot.ca/2008/12/little-mountain-love-in.html; "Queen of the Parks": Jamie Lee Hamilton Declares for Vancouver Park Board," news release, July 7, 2008, *Oldtown News,* http://downtowneastside.blogspot.com/2008_07_11_archive.html; "The People: Strathcona People," *Strathcona Residents' Association*, https://strathcona-residents.org/thisisstrathcona/neighbourhood/people, last accessed 27 November 2020.

living in poverty. Further interviews with additional women and families thus remain necessary to adequately examine community organizing at Raymur through a more thoroughly intersectional lens, including analysis of the likely diverse and divergent experiences of Indigenous and other women of colour, as well as immigrant women.[36]

And yet, while, as with any historian's sources, those I use here impose limits around the history I tell, they nevertheless make it possible to tell an important, if partial, story of women's poverty and organizing in the Downtown Eastside. This story deepens understanding of the configurations of gendered and family poverty in late-twentieth-century Vancouver *and* reveals processes of community-formation in the Downtown Eastside. This story underscores the organizing and labour of low-income mothers to create new social and community services for themselves and their neighbours as anti-poverty politics that fundamentally reshaped Vancouver's social and physical geography. Through their organizing, these mothers rebuilt their housing environment in ways that transformed the Downtown Eastside into a community-oriented neighbourhood. Through their radical mothering, women at Raymur Place Housing brought together and empowered a group of leaders who challenged inequity by remaking their built environments to create, care for, and protect a community.

"Met a Housing Need": Introductions to Raymur Place

Raymur Place public housing was built in the 1960s with little foresight to the needs and well-being of its future residents – mostly single mothers on welfare and their children. As

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[36] Hilkka Atva, for instance, expressed in our conversation that she believed that being an immigrant shaped the way she saw and understood her environment and circumstances. While I am regrettably unable to address these issues in this chapter, the stories she shared about her experiences as a new immigrant to Canada underscore the importance of further research and analysis of how intersectional identities informed women's experiences of poverty, housing, and activism in late-twentieth-century Canada. Atva moved to Canada from Finland in 1957. Following time lived first in Sudbury, Ontario, and then Toronto, Ontario, the family moved to Vancouver in 1964. (H. Atva, interview by the author.)

part of the City's postwar urban renewal plans, planners had demolished houses throughout parts of Strathcona. Strathcona was an ethnically diverse and working-class residential area of the East End that City planners viewed as economically depressed, and which they categorized as "blighted". Two large public housing complexes (that would be operated by BC Housing) were built upon cleared land: MacLean Park and Raymur Place.[37] Several blocks to the east of MacLean Park, Raymur Place was on the eastern edge of the Downtown Eastside. Bounded by Campbell Avenue to the west, Raymur Avenue to the east, Union Street to the south, and Hastings Street to the north, the project comprised the equivalent of nearly four car-free city blocks. Single-detached residential homes that were ultimately spared from urban renewal clearances bordered the housing project on one side, while industries, warehouses, auto-body shops, and wrecking yards surrounded the others. Then a semi-industrial area, Raymur Place was also located within a busy transport corridor, in close proximity to the city's major truck routes and loading bays, and adjacent to freight lines used to ship grain and pulp to and from Vancouver's waterfront port.[38]

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[37] A third public housing project (Skeena Terrace) was also built in East Vancouver during this period, further east of the Downtown Eastside and Strathcona neighbourhoods, near the boundary between the cities of Vancouver and Burnaby. For more information about the City's postwar urban redevelopment and "renewal," including community activism in opposition, see: Michael Bruce, "'A new breed of group': Community Activism in Vancouver's Strathcona Neighbourhood, 1968-1972" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 2005); Wayde Compton, *After Canaan: Essays on Race, Writing, and Region* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2010); Will Langford, "'Is Sutton Brown God?' Planning Expertise and the Local State in Vancouver, 1952-1973," *BC Studies* no. 173 (Spring 2012): 11-39; Jo-Anne Lee, "Gender, Ethnicity, and Hybrid Forms of Community-Based Urban Activism in Vancouver, 1957-1978: The Strathcona Story Revisited," *Gender, Place and Culture* 14, no. 4 (August 2007): 381-408; Tina Loo, "A Fourth Level of Government"? Urban Renewal, State Power, and Democracy in Vancouver's East Side," chap. 5 in *Moved by the State: Forced Relocation and Making a Good Life in Postwar Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019); Daphne Marlatt and Carole Itter, editors, *Opening Doors in Vancouver's East End: Strathcona* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2011); Karen Bridget Murray, "Making Space in Vancouver's East End: From Leonard Marsh to the Vancouver Agreement," *BC Studies,* no. 169 (Spring 2011): 7-49.

[38] H. Atva, interview by the author; L. Atva, interview by the author; Tina Atva, interview by the author, 29 March 2017, Vancouver, British Columbia, digital recording; Cain, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author; Joan Adams (for the Vancouver Housing Inter-Project Council), *A Tenant Looks At Public Housing Projects* (Vancouver: United Community Services of the Greater Vancouver Area, 1968), 16, 19-20; "Ray-Cam," Wednesday April 12, 197[x], handwritten meeting notes, CVA, Urban Design Centre fonds [hereafter cited as UDC fonds], AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; [Ray-Cam Co-

The opening of Raymur Place in 1967 created a bounded and dense population of low-income families and seniors within, but also apart from, a wider area of concentrated poverty. In contrast to the city's earlier postwar social housing projects, Raymur was distinctive in its design, size, and scale. The housing project consisted of two high-rise apartment towers and a series of row houses. The row-houses primarily contained three-bedroom units (117 in total), as well as four- and five-bedroom units (ten of each) intended for larger families. The "Family High Rise" (400 Campbell) had 104 two-bedroom suites, occupied primarily by families, and eleven bachelor suites. The second high rise (512 Campbell), intended primarily for low-income seniors, contained eighty-two bachelor suites and forty-two one-bedroom suites. With 376 units in total, Raymur was densely populated: in the early 1970s, it had more than 1200 residents, including nearly 700 children and teenagers.[39]

Significantly, many residents were single mothers who received social welfare and their dependent children.[40] The gendered inequities of the postwar period, including those

operative Services], "A Community Facility for Raymur Place," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; Mitchell and Goldney, *Don't Rest in Peace,* 52; Tugwell, "Militant Mothers Lectured"; Tait, "CNR Seeks Tent-in Injunction"; Tugwell, "Raymur Mothers Win."

[39] Raymur housing encompassed the equivalent of nearly four city blocks: Hasting Street (the Hastings Street viaduct) to the north, Union Street to the south, Campbell Avenue to the west, and Raymur Avenue to the east. East Pender Street, Keefer Street, and East Georgia Street (running north to south) are interrupted at Campbell Avenue before continuing on the other side of Raymur Avenue and the train tracks. The row houses were four stories, split between two levels (an upper level and a lower level), each with two stories. Designed in a sort of "motel style," as Tina Atva explained, each row house level had about eight to ten units, end-to-end. At the time, people could only access their unit from a staircase at each end or from a concrete ramp (which several people recalled as being quite fun to play on as kids). Jon Cain also described how this design, while inconvenient, did create unintended opportunities for people to meet and connect with their neighbours because residents had to pass each other's homes on their way to-and-from their own, and the neighbours often were sitting out. (Additional staircases have since been added.) H. Atva, interview by the author; T. Atva, interview by the author; Cain, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author; "Statistics etc for Raymur Brief," c. 1972-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; "Raymur," November 4, 1971, handwritten meeting notes, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; [Ray-Cam Co-operative Services], "A Community Facility for Raymur Place," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; "Proposal for Immediate Recreation Programs at Raymur Housing Project," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 14; Mitchell and Goldney, *Don't Rest in Peace,* 52.

[40] Former residents remember some two-parent households, but their sense was that these families were the minority (that is, that most families were headed by single mothers). Cain, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author; Mitchell and Goldney, *Don't Rest in Peace,* 39.

pertaining to unequal access to education and employment opportunities, meant that poverty was a common outcome when a woman became the sole or primary parent, whether through widowhood, separation, divorce, or other circumstances, including leaving an abusive partner. Indeed, mothers who lived at Raymur had varying class backgrounds – many had experienced intergenerational poverty, while others had grown up in middle-class families – but the social and material constraints of supporting a family as a single mother during the late twentieth century affected their economic and housing outcomes similarly.[41]

Residents' earliest impressions of their new home were marked by the starkness of its exterior aesthetic. Several women commented on the abundant use of concrete, which they saw as particularly forbidding in the absence of green space.[42] Hilkka Atva, a Finish immigrant and mother of four children, assessed that "there was too much concrete" and that there "could have been more greenery."[43] She expressed that she would have preferred a unit in another of the city's social housing developments so that she could have had "a little town house and a yard, have the flowers growing in the yard."[44] Other former Raymur residents held similar views. Liz Evans, for instance, an Indigenous woman and mother of five, described

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[41] Many women came to live at Raymur with their children after leaving or separating from their husbands or partners, or following the death of their husbands or partners. Some experienced forms of housed homelessness (e.g. staying in hotels/motels, staying with friends) prior to securing a unit for their families at Raymur. (H. Atva, interview by the author; Cain, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author; Shane Simpson in "Raymur Mothers Walking Tour for Heart of the City Festival 2014 in Vancouver," November 2, 2014, video, part 3, AHAFilm by AHA Media, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GnLft55Bw4; F.J. McDaniel, Assistant Administrator, Social Service Department to Commissioner G. Sutton Brown, Board of Administration, memorandum, "Subject: Housing Registry – Report – [name removed for confidentiality] Case," 29 August 1967, CVA, COV-S450, Director of Social Services' Subject Files, General files - housing registry, 106-D-04 file 6; Liz Evans (pseudonym), interview, c.1979, transcript in appendix to N.J. [Norma Jean] McCallan and Katherine Roback, c/o the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, *An Ordinary Life: Life Histories of Women in the Urban Core of Vancouver*, working paper, ([Vancouver]: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, c. 1979), i-vii.
[42] H. Atva, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author; Evans (pseud.), interview, transcript in McCallan and Roback, *An Ordinary Life.* A child at the time, Meg Stainsby also has engrained memories of how as kids they were always playing and jumping on concrete. (Stainsby, interview by the author.)
[43] H. Atva, interview by the author.
[44] H. Atva, interview by the author.

Vancouver's Little Mountain housing project, where she later lived, as being "a lot better than Raymur was because it was wood."[45] She assessed that "[i]t was amazing what wood, and green lawn, and flowers around the front and the back of the buildings" could do for one's spirits.[46] Toni Graeme likewise described how at Raymur, "the trees that had been planted were few and far between and they were very spindly because they were new."[47] While, Graeme explained, "it's much more attractive looking now, all these years later…then it was very stark, very barren, and not very inviting for…people to go out and sit or anything like that. It was more prison like."[48]

Women interpreted this design through the lens of social marginalization. Graeme, for instance, recalled her shock on moving day:

> It was a brand new building but it was all bricks and wrought iron railings and I stood outside the door of the unit I was assigned, and I looked at it and I said: 'This is just like a prison. Bricks and metal railings. And this is what happens when you're poor and on welfare?' You know. You get sentenced to a social community prison, sort of thing. I was horrified, and I remember thinking at the time: 'Five years. When my youngest one's in grade two I have to leave here.' So that was my introduction to Raymur.[49]

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[45] Evans (pseud.), interview, transcript in McCallan and Roback, *An Ordinary Life,* v. Evans indicated that her mother was an Indigenous woman and her father a White man (an immigrant from a Northern European country). She explained that her mother was disenfranchised when she married her father, meaning that she (and her children) lost status under the 1876 Indian Act (Evans, interview, i). (On the removal of status from women and their children under the 1876 Indian Act, see the Introduction (this dissertation), pages 28 to 29, and 29, note 47.) The transcript of this interview with Liz Evans was published in full as an appendix to N.J. McCallan and Katherine Roback's report from an oral life history project that they conducted with women residents of the Downtown Eastside in 1979. The audio sound recordings, transcripts, and English language translations of most of those interviews are preserved at the British Columbia Archives as the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre Oral History Collection (PR-1858). Unfortunately, the original recording of the interview with Liz Evans (pseud.) is one of the interviews from that oral history project that is not maintained in the BC Archives' collection. I have thus not been able to listen to her interview myself. Rather, I am using the transcript prepared by McCallan and Roback from the interview, which they included in their published report. I accessed this report from Vancouver Public Libraries, but copies are also available at the City of Vancouver Archives and the University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections. Because the report authors used pseudonyms for this oral history project, I am not including details in this dissertation that might inadvertently identify Evans.

[46] Evans (pseud.), interview, transcript in McCallan and Roback, *An Ordinary Life,* v.

[47] Graeme, interview by the author.

[48] Graeme, interview by the author.

[49] Graeme, interview by the author.

Similar to Graeme, Evans and Atva likewise evoked prison similes in their reflections of this housing environment. Atva indicated that the dispiriting concrete aesthetic at Raymur was "the reason I didn't want to move in there [in the] first place because…it looked to me like an army barracks, or a jail house or something."[50] Evans remarked that "Raymur is good clean housing. But so is Oakalla (Prison) and I wouldn't advocate anybody to go live in Oakalla."[51] As their comments suggest, these women understood the project design as an affront that both visibly and publicly marked their social disenfranchisement.

And yet, despite their criticisms of its cold exterior, women simultaneously assessed that Raymur provided decent housing that was affordable for low-income families.[52] Evans, who had her own history of homelessness, indicated that Raymur's affordability made it possible for her to support her children during a period in which there were "no support services for a single parent."[53] Similarly, Atva explained that because she was receiving social assistance at the time, affordability was the real benefit of social housing. Before she moved with her family to Raymur, she leased a house elsewhere in Vancouver. When a rent increase made it no longer possible to stay there, Atva explained that the lower cost of BC Housing brought their family to Raymur: "The rent was sixty dollars a month for a long time. So that was good for me…It was good…cheap rent and a nice place; fairly new, too."[54] She explained that she "appreciated it because I remember then I wanted the place with the cheaper rent when I applied with BC Housing."[55] She recalled that before they moved to Raymur, their rent was $100; the money saved was significant. While "we didn't have no luxuries," she clarified, she

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[50] H. Atva, interview by the author.
[51] Evans (pseud.), interview, transcript in McCallan and Roback, *An Ordinary Life*, ii.
[52] H. Atva, interview by the author; L. Atva, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author.
[53] Evans (pseud.), interview, transcript in McCallan and Roback, *An Ordinary Life*, i-ii.
[54] H. Atva, interview by the author.
[55] H. Atva, interview by the author.

detailed how this lower relative cost for BC Housing meant that she was better able to stretch her monthly income to cover the family's other expenses.[56] Where Atva disliked the exterior design of Raymur, she nevertheless appreciated that it provided her and her family with more affordable housing.[57]

Furthermore, Atva's reflections indicate that in addition to the greater degree of economic security social housing afforded, residents also valued its quality relative to other options. Atva further explained that despite her reservations about the exterior, "once you're inside in your own suite it's fine. You make it…the way you like it. We had a nice place there. Nothing wrong with it… It wasn't the nicest place to live, but my apartment was okay. I was satisfied with that…There was nothing wrong. Water was working and heat was working."[58] Her daughter, Liisa Atva, echoed her mother to remark that "compared to other places we'd lived, it was nice. It was new and clean."[59] Toni Graeme likewise expressed appreciation for having family housing that was "in really good condition."[60]

Thus, while residents were critical of its design, Raymur Place provided valued housing that was more affordable and of relative quality compared to other low-income options. Graeme explained: "But when you need housing, I mean for that I was very, very grateful— that I had housing. And it was brand new, so it was in really good condition. And it was clean… So I was grateful for that part of it."[61] Shane Simpson, who lived at Raymur during his youth, extolled that the project "met housing needs for people who would never have had them met

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[56] H. Atva, interview by the author.
[57] H. Atva, interview by the author.
[58] H. Atva, interview by the author.
[59] L. Atva, interview by the author.
[60] Graeme, interview by the author.
[61] Graeme, interview by the author.

in any other way."[62] He explained that this "certainly was the case, I know, for my mother. This was a godsend for us."[63] Jon Cain, who also grew up at Raymur, echoed Simpson's analysis, and even his language. Cain explained that he once asked his mother Babs (Helene) (who was one of the "Militant Mothers") how she felt about moving into the project. She told him that she had trepidation at first, but that it then "was such a relief to get there because it was affordable…She knew it was long-lasting, [and] she didn't have to hunt and pack, you know, and try to find suitable housing. We had three bedrooms, and she said that was good for her…Then, as she was able to expand her friendships, you know, she said, 'Yeah, it became a godsend.'"[64] Overall, while not always or necessarily the housing environment women desired for their families, by meeting basic housing needs, Raymur Place provided its residents with a context of possibilities.

This latter point matters. Because these women did not have to struggle for daily survival in the same way as those experiencing the precarity of housed and unhoused forms of homelessness, they were better positioned to create change for themselves and their community. As I will trace in the next section of this chapter, women at Raymur organized to create new services in and for their community that would reduce, mitigate, and change family poverty. The underlying material security offered by this housing was not insignificant to their activism. Housing itself did not make these activists, but with stable housing they were better positioned to challenge and change gendered and family poverty. However paradoxically, this housing environment that segregated and concentrated low-income women and their families

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[62] Simpson in "Raymur Mothers Walking Tour," part 4. Shane Simpson was, until his retirement from Provincial party politics, a longstanding NDP MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia) for Vancouver-Hastings (2005-2020), a past Opposition Critic for Labour, Housing, and the Environment, and a past Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction.
[63] Simpson in "Raymur Mothers Walking Tour," part 4.
[64] Cain, interview by the author.

became both a foundation *and* a focal point for their activism. With this housing, these women could challenge some of the inequities imposed and shaped by that housing geography itself.

"It Seemed an Impossible Dream": Geographies of Inequity, Affective Resistance, and Community Empowerment

The opening of Raymur and MacLean Park public housing within the context of postwar urban renewal changed the demographics of the Downtown Eastside by bringing more families into the neighbourhood. But where the City's original vision for a new planned and 'modern' neighbourhood also included a shopping centre, a community centre, a school, and a park, all of which would have served as focal points for and between these two new housing projects, these parts of the plan were never realized.[65] In the late 1960s, community activists in Strathcona successfully brought a halt to further demolition of their homes, convincing governments to move away from a program of 'renewal' to one of 'rehabilitation.'[66] There was, however, an unintended outcome of these activists' successful organizing to preserve their neighbourhood: the housing projects were built upon already cleared land, but those adjacent community facilities and amenities never were. Ultimately, then, an outcome of this only- partially-realized plan was a geography that further compounded inequity for the people and families who moved into these new housing

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[65] These amenities are shown in an architectural drawing of the planned new Strathcona neighbourhood, included as part of the 1957 Vancouver Redevelopment Study. Vancouver (B.C.) Planning Department, "East End project area," architectural drawing, c. 1957, CVA, COV-S445-3-"LEG26.8. See also Loo, "'A Fourth Level of Government'?," 165-166.

[66] For more information about community organizing to "save" Strathcona, which was led largely by the Chinese Canadian community, and especially Chinese Canadian women, see: Bruce, "'A new breed of group'; Lee, "Gender, Ethnicity, and Hybrid Forms of Community-Based Urban Activism"; Loo, "'A Fourth Level of Government'?"; Laura Madokoro, "Chinatown and Monster Homes: The Splintered Chinese Diaspora in Vancouver," *Urban History Review* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 17-24; Marlatt and Itter, eds, *Opening Doors in Vancouver's East End.*

projects.[67] Significantly, however, this geography of inequity became a focus of the mothers'

activism. Through connected and successive projects – a food co-operative store, a daycare,

and a community centre – the women organizers remade their housing environment to better

address the needs of the families who lived there. They built the amenities that the City should

have built in the first place, but did not.

In a single word, mother Toni Graeme explained what she viewed as the overarching

issue faced by women at Raymur: "Poverty, poverty, poverty – was the main problem with

everything."[68] The Raymur Mothers had a sophisticated understanding of the ways in which

poverty intersected with spatialized inequities to exclude their families from opportunities

available to others. But rather than accepting the terms of their geography, the Raymur

mothers undertook these issues as a problem that they could solve. Significantly, the Raymur

mothers' success on the tracks in 1971 engendered a confidence through which they went on

to challenge inequity in other aspects of their lives. For instance, Jon Cain explained that

women at Raymur, his mother included, had already been engaged in a range of informal

means of community caretaking, such as meal sharing, babysitting, and homework clubs. This

social support network was, in Cain's assessment, a seed from which the tracks organizing

emerged.[69] But the tracks then provided fertilizer for that seed to sprout and then blossom.

Indeed, following the tracks protest, the mothers "went forward energetically," driven by a

feeling that "they could achieve almost anything."[70] As Graeme explained, "I think the tracks

whetted their appetites. All of our appetites. If we fixed that, what can we fix next?"[71] Their

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[67] This is not a criticism of the activists who 'saved' Strathcona because, presumably, the City or the Province (which was responsible for public housing) could have developed these services in a way that did not require additional displacement of Strathcona residents from their homes beyond that which had already occurred.
[68] Graeme, interview by the author.
[69] Cain, interview by the author.
[70] Mitchell and Goldney, *Don't Rest in Peace,* 53.
[71] Graeme, interview by the author.

first answer to that question was food affordability, followed thereafter by childcare, and then, recreation.

Of particular consequence to the women was unequal access to affordable and nutritious meals for their families.[72] A mother of seven, Graeme detailed the inherent challenges of feeding her young family on social assistance: "I don't think we had enough to eat. I bought really healthy food and we managed. But we had very small servings, three meals a day."[73] Certainly, food insecurity was a major problem faced by families experiencing poverty in Vancouver throughout the late twentieth century. In 1989, nearly two decades after the Raymur Mothers first organized, another single mother described the challenges she experienced putting meals on the table for her two children while on welfare:

> When my children were small they ate well. Since I've been on welfare I have seen one very serious problem […]: Lack of food, especially during a five-week month. I barely get enough to scrape through in a four-week month. A five-week month with the same amount of money is impossible for me to handle. We always totally run out of food.
> At one point if I ran out of food I would go and try to get a food voucher. I was told not to come back for another food voucher after using the system about five or six times in about three years. I was sent a letter which stated that I should instead go to the food bank. I should spend money on transportation to and from a food bank that was ten miles away. […]
> […] I have the children and we have all lived way below the poverty line since being on welfare.[74]

As these women's experiences indicate, being able to afford enough food to feed their families was a perennial problem for many low-income mothers, a matter that exposed clearly continued insufficiencies of welfare rates through the late twentieth century.[75]

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[72] Cain, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author.
[73] Graeme, interview by the author.
[74] Mother of 2, [no title], *Carnegie Newsletter,* February 1, 1989.
[75] Liisa Atva explained that while her mother Hilkka was able to feed them healthily because she cooked and carefully budgeted the money, that it was different for many of her friends; she explained that for other families, "by the time the welfare cheque had run out, the food situation wasn't so good in the house." (L. Atva, interview by the author.) On challenges faced by single mothers in late-twentieth-century British Columbia securing suitable housing and feeding and clothing their children on a welfare income, see also: Anonymous single mother from

Of course, mothers in these circumstances were resourceful in stretching a dollar. For instance, Graeme described some of the ways she kept her girls fed nutritiously:

> I can remember cutting an orange in eight, an apple in eight, and a banana in eight. And that was our breakfast food – everybody got one piece. And then I always had puffed wheat; that was two dollars for however many quarts this would be [gesturing to bag size]. That was our main breakfast. Or I'd have oatmeal sometimes. In the summer and fall, I would buy groceries cheap at Woodward's, and I would buy things like brussels sprouts and other things and I would freeze them. And somebody gave me a large freezer—so I'd spend the summer and fall freezing and filling that up with vegetables. And I canned fruit and I made my own jam.[76]

As Graeme's reflections show, mothers developed their own strategies to budget and put food on the table.[77]

But while mothers developed strategies to make ends meet, they also set out to do something concrete to change their circumstances. Having identified food insecurity as a collective barrier to equity for those who lived at the housing project, the organizers took clear and creative action. Significantly, these women understood that, in addition to insufficient welfare rates, their geography also contributed to and shaped this problem. With tight budgets, the mothers had to be smart about how they shopped, but the physical environment surrounding

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New Westminster, B.C., "Dear Mr. Levi," letter to the B.C. Department of Human Resources, [Federated Anti-Poverty Groups of B.C. newsletter], c. December 1974, CVA, AM1380, Margaret Mitchell fonds, 623-D-1 file 16; Isobel Kiborn, "Welfare and the Work Force," *Ishtar News* (Aldergrove, B.C.: Ishtar Women's Resource Center and Transition House), [c. January-February 1975], 5-6, Simon Fraser University Archives, Women's Bookstore Collection, F-111-6-0-1. This issue of welfare rates and family poverty was one that activists also took up in late-twentieth-century Vancouver. For example, in 1971, two of the activist mothers who lived at Raymur – Toni Graeme (then Cowlishaw) and Jean Amos – prepared an appeals case in which they successfully lobbied for a welfare allowance increase for their families. The two special Provincial review boards who considered their case ruled in favour of the women; they concluded that their current welfare allowances were entirely insufficient for these women to support their families. The review boards ordered the welfare department to increase the monthly allowances for these two families to better align with the actual cost of living; they also ordered a series of one-time grants for children's clothing, bedding, and other household items. I will analyze this specific case and its outcomes in greater depth in further research on anti-poverty activism that develops from this project. Graeme, interview by the author; "Welfare Hikes 'Not Trend-Setters,'" *Vancouver Sun,* 6 October 1971; Kathy Tait, "Board Ruling Could Trigger Welfare Cost Explosion," *Province,* 6 October 1971.

[76] Graeme, interview by the author.

[77] Clothing was another area of concern for many families, but as with food, women employed various strategies to ensure their children had the items they needed. For instance, some women were skilled seamstresses and dressmakers and made their children's clothing; others made efficient use of hand-me downs. H. Atva, interview by the author; Cain, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author.

Raymur made that difficult. The Ray-Cam Co-operative Association, a tenant group the women would soon establish, articulated this issue clearly and succinctly: "We, who live in one of the largest housing developments in Vancouver, are not within walking distance of any large grocery outlet, which makes it impossible for any senior citizen or family without a car to have any choice in where we can shop."[78] Raymur was, as the tenant association and former residents identified, in a food desert: the closest major grocery store was Woodward's Department Store, which housed a grocery on its sixth floor. Most residents did not own their own vehicles, and so, because Woodward's was the only sizeable store within walking distance of the project, this was where most Raymur families shopped.[79] Furthermore, although the closest store, Woodward's was still relatively far from the housing project, about ten blocks west of Raymur. Graeme recalled how, like other women, she usually made the return trip to Woodward's on foot, no easy feat when carrying groceries to feed a family: "When you're shopping for a family of seven, it's quite a load of groceries to manage and I didn't have any wheels to carry them in."[80] While some women took the bus, or even a taxi, for some, the cost of the fares made this prohibitive.[81] Moreover, as Jon Cain, who lived at Raymur with his three

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[78] Ray-Cam Co-operative Association, "Application for: Local Employment Assistance Program", c. 1971-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14.

[79] H. Atva, interview by the author; L. Atva, interview by the author; T. Atva, interview by the author; Cain, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author. Tina and Liisa Atva also remembered their family shopping at the Famous Foods store at Hastings and Clark, but recalled that it was limited to mostly dry goods, and did not have much in the way of fresh produce or dairy. There were also a couple of convenience stores near the project that stocked basic items, but they did not carry much produce (fresh fruits and vegetables), and residents recalled that their prices were noticeably higher than Woodward's. (L. Atva, interview by the author; T. Atva, interview by the author.)

[80] Graeme, interview by the author.

[81] For example, Liisa Atva remembered that the family had to take a taxi home with the groceries because in the first years they lived at Raymur, the food floor at Woodward's did not deliver. Her younger sister, Tina Atva, remembers that Woodward's delivered groceries to Raymur, but Liisa explained that this service was not available until later. Thus, while a grocery delivery service was later instituted (at some point during the 1970s), during the initial years of Raymur's existence, most women had to walk or take the bus or a taxi. L. Atva, interview by the author; Liisa Atva, email message to author, November 26, 2020; T. Atva, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author.

siblings and mother Babs (Helene) from the age of three to eighteen, remembered, Woodward's was often unaffordable. The department store, he explained, "was good on Tuesdays for $1.49 day," but "the rest of the time it was…an expensive place to shop."[82] But because there was not another major store in walking distance, many Raymur families were limited to shopping at Woodward's which meant that they were unable to seek out deals at less expensive stores and save money that way.[83] This geography, then, exacerbated the challenges these women faced living on low incomes.

However, rather than accepting these circumstances, the women took the matter into their own hands.[84] Graeme, who understood "that food was an issue for all of us," raised the idea of a non-profit food co-operative store with other residents. She later presented information she obtained from the provincial food co-operative group to others, who, she explained, took the idea "and went with it."[85] Their vision was a store at Raymur run by and for residents with items purchased from wholesalers and sold without a markup.[86] The mothers quickly set their entrepreneurial plan in motion: they established a Co-Op Association with an elected board, secured loans and other financing, and obtained approval from BC Housing to transform space in the basement of the Family High-Rise for this store.[87] The newly formed

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[82] Cain, interview by the author.

[83] Cain, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author; Olivia Ward, "The Poor are Always with Us," *Province (Woman's Province),* February 26, 1971.

[84] Graeme, interview by the author.

[85] Graeme, interview by the author.

[86] Ray-Cam Co-operative Association, "Brief to: The Honourable Norman Levi," c. 1971-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Ray-Cam, "A design program for the community facility at Raymur Place, for the Ray-Cam Co-Operative Association," January 1974, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16.

[87] Meg Stainsby, daughter of Judith Stainsby, one of the Raymur activists, described how the women held meetings in each other's kitchens to plan and prepare for the store. She remembered that the mothers brought their children with them, sometimes enlisting a teenager to babysit the kids at the meetings. Jon Cain likewise described how the women brought their children to their meetings, and how they had to sit and play quietly. Cain described how the mothers asserted their plan for the store confidently to BC Housing officials, firmly instructing them to make the physical changes to the building that were necessary to operate a food store, such as removing lockers and constructing a ramp, which BC Housing did. According to a brief prepared by the Ray-Cam Co-operative

Ray-Cam Co-operative Association explained that the idea for this store "was born over a cup of coffee; at that time, we realized it had become essential for us to provide ourselves with food at the lowest possible price available, thus giving us a chance to have a better diet with money left over for other necessities that we were lacking in our circumstances."[88] In February 1971, before the matter of the tracks was finalized, the tenant organizers opened their store.

As the residents planned, established, and then ran a co-operative food store at the housing project, they remade their geography. This achievement reflected the women's innovation in creating change.[89] Not only did their store solve an immediate problem, it had long-term beneficial impacts. Significantly, in addition to being a place to shop for groceries that was both more convenient (on-site location) and more affordable (at-cost goods), the store

Association, the co-operative received an initial "loan from a credit union with backing from the United Church." The Association used membership fees and interest to make monthly repayments on this loan. Carolyn Jerome also recalled that with the assistance of Margaret Mitchell (an activist and community development worker who, as Jon Cain recalls, was a key supporter of Ray-Cam), the group placed an application with the Vancouver Foundation (a local funding agency) who provided $8000 for the co-op initiative. Jerome in "Raymur Mothers Walking Tour," part 3; T. Atva, interview by the author; Cain, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author; Mitchell and Goldney, *Don't Rest in Peace,* 53; Ray-Cam Co-operative Association, "Brief to: The Honourable Norman Levi," c. 1971-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; [Ray-Cam Co-operative Services], "A Community Facility for Raymur Place," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; "Information Sheet," December 1971, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1.

[88] Ray-Cam Co-operative Association, "Application for: Local Employment Assistance Program", c. 1971-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14.

[89] While the organizing was led by women, Hilkka Atva also indicated that "Raymur people, not just women" were involved with the co-op store. To shop at the store, families had to pay a small membership fee of two dollars a month (or one dollar for a single person). This fee was to cover operating expenses. Their association was a "non-profit direct charge co-op." Within a short period after the store's opening, more than one hundred families had joined the co-operative. Eventually, the store was open six days a week, operated by mostly volunteer workers from the community. Initially, only residents of Raymur were eligible to shop at the store (because the store was located in BC Housing space), but later non-residents were also permitted to do so. This widening of eligibility presumably changed after the co-op store moved into the new space of the Ray-Cam Co-operative Community Centre, which was not on BC Housing property. H. Atva, interview by the author; L. Atva, interview by the author; T. Atva, interview by the author; Cain, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author; "Co-op store at Raymur," *Province,* February 3, 1971; Ward, "The poor are always with us"; Mitchell and Goldney, *Don't Rest in Peace*, 53; Ray-Cam Co-operative Association, "Brief to: The Honourable Norman Levi," c. 1971-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; [Ray-Cam Co-operative Services], "A Community Facility for Raymur Place," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; "Information Sheet," December 1971, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; "Raymur: An Outline of Some Reasons Why the Requested Spaces Are Needed," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; "Ray Cam Co-operative Services: Food Co-op," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14.

also provided residents with new economic opportunities. Integral to the organizers' 'self-help'

philosophy and commitment, the store was managed and operated by Raymur residents. Those

involved with the store trained progressively in various tasks associated with grocery retail

work, including stocking shelves, bagging groceries, operating the register, ordering items,

scheduling shifts, and general management. Workers at the store thus gained commercial retail

experience that expanded and enhanced their future employment prospects.[90] Hilkka Atva, who

reflected positively on her experience as a stocker and cashier in the Raymur store, explained

how the store opened new opportunities to her. After immigrating to Canada, Atva – a

dressmaker by trade – worked for periods in Vancouver's dress-making factories. However,

she explained that she also worked as a cleaner in various hotels and offices where she earned

only "survival wages…just enough to live by."[91] Atva thus explained that her experience

working at the Raymur store "was helpful because I wanted to get [other] work and make more

money."[92] With retail experience obtained at the Raymur store, she later secured a customer

service position at the Purdy's Chocolates located within Woodward's Department Store.

Although, she explained, this position at Purdy's did not pay "much more really," she recalled

the job with fondness, and credited the Raymur food co-op with having been helpful in this

later employment.[93] "I loved my co-op store," she beamed.[94] As Atva's experience illustrates,

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[90] L. Atva, interview by the author; H. Atva, interview by the author; Cain, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author; "Ray Cam Co-operative Services: Food Co-op", CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; "Raymur: An Outline of Some Reasons Why the Requested Spaces Are Needed," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1.
[91] H. Atva, interview by the author.
[92] H. Atva, interview by the author.
[93] H. Atva, interview by the author.
[94] H. Atva, interview by the author.

the food co-op store was a grassroots, bottom-up anti-poverty initiative that offered both short- and long-term social and economic benefits to Raymur families.[95]

The food co-op also had intangible benefits. For example, the store generated social capital for tenants who worked there, and fostered a culture of community involvement that fed other tenant-driven projects. In these ways, the store was a critical node in community formation. For example, a teenager at the time, Liisa Atva described the pride she felt as she watched her mother Hilkka work in the store. It was even a "status thing," she explained, to have "a mother who worked in the store…because it meant your mother was doing her part."[96] Indeed, as the store "[brought] people together to work on a common interest," as Toni Graeme put it, it unified residents around a shared issue which generated a spirit and practice of community participation that extended beyond the store's walls.[97] Jon Cain recalled, for instance, that residents who shopped at the store would volunteer their own time in the community in any number of ways, including, for instance, by working a weekly shift or two at the store, or, especially before the pedestrian overpass had been completed, by accompanying young children safely to school.[98] Significantly, then, the store itself helped women build connections and grow community within and across this large housing project,

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[95] I have highlighted Hilkka Atva's experience working in the food co-operative store here, but there are surely many additional examples of how women's involvement with the store positively shaped their employment opportunities. For example, Meg Stainsby explained that in addition to working in the store, her mother Judith (Judy) Stainsby also became its bookkeeper, the beginning of a longer career for her mother. Stainsby described how her mother took correspondence and evening courses in accounting and bookkeeping, and, that, ultimately, through tremendous hard work and determination, became a certified general accountant. Stainsby described with pride the sheer tenacity through which her mother overcame various barriers to accomplish this "remarkable achievement." Judith Stainsby subsequently worked as an accountant and/or bookkeeper for various businesses and organizations for nearly twenty years. (Stainsby, interview by the author.)
[96] L. Atva, interview by the author.
[97] Graeme, interview by the author; "Raymur: An Outline of Some Reasons Why the Requested Spaces Are Needed," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; Ray-Cam Co-operatives Association, "Application for: Local Employment Assistance Program", c. 1971-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14.
[98] Cain, interview by the author.

extending beyond those who were involved in the initial tracks protest.[99] And "once you were part of any step," as Cain remarked, "you were cemented in."[100]

The co-op store and the community it helped create further fueled a feeling of confidence and unbridled possibility that inspired the mothers to organize in additional ways. For example, Graeme indicated that in establishing and running the co-op, the group had to make collective decisions about operations, which, she analyzed, boosted the assertiveness of those involved in ways that translated to other aspects of their lives: "People have to start making decisions, and that's really good, you know. Because you take it into your own life as well as doing it in the community."[101] Through their organizing on the tracks, and then, through their organizing and work with and via the store, these women became increasingly empowered to create change in other places in their individual lives and in their community.

Indeed, following from the store, the women directed attention toward another pressing issue: the matter of childcare. They identified how a lack of accessible and affordable daycare shaped and compounded feminized poverty. The organizers explained that without adequate childcare services many mothers were limited from working outside of the home, taking educational courses, participating in vocational training, and/or pursuing other personal endeavours outside the home.[102] Other anti-poverty activists in Vancouver also drew direct attention to this issue. For example, social housing tenant activist Joan Adams argued in 1968 that childcare services "would be of great value in public housing projects where there are many single working parents as well as mothers on Social Assistance who would be interested

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[99] Cain, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author.
[100] Cain, interview by the author. One of the "Militant Mothers," Cain's mother Babs (Helene) was involved in many forms of formal and informal community organizing and involvement at Raymur.
[101] Graeme, interview by the author.
[102] "Ray Cam Co-operative Services: Day Care/Nursery", CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14.

in finding a job if their children could be properly cared for, in or near the project, for a fee the mothers could afford."[103] But as the state failed to provide such a service, the mothers at Raymur took it upon themselves to do so: the women transformed a second room in the basement of the Family High-Rise into a daycare (preschool) and nursery for families at Raymur.[104] They assessed that on-site daycare "would increase the number of employable people in the project" for "there are a great number of women with children here who would love to go out and work if they only could have regular babysitting provided for their children."[105] The organizers thus created daycare services at Raymur to open up women's employment possibilities that would, in turn, benefit women personally and aid families to move out of poverty.

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[103] Adams, *A Tenant Looks at Public Housing Projects,* 25. Adams prepared this report for the Vancouver Housing Inter-Project Council, an organization formed in 1967 to represent tenants from six public housing projects in Vancouver (Little Mountain, Orchard Park, Skeena Terrace, Killarney Gardens, MacLean Park, and Raymur Place). This report represented tenant concerns and suggestions for improving conditions in and around public housing projects across Vancouver; it raised concerns about housing environments, and detailed specific areas and recommendations for changes. The Vancouver Housing Inter-Project Council later became the Vancouver and District Public Housing Tenants Association (VDPHTA).

[104] Many of the working mothers at Raymur had been taking their children to a preschool/daycare located within the nearby Kiwassa Neighbourhood Services. But the daycare at Kiwassa had limitations. For instance, as Jon Cain indicated, in addition to not having enough spaces, its limited hours of operation and the time required to take their children there posed challenges for many working mothers who needed to be at work at a certain time. Mothers also experienced (or feared) chastisement from social/welfare workers if they found out that the mothers arranged for another adult to take their children to the daycare. Mothers were worried that this could be a reason used by social workers to apprehend their children. The on-site daycare at Raymur was one way the mothers mitigated these challenges. When the women organized the daycare on site at Raymur, they arranged for staff from the Kiwassa preschool to work it. (Cain, interview by the author.) The pre-existing daycare at Kiwassa Neighbourhood Services and the daycare subsequently organized by women at Raymur are two examples that support Lisa Pasolli and Julia Smith's assessment of the central role of non-profit community organizations and parent groups in establishing, operating, and funding daycare centres in 1970s Vancouver, often out of neighbourhood houses and community centres. As Pasolli and Smith explain, in late-twentieth-century Vancouver (as across British Columbia), community organizations, social agencies, and parent groups – and not the state – carried the work of establishing, administering, operating, and funding daycare centres. Both Kiwassa and the Ray-Cam Co-operative daycares were part of and representative of the community (and often welfare-based), piecemeal childcare system that prevailed in the province at this time. (Lisa Pasolli and Julia Smith, "The Labor Relations of Love: Workers, Childcare, and the State in 1970s Vancouver, British Columbia," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History*, 14, no. 4 (2017), 43. For more on the history of childcare politics in late-twentieth-century British Columbia, see Pasolli and Smith, "Labor Relations of Love," and Lisa Pasolli, *Working Mothers and the Child Care Dilemma: A History of British Columbia's Social Policy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).

[105] "Ray Cam Co-operative Services: Day Care/Nursery", CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14.

The mothers' anti-poverty organizing to remake their built environment did not end there. The original design of Raymur Place effectively concentrated low-income families, yet its architects failed to attend to the details that would make that space a liveable home. Building from their existing initiatives, the women thus formed another new committee – the Ray-Cam Recreation Committee – to lobby for the construction of a permanent community and recreation centre that would, they argued, "complete the space that should have been built at Raymur in the first place."[106] Indeed, while a community centre in the vicinity of the project was part of City planners' initial neighbourhood redevelopment plan, such a centre was never built.[107] That said, while the neighbourhood lacked a dedicated community centre, there were a few local recreation services available. However, as the Ray-Cam committee indicated, they did not envision their proposed facility as a substitute for existing facilities and services. Rather, they argued that their plan would provide an "extension of the personal living space of residents of Raymur" who lacked the spaces "frequently available to individual families living in single family units…[including] recreation rooms, back yards, [and]…sufficient space within the home for pursuit of personal interest."[108]

Certainly, within this environment, the size of individual units shaped families' experiences of poverty. Meg Stainsby, who spent many years of her youth living at Raymur,

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[106] In July 1971, interested tenants held the first meeting of the new Ray-Cam Recreation Committee. [Ray-Cam Co-operative Services], "A Community Facility for Raymur Place," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; "Ray-Cam Recreation Committee: A Brief History", CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Ray-Cam Recreation Committee, [no title – brief re planning and need for a recreation centre at Raymur housing project], CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Ray-Cam, "A design program for the community facility at Raymur Place, for the Ray-Cam Co-Operative Association," January 1974, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; "Proposal for Immediate Recreation Programs at Raymur Housing Project," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 14; "Advisory Committee Perspective," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; Ray-Cam, "Design Proposal: Summary," January 1974, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; "Information Sheet," December 1971, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1.
[107] See page 229 above and supra note 65.
[108] Advisory Committee Perspective," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1.

remembered her family's two-bedroom high-rise apartment as being a small space of no more than 500 to 700 square feet, shared between her mother, two siblings, and herself.[109] She described that in addition to the bedrooms, "one of which was absolutely tiny," their unit had an "open plan living room, kitchen, dining room – like that was one room. So there was the one room, and the two bedrooms, and then a tiny bathroom and that was all there was."[110] Stainsby explained that her mother Judith (Judy) slept in the living room "on a hide-a-bed couch that she shut up every day," while one sibling had the smaller bedroom and she and another sibling shared the larger bedroom.[111] Liz Evans gestured toward the emotional affect of such cramped conditions. She described "too many people in too small spaces…You [could not] get away from anybody…it was just the close proximity of the families. And the close proximity of your own family. You just [could not] get away. There's just no place."[112] Evans, who had lived in a three- (and later four-) bedroom unit with her five children, conveyed the toll of these conditions for parents and their children alike:

> There's no place to give your kids any breathing room. No place to close the door and say this is my space, now go away and leave me alone while I work out what I have to work out. Because you have to share a room, with your brother or sister or whatever and there has to be somebody in there all the time. My kids were always under my feet, always under my feet.[113]

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[109] Stainsby, interview by the author.

[110] Stainsby, interview by the author.

[111] Stainsby, interview by the author. Stainsby here is describing their apartment in the family high-rise. After a few years living in the highrise (1969-72), the family moved to a different housing complex elsewhere in the city, where they lived for over a year before moving back to Raymur. When the family returned to Raymur in 1973, they lived in one of the row houses.

[112] Evans (pseud.), interview, transcript in McCallan and Roback, *An Ordinary Life*, v.

[113] Evans (pseud.), interview, transcript in McCallan and Roback, *An Ordinary Life*, v.

This density impacted families' well-being and personal growth. As tenant activists explained, "there [was] little or no room for studying, privacy, hobbies, or just getting away from one's family."[114]

The absence of communal and recreation spaces at Raymur compounded this issue of small living spaces. Despite providing housing for more than one thousand residents, more than half of whom were youth, Raymur had very little in the way of indoor or outdoor common spaces appropriate for community gatherings, activities, socializing, learning, or play.[115] Elsewhere in the neighbourhood, the local Gibbs Boys Club, for example, offered youth programs, and later, a small playground (which came to be known as Capozzi Park) was constructed in the south end of the housing project. But overall, there were limited structured recreation options for Raymur families within the project itself.[116] Children, of course,

[114] "Proposal for Immediate Recreation Programs at Raymur Housing Project," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 14; "Ray-Cam," April 12, 197[x], handwritten meeting notes, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; "Raymur Monday," handwritten meeting notes, c. 1971-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1.

[115] Overall, there were limited spaces and facilities within the project itself that were conducive to tenant recreation, gathering, and socialization. The senior's high-rise had a lounge, and the family high rise originally had two meeting rooms that served as common space. There were also some limited grassroots programs organized at the project by tenants themselves that transpired within in those spaces. For instance, Meg Stainsby and Hilkka Atva remember judo and other exercise classes held in one of the ground floor meeting/common rooms in the Family High-Rise building. However, these existing spaces were insufficient to meet the community's wider needs. For example, these rooms were unavailable during evening hours out of consideration and respect for residents of adjoining suites. Furthermore, the tenant-organized daycare came to occupy the meeting rooms weekday mornings and afternoons, thus limiting the availability of this space for other community activities. One of these rooms was available afternoons, but uses remained limited to protect the preschool play equipment. H. Atva, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author; Ray-Cam [Co-operative Services], "A design program for the community facility at Raymur Place, for the Ray-Cam Co-Operative Association," January 1974, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; Ray-Cam Co-operative Association, "Vancouver Foundation Grant Application," 29 October 1975, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; [Ray-Cam Co-operative Services], "A Community Facility for Raymur Place," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; [no title – timeline/overview of history of Ray-Cam Recreation Committee], CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; "Basford favors project idea," *Vancouver Sun,* October 13, 1972, news clipping, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; Adams, *A Tenant Looks At Public Housing Projects*, 25.

[116] More formal recreation services for children in the surrounding area included: The Gibbs Boys' Club; Kiwassa Neighbourhood Services; Pender YWCA; Vancouver East Recreation Programme; and the Strathcona Neighbourhood Services Centre. Many of these services were popular with families, but tenants identified that they were insufficient on their own to meet the needs of families at Raymur. For instance, tenants identified that these existing services were limited in various ways, including: space constraints and limits (eg. overcrowding);

discovered all kinds of creative opportunities for play.[117] Tina Atva identified Raymur's "car-free" design as a "child's paradise," while Meg Stainsby recalled "a lovely sense, at least for some parts of my childhood, of this [project area] as a giant playground. Like you kind of owned the whole project."[118] Stainsby described how children transformed areas in and beyond the project's boundaries – trees, boulders, railings, concrete ramps, hydro transformer boxes, parking lots, construction sites, warehouses, auto-body shops, and abandoned houses – into their own playgrounds.[119] With adult hindsight, though, Stainsby also assessed that "we played in a lot of highly dangerous, dubious places…. you know, broken down houses and construction zones and forklifts, and that kind of stuff."[120] She explained, however, that as

age restrictions (eg. programming often was for younger children, with little available for teenagers); cost (eg. programs sometimes had associated fees or additional costs); staffing (eg. programs often were understaffed); and inter-project tensions (eg. some programs/facilities serviced families from both Raymur Housing and MacLean Park housing, which contributed to "inter-project conflict." Rivalries - or presumed rivalries - between kids at Raymur Housing and MacLean Park was an issue mentioned by several people I interviewed who were youth at the time; further, archival records indicate that adult organizers at Raymur were also aware of and identified inter-project conflict as one issue with existing recreation services.) What ultimately became the Brittania Community Services Centre was still only in its planning stages in the early 1970s, and thus not yet available to the community. Moreover, tenants identified that this planned facility – which would offer a broad range of recreation and community services for residents of East Vancouver – would have limits in its ability to meet the needs of families at Raymur. Notably, residents identified Brittania's location as impractical and/or dangerous for them, particularly during the dark winter months; they explained that the distance was too far for mothers with younger children who did not have access to private cars, and that the roads linking Raymur and Britannia had extensive truck traffic and/or were poorly lit. "Proposal for Immediate Recreation Programs at Raymur Housing Project," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 14; [Ray-Cam Co-operative Services], "A Community Facility for Raymur Place," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; "Advisory Committee Perspective," report, c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; Miss P. Willows, Vice President East Enders Society, draft letter to Mr. Brown, [no date], Simon Fraser University Archives, East Enders Society fonds, F-59-1-0-9.

[117] T. Atva, interview by the author; Cain, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author. For instance, Tina Atva, Jon Cain, and Meg Stainsby reflected on how having so many other children around meant they could have lots of fun and adventures, playing, for example, massive games of hide-and-seek, kick-the-can, and Red Rover. Indeed, they reflected on how living at Raymur as children meant there were always lots of kids to play with, and that there was a general sense of 'welcoming', 'communal' play. As Meg Stainsby put it, "…like people could just come and join. You know, it was almost like the suburban cul-de-sacs you hear about in the '50s and '60s in the Pleasantville kind of stories. It was just a very urban and concrete version. But it was quite communal and very welcoming and … there wasn't a sense of clique or some could play and some couldn't play. It was quite open." (Stainsby, interview by the author.) Youth experiences of growing up at Raymur is a topic for further research and analysis.

[118] T. Atva, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author.

[119] Stainsby, interview by the author.

[120] Stainsby, interview by the author.

children, "it didn't feel particularly unsafe; it was just—you just found adventure where you got it, right."[121] Parents, though, had differing ideas about the suitability and safety of the neighbourhood for their children: many saw it as inadequate at best, and dangerous at worst.[122]

Truly, Raymur organizers saw the lack of amenities in their housing environment as an equity issue. "Adequate recreational facilities," tenant activist Joan Adams wrote in her critique of Vancouver's public housing in 1968, "can make the important difference between an agreeably appointed prison and a home."[123] While existing facilities like the Capozzi Park playground at the project and the Kiwassa Neighbourhood Services and Gibbs Club elsewhere in the neighbourhood were well-loved by children at Raymur, they only began to scratch the surface of families' recreation and liveability needs.[124] Indeed, while parents were creative and resourceful in designing free or inexpensive activities for their children, they nevertheless expressed concerns about their families' access to a range of structured social and recreational activities in or near the housing complex, especially given the concentration of families in too

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[121] Stainsby, interview by the author.
[122] "Advisory Committee Perspective," report, c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; [Ray-Cam Co-operative Services], "A Community Facility for Raymur Place," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; Adams, *A Tenant Looks at Public Housing Projects,* 2-6, 10, 15, 17, 19, 20.
[123] Adams, *A Tenant Looks at Public Housing Projects,* 25.
[124] The Gibbs Club initially was for boys only – a restriction that the Ray-Cam Co-op group identified as a limitation of that service. However, Gibbs later opened to girls; Tina Atva remembered that she attended Gibbs regularly in the early 1970s. Tina Atva also recalled Kiwassa as significant through the 1970s for after-school activities for elementary school children, as well as for Christmas activities. Tina's older sister Liisa, however, explained that there was less available for teenagers. Liisa Atva explained that while she would go play pool at the Gibbs Club, and attended the occasional dances held for teenagers at the Russian Hall (one of two pre-existing buildings located within the perimeter of the housing project spared from urban renewal clearances), that there were limited programs and activities in the neighbourhood for teenagers, and that those that were available were not popular – they were not seen as "cool things" to do. Kiwassa Neighbourhood Services was then located close to the project and Seymour Elementary School. (Kiwassa, now the Kiwassa Neighbourhod House, still serves families and communities (as of 2020), but in a neighbourhood further east of the Downtown Eastside). For adults, there was one hotel beer parlour (The Astoria) near the project that women occasionally visited with friends for a beer when they could arrange babysitting, often by a teenager of one of the mothers. See also supra note 116 on organizers' concerns about the limits of Kiwassa, Gibbs, and other available services. H. Atva, interview by the author; L. Atva, interview by the author; T. Atva, interview by the author; Cain, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author; [Ray-Cam Co-operative Services], "A Community Facility for Raymur Place," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16.

small spaces. For many families, their financial situation limited their participation in recreation programs elsewhere in the city: the costs of transportation, program fees, equipment and supplies, and babysitting often made such activities prohibitive.[125] Parents further assessed the social costs of these barriers to be high. For example, parents expressed concerns that "due to boredom and lack of anything constructive to do, many kids turn to drugs, glue sniffing, stealing and various other illegal and harmful activities."[126] Ultimately, parents' concerns about the limited availability and accessibility of recreation services for families at Raymur were informed by their desire to ensure their children had the same kinds of opportunities as their peers, which they connected to their children's overall health, safety, and well-being.[127]

The Raymur Mothers actively challenged the ways in which this built environment shaped and reinforced social inequity. For example, as a short-term solution to the need for recreation programming and facilities, residents constructed two wooden structures – what came to be known as the "Sugar Shacks" – to provide youth in the community with temporary recreation space and programs until a permanent facility could be built. The "Sugar Shacks" housed after-school programs, lessons, and activities that were organized, run, and supervised by adult volunteers from Raymur.[128] But the mother activists remained committed to a long-

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[125] Graeme, interview by the author; Evans (pseud.), interview, transcript in McCallan and Roback, *An Ordinary Life*, v; "Proposal for Immediate Recreation Programs at Raymur Housing Project," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 14; "Ray-Cam," Wed April 12, 197[x], handwritten meeting notes, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; Vancouver Housing Inter-Project Council, "The Need for Activity Rooms in Public Housing Projects," in Adams, *A Tenant Looks at Public Housing Projects*, i.

[126] "Proposal for Immediate Recreation Programs at Raymur Housing Project," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 14. Several people I interviewed indicated that they either personally observed or became aware of substance misuse (eg. glue sniffing, alcohol misuse and addiction) among youth at Raymur. (L. Atva, interview by the author; T. Atva, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author.)

[127] [Ray-Cam Co-operative Services], "A Community Facility for Raymur Place," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16.

[128] The Rotary Club provided some financing for these structures, and maintenance workers from Raymur built them with some training and supervision by the Urban Design Centre architectural firm. Stainsby, interview by the author; Cain, interview by the author; Simpson in "Raymur Mothers Walking Tour," part 3; "Proposal for Immediate Recreation Programs at Raymur Housing Project," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 14; "Sugar-Cam Ray-Shacks," handwritten meeting notes, April 12, 1973, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-

term, permanent solution. The Ray-Cam committee thus moved forward energetically with their vision for a community facility at Raymur Place. The women successfully lobbied the City to restrict development on a vacant lot on the southeast corner of Hastings Street and Campbell Avenue (directly in front of the housing development), and to undertake necessary assessments and planning for a community facility at this site.[129] The Ray-Cam committee then consulted with residents of the housing project, conducting a survey in August 1971 to assess residents' needs and desires for recreation and social spaces at Raymur. With the results of this community survey in hand, the committee next produced a short-list of desired amenities, which they then provided to the Urban Design Centre, the architectural firm they enlisted to develop designs for the proposed facility in accordance with residents' wishes and needs.[130]

S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; "Raymurmeat," handwritten meeting notes, July 13, 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; Ray-Cam Co-operatives Association, "Application for: Local Employment Assistance Program", c. 1971-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; "Ray-Cam Recreation Committee: A Brief History", CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Ray-Cam Recreation Committee, [no title – brief re planning and need for a recreation centre at Raymur housing project], CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; [no title – timeline/overview of history of Ray-Cam Recreation Committee], CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Ray-Cam Recreation Committee, "Design Progress report," c. February 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; "Information Sheet," December 1971, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1.

[129] Ray-Cam Recreation Committee, [no title – brief re planning and need for a recreation centre at Raymur housing project], CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Ray-Cam Recreation Committee, "Design Progress report," c. February 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; [Ray-Cam Co-operative Services], "A Community Facility for Raymur Place," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; [no title – timeline/overview of history of Ray-Cam Recreation Committee], CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; "Ray-Cam Recreation Committee: A Brief History", CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; City of Vancouver, "Recommendations - 1. Recreational Facilities – Raymur Place," Report to Council by the Standing Committee of Council on Social Services, May 31, 1973, in Council Meeting Minutes, June 12, 1973, 587-588, CVA, COV-S31-F113.12, Box: 897-C-01 folder 01.

[130] The Urban Design Centre was a non-profit architectural and planning organization that worked on projects for community groups, service organizations and housing co-operatives at scaled rates (free or low cost). For instance, they also did design work for the St. James' Social Services Society. [no title – timeline/overview of history of Ray-Cam Recreation Committee], CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; "Ray-Cam Recreation Committee: A Brief History", CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Ray-Cam Recreation Committee, "Design Progress report," c. February 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; [Ray-Cam Co-operative Services], "A Community Facility for Raymur Place," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; Ray-Cam [Co-operative Services], "A design program for the community facility at Raymur Place, for the Ray-Cam Co-Operative Association," January 1974, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; Kathy Tait, "Raymur Tenants Fight for Centre," *Province,* April 22, 1972, 11; Mitchell and Goldney, *Don't Rest in Peace*, 53.

In this work to remake their built environment to better meet the needs of families, Raymur activists had to continuously fight to have their perspectives and knowledge taken seriously by the municipality and Province, which oversaw and funded the project. The activists encountered extensive bureaucratic obstacles and resistance, but fought for their vision and remained firm in their resolve.[131] For example, Barbara Burnett, co-chairwoman of the Ray-Cam Recreation Committee, explained that after several months of collaborative discussions and meetings with various government officials, the tenants felt they had made little headway. Officials issued repeated requests to the tenant group to rewrite their proposal, which left the women increasingly frustrated. They felt officials were discounting their expertise, which was grounded in their lived experience and local knowledge.[132] Burnett expressed this frustration to a *Province* reporter:

> First of all they wanted us to give reasons why we wanted this site rather than one farther away. I don't think they accepted or really understood our reasons…Then they said what we wanted was too much. We feel we need a building about 12,000 square feet. But their figure was 5,000…There's no way we can cut it down. We know what is needed.[133]

As government representatives consistently dismissed their expertise, the women stood their ground, determined to ensure that this new facility would best meet the social needs of Raymur residents. As Burnett explained to a reporter, the group "won't give up – it's too important."[134]

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[131] A special advisory committee, comprised of municipal, provincial, and federal officials, the Ray-Cam group, and other interested community parties formed following several protracted months of correspondence and meetings. This multi-lateral committee met first in the winter of 1972, and several more times throughout that year. Tait, "Raymur tenants fight for centre"; "Brief History of the Advisory Group," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Ray-Cam Recreation Committee, [no title – brief re planning and need for a recreation centre at Raymur housing project], CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; "Ray-Cam Recreation Committee: A Brief History," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; "Basford Will Cut Red Tape for Housing Project Group," *Province,* October 13, 1972.

[132] "Brief History of the Advisory Group," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Tait, "Raymur tenants fight for centre."

[133] Barbara Burnett quoted in Tait, "Raymur Tenants Fight for Centre."

[134] Tait, "Raymur Tenants Fight for Centre." See also: "Brief History of the Advisory Group," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14.

In addition to fighting to ensure the physical space of the centre met their expectations and needs, the organizers also fought to ensure the facility would be managed, operated, and staffed by Raymur residents, rather than by any external department or those outside the community. Consistent with their 'self-help' principles, the organizers underscored the myriad anti-poverty and community benefits of having people work in and for their own community, as opposed to top-down management and operations. Tenant activists argued that, like the food co-operative store, a community-run facility would provide low-income residents with supplementary income, as well as training and experience beneficial to securing jobs elsewhere.[135] Furthermore, they reasoned that a community-run service would boost morale at the housing project because residents were frustrated with consistent intervention into their lives by external agencies. The organizers explained that "people here are tired of the presence of outsiders in running their affairs… there are so many professional outside agencies operating here already that most people here have had enough of outsiders running their lives for them. An externally run recreation program is just seen as another in a long list of external threats."[136] A self-run facility, they argued, would also be more responsive to the community's needs because the stakes were personal: residents would be more committed to the work "because people here <u>feel</u> the need for recreation themselves."[137]

Ultimately successful, on 13 November 1976, the Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre officially opened its doors, a grassroots project five years in the making.[138] Reflecting

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[135] Ray-Cam Co-operatives Association, "Application for: Local Employment Assistance Program", c. 1971-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14.

[136] "Proposal for Immediate Recreation Programs at Raymur Housing Project," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 14.

[137] "Proposal for Immediate Recreation Programs at Raymur Housing Project," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 14.

[138] Following the appearance of a tenant delegation before the City's Standing Committee on Social Service, in 1973, City Council negotiated a cost-sharing agreement with the two senior governments and the project moved forward. Ray-Cam Co-operatives Association, "Application for: Local Employment Assistance Program," c.

community pride in this accomplishment, Muggs Sigurgeirson recalled how the organizers

distributed one hundred pairs of scissors at the opening ceremonies so that each attendee could

cut the ribbon, stamped fittingly with "The Opening of Ray-Cam by the People."[139] Made

possible because of and through the determination, labour, and tenacity of women organizers

at Raymur, this new community centre became a hub for myriad activities and services. It

included more expansive space for the store and daycare, along with a variety of rooms and

areas, including: a central foyer; meeting room; arts and crafts workshop; children's play area;

teens' lounge and recreation area; study space and library; office space; kitchen and lounge;

multi-purpose activity room (gymnasium); and an outdoor porch.[140]

1971-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Ray-Cam Co-operative Association, "Vancouver Foundation Grant Application," 29 October 1975, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; "Advisory Committee Perspective," report, c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; Standing Committee of Council on Social Services, "Recreational Facilities – Raymur Place," 31 May 1973, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 15; Standing Committee of Council on Social Services, "Agenda: Thursday, July 12, 1973," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 15; "Raymur Place: 'Community Space' Idea Approved," *Vancouver Sun,* January 26, 1973, news clipping, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; "Project to Cost Extra $62,850," *Vancouver Sun,* June 14, 1974, news clipping, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; "Centre Project: Gov't Finance Sought," *Province,* May 4, 197[x], news clipping, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; City of Vancouver, "Enquiries and Other Matters - Alderman Phillips - Recreational Site: Hastings Street and Campbell Avenue," Council Meeting Minutes, October 24, 1972, 116A, CVA, COV-S31-F111.03, Box: 25-B-2 folder 3; City of Vancouver, "2. Recreational Facilities – Raymur Place", Report to Council by Standing Committee of Council on Social Services, January 25, 1973, in Council Meeting Minutes, February 6, 1973, 251-252, CVA, COV-S31-F112.09, Box: 025-B-02 folder 22; City of Vancouver, "Recommendation - 2. Recreational Facilities: Raymur Place," Report to Council by the Standing Committee of Council on Social Services, May 3, 1973, in Council Meeting Minutes, May 15, 1973, 370-371, CVA, COV-S31-F113.07, Box: 025-B-03 folder 13; City of Vancouver, "Recommendations - 1. Recreational Facilities – Raymur Place", Report to Council by the Standing Committee of Council on Social Services, May 31, 1973, in Council Meeting Minutes, June 12, 1973, 587-588, CVA, COV-S31-F113.12, Box: 897-C-01 folder 01; City of Vancouver, "Recommendation – 1. Recreational Facilities- Raymur Place," Report to Council by the Standing Committee of Council on Social Services, July 12, 1973, in Council Meeting Minutes, July 31, 1973, 251-253, CVA, COV-S31-F114.03, Box: 897-C-01 folder 06; City of Vancouver, "Recommendation and Information – 1. Meeting with the Minister of Housing," Report to Council by the Standing Committee of Council on Social Services, January 21, 1974, in Council Meeting Minutes, February 5, 1974, CVA, COV-S31-F116.05, Box: 897-C-2 folder 19.

[139] Muggs Sigurgeirson in "Raymur Mothers Walking Tour," part 3.

[140] Tony Green to the Administrators of the Local Employment Assistance Programme [letter], May 9, 1973, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Ray-Cam [Co-operative Services], "A design program for the community facility at Raymur Place, for the Ray-Cam Co-Operative Association," January 1974, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; Tony Green (Urban Design Centre), "Points to Remember," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; "Ray Cam Co-operative Services: Day Care/Nursery", CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Urban Design Centre Series: Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Ray-Cam Co-operative Association, "Vancouver Foundation Grant Application," 29 October 1975, CVA, UDC fonds,

The new centre improved the liveability of the housing project, made more opportunities available to residents, and became a space that generated and nurtured community. Architects for the Urban Design Centre, the activist firm that developed the design plans in collaboration with the tenant organizers, expressed that by having the centre managed by an elected board composed primarily of Raymur residents with programs staffed by community members, "the community of Raymur…receives a local, responsive, helpful network, open and accessible like no other program from an "outside agency" could possibly be."[141] Moreover, as a centralized gathering space in which neighbours could meet and

AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; Ray-Cam [Co-operative Services], "A design program for the community facility at Raymur Place, for the Ray-Cam Co-Operative Association," January 1974, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; "Raymur: An Outline of Some Reasons Why the Requested Spaces Are Needed," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; [Ray-Cam Co-operative Services], "A Community Facility for Raymur Place," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; Standing Committee of Council on Social Services, "Recreational Facilities – Raymur Place," 31 May 1973, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 15; City of Vancouver, "Recommendation - 2. Recreational Facilities: Raymur Place," Report to Council by the Standing Committee of Council on Social Services, May 3, 1973, in Council Meeting Minutes, May 15, 1973, 370-371, CVA, COV-S31-F113.07, Box: 025-B-03 folder 13; City of Vancouver, "Recommendations - 1. Recreational Facilities – Raymur Place," Report to Council by the Standing Committee of Council on Social Services, May 31, 1973, in Council Meeting Minutes, June 12, 1973, 587-588, CVA, COV-S31-F113.12, Box: 897-C-01 folder 01; City of Vancouver, "Recommendation and Information – 1. Meeting with the Minister of Housing," Report to Council by the Standing Committee of Council on Social Services, January 21, 1974, in Council Meeting Minutes, February 5, 1974, CVA, COV-S31-F116.05, Box: 897-C-2 folder 19; City of Vancouver, "Social Service and Health Matters – Consideration: 1. Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre 1978 Operating Budget," Manager's Report, February 3, 1978, in Council Meeting Minutes, February 7, 1978, 172-174, CVA, COV-S31-F128.04, Box 897-D-7 folder 2.
[141] Tony Green (for Urban Design Centre) to Administrators of the Local Initiatives Programme, 16 November 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14. See also: Tony Green (Urban Design Centre), "Points to Remember," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Ray-Cam Co-operatives Association, "Application for: Local Employment Assistance Program", c. 1971-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Ray-Cam [Co-operative Services], "A design program for the community facility at Raymur Place, for the Ray-Cam Co-Operative Association," January 1974, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; [Ray-Cam Co-operative Services], "A Community Facility for Raymur Place," c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-5, file 16; Ray Cam Cooperative Services, "Local Initiatives Program Application (Manpower and Immigration)," November 10, 1971, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Urban Design Centre Series: Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Ray-Cam Co-operative Association, notice of L.E.A.P. grant positions, c. 1971-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; "Ray Cam Co-operative Services: Day Care/Nursery", CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Ray-Cam Co-operative Association, "Brief to: The Honourable Norman Levi," c. 1971-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; "Proposal for Immediate Recreation Programs at Raymur Housing Project," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 14; "Advisory Committee Perspective," report, c. 1972, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; "Centre project: Gov't finance sought," *Province,* Friday May 4, 197[c], news clipping, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1; "Raymur Place: 'Community space' idea approved," *Vancouver Sun,* January 26, 1973, news clipping, CVA, UDC fonds,

socialize and where children could play and grow, this new facility made it possible for residents to nourish the social connections that lie at the heart of community.[142] Truly, in addition to the mutual support provided through needed services, amenities, and programmes, the centre also fostered community in organic ways. For example, Jon Cain recalled the foyer as being "constantly filled with women just sitting there gossiping," making it just "like one big happy hour."[143] Ultimately, through their organizing within and against their circumstances of poverty and inequity – the culmination of their efforts being the Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre – the Raymur Mothers transformed their environment. "It seemed an impossible dream," the Ray-Cam Co-operative Association exclaimed, "but it has become a reality."[144]

The significance of the Raymur Mothers' community organizing lies not only in their creation of new spaces and services. In developing and fighting for these spaces, they also challenged stigmatizing attitudes directed toward themselves and their community, and asserted themselves as intelligent, creative, capable, and effective leaders. Former Raymur tenant and Downtown Eastside community activist Liz Evans described a pervasive stigma directed at single mothers and families living in social housing during this period:

> [P]eople look at you from the outside in, sort of and say that's a project parent and that's a project home and what do you expect from project kids and what do you expect from a single parent and what do you expect from, ah, what do you expect from those kind of people. And I was always one of "those kinds" of people. And I don't know what one of "those kinds" of people are…You have to be tough in order

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AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; Mitchell and Goldney, *Don't Rest in Peace,* 53-54; City of Vancouver, "Recommendation - 2. Recreational Facilities: Raymur Place," Report to Council by the Standing Committee of Council on Social Services, May 3, 1973, in Council Meeting Minutes, May 15, 1973, 370-371, CVA, COV-S31-F113.07, Box: 025-B-03 folder 13; City of Vancouver, "Social Service and Health Matters – Consideration: 1. Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre 1978 Operating Budget," Manager's Report, February 3, 1978, in Council Meeting Minutes, February 7, 1978, 172-174, CVA, COV-S31-F128.04, Box 897-D-7 folder 2.

[142] Cain, interview by the author; [no title – brief on purpose/motivation for Ray-Cam recreation centre], CVA, UDC fonds, in AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14; "Raymur: An Outline of Some Reasons Why the Requested Spaces Are Needed," CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project Files, 600-D-6, file 1.

[143] Cain, interview by the author.

[144] Ray-Cam Co-operatives Association, "Application for: Local Employment Assistance Program," c. 1971-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14.

to survive. Because if you aren't, what is upper middle class or nearly middle class, there is no survival for you. People look at you as if you are not something which belongs in the universe at all, period…Society views you as being different. You live in a goldfish bowl, like you're some kind of an alien…It's always them us, us and them. Never a part of them. You know. Never part of the whole.[145]

These kinds of stigmatizing attitudes shaped the relationships between mothers at Raymur and many outside agencies. For instance, agency workers often dismissed the women's capabilities because of limiting ideas they held about single mothers and poverty. These workers, Evans detailed, "viewed me as an alien. Because of my address…. They assumed that I didn't have the decision making capability."[146] She explained that social workers "all stereotyped me. They really didn't expect much from me, o.k.? And never really listened to what I could do and what I needed."[147] Rather, Evans assessed:

> They were really into having a planned formula, a plan for my life. And not sitting down and listening to me saying hey really I'm an intelligent person and here is what I need to help me survive and here's what I need to get along and here's what I need to help me in this area. They were into saying…you really don't know what you're doing so sit down and you do it THIS way. Not even really knowing my family and not knowing anything about my circumstances. But knowing that they had a degree and knowing that they knew or thought that they knew what was best.[148]

Meg Stainsby believes that her mother Judith, one of the Raymur activists, "socially found [this stigma] hard … from not just living in Raymur but being a single mum on welfare, which

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[145] Evans (pseud.), interview, transcript in McCallan and Roback, *An Ordinary Life*, ii, vi. Because this interview is published under a pseudonym, I do not know if Liz Evans was one of the "Militant Mothers of Raymur." The transcript does not include specific mention of organizing and activism at Raymur. But it is clear from her interview that, like many of the "Militant Mothers," she went on to be an important community organizer and leader in the Downtown Eastside and elsewhere in the city after she moved out of Raymur. In the interview transcript, Evans also describes her history of poverty as a child and adult before moving to Vancouver, detailing, for example, her own personal history of homelessness, her involvement in street-based economies, struggles with addiction, and her experiences of housing. She also describes early encounters with racism as a young Indigenous girl, and her experiences of domestic and family violence as an adult. Certainly, as she recounts her life history, Evans points to several intersecting, cascading, and cyclical causes and consequences of her poverty, including settler colonialism, racism, gendered violence, homelessness, and addiction. But in sharing her history of poverty and street-based life, she also highlights her strength and resiliency and a fighting spirit. (Evans (pseud.), interview, transcript in McCallan and Roback, *An Ordinary Life*, iii-iv.
[146] Evans (pseud.), interview, transcript in McCallan and Roback, *An Ordinary Life*, vi.
[147] Evans (pseud.), interview, transcript in McCallan and Roback, *An Ordinary Life*, iii.
[148] Evans (pseud.), interview, transcript in McCallan and Roback, *An Ordinary Life*, iii.

was by definition a whole category of other things… She had no patience for people and their stereotypes at all."[149] Stainsby assessed that her mother "often felt patronized by agencies, social services … and when she wanted help it sort of came with a condescension that wasn't necessary, or appropriate. And she wouldn't take it. So she often just [didn't] ask for things, rather than have to put up with crap."[150] Certainly, dismissive attitudes, stereotypes, and paternalism of privileged outsiders infused the experiences of women and families who lived at Raymur, shaping the ways in which social welfare workers understood and interacted with them, and the ways in which the women themselves interacted (or not) with the system in turn.

But perhaps paradoxically, this paternalism, which might have been a barrier, instead became fuel for action. Evans explained how this stereotyping "made me a little angry and a little bitter, a whole lot resentful… [but] it strengthened me because it made me aggressive and you know, I would fight for things."[151] Truly, through their leadership and activism in and for their community, the Raymur Mothers challenged these pervasive social biases: they defied harmful stereotypes about single mothers on welfare as they actively pushed back against a paternalism tinged with both sexism and classism. Through their grassroots organizing and self-help principles, the Raymur Mothers challenged dismissive attitudes and top-down approaches to service provision. As they fought for and created services responsive to the needs and welfare of their community – the overpass, the food co-operative, the daycare, and the community centre – these women became leaders who asserted themselves and spoke up for their community in a context ripe with normalized paternalism.

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[149] Stainsby, interview by the author.
[150] Stainsby, interview by the author.
[151] Evans (pseud.), interview, transcript in McCallan and Roback, *An Ordinary Life*, ii.

Through their organizing, the Raymur Mothers grew and nurtured confidence to challenge inequity and stand up to power in various areas of their lives. As Meg Stainsby estimated, "I think it gave my mum the extra little bit of confidence to know that she'd helped effect change. 'Cause that overpass was built in record time, once they got their way."[152] And with each success, the women's confidence grew.[153] Carolyn Jerome explained the affect generated through their initial action on the tracks:

> The first time we went out [to physically block the tracks], we linked arms to stop that train…And what I remember when I think back on that first morning is the feel of the train on the ground as it came towards us. We had to stand our ground and stay there and hope this train was going to stop – and it did stop. We felt very empowered when we saw that we could actually do this.[154]

Like Jerome, Toni Graeme reflected upon the tracks protest as a powerful moment in the mothers' personal growth. She likewise explained that "it was very empowering…for women in the community to look at all those challenges they had with the three railways and the three levels of government and not be dissuaded. Not feel un-empowered, you know. And to say, well, 'We're gonna go for it. We're gonna go for it!'"[155] Graeme assessed that during the tracks protest, "taking care of our children" was an important part, with the "camaraderie in the group" also being significant. But she evaluated the long-term significance of their protest and subsequent organizing, for some, as lying in the fact that they challenged unequal power relations and the dismissive attitudes that operated to maintain them. "Taking on the powers that be who rule our lives," Graeme explained, had lasting impact: "Because when you're on

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[152] Stainsby, interview by the author.

[153] Cain, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author; Ray-Cam Co-operative Association, "Application for: Local Employment Assistance Program", c. 1971-75, CVA, UDC fonds, AM989-S3, Project files 600-D-5, file 14.

[154] Carolyn Jerome quoted in CCEC Admin, "Raymur Moms Features 14 Original Scores by Bill Sample," *CCEC Credit Union Blog,* http://www.ccec.bc.ca/blog/1026/raymur-moms-features-14-original-scores-by-bill-sample-ccec-member/, accessed March 21, 2017. See also Jerome in "Raymur Mothers Walking Tour," part 5.

[155] Graeme, interview by the author.

welfare, you are completely powerless. You have no status. None, whatsoever. So you have to go outside that lifestyle to build something…and say, 'We own this, not you. We own it. Fix it.'"[156] Seeing directly that they could effect change emboldened the mothers.[157] Graeme further explained: "When you start doing these things and they succeed, you know, then the fearlessness grows. You know, you think, like anything is possible! We could do anything, any of us!"[158] She assessed the cascading and enduring impact of the women's collective action: "Everybody has something to give. And I like seeing people do that. And I think it changes people. It change[s] individuals, it changes families, and it changes communities. And it spreads."[159]

These women continued to stand up for their communities, both in and beyond Raymur Place. Their fight for the pedestrian overpass, for instance, was not the only initiative these women undertook to make their neighbourhood safer for their children. Following from their fight to protect children on their way *to* school, these mothers also fought to safeguard their health and safety *at* school. One morning in mid-May 1971 – about six weeks after their victory in court regarding the railway tracks – a group of about fifteen Raymur mothers picketed the Seymour Elementary School portables to protest inadequate conditions there. They raised numerous concerns about the facilities and surrounding property, one of the most pressing being dangers related to heavy industrial traffic in the area, and another, the presence of only a single toilet between about sixty children and four teachers. The women's protest attained results: by day's end, the School Board had provided the mothers with a written proposal in which it vowed to implement structural upgrades to the portables and surrounding

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[156] Graeme, interview by the author.
[157] Cain, interview by the author; Graeme, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author.
[158] Graeme, interview by the author.
[159] Graeme, interview by the author.

property.[160] "It was solved by noon," Toni Graeme recalled: "It was amazing!"[161] Later that summer, a group of these mothers also protested in the streets and lobbied City Hall on another matter related to traffic safety – they successfully advocated for the installation of a pedestrian crossing light at Prior and Campbell Avenue, a busy route at the south end of the project that bore heavy traffic. This traffic light was necessary to ensure children could safely cross Prior Street to visit False Creek Park (now Strathcona Park), a neighbourhood green space where many children went to play sports and watch baseball games.[162]

As the Raymur Mothers changed their urban environment, they changed the dynamics of poverty in their families' and neighbours' lives. But they also fought inequity and poverty in a broader sense, too. Their spirit and tenacity have legacies that ripple into the present beyond the physical structures – the pedestrian overpass and Ray-Cam Community Centre – that serve as reminders of their activism, and which continue to serve the community today.

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[160] Children in grades one and two at Seymour School attended these temporary classrooms (portables) on Union Street and Venables, on land the School Board leased from the city. In addition to there being only one toilet between two classrooms, other concerns raised by the mothers included the following: the property was not fenced, even though it was in an area without sidewalks and with heavy truck traffic; the area lacked sufficient road signage and crosswalks that would indicate the presence of children to drivers; the property needed to be drained and leveled; and the property lacked a covered outdoor play area (for use during rainy periods, of which there are many in Vancouver). The mothers had previously written letters to the School Board and City Hall to make their concerns known, but as with the train tracks, letters failed to elicit attention or action. Following their picket at the portables, the School Board promised to grade the site; fence the yard; install a covering between the portables for shelter from the rain; and install an additional toilet. Graeme, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author; Toni Cowlishaw, Judy Stainsby, and Dorothy Cox (contacts), informational letter and invitation to a meeting to discuss the Seymour School portable units, 10 May 1971, CVA, AM1380, Margaret Mitchell fonds, 623-C-8, file 13; "Another Victory!!," *Georgia Straight,* Vol. 5, No. 166, May 14-18 1971, 3; "Mothers Seek Meeting," *Province,* May 11, 1971; Kathy Tait, "Raymur Moms Get School Board Action," *Province,* May 14, 1971; John Gibbs, "New Victory for Children Scored by Raymur Moms," *Vancouver Sun,* May 14, 1971.
[161] Graeme, interview by the author.
[162] As the mothers expected, there was a noted increase in traffic on this road following the opening of the first phase of the new Georgia Viaduct in summer 1971. Olive Strauman, comments (7 August 2009) on "Militant Mothers of Raymur," *Viaduct: Travels Through East Vancouver*, 25 June 2008, personal blog, https://viaducteast.wordpress.com/2008/06/25/militant-mothers-of-raymur/#comments, accessed 21 March 2017; Graeme, interview by the author; Cain, interview by the author; "Another Victory!!"; "Protest Jams Opening of New Viaduct," *Province,* June 29, 1971; "Raymur Mothers on Victory Road," *Vancouver Sun,* July 22, 1971; City of Vancouver, "Adoption of Minutes – 1. Pedestrian-Actuated Signal: Prior/Venables at Campbell," Minutes of Meeting of Official Traffic Commission, July 21, 1971, in Council Meeting Minutes, August 10, 1971, 499-500, CVA, COV-S31-F107.10, Box: 025-D-02 folder 05.

Significantly, through their strength and leadership, these women taught their children to not settle or compromise in the face of adversity.[163] For example, Liisa Atva expressed that "looking back now I can see that it certainly left you thinking that you could do something about [your] situation, you know."[164] Atva explained, moreover, that because of her mother's example, she "never thought as a woman that there wasn't something I couldn't do...or did I ever have any preconceived role, idea of what my role as a woman should be, never. Never."[165] Meg Stainsby also explained how her mother's example shaped her sense of boundless possibilities: "There was no overt, or even subtle, coding of expectations around our paths…. I credit my mum's wacky kind of activist confidence with the fact that it never occurred to me that I couldn't also do other things."[166] Jon Cain similarly indicated that these mothers helped to lessen and change poverty cycles within "their little circles... I'm sure lots of us are still living in poverty," he clarified, conscious of continued intergenerational poverty, "but they taught us not to accept that… [and that] even if you're living in poverty, you don't have to accept that it's something to be ashamed of."[167] In his own case, Cain described that he "honestly did not know that there were boundaries…to what I wanted. It was like, if I want to go to university, I'm going to university…if I can't afford it, I'm going to take multiple jobs because fighting is what we do. No one was handed anything. No one settled. We fought hard. And it was because our parents taught us: 'Don't settle. Fight hard. And keep going.'"[168]

Moreover, in teaching their children to question and challenge systems of power and inequity, these women raised a new generation of politically-engaged adults who hold

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[163] L. Atva, interview by the author; T. Atva, interview by the author; Cain, interview by the author.
[164] L. Atva, interview by the author.
[165] L. Atva, interview by the author,
[166] Stainsby, interview by the author.
[167] Cain, interview by the author.
[168] Cain, interview by the author.

community-focused social responsibility among their core values. Speaking about her mother, Stainsby explained that she "grew up understanding that it was your responsibility, if you could, to speak up…it's almost a moral thing, that it's not appropriate to not…I've always carried that sense of responsibility that one has to the rest of whatever one's community is, you know…So I think that's a legacy from her, for sure."[169] Similarly, Cain expressed that rather than being acknowledged for stopping the trains or building the co-op, these mothers would rather be recognized for having "raised kids that are caring, community members." The Raymur Mothers, Cain explained,

> created a legacy that has gone on…When you look at Vancouver's political scene, you can see so many people that came out of Raymur…The anti-poverty movement is populated with so many of us that grew up out of that. And I don't know a single one of my friends from that period who don't do something within their community…We truly are community members because we were taught if you want to be part of the community, you have to build the community. You can't just sit back and watch the community grow and pretend to be a part of that community. You have to actually be a catalyst within that community.[170]

As Cain further analyzed, the Raymur Mothers "created a set of kids that were empowered to question society…They created a longer legacy than just, you know, the overpass … and the community centre...They created generations of people…who are changing the world, you know. The ones that went into politics are continuously changing how the world sees people in poverty."[171]

Conclusions

In the early 1970s, this group of mothers who lived on the social, economic, and political margins of society – whose kids literally were on the wrong side of the tracks – built

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[169] Stainsby, interview by the author.
[170] Cain, interview by the author.
[171] Cain, interview by the author.

a community that ameliorated poverty and which changed the city in the process. Raymur

housing was one completed node in the City of Vancouver's halted postwar plan of urban

renewal. As part of the municipality's larger, but ultimately uncompleted, vision for East End

renewal, planners razed many blocks of houses (displacing thousands of people from their

homes in the process) to build a planned new neighbourhood that included new public

housing. And so, when Raymur Place opened in the Downtown Eastside in 1967, it created a

new concentration of women and families living in poverty. But while the housing was built,

the planned community services to support this demographic were not. In response to their

new geography, these mothers came together through shared concerns about the safety and

well-being of their children; they initiated a wave of change, their own grassroots movement.

Individual personalities likely also mattered – these were and are formidable women – but

their work was collective. These women turned an environment that was built to segregate

them into an opportunity. Together, they built the services for themselves and their neighbours

that should have been built by the state, but which were not.[172] Through their collective action,

these women developed a series of new services, culminating in a community centre that still

serves this community more than forty years later.[173]

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[172] I mean this in both a literal and figurative way. Of course, the actual physical construction and operation of these services ultimately were funded, at least in part, through state dollars, and the tenants received some assistance from a few community development workers (eg. Margaret Mitchell, Nora Curry) and other interested parties (including the architects of the Urban Design Centre), but it was the women's organizing that drove these projects and which secured the needed stated funding.

[173] Jon Cain identified the early 1980s as a turning point in the history of Raymur. He explained that the community centre remained an entirely co-operative facility (separate from the City) until the early 1980s, at which point the City Park's Board became involved in operations. Cain analyzed that this change marked the beginning of a shift in community dynamics at Raymur. (Cain, interview by the author.) Certainly, the history I have written about here marks a particular moment in time in the history of the Raymur community; additional research is needed to trace change over time with respect to community dynamics, form, and involvement from the 1980s to the present day. Some issues to consider, for example, are: the effects of Ray-Cam becoming jointly-managed between the Ray-Cam Co-operative and the Parks Board; impacts of the closure of the food co-operative store; changing demographics of residents of Raymur Housing (now Stamps Place); and, more recently, neighbourhood gentrification. Nonetheless, while the community at Raymur today is not the same as the community at Raymur in the 1970s, the Ray-Cam Co-operative Community Centre remains a central community

By centering the creative resistance, tenacity, and conviction of these mothers as they organized around and for family and community within their contexts of poverty, this chapter highlights some of the expansive means and possibilities through which marginalized individuals have actively fought against and transcended both literal and metaphorical boundaries of inequity. When these women stopped the trains and got that overpass built, they challenged those with power and authority and 'won.' But their success on the tracks achieved something broader, as well. Their direct action to protect their children by stopping the trains was a crucible for more expansive organizing to challenge social inequity. As these mother activists advocated for their and their neighbours' children, they remade their housing environment into something more than a roof over their heads. In refusing to settle for less than, the Raymur activists achieved something remarkable: they generated greater opportunities for low-income families as they transformed their housing project into both a home and a community. As Tina Atva affirmed: "I'm proud of what our mom did; I'm proud of where I grew up."[174]

As these women disrupted barriers that contributed to and shaped their marginalization, they also disrupted narratives about women, poverty, and the Downtown Eastside. From the tracks to the Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre, these women defied social stereotypes and expectations of poor single mothers, and empowered themselves in the process. Contrary to normalized privileged social expectations, the Raymur Mothers claimed power from within the margins to create change. As Jon Cain remarked, these mothers

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hub and gathering place, with a range of recreation and programming for the diverse people who live in the housing project and surrounding neighbourhood. In a momentous occasion, the Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre celebrated its fortieth anniversary in 2016 with a community event that brought together current and former community members and others from across the city to reminisce upon their history and to look forward to what the future holds: planning was then (and remains) underway for a renewed facility, one with a vision to continue to serve and nurture this community for generations to come.

[174] T. Atva, interview by the author.

"created change because change wasn't gonna be created for them."[175] Within their contexts

of social marginalization, these women stood up to power. As Meg Stainsby underlined, the

barriers the women overcame to establish the store, for example, were vast; the mothers "had

no property, they had no money, they couldn't sign for loans, they couldn't, you know,

negotiate things, and didn't have any business training and health and safety – all that stuff,

right? None of that."[176] And yet, she assessed, these women – her own mother included –

"made it happen by…just not letting it not happen. It's sheer perversity, sort of.

Assertiveness."[177] Reflecting upon the mothers' accomplishments, Tina Atva similarly

remarked that "it's pretty remarkable…when you think about it. People arranging that out of

nothing."[178] Truly, this story of the Raymur Mothers challenges particular stigmatizing

discourses about single mothers and poverty. Indeed, the mothers' story, as Stainsby assessed,

"lends…a positive lens to a group that are often seen as victims and powerless."[179] These

women were anything but. Through their organizing, the Raymur Mothers created a

community of leaders who went on to continually challenge injustice both from within and

from beyond the project's borders. Many of these women went on to be involved in other

forms of politics, some more institutionalized, and some even more grassroots.[180]

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[175] Cain, interview by the author.
[176] Stainsby, interview by the author.
[177] Stainsby, interview by the author.
[178] T. Atva, interview by the author.
[179] Stainsby, interview by the author.
[180] For instance, some of the women became involved in other local activist movements; party politics; government and policy work; community resource board work; tenants' associations; local community programs, and many other formal and informal means of community involvement. Some of these women continue to be involved in anti-poverty politics and activism in the Downtown Eastside today. Graeme, interview by the author; Cain, interview by the author; Stainsby, interview by the author; Carolyn Jerome, Vancouver Opportunities Program resignation letter, 8 July 1971, CVA, AM1380, Margaret Mitchell fonds, 623-C-8, file 15; "FAPG [Federated Anti-Poverty Groups] Promotes Civic Slate," *Help Yourself!,* [Vancouver Opportunities Program newsletter], Vol. 1, No. 8 (October-November 1974), 1, 7, Simon Fraser University Archives, Women's Bookstore Collection, F-111-7-2-27; Joan Morelli, "Daily Struggle and Resistance in the Downtown Eastside," *In Our Own Voices* (series)*, Vancouver Media Co-op (Local Independent News),* June 24, 2011, http://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/story/daily-struggle-and-resistance-downtown-eastside/7581; Jamie Lee

A compelling local example of how a diverse group of women experiencing poverty came together to confront inequity within their housing environment and empowered themselves in the process, this history of the "Militant Mothers of Raymur" broadens knowledge of community movements and anti-poverty politics, and deepens understanding of how social change occurs. Their story teaches that anti-poverty work happens on the ground, rooted in and at the local level. In their clear and decisive actions, the mothers' organizing also offers a clear lesson for politics and policy-making in the present. As Stainsby further analyzed, "it's…important for the rest of the city not to patronize [low-income mothers] as victims and think that they always need to have solutions coming from outside."[181] Although "a kind of a platitude," Stainsby explained, "a lot of times people are quite aware of what it is that they need and how to help fix their own problems. They don't need people coming in patting them on the head and saying: 'Little lady, it's okay, I'll do it for you,' you know."[182] Those living within circumstances of poverty understand far more clearly than outsiders the issues that shape their lives and of what solutions are needed. This history should give those in positions of power to make or enforce policy pause to consider how they might learn to listen more effectively to those with lived experience, and to better equip individuals and communities with the resources to enact their own visions for change.

Showcasing the power and strength of marginalized individuals and communities to defy external stereotypes and create change in their lives, this story of the Raymur Mothers and their activist mothering in and for the community has additional present day implications. First, their story demonstrates in concrete terms the power of housing. The security offered by

Hamilton, "Little Mountain Love-In," December 8, 2008, *Oldtown News*, http://downtowneastside.blogspot.ca/2008/12/little-mountain-love-in.html.
[181] Stainsby, interview by the author.
[182] Stainsby, interview by the author.

social housing was a critical foundation for the women's activism. Because they did not have to fight for survival on the most fundamental level, they were better positioned to fight for and advance change. This housing was inadequate in some ways, certainly, and in some ways further marginalized and segregated these families. But it was also in large part because of that housing that these women could more effectively fight for themselves, their families, and their community. Second, this history of the Raymur Mothers might provide some inspiration and hope to those currently fighting from the margins for equity and justice. When I asked her why she thought it was important that people learn about this history, Hilkka Atva explained that she hoped it might inspire and encourage women in similar circumstances to know that they too "can accomplish something when you get out and do something."[183] She hoped that when people learn about their story that they will think: "Yes, I can do that, too."[184]

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[183] H. Atva, interview by the author.
[184] H. Atva, interview by the author.

Mavis Hippolyte

Mavis Hippolyte was last seen around the end of October. At the beginning of January, she was carried out of her store on Hastings St. The coroner said that she had been dead for two or three weeks.

"Hello honey. How ya doin?" was one of the most familiar and sincere salutations heard on the streets of the Downtown Eastside. Known as "Mama" by many, Mavis's suddenly explosive and theatrical outbursts had been keeping Carnegie members awake for years – especially Conrad. She was reputed to be a "witch" (she put a curse on me once, but by the next day we were friends again.). She said she could smell a 'bad trick' and warned the young working women accordingly.

Resplendent in frills and curls, she swished and twirled the entire distance of the PNE[1] parade just last August, although her legs had been bothering her for over a year.

..On Dec. 3rd, Conrad came to the [Carnegie Community Centre] info desk and asked me to call Missing Persons because he thought she was dead in her store. He had notified the police but they were reluctant to enter her store on a "hunch", and merely sniffed the mailbox. The RCMP however said that they would enter the store if I met them there. John Turvey and I walked down there and froze for a half an hour, th[e]n had to come back to work. The police showed up at Carnegie later that night. They asked some questions about Mavis but nothing came of the search.

It was thought that Mavis was quite rich. Where her riches came from or where they will go no one knows for sure. Anyway she is gone now.[2]

<div align="right">

– Leith Harris, "In Memory of Mavis Hippolyte,"
Carnegie Crescent, c. January - February 1984

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The black-and-white photograph that accompanied this community memorial to Mavis Hippolyte offered a snapshot of a gentle summer afternoon, a quiet scene of relaxation and friendship, or maybe romance. In an open grassy spot, a slender Black woman – Mavis – lays

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[1] Pacific National Exhibition, the annual summer fair held at Vancouver's Hastings Park since 1910.

[2] Leith Harris, "In Memory of Mavis Hippolyte," *Carnegie Crescent,* c. January - February 1984, Vancouver Public Library Special Collections, SPE-NW-REF 790.068 C289. Mavis Hippolyte lived in a storefront in the Downtown Eastside, and barricaded herself in at night for safety. She had fallen ill, but was without a phone and unable to seek help. Her friends were worried when she went missing; they were, tragically, unsuccessful in their efforts to get the police to check on her in time. "Our Story," *Mavis McMullen Housing Society* (website), http://www.mavismcmullen.org/index-1.html.

on her side, perched up by a single arm, her cheek resting on her hand; a jacket laid out beneath

her protects her crisp white linen dress from the earth below. Mavis looks intently into the lens,

displaying only the slightest hint of a smile. Tucked in close behind Mavis sits a young woman,

her gaze angled downward and away from the camera. A wicker basket hints of a shared picnic

on a warm day, a peaceful moment in an urban park, a fleeting escape, I imagine, from the

concrete of the Downtown Eastside.

> *Mavis is dead.*
> *The police mourn her because she was an informer. They ignored reports that she had been missing for over a month and a half. She was also a hooker.*
> *There are a lot of stories about her, many of them negative. She was either from Barbados or Jamaica. Her age is unknown. As one person put it, "She was in the Downtown Eastside almost forever."*
> *I have three memories of Mavis.*
> *One is of her weeping quietly at a performance of "Boesman and Lena" in the Carnegie theatre. It was a play about South African blacks struggling to survive with dignity in a white-racist nation. I was told she had gone to every show.*
> *The other is of her flamboyant visit to the opening of the Remand Centre[3] on Cordova. She made some of the police uneasy with her comments about the facility, from the cost ($13,000,000) to its use of computers. At one point she told an officer, "Very pretty building when it's empty. You put people in here and you can really make them feel low."*
> *And the last memory I have of her was when she told me in great detail about the Diana Ross concert. "She was so beautiful!" Mavis exclaimed with gusto. "Diana Ross is some woman!"*
> *So was Mavis, no matter what they say about her.* [4]

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[3] A remand centre is a form of correctional facility used to house inmates awaiting trial. The Vancouver Remand Centre on Cordova Street opened in the early 1980s as a pre-trial centre or jail. The Government of British Columba closed it in 2002. The former remand centre has since been converted into low-income housing, including housing for at-risk youth, at-risk women, and others at risk of homelessness; this housing initiative was a collaborative project between BC Housing, the City of Vancouver, non-profit organizations (including the Bloom Group, formerly St. James' Social Services, whose history is a subject of this dissertation), and other private groups. Mike Howell, "Downtown Eastside: Former Jail Begins Transformation," *Vancouver Courier,* February 27, 2014, posted on *The Bloom Group* (website), https://www.thebloomgroup.org/2014/02/downtown-eastside-former-jail-begins-transformation-vancouver-courier/.
[4] James Gorman, "To The Editor," *Carnegie Crescent,* c. January –February 1984, Vancouver Public Library Special Collections, SPE-NW-REF 790.068 C289. The *Carnegie Crescent* preceded, and was replaced by, the *Carnegie Newsletter.*

Penned by her friends in the Downtown Eastside, these two memorials intimate that Mavis Hippoloyte's life and death were marked by structures of violence; they gesture toward the systemic violence of racism, poverty, and state indifference that she experienced during her life, including her final days, as well as during the weeks following her death. These memorials to Mavis are shaded by tragedy, and intimate anger at police (in)action surrounding her illness, but they also pay loving tribute to a woman who was a fixture in this community. They suggest a life and death shaped by social marginalization, yes, but also a vibrant personality and an active spirit of resistance in the face of everyday injustice. They tell us of a woman who, despite her circumstances, lived fully and cared for and supported her community in her own ways. They also underscore how her community, in turn, advocated and cared for her in her time of illness and subsequent death. Moreover, the care taken by these community members to write and publish these memorials in the *Carnegie Crescent,* a community newsletter, to collectively mourn and remember their friend also show that she was very much loved and missed. Mavis Hippolyte lived in precarity and her tragic end-of-life story was an outcome of that precarity, but she also lived a life in community.

The death of Mavis Hippolyte sparked action that continues to this day to maintain her memory. Propelled by her death, a group of women who lived and/or worked in the Downtown Eastside, and who were concerned about the housing needs of women in the community, formed a new grassroots organization with the mandate of creating permanent, safe, and affordable housing for women and their children. The Mavis McMullen Housing Society successfully opened their first building in the Downtown Eastside – Mavis McMullen Place – in February 1988, with thirty-four suites for low-income women, both elders and single

mothers with their children. A few short months after moving into the new building, tenant

Mary Cappell offered affirmative remarks about the home she was able to create there:

> [T]hrough my eyes, the housing project is going fine…The tenants seem to get along…Every month we get together for a monthly meeting, so if there is a disagreement over anything it can be very well cleared up… I have been very happy and content, living in my new apartment. I feel very much at home. Most people who know me also know that I'm always downtown a lot. Now I can spend a joyful day at home …. I wish Mavis/McMullen all the best through the years. I would also like to thank all those who made the housing project possible.[5]

Years later, Bharb Gudmundson, who had also been a resident at Mavis McMullen Place,

expressed similarly positive sentiments:

> I remember the feeling I got when we first moved in. The dinners in the common room. The excitement of meeting new neighbours that was happening. Those were very happy days. My son and I were moving from a condemned house that was literally falling apart into a beautiful two bed-room townhouse.[6]

More than thirty years after the Mavis McMullen Housing Society opened Mavis McMullen

Place, this organization continues to provide safe, secure, and affordable housing for women

in the Downtown Eastside. As they do so, they continue to honour the memory of Mavis

Hippolyte in both name and action.[7]

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[5] Mary Cappell, "Dear Carnegie Readers" ("Thanks, Mavis…"), *Carnegie Newsletter*, May 1, 1988.
[6] Bharb Gudmundson, "One Presentation to Council," *Carnegie Newsletter*, February 1, 2007.
[7] Those involved named their organization after Mavis Hippolyte and Helen McMullen (a UBC sociologist who researched women and poverty, and who was the first president of the housing society). "Home" and "Our Story," *Mavis McMullen Housing Society* (website), http://www.mavismcmullen.org.

Conclusions
Life and Love in the Paradox

[T]he hidden truth of the Downtown Eastside is that despite the poverty, criminalization, and trauma, we all care for each other and socialize with one another. Especially in the DTES Power of Women Group, where we are like one family and support the community on issues such as police brutality, child apprehensions, violence against women, and housing. Whether people are sober or high on drugs, we listen to each other's dreams and desires to make this neighbourhood a better place for ourselves. [1]

<div align="right">– Stella August, Power of Women Group, June 2011</div>

The heart of the Downtown Eastside (DTES) is home to survivors of the war on terror: the terror of poverty, physical and spiritual abuse, child apprehension, addictions, and residential schools – all of which quietly destroy the human spirit. Yet in spite of its image as the poorest urban postal code in the country, the DTES has the highest number of art galleries per capita in the country. This seeming contradiction becomes more understandable when one looks more deeply into the neighbourhood. The DTES is made up of the most extremes in our society – brutality and indifference on the one hand, and selfless generosity and compassion on the other hand. [2]

<div align="right">– Shurli Chan, Power of Women Group, June 2011</div>

Though the institutions that govern and rule the Downtown Eastside are ugly, as you can see, the residents of the Downtown Eastside have so much beauty and strength. [3]

<div align="right">– Madeline A., Power of Women Group, June 2011</div>

The Downtown Eastside of Vancouver is a space of paradox. These community

members from the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre's Power of Women Group –

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[1] Stella August with the Downtown Eastside Power of Women Group, "Residential Schools and My Journey to the Downtown Eastside," *In Our Own Voices* (series)*, Vancouver Media Co-op (Local Independent News)*, June 8, 2011, http://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/story/residential-schools-and-my-journey-downtown-eastside/7441.

[2] Shurli Chan with the Downtown Eastside Power of Women Group, "Mental Health and Police Violence," *In Our Own Voices* (series)*, Vancouver Media Co-op (Local Independent News)*, June 10, 2011, http://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/story/mental-health-and-police-violence/7450.

[3] Madeline A. with the Downtown Eastside Power of Women Group, "Childhood Abuse Brought Me to the Downtown Eastside," *In Our Own Voices* (series), June 6, 2011, *Vancouver Media Co-op (Local Independent News)*, http://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/story/childhood-abuse-brought-me-downtown-eastside/7424.

including Stella August, whose powerful voice opened, and now begin to close, this dissertation – point directly to this paradox.[4] They challenge the lens of pity through which many privileged outsiders view the neighbourhood by asking them to recognize the beauty that lies within, beyond, and despite the trauma. This history of gendered precarity and care politics in late-twentieth-century Vancouver helps to make sense of this paradox, the "seeming contradiction" that these women underscore. It does so through feminist analysis that offers a more nuanced way of thinking about and understanding this place and its people that both captures and allows for complexity. This complexity is revealed in the moments of love, compassion, and resilience in the face of adversity that this dissertation showcases. And through this complexity, space clears for hope.

Histories of trauma can serve a purpose. Here, using the Downtown Eastside as a case study, this research brings into focus structures of inequity and violence that precipitated and shaped gendered poverty, homelessness, and vulnerability to early death in late-twentieth-century urban Canada. By illuminating the historical processes that uphold these structures

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[4] Hosted at the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, the Power of Women Group is a grassroots "social justice collective and community action group" that seeks to empower women in the Downtown Eastside "to create social change in their lives and communities," and to educate and organize women on issues including, but not limited to, homelessness, violence, poverty, and colonialism. Their members are diverse, but they also share commonalities: they all live in extreme poverty; many are single mothers or have had their children apprehended because of poverty; most have chronic health issues (physical or mental); many have drug or alcohol addictions; many are survivors of trauma, violence, and abuse; many are, or have been, homeless; and many are Indigenous women, whose lives have been affected by racism and legacies of settler colonialism, including residential schools. ("Power of Women," *Downtown Eastside Women's Centre* (website)*,* last accessed 20 November 2020, https://dewc.ca/drop-in-centre/power-of-women-to-women; Debra Leo, Beatrice Starr, and Stella August (Downtown Eastside Power of Women Group), "Voices from the Downtown Eastside," in *Keetsahnak: Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters,* eds. Kim Anderson, Maria Campbell, and Christi Belcourt (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2018); Downtown Eastside Power of Women Group, "The Downtown Eastside Power of Women Group Presents 'In Our Own Voices' Writing Project!," *Vancouver Media Co-op,* May 30, 2011, http://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/newsrelease/7375.) To read Stella August's, Shurli Chan's, and Madeleine A.'s stories in full, as well as the stories of nine additional women from this group, see Downtown Eastside Power of Women Group (with writings by B., Charlene, Courtney, Debbie V., Diane, Joan Morelli, Karen Lahey, Madeline A., Patricia D. Haram, Pearly May, Shurli Chan, and Stella August, and edited by Harsha Walia, Nassim Elbardough, and Dawn Paley), *In Our Own Voices* (series)*,* June and July 2011, *Vancouver Media Co-op*, http://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/author/dtes-power-women-group.

they become less nebulous. Specifically, this research shows and names the work, often intersecting, of settler colonialism, institutionalized racism, patriarchy, and capitalism to create, shape, and entrench gendered precarity. This history reveals, for instance, that state policies and (in)actions, including insufficient welfare allowances, restricted or limited availability of social housing, and the criminalization of poverty and addiction often coalesced to entrench women's poverty. It also makes clear that gendered poverty was racialized in significant ways. It shows that historical legacies and continuing practices of settler state dispossession, colonial violence, and racism brought Indigenous women in increasing and disproportionate numbers into circumstances of precarity in Vancouver's urban core, where they were and are at risk of extreme poverty, poor health, and gendered, racialized violence. Indeed, this research shows that the history of gendered precarity in Vancouver is also, inextricably, a history of settler colonialism. Furthermore, by making bare both structures of poverty and poverty itself as structural violence, this research also denaturalizes the Downtown Eastside, and other neighbourhoods like it, as a geography of expected violence and poverty. It does so by tracing a longer pattern of women's precarity that shows that gendered inequity in the Downtown Eastside has a history. By showing this history of precarity as a symptom and consequence of these multiple and overlapping systems of inequity, this research interrupts ideas about inevitability: recognizing precarity as made means it can be unmade.

But this history offers much more than a genealogy of gendered precarity in urban Canada. Rather, this research calls for the inclusion of what I have called the politics of care within broader understandings of late-twentieth-century social movements. By connecting social work, philanthropy, Christian charity, and community-based labour to political

activism, this research re-directs attention from masculinized forms of activism and protest to better recognize the many and diverse ways in which women create change on the ground, in local, everyday settings. This local history demonstrates that one of the ways in which politics and activism manifested during this period was through women's voluntary care work outside the private home. During the late twentieth century, women of diverse racial and class backgrounds identified conditions of gendered and racialized precarity in the Downtown Eastside as a serious social problem, and responded by developing a series of related projects of care. While the women organizers and service providers in this history may not have necessarily or always understood themselves or their work as political, through their largely voluntary service and labour, they both responded to and advanced shifts in public consciousness about gender, Indigeneity, and marginalization as they enacted practices of social responsibility. Through their care work, these women advocated for the welfare, basic dignity, and equity of disenfranchised women, intervened where the state had not to critically meet women's most immediate material needs, and mitigated poverty, if only on an individual level.

One of the things that becomes clear by framing women's care work as activism is that what it means when someone takes the personal and turns it into the political is shaped by their class and cultural backgrounds: the intersectional positionalities of these actors shaped their work, their understanding of it, and their outcomes. Some of these women came to care work because of ideas of Christian service and duty, motivated by their faith perhaps, some through their professional experiences as public health nurses and social workers, some because of their understandings of their responsibilities as Indigenous people, and some through their own lived experiences as single mothers raising families in poverty. These

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diverse women sometimes worked collaboratively, showing that cross-cultural collaboration was critical in the development of a service infrastructure in late-twentieth-century Vancouver. Nevertheless, their different class and cultural backgrounds meant that they also had divergent understandings of what it was they were doing and why their work mattered. Certainly, this history shows that settler women's responses to gendered precarity were not the same as Indigenous women's responses, even when they overlapped, because these women had different frameworks for understanding home, homelessness, and community. Furthermore, this history shows that women's economic circumstances shaped their activism; low-income women's own lived and living experiences of poverty uniquely informed their motivations, understanding of, and knowledge about how to best address social marginalization. Collectively, the different examples of care politics showcased in this history show that neither the personal nor the political are neutral terms; women's positionality informs the shape of activism itself.

In shared, overlapping, and distinct ways, these diverse women responded in important ways to poverty and homelessness. However, their organizing had complicated, even contradictory, outcomes: this history shows that care work mitigated but also sustained inequity. These women created essential new services that have stayed in the neighbourhood. But that in turn is what, at least in part, the neighbourhood became. Indeed, this research unveils the process through which social services, including shelters and drop-ins, became an engrained part of the neighbourhood's physical and social landscape; it shows how the Downtown Eastside became a space of service provision. The continued existence and need for such services indicates that these women ultimately fell short: they did critical work to respond to the conditions and consequences of women's poverty, but they did not solve its

causes. We might, then, understand that women's care work institutionalized social services in the neighbourhood and thus, in effect, entrenched spatialized poverty. Limited in material ways, these women did not change the structures of poverty, and perhaps even helped those structures to endure, if inadvertently.

However, that inequity endures – reflected in part by this geography of social services – is not a criticism of these services, nor of the frontline workers, activists, and organizations who operated and still operate them. This history is unequivocally not an argument against social services, including shelters and drop-ins, but rather, an argument for simultaneous action to dismantle the complex systems that create and maintain poverty. Certainly, while these organizers were unable to change the structures that brought women, particularly Indigenous women, into precarity in Downtown Eastside Vancouver, they also did not think that was what they were doing; rather, they aimed to do what they could while working from within these structures. These women recognized an urgent need for action and then did what they could from within their own limited means to address issues on which the state had failed to adequately respond. But while these women's projects of care met a critical need, these organizers also never saw them as ultimate solutions to poverty and homelessness. Rather, they understood their projects as emergency measures; that is, they saw their work as a first step in a larger and longer vision for change. In fact, these women called for broader action, such as in the arenas of welfare policy reform and in the creation of more social housing. Certainly, one can imagine that these women would be appalled to learn that these conditions of precarity endure, and thus, that the very kinds of services they spearheaded were not ephemeral, but rather, remain essential. Ultimately, though, the state did not pick up the solutions they put forward, such as by investing in social housing on the scale necessary. And

so, another lesson – if an obvious one – of this history is that frontline social services will remain essential until the underlying structures of inequity that create and perpetuate gendered, racialized poverty are exposed, named, and then, most critically, addressed with concrete measures. This research shows, moreover, that this process cannot be the work of concerned individuals or individual organizations on their own, but requires large-scale political will and capital investment.

Most concretely, this research supports activists' demands for increased state investment in safe and affordable housing because it shows that housing both constricted and shaped people's social-economic possibilities, including their material capacity to create change in their own lives. Speaking in 2018, then as the British Columbia Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, Shane Simpson – who grew up at Raymur during the period of the Militant Mothers' activism and community building – explained that "[p]eople can't escape poverty without a safe place to live. Providing healthy, supportive homes to people in need is a key part of the work we're doing to give people the opportunity to build a better life for themselves."[5] This research validates with historical evidence this argument and, indeed, the principal advanced for decades by anti-poverty activists of "Housing First." It does so, first, by revealing a relationship between precarious housing, unhoused homelessness, gendered violence, ill health, and enduring poverty. In showing this relationship, this research demonstrates that a more nuanced definition of homelessness that includes the precariously housed is necessary to understand the structural and social factors that underlie women's historical and ongoing risk in this settler city. Second, this history demonstrates that secure

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[5] Shane Simpson quoted in "Province Provides Better Housing as City Closes Regent Hotel," news release, Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, June 20, 2018, https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/2018-06-20-regent-hotel-mah-news-release.pdf.

housing makes different outcomes possible: specifically, the story of the Raymur Mothers offers an historical example of what can be possible when people have secure housing. Their story shows what people are capable of when they do not have to fight for the most basic level of security and stability. Of course, the issues around which the mothers at Raymur organized shows that social housing built by governments in the 1960s also did not fully meet women's and families' housing needs. Certainly, the story of the Raymur Mothers shows that living in social housing had its own set of challenges, and in some ways imposed further inequity. But this housing also provided a level of security from which these women could organize to transform their housing project into a home and a community, to actively and demonstrably challenge stereotypes about women, welfare, and poverty, and for some at least, to move out of poverty. The juxtaposition of the history of women's organizing and activism at Raymur Place with other women's parallel experiences with precarious housing and unhoused homelessness should make abundantly clear the social value of greater state investment in housing.

But this is not the only critical takeaway from this history. Perhaps most significantly, this local history of women's activism shows that social change happens most when women are set up to create change in their own lives. This research shows us women who worked for decades through a helping model of service to support women in the Downtown Eastside. Their organizations included White women, Indigenous women, and other women of colour. However, the helping model of care developed by these actors, most of whom occupied more privileged social positions than the women they sought to help, was inherently limited. In contrast, the story of the activist mothers at Raymur housing shows that what works best is when marginalized women are empowered and equipped with the resources in place to do the

work of creating change themselves. The grassroots programs that these low-income single mothers developed, from the bottom up, differed in important ways from the services developed by more economically privileged women. In contrast to those other helping models of service delivery, the Raymur activists' programs reflected and embodied principles of self-help, with their programs designed and delivered by and for their own community members. Their story shows that people do not need outsiders to solve their problems: people know what they and their communities need, and so should not have to fight for resources to realize their ideas. Placed alongside these other parallel models of care politics, the Raymur Mothers' story shows that an empowerment model, one which puts power in the hands of the people, is what is most effective.

Finally, there is yet an additional way to interpret this history of women's care work in Downtown Eastside Vancouver. Through their care politics, women changed the shape of the city itself. These diverse organizers created new spaces for women and families in a neighbourhood that had originally been built by and for men, as they responded to a change in the gendered landscape of poverty from one that had been (or at least had been viewed by outsiders as) almost exclusively single and male. Significantly, the new geography these women created was transformative on both a physical and metaphysical plane: in changing the physical landscape of the Downtown Eastside, these women changed its social environment, too. As women engaged in care work in late-twentieth-century Vancouver, they laid the foundation for a community-oriented neighbourhood. By creating new spaces in the Downtown Eastside – from shelters and drop-ins to co-operative stores and community centres – these women transformed the city to be more responsive to the needs of its most marginalized. From the ground up, women produced place, and through place, built

community. Thus, while this story is, in part, a history of how this neighbourhood became a place of institutionalized social services and entrenched poverty, it is also a history of how the Downtown Eastside simultaneously became a community. The women of various class and cultural backgrounds who engaged in care politics in Downtown Eastside Vancouver did not end poverty, or violence against women living in poverty, but they carved out space for women and families in a neighbourhood dominated by men, acknowledged and shaped the neighbourhood as diasporic Indigenous space, and helped to create a strong, resilient, activist community in the process.

Ultimately, then, this dissertation is not about trauma, but about the richness of the human spirit. This history of gendered precarity and the politics of care looks to what lies within and between the spaces of this seeming contradiction to reveal something powerful: the origins of a strong community amid inequity. This community and community power is a legacy of women's care politics in late-twentieth-century Vancouver that continues to support women and families in the Downtown Eastside today. Although still very much a space of extreme poverty, the Downtown Eastside is an area that inspires fierce loyalty and continued social activism among its community members. Women in the Downtown Eastside continue to be caretakers of their community, living there and doing this work today and every day. These women have been, and continue to be, activists working for justice and change. They continue to challenge the colonial, racist, capitalist, and patriarchal logics that work to normalize injustice and institutional neglect, make visible that which these systems strive to render invisible, and demand justice and systemic change for those who continue to live within precarity today. And these women support one another in the everyday, within and as part of a community that continues to nurture and sustain love and hope in the margins. This history,

then, may begin in heartbreak, but I hope that it may offer some inspiration to those who continue to do this community caretaking today, incite those in positions of privilege to re-examine held narratives about women and poverty, and, in doing these two things, usefully contribute to the ongoing work of all those who seek to transit to a more just future. For as much as this history is one of tragedy, trauma, and loss, it is, at its core, a history of survival, resilience, strength, love, and above all, possibility.

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