Land is Home: Healing the Narrative of “Indigenous Homelessness” in Yellowknife

by

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi’kmaq’i,
the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi’kmaq.
We are all Treaty people.

Contents

Abstract

“Indigenous Homelessness” in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, stemmed from a settler colonial legacy, where processes of urbanization and housing policies have disrupted the connection between people and the land. This thesis develops a series of related design interventions, arguing that ‘home’ and ‘land’ are inseparable and analogous spatial concepts. It illustrates the tangible geographical significance of “home” within the Dene people. The thesis reframes decolonization within the framework of pattern language, presenting it as a transformative process rooted in the land. While dismantling colonial structures within architectural discourse, patterns foster a perspective that views home as open to reimagination and land as expansive. The tapestry of patterns includes healing, meeting, making, pausing, harvesting, and retreating. In rebuilding the notion of “home” through specific lived experiences and traditional practices, the thesis ultimately points to a movement of resurgence rooted in the idea of land not as property but as a healing ground.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to my friend, Larry Jones, whose invaluable role as an observer with profound understanding and knowledge of the North has greatly supported my thesis through informal conversations and emails we have shared. Larry, your stories, insights, and expertise have enriched my understanding throughout my thesis journey. Being able to listen to your guidance, receiving warm invitations to share informal stories, and your help in finding the burning questions have been immensely appreciated. Thank you for being an extraordinary friend and mentorship.

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Finally, I would like to thanks my friends and faculty members at Dal. The journey through architecture school has been a remarkable experience, filled with memories that I cherish. It is the friendships and support that have made this journey truly enjoyable and rewarding.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Where to start ?

I want to acknowledge my position within this thesis, as my presence is integral to a place that I have been privileged to live and be nurtured by for more than half of my life. I was born and raised in Vietnam, a place I consider my homeland. I moved to Canada and reside in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories (NWT), on the land that forms part of Chief Drygeese Territory. My sense of connection to this place has stretched across provinces and oceans, yet its always continues to welcome me home. While Yellowknife is where I call home, it is not my homeland.

This illustration marks the beginning of my thesis journey, prompting reflection on the concept of home. It relate my birthplace in Vietnam juxtaposed with my home in Yellowknife, NT, CA, illustrating that home transcends borders, nations, and singular identities.

Yellowknife, founded in 1934 with aspirations of gold mining, evolved into the capital of the NWT in 1967. Initially, the term ‘homelessness’ was virtually nonexistent early, with visible signs of homelessness in the NWT emerging as a relatively recent phenomenon in the late 20th century. Today, as I walk

down the main street of Yellowknife, I observe significant changes. Downtown Yellowknife is simply known as a place for a local mall, government buildings, and businesses. People hang out on the steps of the mall, selling artwork or carvings, finding spots on benches to read newspapers, frequently using the library, and wandering the streets. As I witness the streets and public spaces, I begin to understand how the layered nature of this place continues to contribute to the present-day phenomenon of ‘homelessness.’

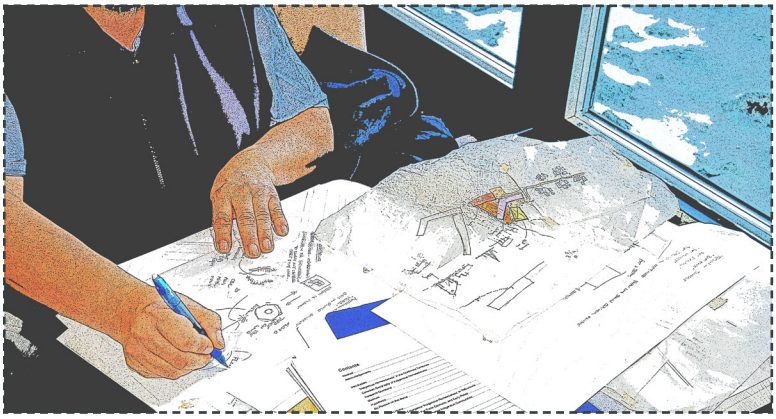
Capturing the essence of my hometown during my work term, this illustration reflects my daily observations of Yellowknife Downtown streets. It offers a glimpse into the dynamic nature of public street and people on street.

The essence of home resonates deeply within me, leading burning questions:

- How can an Indigenous person be without a home when the land is home ?
- What is home ?
- What tensions exist between urban and remote community settings for one experiencing homlessness / houselessness in the North ?
- How can the field of architecture serve as a design process to foster meaningful engagement and constructive relationships between settler/Indigneous and communities ?

Coffee with Larry

I met Larry through a casual conversation as friends at a coffee shop, where he identified himself as Dene-Métis born in his homeland of Dënéndeh. Larry's extensive experience spanning three decades in housing, including direct involvement with the Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition—a non-profit organization—provided valuable insight. Larry and I shared conversations about home, attempting to define its essence. Larry shared visions of reality and the history of the North.



Larry and I engage in thought-provoking discussions over coffee, exploring into topics such as architecture, northern living, housing, community dynamics, and the northern indigenous perspective on the concept of home.

Through our discussions, I began to perceive a gap in my understanding of my own sense of place, particularly within the home of Yellowknives Dene (T'atsaot'ine), situated on the northeast shores of Tinde'e - "Great Lake" and Weledeh Cho - "Inconnu River" (Marsh 2006). Home extends beyond mere physicality, existing as a profound vision.

We shared a dream, a vision rooted in land. As part of this thesis, we did not directly engage with the 'homelessness' population, citizens, community, animals, fish, trees, grasses, or listen to what the grand rocks have to share.

While I may not have insight into the dreams of others, this illustration show the act of pursuing hope as a proactive step towards future aspirations.

Everyone has their dreams, and we do not know what they are; here, we can only rely on the knowledge passed down by traditional families about the land and make an effort. We call it a dream, but we do not know what the dream is. Here, we stand at the edge of a great rock, staring into the abyss, yet able to call that dream of a better future and aspirations to see land as home to heals.

Dene

To understand the scope of my research, it is crucial to contextualize the geographical and cultural landscape in which it takes place, particularly its impact on individuals identifying as the Dene First Nation, in the territories of the Tłįchǫ (Dogrib) and T'atsaot'ine (Yellowknives) Dene communities. In a larger context, Dene is often translated as *people.* The term "Dene" and its varied connotations depending on context. Linguistically, Dene speakers belong to the Athapaskan family, which spans across northern Canada, interior Alaska, and parts of the southwestern United States, encompassing groups like the Navajo and Apache. Specifically, within Canada, "*Dene*" refers to Athapaskan peoples residing in eastern Alaska, the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and northern regions of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia (Walsh 2017). The term also encompasses the political entity known as the Dene Nation, representing the largest linguistic group in North America, with number peoples in Canada identifying as Dene (Walsh 2017). Despite its varied interpretations, "*Dene*" often embodies the collective identity of its people, signifying a shared heritage and sense of belonging.

This book inspire to my thesis research as settler (Christensen 2017)

Defining Homelessness

It is challenging for me to borrow the term 'homelessness' or 'houselessness' or 'unhoused' among Indigenous Peoples because it encompasses a complex concept. Along the spectrum, houselessness typically refers to a state without shelter, where one lacks a roof over their head and may live on the streets or in emergency shelters, without housing of their own. Indigenous populations in the NWT, like others across the country, experience houselessness /

homelessness along a spectrum with temporal and spatial dimensions. Homelessness cycles over time and space and cannot be understood solely as a fixed state; it is complex and extends beyond what is immediately visible or acute (Christensen 2017).

The term “Indigenous Homelessness,” as understood in Julia Christensen’s book “No Home in Homeland,” refers that Indigenous individuals living homeless experience “a doubling of its effects” (Christensen 2017, 26) .

In the book, Paul, a Dene knowledge keeper, emphasized that the term “homelessness” does not align with the experiences of the Dene and is an external concept. He cautioned against the use of a single term with significant cultural and societal connotations to categorize diverse states of being and experiences within specific research and policy contexts. Defining homelessness is complex as it encompasses emotional and psychological aspects associated with “home,” making a universal definition challenging. While often defined as lacking shelter, this overlooks its sensibility, spectrum-based nature involving gradual or sudden transitions and ontological and spiritual dimensions of home. “Indigenous Homelessness” in the context of settler colonialism presents a paradox, involving both a collective “disbelonging” due to settler impacts and personal experiences of insecure shelter. The complexity of “Indigenous Homelessness,” shaped by settler colonialism, racial differences, addiction, and mental health, poses a challenge to oversimplification, as it refrains from categorizing all homeless individuals universally under the label “homeless” (Christensen 2017).

Canada's colonial history cannot be erased, *The Scream,* 1893 (Monkman 2017)

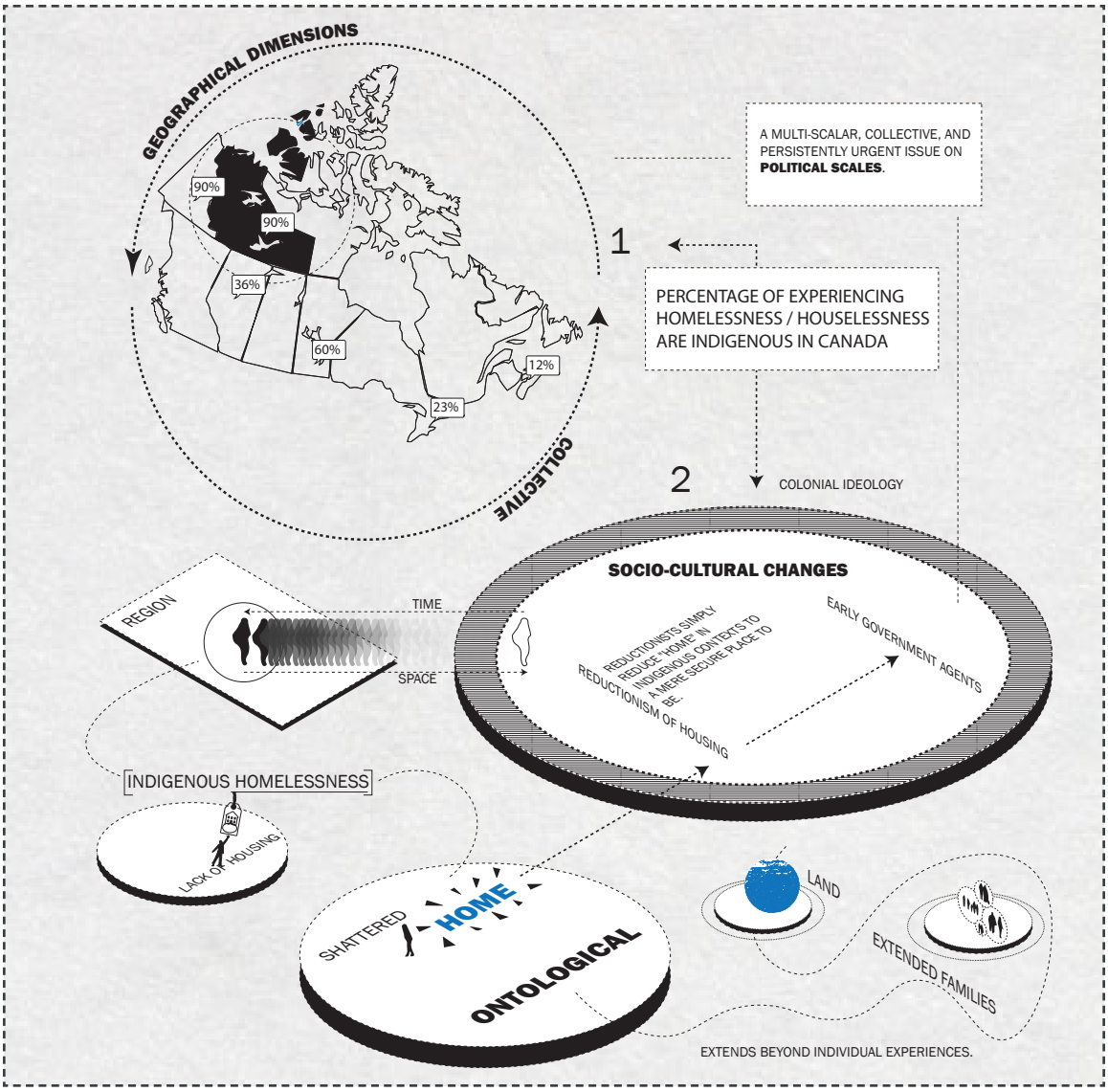
"Indigenous Homelessness" in Canada

In the Canadian context today, "Indigenous homelessness" is deeply rooted in the legacy of colonialism, involving complex harms from Residential schools, the child and family services system, displacement from traditional lands, imposition of Western knowledge and values, marginalization of Indigenous knowledge and traditions, and social determinants of health. This has significantly worsened the health and well-being of Indigenous people compared to the non-Indigenous population in Canada, profoundly impacting their families, communities, and cultural heritage (Christensen 2011).

This phenomenon is linked to what is known as "Spiritual Homelessness," comprising two primary aspects. Firstly, it involves the loss of connection to one's community, heritage, cultural practices, and traditional knowledge, impacting self-esteem. Secondly, it consitutes separation from traditional lands, family, and kinship networks, negatively affecting one's sense of identity and overall well-being (Memmott and Chambers 2010).

Christensen argues for the importance of examining "Indigenous Homelessness" from a geographical perspective, considering how it interacts across time and space and how structural factors intersect with individual experiences. Emphasizing the profound impact of colonial history on the spatial organization of northern communities, economic opportunities, and the intergenerational effects of colonialism (Christensen 2017).

The issue of "Indigenous Homelessness" is complex, rooted in specific geographical place contexts, intertwined with local histories, economies, cultures, and social dynamics,



This illustrative diagram visually depicts the geography of 'Indigenous Homelessness' in Canada, highlighting the structural factors that fracture the dimensions of home and impact communities on a collective geographical scale.

and influenced by broader regional, national, and global factors, often associated with mental illness and addiction (Christensen 2011).

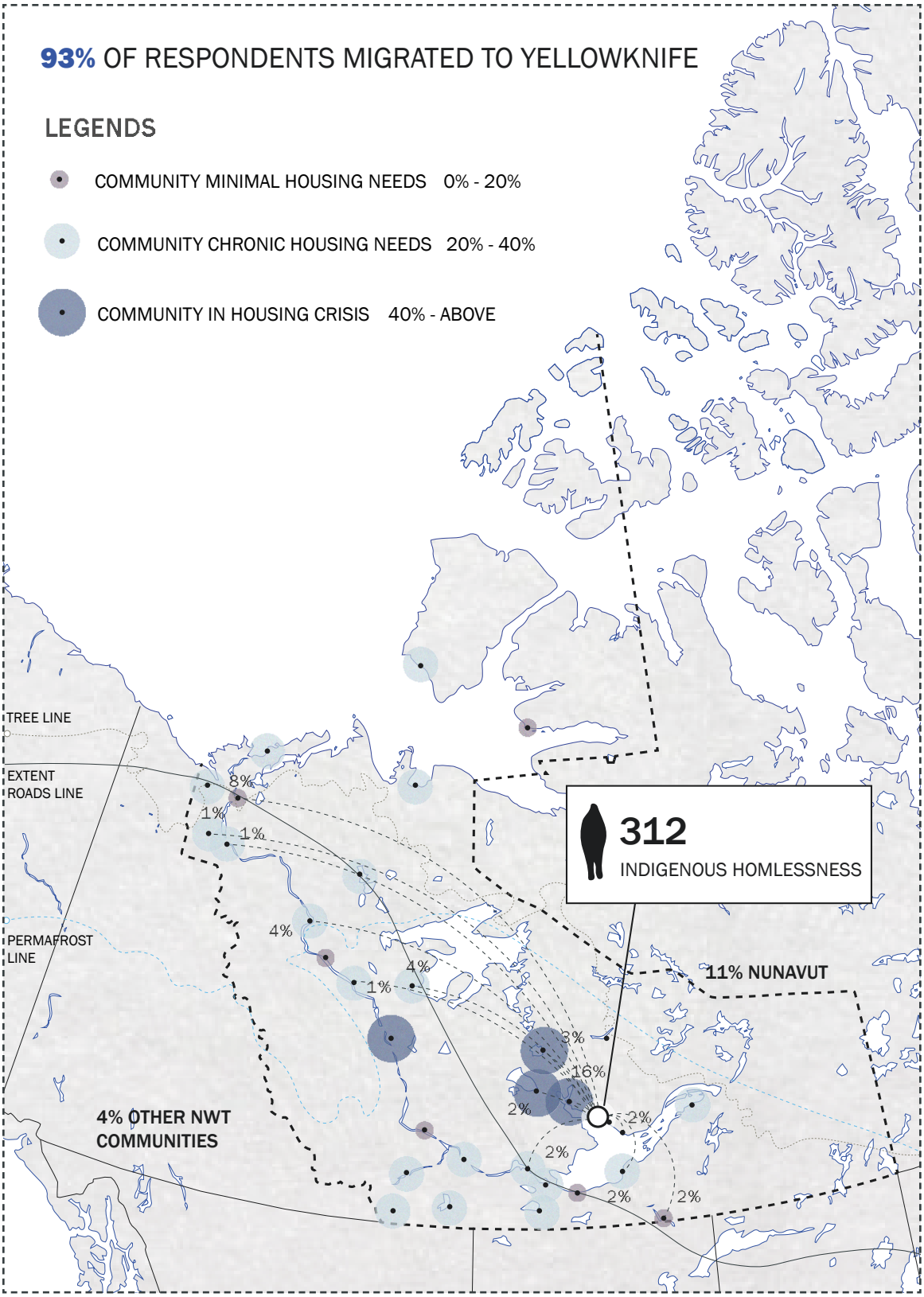
Understanding "Indigenous Homelessness" demands an acknowledgment of its historical and (neo)colonial context, marked by government paternalism, rapid socio-cultural changes, social welfare programs, reliance on government

support for housing, and uneven economic development. (Christensen 2017).

Due to my thesis's content limitations, I can only touch on a small aspect of this broad topic and acknowledge the critical spatial impact of Northern Housing policy and historical spatial forces in the unique context of Canadian Northern geography.

Geography of "Indigenous Homelessness"

Indigenous communities in Canada, comprising First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, constitute a significant portion of the population, with approximately 1,400,685 Indigenous individuals, accounting for 4.3% of the total population (Statistics Canada 2011). Persistently, Indigenous Peoples face a disproportionate burden of unhomely and housing due to a combination of historical legacies and ongoing challenges. In urban areas, "Indigenous Homelessness" represents a substantial percentage of the overall homelessness population. Research reveals that "Indigenous Homelessness" in major cities varies from 20% to 50%, with some reports suggesting an even wider range of 11% to 96%. Shockingly, in certain Canadian cities such as Yellowknife or Whitehorse, Indigenous Peoples make up as much as 90% of the homelessness population (The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness 2021). In Thunder Bay and Winnipeg, an average of 50% of those experiencing homelessness/houselessness are Indigenous. Even in Toronto, Canada's largest urban center, Indigenous Peoples account for approximately 23% of those facing homelessness/houselessness, despite constituting only about 0.8% of the total population. To put this in perspective, one study revealed that 1 in 15 Indigenous Peoples in urban



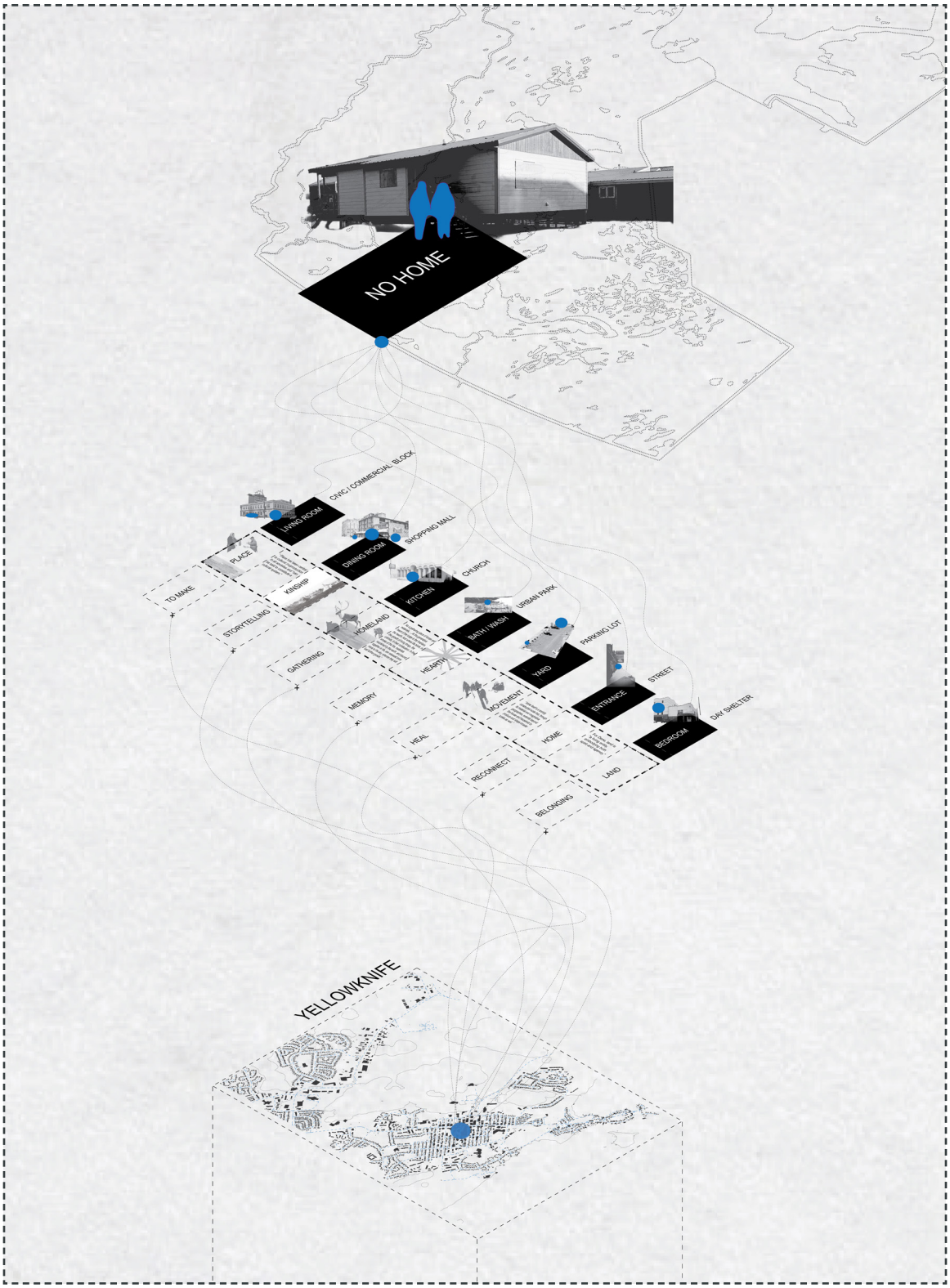
Migration: Mapping the Movement from NWT Communities to Yellowknife in Search of Support and Social Services Migration: Mapping the Movement from Northwest Territories Communities to Yellowknife in Search of Support and Social Services.

centers experiences homelessness, in stark contrast to 1 in 128 for the general population. This stark disparity highlights the pressing need to mitigate “Indigenous Homelessness”, making urban Indigenous peoples eight times more likely to experience homelessness/houselessness (The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness 2021).

Understanding “Indigenous Homelessness” is indispensable in the Canadian context today, as it embodies complex dimensions that shape its geographical impact and undermine the very essence of home, disrupted this connection, intertwining home with land. Crucially, the Western initiative has reduced housing to an oversimplification of the Indigenous home throughout history, overlooking its existential nature (Geisler and George 2006). “Indigenous Homelessness” today continues to manifest in its socio-cultural nature within the ongoing framework of colonialism, highlighting it as a persistent and pressing political issue.

Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that acknowledging the failures in the colonial legacy and housing policies in the North is perpetuated. Viewing ‘land is home,’ this thesis initiates a discourse on decolonization, emphasizing openness as moments to reflect ‘home’ and reform in the realm of structural decisions. In this paradigm shift, the reevaluation of political, social, economic, and judicial structures is approached from a decolonial mindset centered on the concept of ‘home’. A new framework has been proposed to reconceptualize ‘home’, viewing it not only as a physical space but also as an ontological sense of belonging, aimed at reimagining Yellowknife’s as a place for healing.



This illustration captures the spatial dynamics of accessing dwellings through public areas, highlighting the unhomely experience within a space. It portrays a passage that alienates those, using public spaces for domestic needs. The house ideal transforms into a life patch connecting the street, emphasizing the concept of making a home in the world.

Chapter 2: No Home

Urbanization and Emergence "Indigenous Homelessness" in Yellowknife

Yellowknife's Centre Square Mall (Williams 2021)

In the postwar era, Northern Canada experienced a significant wave of urbanization, particularly in towns like Yellowknife. This urbanization aimed to improve living standards in northern communities and was driven by investments in non-renewable resource development like gold mines, diamond mining, and oil and gas industries (Santarossa 2004), military activities, and administrative functions (Christensen 2017). Yellowknife's status as the capital city in 1967 solidified its role in northern development and governance but also created an uneven economy geography landscape. While Yellowknife prospered due to resource development and administration, many settlements around former trading posts and Distant Early Warning Line (DEW Line) stations had limited local employment opportunities, leaving community areas without a strong economic foundation (Christensen 2017).

Despite the territory's economic upswing, which doubled its gross domestic product, there was a concurrent increase in shelter use and demand for social services. Federal and territorial government support for social housing declined, contributing to these challenges. In Yellowknife, competition for private housing intensified, especially with an influx of workers. Although government-subsidized housing remained crucial, regional centers faced limited private housing options, intensifying the demand. The late 1990s saw the emergence of social crises, marked by a surge in emergency shelter usage (Christensen 2011). In Canada, Indigenous individuals migrating for better opportunities encountered

This historical collage portrays Yellowknife's evolution as a city, capturing its role as a catalyst for various events and illustrating the intersection of geography, opportunity, and the social phenomenon of 'Indigenous Homelessness'.

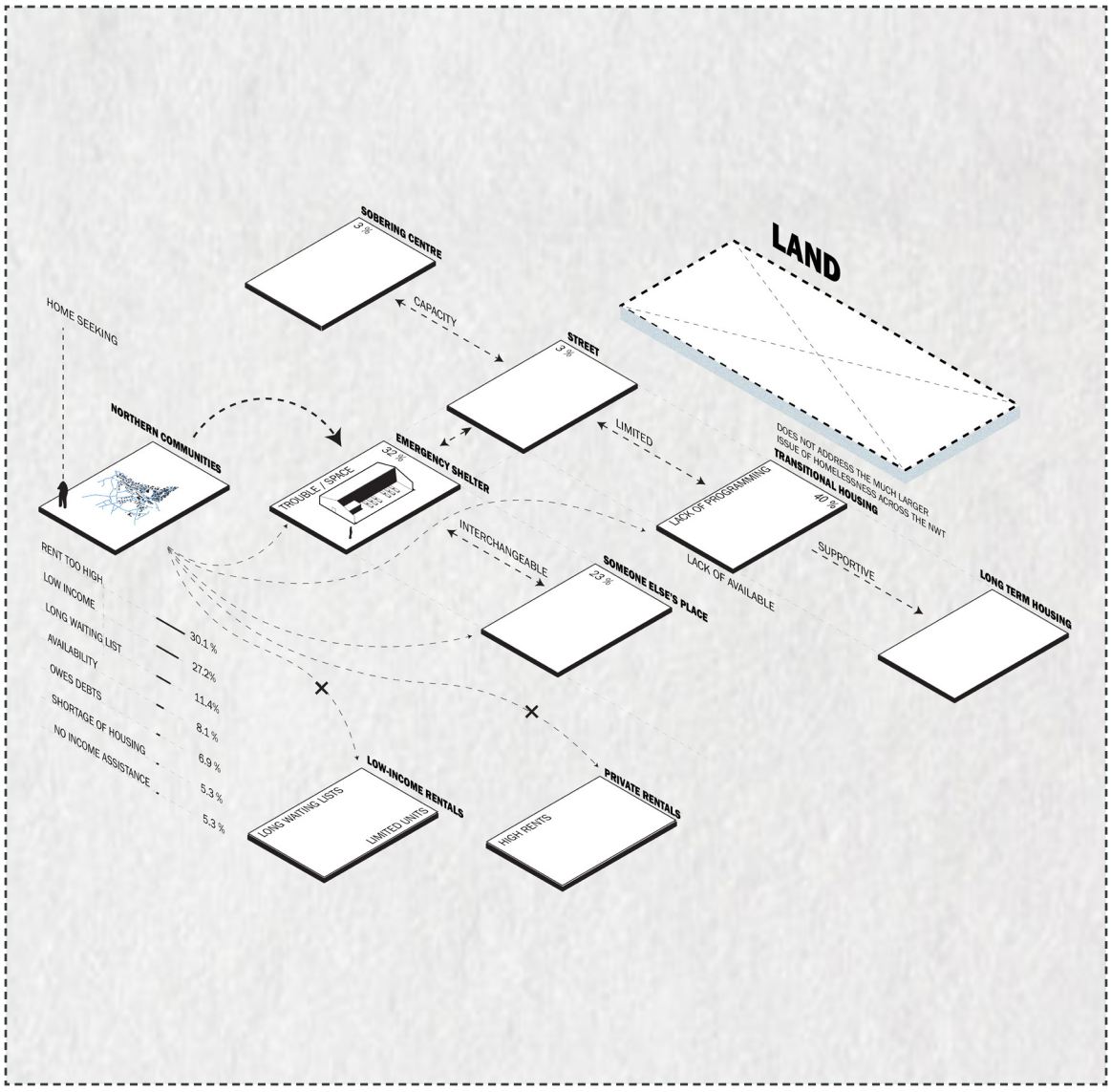
employment difficulties due to lower education levels and occupational prestige, resulting in high unemployment rates compounded and lack of support networks in urban areas (Brandon and Peters 2014).

In Yellowknife, this led to a homelessness rate as high as 92% among Indigenous individuals by 2021. The Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition estimated 936 people experienced homelessness in 2008, constituting 5% of the city's population. Yellowknife became a hub for government-operated emergency shelters, with the Salvation Army playing a key role (City of Yellowknife 2021). Today, the city offers various shelters and transitional housing programs, addressing sheltering in the NWT.

Yellowknife Emergency State

Yellowknife has emerged as the main hub for development in the territory, serving as a central location for health and social services, post-secondary education, and various aspects of the criminal justice system (Christensen 2017). Additionally, it provides specialized support resources for "Indigenous Homelessness", including emergency shelters.

Bailey House, Yellowknife transitional home for men located above the Salvation Army Thrift Store in Yellowknife (CBC News 2016)



Visualizing the pathway to shelter and support in Yellowknife: A diagram illustrating the journey of accessing resources for those in need.

The first shelter in Yellowknife was operated out of town by Pastor Gordon and Ruth Bailey. In the late 1970s, the territorial Department of Health and Social Services reached out to the Salvation Army to see whether it would take on the provision of shelter services in Yellowknife. The Salvation Army had not previously been active in the city but decided to open a small mission in 1982. In the late 1990s, a new, larger facility was built to house the growing shelter needs in city. Today, the Salvation Army operates as a church,

Finding refuge at Yellowknife's Salvation Army Citadel, a beacon of hope for those in need of emergency shelter (NNSL 2021)

shelter, and halfway house, as well as offering withdrawal management services. The Salvation Army imposes a three-year limit for transitional housing clients because of funding limitations. Yet, Alison McAteer House provides shelter for women and their children who are victims of family violence. Boys over the age of fifteen are ineligible to stay with their mothers in the shelter and some end up sleeping on friends' couches or at the SideDoor Youth Centre, which offers an overnight drop-in program on an emergency basis. The expansion of the Centre for Northern Families not only encompasses the establishment of an emergency shelter for women but also incorporates family-oriented programs such as daycare services and educational classes catering to new and expectant mothers (CBC News 2016). Today, Yellowknife continues to face challenges with the peaking number of "Indigenous Homelessness" rising, and social support is always at capacity. There are also three transitional housing programs in Yellowknife. Bailey House, which is a housing program for men, has thirty-two beds. Clients at Bailey House can stay in the transitional housing program, which includes the initial three-year period and the possibility of two six-month extensions. Rockhill Transitional and Emergency Housing, a program for women and children run by the YWCA, offers twenty-seven units. In 2014, a new transitional housing program for women was made available through Lynn's Place. In contemporary, the Yellowknife Women's Society recently learned that Spruce Bough, the only permanent supported living program in the NWT, may potential lose funding (Rosenfield 2024). Housing costs are higher in the Northwest Territories due to elevated construction expenses and accelerated deterioration caused by extreme weather conditions. Operating costs

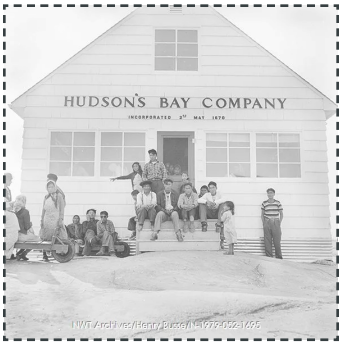
The Centre for Northern Families (CBC News 2016)

for housing are usually higher. Perhaps not surprisingly, renting an apartment in Yellowknife is expensive. Social conditions drive migration from small communities in the NWT to Yellowknife due to issues like inadequate housing, high violence rates, and unemployment, often leaving newcomers jobless and homelessness (Falvo 2011).

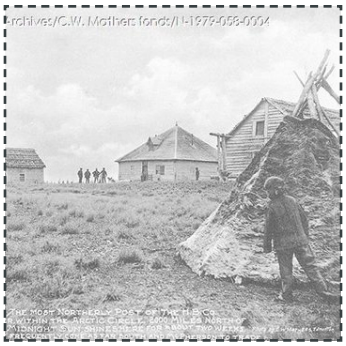
Unsettlement Narrative: Fur Trade Economy, and Early Policies

Hislop and Nagle's post, Fort Rae, 1890 (Porritt 1890)

"Indigenous Homelessness" has its roots in the transformative nature of initial colonization. The transformation of the Canadian North into permanent settlements did not happen until the mid-1900s (Abele 1987). From the early to mid-1990s, the nomadic Indigenous populations scattered across the remote landscape. The unsettlement period marked a central influence by the trade economy and the spreading of missionary values (Fried 1964). In the late 19th century, fur traders and missionaries had established themselves in the North, while Indigenous peoples continued their nomadic lifestyles (Abele 2009, 19-65). The federal government had limited involvement, providing minimal education and health care services to the Indigenous population. Home simply reflects as impermanent grounds, characterized by a moving traditional hearth. As the fur trade encroached on traditional subsistence cycles, pushing people toward a cash economy (Condon 1990) and altering mobility and settlement patterns. This shift increased contact with Christian missionaries and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Before World War II, fur traders, missionaries, and the government discouraged the centralization of northern Indigenous communities, fearing dependence and harm to the fur trade. This period was primarily characterized by an economic relationship (Tester and Kulchyski 1994).



Dene still lived on land and trading for economy at Fort Rae 1949 (Busse 1949)



Fort McPherson, the northernmost post of the HBC, showcases a range of interpretations of 'home,' from tipis, log structure, and house, reflecting diverse ideals and cultural perspectives on place. (Mathers 1901)

The early 20th century saw the decline of the fur trade, impacting northern Indigenous communities. Organizations like the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), missionaries, and the RCMP were tasked with providing health and social services (Brody 1991; Condon 1990; Tester and Kulchyski 1994). Economic uncertainty led many families to build shacks near trading posts for access to supplies and limited wage employment. Traders saw this as growing dependency and discouraged it (Tester and Kulchyski 1994). After World War II, there was a shift from a "laissez-faire" approach to social welfare initiatives, profoundly affecting Northern Indigenous lives. These changes transformed the way they made a livelihood, raised their children, and even where and how they lived. Spatial and social organization also underwent significant changes with the introduction of new categories of difference (Christensen 2011, 69). Home has been radically transformed through modernization: a fix structure rooted to permanent ground, with the family situated in one place, the hearth ceasing to move, and a production of western family housing. This marks the beginning of a disrupted cycle that has fundamentally shattered the traditional concept of what home really is.

Resettlement Narrative - Permanence Indigenous Communities

"Indigenous Homelessness" has persisted throughout zone of contacts, entangled in a cycle of colonial welfare where 'home' is merely understand as reductionism . Such reductionism confuses housing with home and thereby glosses over cultural, spiritual, and ideational meanings of "home" as a secure place to be (Geisler and George 2006). It has become a role, a property, labor, and a conquest.

The CANOL ('Canadian Oil') Project had a considerable wartime impact on the NWT, Yukon, Alaska, northern Alberta and northern British Columbia (Finnie 1942)

Failure in this context means failing to sustain oneself and, by extension, failing within the system of Canadian welfare.

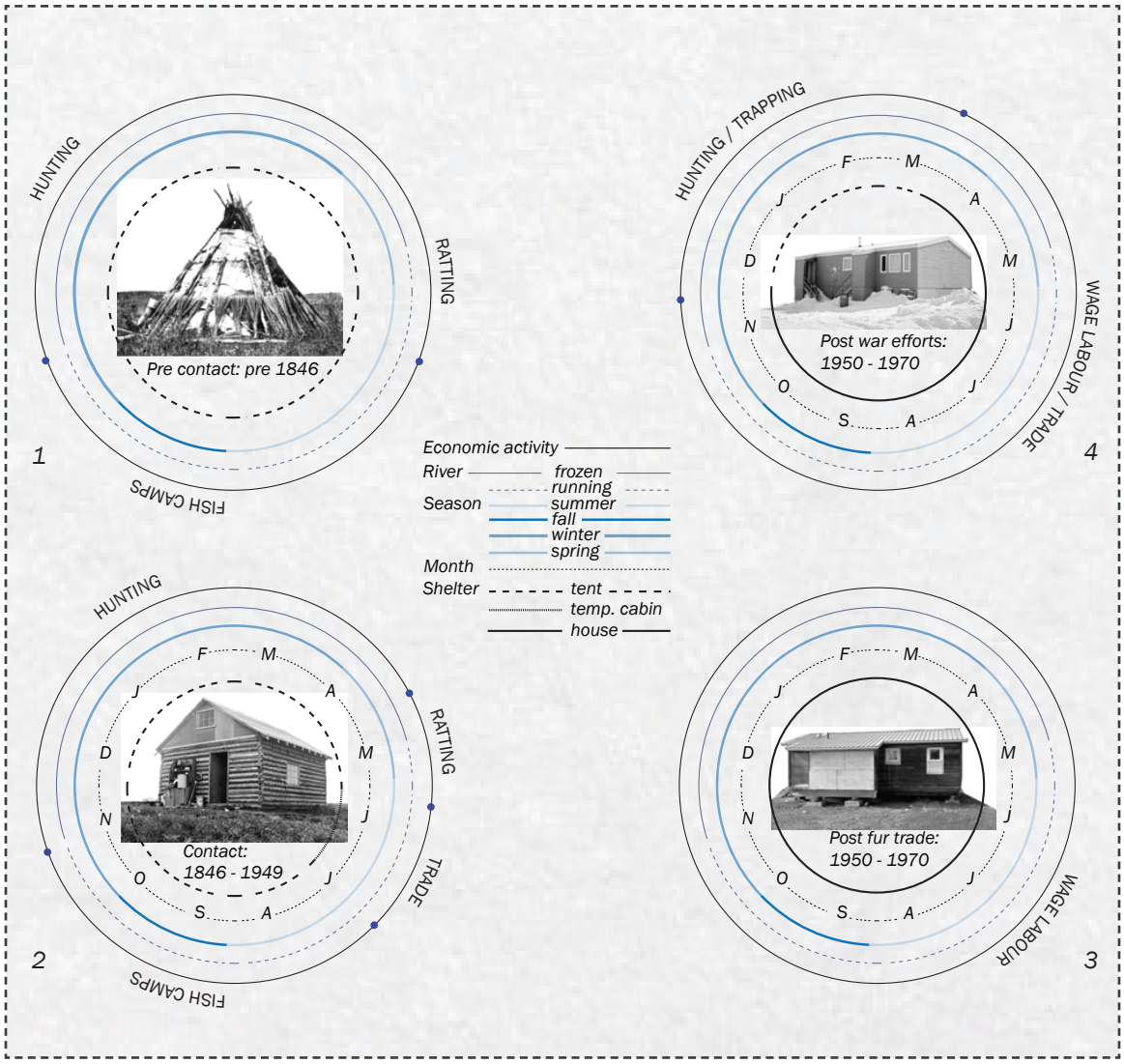
Living in the North continues to be shaped by geographical interests. The North was transformed into a territory defend. During the resettlement period in the post-World War II era, Indigenous populations in the North experienced a constant shift due to government expansion. Northern settlement, much like that of Indigenous peoples in southern Canada, was driven by government and commercial interests (Kirmayer, Brass, and Tait 2000), with an expectation that Indigenous communities would embrace modernization and economic progress (Fried 1964).

The impact of the Second World War and the subsequent Cold War had a profound effect on the North and its people, leading to rapid and extensive development in the Arctic following the decline of the fur trade (Weissling 1991), particularly due to security concerns following the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor (Abele 1987).

Canada's North experiences growing employment opportunities driven by the strategic sectors of oil, mining, transportation, and gas, fueling its evolving wage economy (Government of Canada 1925)

The Canadian North became strategically important, resulting in significant resource investments and military involvement, leading to major development projects, including highways and pipelines, which created employment opportunities for northern Indigenous people. Consequently, the government transitioned from "discouraging dependency" to actively encouraging the centralization of Indigenous communities into settlements, viewing this as a means to integrate Indigenous people into Canadian society and the wage economy (Bone 2003).

Despite the declining fur trade, many settlements formed around trading post sites as Indigenous populations sought access to medical care, transfer payments, education,



Adapting to the Seasons: This illustration show how northern Indigenous families modify their dwellings in response to the changing economic and seasonal cycles. Each housing program undergoes progressive changes, as seen in the reinterpreted image from 'The Northern House' (Harlander 2012)

and government-provided housing (Condon 1990; Damas 2002; Tester and Kulchyski 1994). This shift resulted in over-reliance on cash and imports, transforming the central focus of northern life from the land to the settlement (Condon, Collings, and Wenzel 1995). The rapid transition to settlement living created challenges for Indigenous communities, particularly for men who traditionally served as providers in the land-based economy (Bone 2003). This change also strained Indigenous communities, with

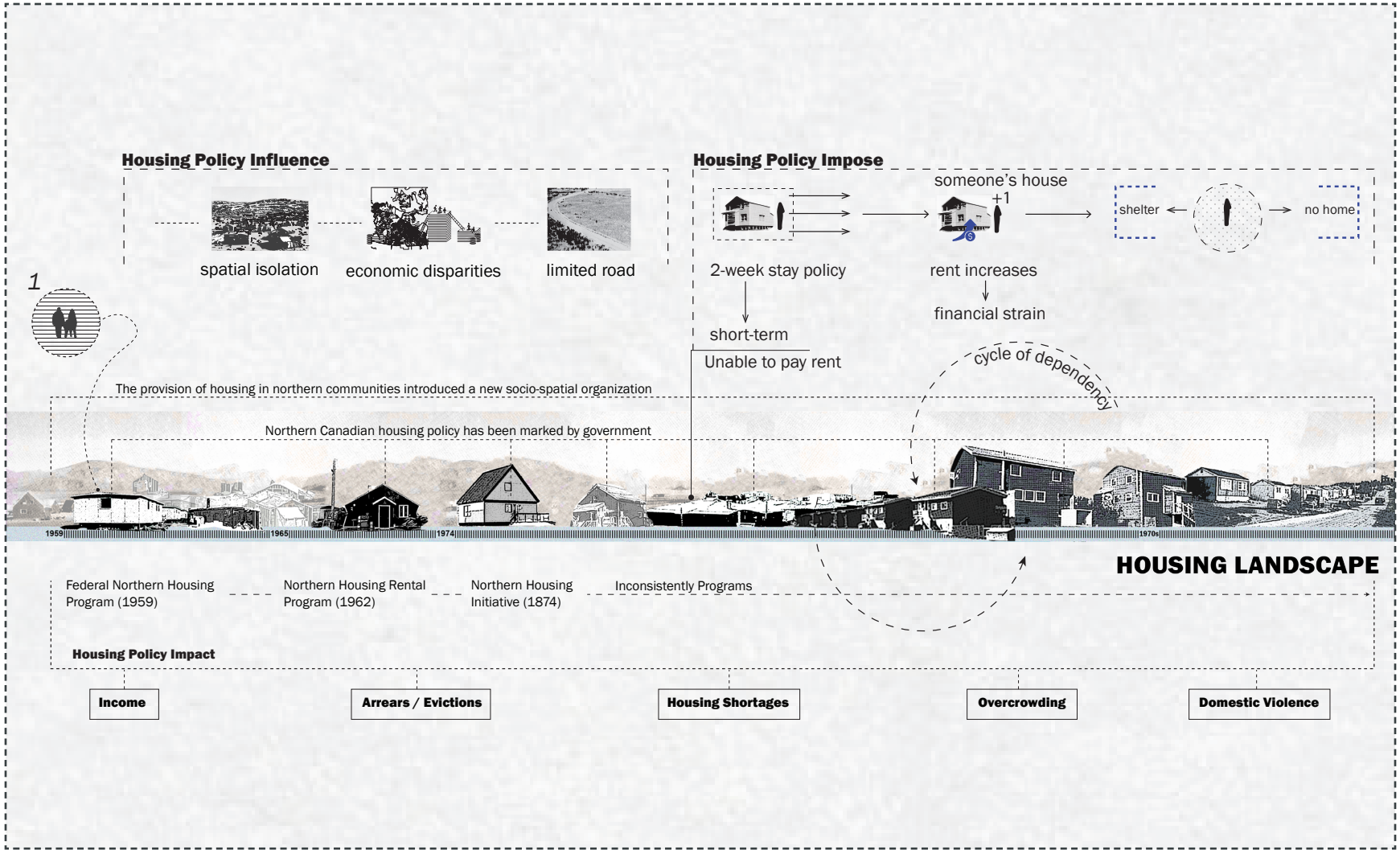
housing provision and centralize housing policies greater impact to social and cultural transformations and increasing vulnerability (Tester and Kulchyski 1994).

Resettlement is characterized as a period during which home and land become disconnected from nature. Housing becomes a threshold that represents the arbitrary line between modernization and determination, made less arbitrary through the reconnection to the land.

Housing Policy Impact: A Complex Legacy

To comprehend the intricate social phenomenon of ‘Indigenous Homelessness’ in the North, this thesis challenges the realm of housing provision and the impact of government policies on communities deeply rooted in Indigenous domestic space. Often, these policies bring about significant changes through housing programs, yet they frequently adopt a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach, failing to account for the unique and diverse Indigenous groups across the North (Agrawal and Zoe 2021). Western-style modern housing reshaped community dynamics, household composition, sanitation, hygiene standards, and gender relations. These changes reflected federal aspirations for a northern working class by promoting wage-based economic participation, ultimately increasing Indigenous vulnerability by fostering government dependency for dwelling (Christensen 2017). In addition to altering family living arrangements, this housing system imposed gender-specific roles, with men expected to engage in wage work and women in domestic tasks. The housing provided by the government was often insufficient in terms of both quality and quantity, further exacerbating Indigenous vulnerability (Christensen 2017).

A typical standardization housing landscape of North (Kane n.d.)



Mapping the Contemporary Housing Landscape in the North: This illustration provides an overview of housing rental dynamics influenced by current policies, offering a diagrammatic representation of the housing situation in northern communities

Overcrowded storage at the entrance of public housing complexes highlights the challenges residents face in managing limited space.

The development of northern housing policy in Canada has been marked by government indecisiveness about whether housing should be treated as a commodity or a social right (Tester 2006). While the government aimed to improve living conditions and promote wage-based economic participation through housing initiatives, these efforts inadvertently increased Indigenous vulnerability by fostering dependency on government-provided housing welfare. The federal government's initial venture into northern housing in 1959, focused on eastern Arctic communities, offered prefabricated plywood houses for lease, which proved expensive to heat and ill-suited to traditional northern household arrangements. Around 1962, the introduction of the Northern Housing Rental Program imported Southern Canadian values, resulting in larger families cramped in undersized houses (Thomas and Thompson 1972). Despite In 1974, the Government of the Northwest Territories took over responsibility for northern housing from the federal government, aiming to provide rental, purchase, homeownership, access, and down payment assistance (Hulchanski and Rees 1990). However, despite these efforts, modern housing introduced to northern communities has not effectively met local needs (Christensen 2017). The expectation that a household would comprise no more than a nuclear family has been implicit in northern housing policy and programs. These houses prioritized individualism and privacy, reflecting Euro-Canadian values, rather than the communal social interactions essential to local Indigenous families (Dawson 2003). Northern housing policy in the early legacy is proved in the enactment in contemporary counterparts and continue to stretch to take on welfare colonial forms and increase factor significantly in

HOUSING PROGRAM - A HISTORICAL OUTLINE

1959 *The Arctic housing program - Canada Morgage Housing Coporation (CMHC)*

entailed the promotion of a 512-square-foot house design, predominantly derived from the Frobisher Bay-type rigid frame plywood house. This design was advocated for adoption across the Arctic region. Under the program, these houses were sold at cost price, and financing

1965 *Rental Purchase Housing Program - CMHC*

was designed to promote the sale of government-built three-bedroom houses, each measuring 700 square feet. Qualified tenants had the opportunity to rent these units at a rate equivalent to 20% of their income, with the ultimate goal of eventually owning the property themselves.

1968 *The Northern Rental Housing program - CMHC*

offers housing to individuals in need, where the rent is determined as a percentage of their total income, with the government serving as the landlord.

1974 *NWTHC was created*

The establishment of the NWTHC, a crown corporation, empowered to manage ongoing programs and engage with Inuit and First Nations groups, led to the implementation of changes in housing designs. Initially, the "Weber home" design was introduced, which featured significantly larger units compared to the smaller "matchbox" homes, with sizes ranging from 896 to 1,600 square feet.

1975 *The Territorial Rental Purchase Program (TRPP)*

functioned similarly to the CMHC's Rent-to-Own Program (RPP), but with administration now under the purview of the NWTHC. Additionally, there were alterations in the housing options available through this program.

1977 *The Small Settlement Home Assistance grant (SSHAG) - NWTHC*

enables families residing in communities with fewer than 1000 residents to construct their own homes using locally available materials. The program provides financial support to cover the expenses associated with manufactured materials such as windows, doors, hardware, and more. In the majority of cases within the NWT, these homes were typically built as straightforward log cabins.

1979 *The Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP)*

provides financial support to low-income households that own and reside in substandard housing, helping them undertake necessary repairs to bring their homes up to minimum health and safety standards.

1982 *The Homeownership Assistance Program (HAP),*

which followed the SSHAG program, aimed to promote the use of rigid frame construction instead of log cabins. Under this initiative, eligible tenants were provided with all the necessary materials to construct their own homes. Additionally, the HAP program mandated the involvement of an engineer to

1992 *The Lease to Purchase (LTP) program - NWTHC*

provides a comprehensive solution, involving the construction of a house by NWTHC, which is then leased to clients at a rate based on their monthly income. The rent payments made by clients are accumulated as part of the eventual purchase price of the house.

1997 *NWTHC*

has broadened its down payment program, which helps families achieve homeownership by offering financial support in the form of a down payment or loan.

1997 *The Independent Housing Program - NWTHC*

helps individuals secure modest homes when their housing requirements are not adequately addressed by existing housing programs.

2007 *NWTHC introduced a program called "Housing Choices/Solutions to Educate People" (STEP)*

STEP offers educational and counseling support through a series of four courses carefully crafted to equip individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge required for homeownership. The primary objectives of STEP are to enhance the financial literacy of prospective homeowners and to provide them with a comprehensive understanding of the home-buying process, along with essential skills for basic home maintenance and repairs.

2007 *Housing choices / supports homeowners through the Contributing Assistance for Repairs and Enhancements (CARE) program - NWTHC*

This program helps current homeowners undertake essential repairs on their residences, ensuring safety and a healthy living environment while extending the economic viability of their homes.

Source reference:

The Northern House

thenorthernhouse.wordpress.com

Dave Harlander

A study from The Northen House: History outline of illustrating the initiative of government housing programs, showcasing changes driven by various initiatives and motives (Harlander 2012)

experiences of northern “Indigenous Homelessness” today (Christensen 2017).

Nature of Contemporary Housing Policy Issues

Up to the present day, the dominant influence shaping people’s minds remains the government’s housing policies. These policies have extended their reach and perpetuated a challenging cycle of dependency and vulnerability within community family structures, as they have undergone and will continue to undergo inconsistent changes over time (Thomas and Thompson 1972).

Those who are unable to meet the criteria may find themselves subject to the two-week stay policy for adults. Rent is determined based on the incomes of all household members living under one roof. Consequently, some households understandably worry that assisting another person in this way may lead to higher rent obligations. This policy serves multiple purposes, such as protecting single mothers or elders from disruptive family members who refuse to leave or contribute financially, and ensuring that individuals with arrears do not occupy public housing units. However, an unintended consequence of enforcing this two-week limit is the potential for one to be without a house almost immediately (Agrawal and Zoe 2021).

Community housing captured during my visit in July 2021, Łutselk’e, NT

An analysis of public housing agency data reveals numerous obstacles faced by Indigenous applicants, including issues related to sum unpaid and land titles. Since 2017, evictions have become less severe, with efforts to assist tenants in catching up on arrears. Communities like Behchokǫ̀, from which most experiencing unhomely migrate to Yellowknife, witnessed the highest number of evictions in 2016, primarily due to accumulated mortgage arrears. In 2009,

approximately 19 percent of households in the NWT were identified as experiencing core housing need (Agrawal and Zoe 2021). Despite these formidable challenges, the severe climate, geographical constraints, and housing shortages in the NWT left residents with limited options, compelling them to endure housing problems, as the alternative of having no housing at all is simply not viable in such extreme conditions.

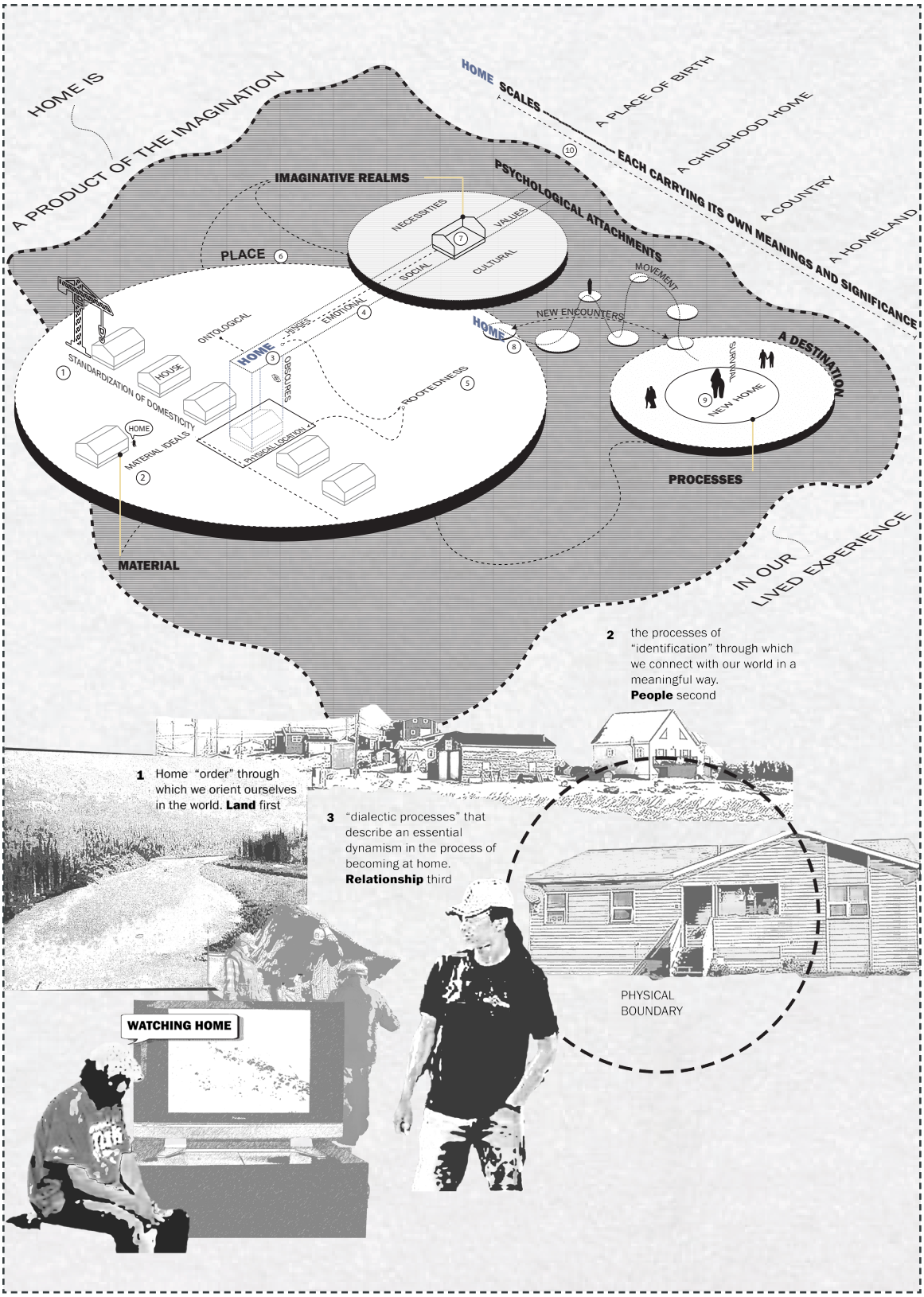
Chapter 3: Ideology of Home

Notion of Home

To explore the relationship of home, it is important to frame the notion of home space and how we understand it. Home holds deep personal meaning and significance; it is a complex concept deeply rooted in one's ontological state. Indigenous and settler perspectives on home contrast significantly. Home is a key focus in this thesis to understand the complexities of "Indigenous Homelessness", where the loss of home leads potential to disbelonging, mental illness, perpetuating the erosion of the experience of feeling at home and paralyzing its current emergence stage in the world. Being home is included more than just physical shelter; it is deeply rooted in the cultural, technological, social, and economic values aspects (Dovey 1985).

As the dichotomy between the Western ideal of living in a house as a spatial unit in the built environment and the term 'house', which represents physical needs delineating space for the members of a household and providing shelter and protection for domestic activities becomes apparent (CMHC 2005). While a house is an object, a part of the environment, 'home' is best understood as a specific contextual relationship between people and their built environment. It is an emotionally based and meaningful connection between individuals and their dwellings. The term 'home' is intended to refer to this relationship or experiential phenomenon, rather than the built form itself—the phenomenon of 'home' (Dovey 1985).

Home "order" through which we orient ourselves in the world. The second theme involves the processes of "identification"



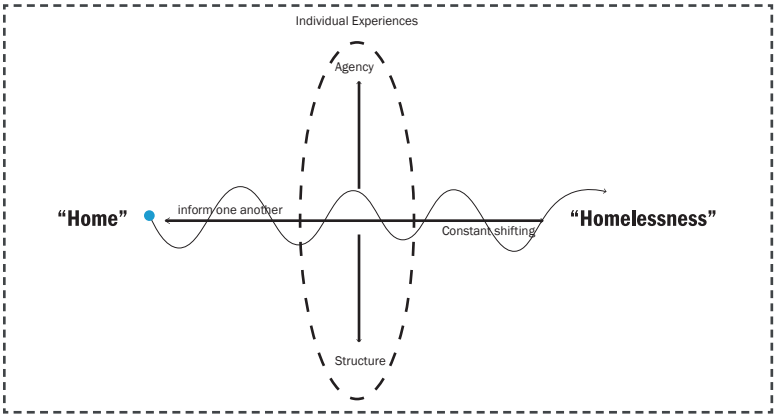
Mapping the Geography of Home: This illustration captures the intricate relationship between personal identity and the geographical origins of an individual, reflecting cultural, technological, social, and economic values deeply rooted in community traditions.

through which we connect with our world in a meaningful way. The third theme is that of “dialectic processes” that describe an essential dynamism in the process of becoming at home (Dovey 1985).

Geography of Home

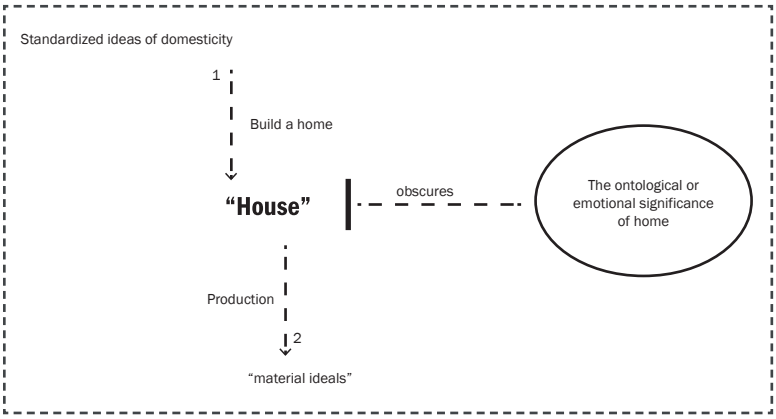
Home is described as ‘multi-scalar’ and ‘multi-faceted,’ signifying its existence across territorial scales, social-cultural perspectives, ranging from individual to collective needs (Christensen 2013). Geography address homes not only basic social and material needs but also flux in between individual and collective beings, including voice for self-determination, cultural emplacement, and socio-economic inclusion (Christensen 2013).

The nature of “home” in geography allows this thesis to define its significance and expands what “home” in literature reviews and how it interrelates with homelessness. Criminologist scholar Julia Wardhaugh highlights the intricate relationship between home and homelessness, emphasizing the dynamic influenced by societal values and structural change (Wardhaugh 2001).



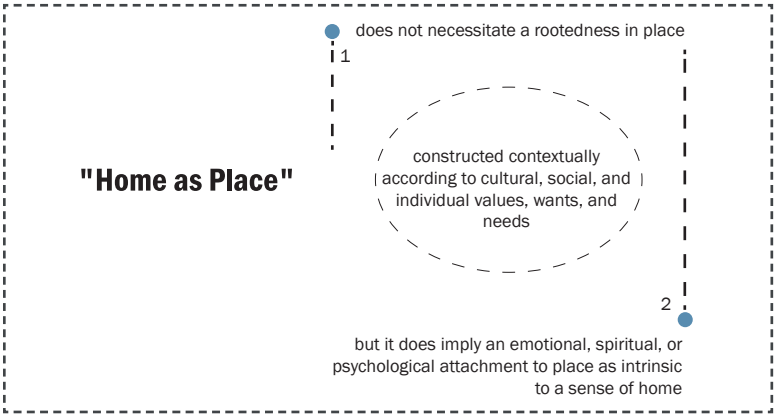
Home may be vulnerable to disruption when individual experiences are influenced by societal structures and political policies. A single shift can alter the informal dynamics of everyday life.

Geographer Scholar April Veness criticizes the conventional understanding of “home” as merely a physical “house,” the society standardized notions of domesticity and the perception of home as a production process overlook the existential meanings and feelings associated with home (Veness 1993).



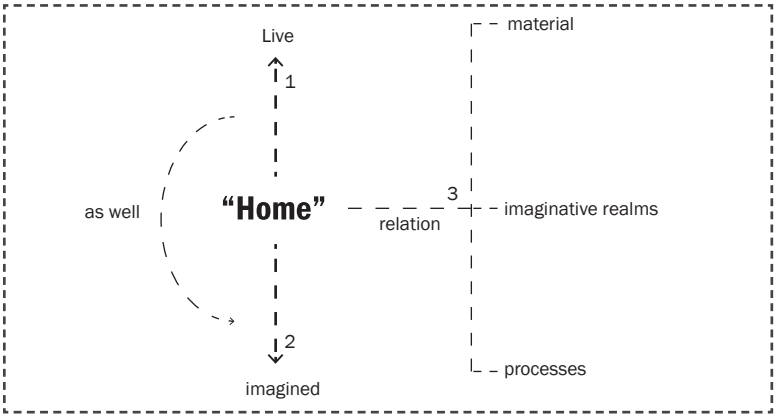
Standardized ideals of housing often obscure the true meaning of ‘home,’ reducing it to a reproduction of societal norms rather than a personalized expression of domesticity and belonging.

Scholar Jon May introduces the idea that home is not solely tied to a physical location but can be rooted in emotional, spiritual, or psychological attachments to that place (May 2000).

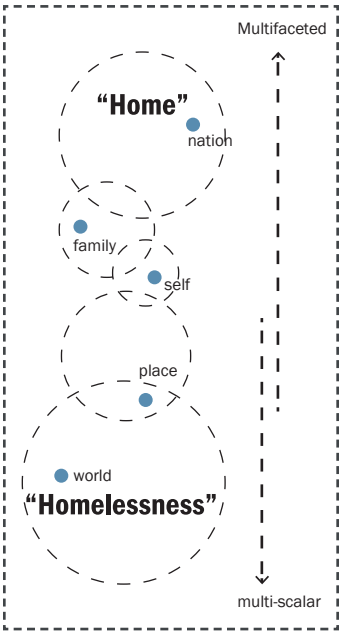


Home transcends physical coordinates; it is a social construct everywhere we go.

Geographers James S. Duncan and David Lambert view home as a complex concept intrinsically tied to self, family, nation, place, and one's responsibility in the world (Duncan and Lambert 2004). It emerges from a complex interplay between tangible and imaginative realms and processes, suggesting that home is both a lived experience and a product of the imagination (Blunt and Dowling 2006).



Home is not just a physical structure, but a manifestation of human creativity and imagination, shaping our lives and interactions with the world around us.



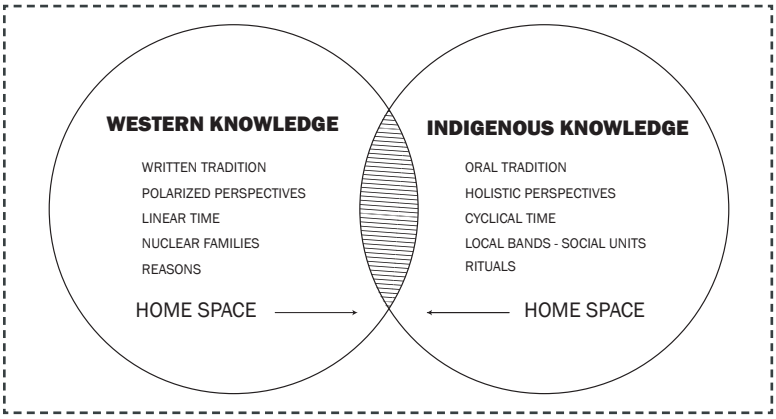
Home is scale

Scholar Sara Ahmed argue that home is neither solely a clearly defined and bounded space nor solely a place of strangeness and dislocation (Ahmed 1999). Instead, home can exist in between these binaries, serving as a place of movement and new encounters. Home can take on various forms, such as a place of birth, a childhood home, a country, or a homeland, and these different types or scales of home can coexist, each carrying its own meanings and significance. (Ahmed 1999; Massey 1992).

In geographical discourse, the concept of "home" occupies a central position, drawing attention to the manifold meanings embedded within the built environment, revealing mapped geographical patterns and social relations. Through a

political lens, landscapes are read for their cultural and political significance, disclosing the complexities of home and homelessness. The geography of home theory transcends scales, exploring how architectural spaces are not only inhabited but also consumed as sites of productive activity, shaping social relations and identities through processes rooted in everyday practices. This perspective views the boundary of home as a space for rehearsing and representing the lived politics of architectural use. By considering design practices, geography and architecture intersect to empower individuals, revealing gestures of expansion in spatial concepts within the political-cultural sphere. This connection between space and home underscores multiple power dynamics inherent in the built environment, acknowledging the spatialized entanglements of power. A critical geography and architecture necessitate political engagement, prompting a broader reflection on their implications and possibilities.

Two Knowledges of Spaces



When Western knowledge intersects with Indigenous worldviews, it often sparks a cultural collision.

In the North, the conflict revolves around the clash between empirical knowledge rooted in ‘southern-based

planning principles' (government planning in communities) and Indigenous traditional knowledge. It is important to note that Northern communities do not reject western technological advances that provide comfort, warm housing, adequate space, and indoor plumbing. However, these housing solutions often overlook the consideration of local Indigenous traditional values and knowledge. When architecture, community planning, and decision-making do incorporate space within the community, they often lack regard for culture and local perspectives. Communities today recognize the benefits of modern housing but also need to acknowledge the value of community knowledge (Diakun and Pin, 1997).

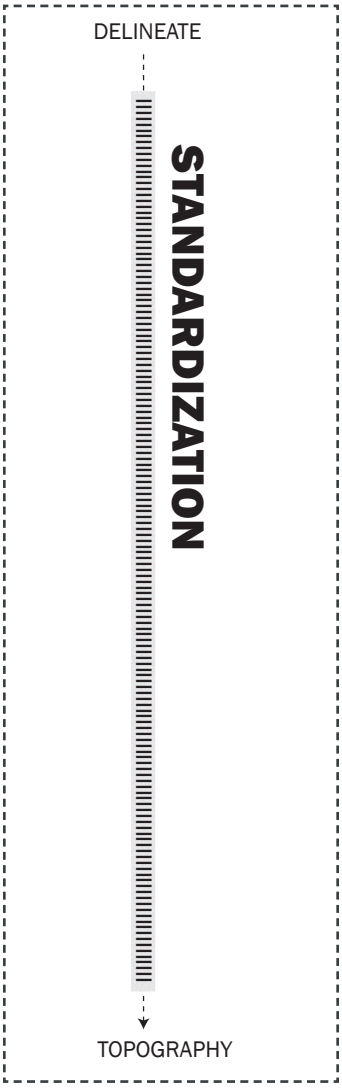
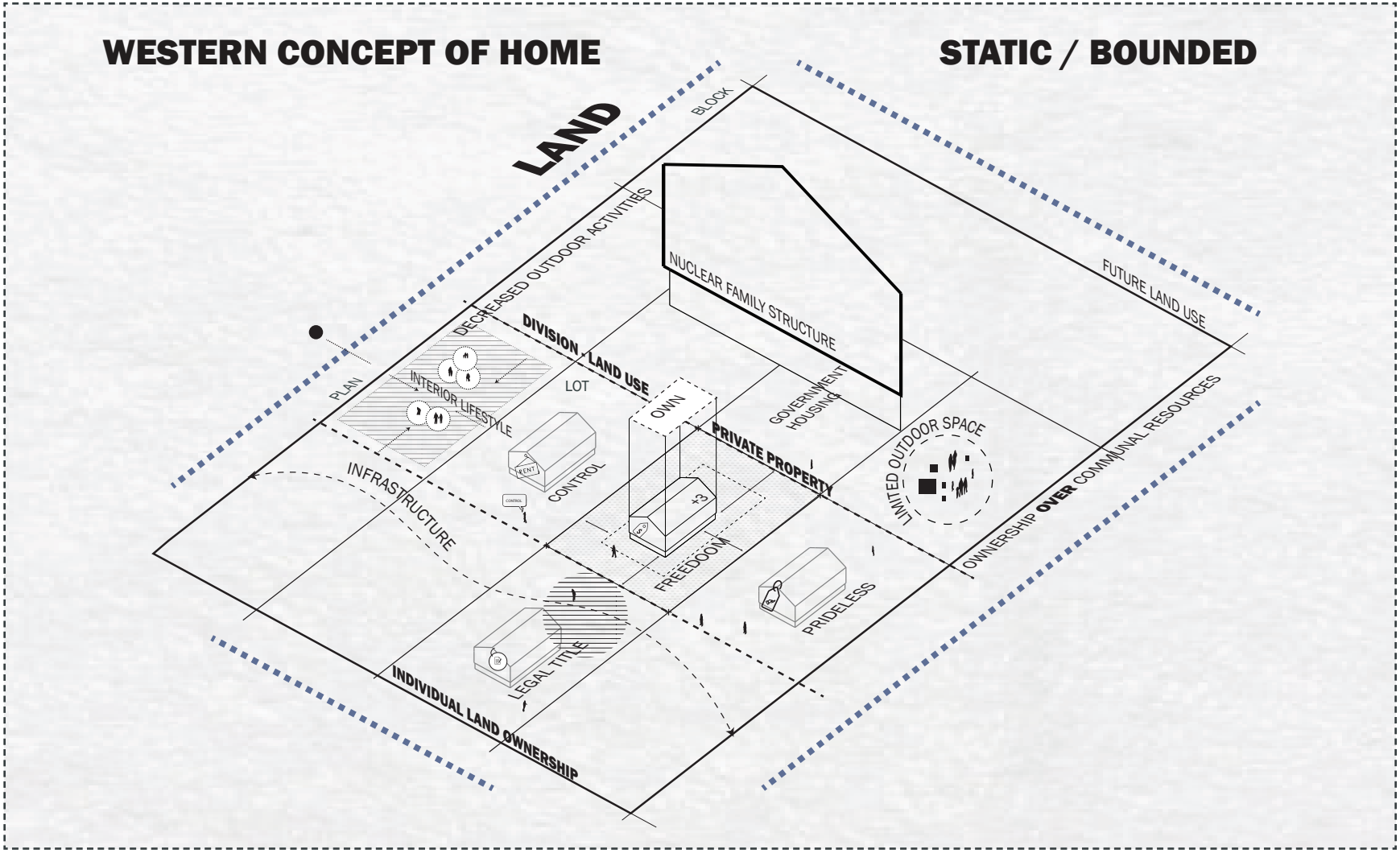


Diagram illustrating the Western approach to precision and viewing topology through the lens of standardization perspectives.

Western Home: Static / Bounded

In Western concepts, home and space is often viewed as static and bounded, shaped by the notion of ownership and the division of the Earth's surface into fixed territories through legal survey lines that delineate property boundaries. Infrastructure layers such as roads and buildings have further reinforced the dominance of surveyed areas, disconnecting the built environment from the pre-existing landscape. Due to these spatial practices, Indigenous communities in the North often identify with this geometric order, which becomes deeply embedded in their collective memory (Diakun and Pin 1997).

Many Northern communities today, the longstanding town grid has become an unquestionable fixture in residents' minds. As a result, settlement landscapes gradually come to mirror the town's plan, reflecting the imposed geometric order and even leading homeowners to erect fences along invisible lot lines between equally spaced houses. The



This illustration shows the spatial diagram of the Western concept of space, emphasizing development and planning, alongside the notion of daily rituals tied to individualism and freedom through property ownership.

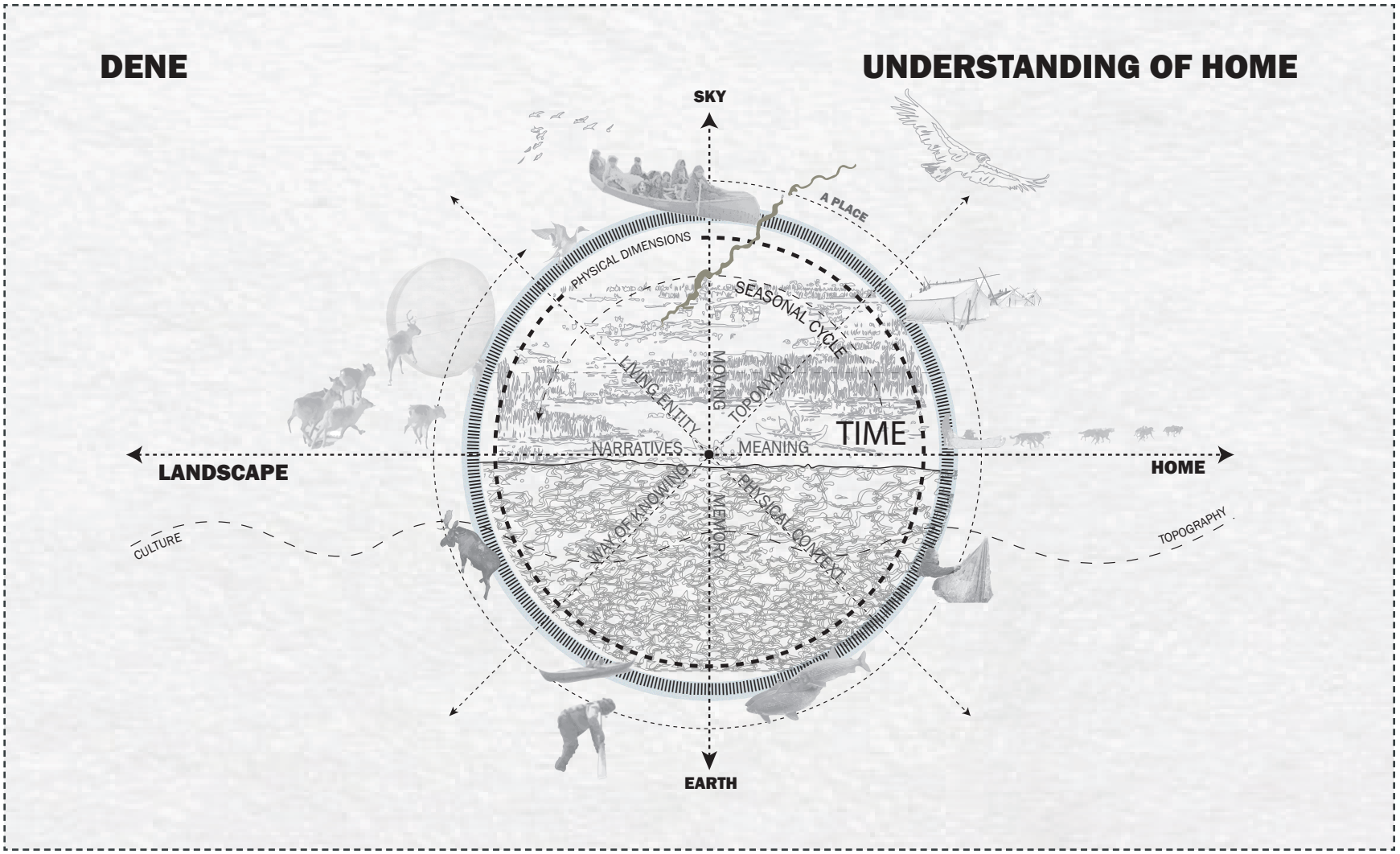
predominance of rectilinear lot divisions and the emphasis on private property and individual land ownership over communal resources. This disrupted traditional Dene attitudes towards the land. The allocation of single-family homes to individual families, rather than collective groups, further fragmented traditional family structures (Diakun and Pin 1997).

Modern planning practices largely ignored traditional Dene social structures, contributing to the disintegration of kinship groups spatial distributions. This disregard for traditional knowledge and social structures has had negative impacts on the social health of Dene communities. This transformation is evident in the changing housing landscape, where rising housing standards in Canadian society, resulting in larger homes in both urban and northern areas, have led to a shift towards a more sedentary lifestyle, decreasing outdoor activities and prompting people to spend more time indoors (Diakun and Pin 1997). This shift has exacerbated issues such as overcrowding and domestic violence, contributing significantly to the contemporary phenomenon of “Indigenous Homelessness.”

The portrayal of home space in academic texts largely reflects broadly Western conceptions of home that privilege a physical structure or dwelling. This predominant representation in academic literature aligns with the agreement among most researchers who believe that addressing the causes of homelessness is ineffective without the provision of housing, regardless of the circumstances (Mallett 2004).

Dene Home: Expansion / Tradition Hearth

Part of Christensen’s research acknowledges the significant studies on the central role of the land in the insight of home



This illustration depicts the profound connection between home and geography, as the Dene people inherit a lived experience on the land, shaping their worldview through the embodiment of place. Through land-based practices and memories, home becomes a living identity intricately intertwined with the landscape.

for Indigenous communities like the Dene, Métis, and Inuit (Christensen 2017). For the Inuit, a land-based “subsistence ideology” underscores the critical role of the land in individual and community well-being, affecting all aspects of life (Condon, Collings, and Wenzel 1995). Similarly, among the Métis, one’s sense of home is intimately tied to the land and family (Macdougall 2011).

For this thesis, the context of home pertains to the Dene group. For the Dene, the land is not merely a resource but a living entity with both spirit and agency, serving as a source of identity and relationships (Coulthard 2010). Land represents not only the physical geography of places, routes, and stories but also the human relationship with a diverse range of animal species and a holistic cosmology that is central to the way of knowing and belonging for northern Indigenous peoples (Wenzel 2004). The traditional social structure of the Dene people was marked by flexibility and harmony, consisting of various groups such as local bands, task groups, and regional bands. In the pre-contact period, Dene kinship groups lived experientially distinct lives from the settlement patterns through traditional family-based groupings, mobility, and temporality. Family units lived in mobile camps, allowing people to revisit specific places semi-permanently during seasonal events such as the fall fishery. This reflects the active activities around sites and the seasonally influenced nature of settlements (CMHC 2005).

For the Dene, land use and occupation of the land are inseparable. Home is not about containment but rather understood as an expansive experience. Dene culture is intricately linked to geographical meaning and the cultural landscape through generational oral tradition. Being on land

and moving as a camp through seasonal rooted relationships to the land, the concepts of “in” and “out” are superfluous since home is a continuous journey between hearths at all times. These hearths are interwoven into the fabric of extended family groupings, where their spatially communal organization includes temporarily domestic built structures. This connection is linked between boundaries indoors and outdoors, serving as a constant for on-land activities, with dynamics ebbing and flowing—fluid and flexible. A dedicated hearth lived experience is always intricately intertwined with life on the land (CMHC 2005).

Boundary of Home

CCA, *I’m Calling Home*, Installation view, installation view of Uvatinni Uqallajunga, Geronimo Inutiq (Brouillard 2022)

In the exhibition of the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA), *Toward Home*, presenter of Rafico Ruiz speaks with Geronimo Inutiq about home in community by radio, what constitutes home, and media art. The exhibit’s projection mapping skillfully recreated Artic environments, from the intimate interior of a home with recognizable features like chairs, tables, radios, and windows, instilling a feeling of homeliness, to outdoor scenes on land, offering viewers a glimpse beyond individual homes and into the unique characteristics of Arctic dwellings, thus immersing them deeper into the atmosphere of a Northern community. ‘Enter memoryscape’ allows visiting other people’s homes, which Inutiq animates home as an “amalgamation of ideals, memories, and timeframes: our memories are wrapped into the immediate past, into the more distant past, into the present and future” (Inutiq 2023), The boundaries between home inside the house and out on the land truly come alive among Arctic communities. The sense of home exists on multiple levels, where Northern “home began to extend

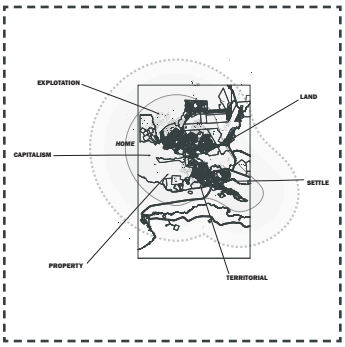
Frames of home (Inutiq 2023)

outside of the comforts of the cocoon of the house" (Inutiq 2023).

> home extends beyond the house itself. That nearby river became a kind of landmark—a very specific one, because it represents multiple bodies of water: sea ice, streams, the creek I would cross to go to school, bodies of water where my family would fish. Bodies of water are important in delineating and defining community… home is, for many of us, out on the land. One way for me and many Inuit to reflect is to look at the water. (Inutiq 2023)

In contemplating the essence of dwelling, I find the notion of the aperture, particularly in the form of a window, to be a powerful device that transcends its physical function. It serves not merely as an opening to the external world but as a conduit for reconnecting with the intimacy of home and the memories woven into the natural landscape. Within the confines of domestic dwellings, even a small window possesses the remarkable ability to encapsulate the essence of home, offering a glimpse into the cultural and political identity intricately tied to a specific place. Through this lens, outside space becomes more than mere surroundings; it becomes an integral part of daily activities that shape the very essence of what makes a home truly feel like home.

Chapter 4: Decolonizing Home: Reimagining Architecture with Patterns



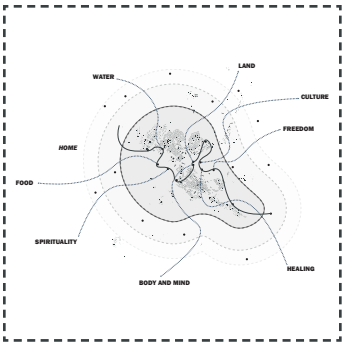
Settler colonialism diagram: show the transition from external settlement to permanent occupation, reflecting the process of claiming resources and land, and internalizing them as a new home.

Unsettling

> Decolonization has to be about changing relationships and making them healthy, supportive, and safe, not just in spite of colonial power, but actively against it. This is inherently a prefigurative act – an instance where the pursuing of an end goal and the actual end goal are the same. (Lowman and Barker 2015, 117)

As is well-known, colonization initiatives involved internal colonialism, which established biopolitical and geopolitical control over people, land, flora, and fauna within the 'domestic' borders of the imperial nation. This process made land a new home and a source of capital, serving as a shared component through various instruments across land. However, the implementation of this process is uniquely tailored to each setting, transitioning from an externalized state to an internalized one (Tuck and Yang 2012).

First, I will limit myself to the broader Canadian context for this research, aiming to position decolonization as a theoretical source to capture the essence of place in the NWT region, which is the focus of my research. Under the umbrella of decolonization, it is generally understood as a "global transition of states and societies from foreign rule to sovereign status; in the case of Indigenous groups achieving a degree of self-determination, however, sovereignty was and is negotiated within a polity rather than between polities" (Veracini 2007, 3). When the conversation of decolonization is enlightened, it demands the recognition of "Indigenous sovereignty in its material, psychological, epistemological, and spiritual forms" (Sium, Desai and Ritskes 2012, v). Within



Decolonization in action: This diagram illustrates homemaking as an ongoing effort to expand existing structures, embodying lived experiences to resist. Take sites scattered across the built environment to infuse land and place with land-based practices, challenging settler contexts at every turn.

the decolonial project, there is a shared effort to “reimagine and rearticulate power, change, and knowledge through a multiplicity of epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies” (Sium, Desai and Ritskes 2012, v). Decolonial projects take the importance of place and context is crucial (Tuck and MacKenzie, 2015). It is not a neat or linear process; rather, it demands a messier, dynamic, and contradictory approach to disturb, unnerve, and upset, thereby prompting a pause for reconsidering issues or ideas. It requires unique approaches and enactments across scales that acknowledge historical specificity, contest specificity, and the uniqueness of each place (Sium, Desai, & Ritskes, 2012).

Decolonial Space

Decolonization informs the orientation of one towards creating communities where relationships are structured around connections between humans and non-humans, and in the relationship of land. In this key aspect, the work of decolonization moves from theoretical discussion to the practice of being and becoming a source of decolonial power (Freeland Ballantyne 2014). Yet, I argue that the discipline of architecture provides discourse tools that guide the mind towards reimagining and representing space within the profession. By learning from other interdisciplinary fields, we can manifest space with a decolonial mindset. Decolonization in architecture is important because it allows us to learn from the past and understand the ongoing effects of European, North American, and Neoliberal colonialism (Rozas-Krause 2022). This transformation will reshape our understanding of our discipline, and our built environment. Decolonization as a motive thinker enables us to reexamine the architectural canon and envision a more diverse

and inclusive approach to teaching, building, and writing architecture (Rozas-Krause 2022).

In my research, I explored the dynamics of settler colonialism in Canadian Northern geography, examining its impacts on various scales and within societal structures. To conclude, parallel to Dupuis's master thesis, "Unlearning by Learning to Dry Fish: Land-Based Pedagogy that Decolonizes," my focus is not on contemplating the repatriation of The Constitution Act, 1982, or symbolic acts such as removing references to England, such as having the Royal Monarchy on our currency (Dupuis 2015, 42). Instead, I teased out decolonization as infused and diffused through lived experiences in the regime representation of space, aiming to acknowledge the disruptions to notions of home caused by the initial contacts of settlers colonialism upon arrival on this land, a Dene land. As Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg Scholar Leanne Simpson points out:

> We cannot simply think, write, or imagine our way to a decolonized future. Answers on how to rebuild and resurge are derived from a web of consensual relationships infused with movement, experienced and embodied. (Simpson 2014, 16)

By infuse traditional land-based approaches as a source of healing, this thesis take architecture to unsettle the grounds, to construct the infrastructure of care, to engage with land as a mutually shared relationship, and to soften time and space for barriers to cross-cultural engagement and collaboration toward the 'abolition of land as property' (Tuck and Yang 2012).

We Demand On the Land Housing

The rise campaign call for "We Demand On the Land Housing" has advocate for the home be built off-grid

Living A Dene Way Of Life (AAHA 2023).

AAHA, We Demand On the Land Housing, "*feeding the fire ceremony*" (AAHA 2023)

communities on the land for Indigenous women and girls, in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)' findings regarding the root causes of violence.

> Indigenous women and girls across c\a\n\a\d\a are disproportionately impacted by domestic and other forms of structural violence, often leading to a choice between living in a threatening situation or losing their access to shelter. In response, we seek to prevent homelessness and unsheltered living for young Indigenous women as summarized in the Final Report of the National Inquiry into MMIIWG in c\a\n\a\d\a. (AAHA 2023)

Activists like Katlia Lafferty, architects like Ouri Scott, and advocates like Julia Christiansen have brought attention to this project, calling for and demanding that the federal and Northwest Territories governments fund On the Land communities in the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, led by Indigenous women. This demand explored into the essence of architecture in addressing contemporary issues through research and practice. By emphasizing design as a process to raise awareness about settler built environment and the core concerns of people, it advocates for a deeper comprehension of profession's role in contemporary society. Specifically, it reflects on the urgent contemporary crisis of "Indigenous Homelessness" and prompts us to reconsider our perception of architecture. The argument presented asserts that architecture mirrors lived experiences, focusing on land-based values and self-determination in housing. In this context, architecture becomes a tangible expression of values associated with access to safe, secure, affordable, and culturally relevant support services. It embodies patterns that resonate with the central hearth on the land and communal engagement with the land through relationships, building with love and care for people and all living beings, and providing a healing proposal for pathways toward

Spatial cultural practices of the Dene - way of life (AAHA 2023)

addressing “Indigenous Homelessness”. This includes addressing the specific needs of women for traditional living free of rent, utility payments, and other potential sources of debt or arrears (AAHA 2023).

Land as Property

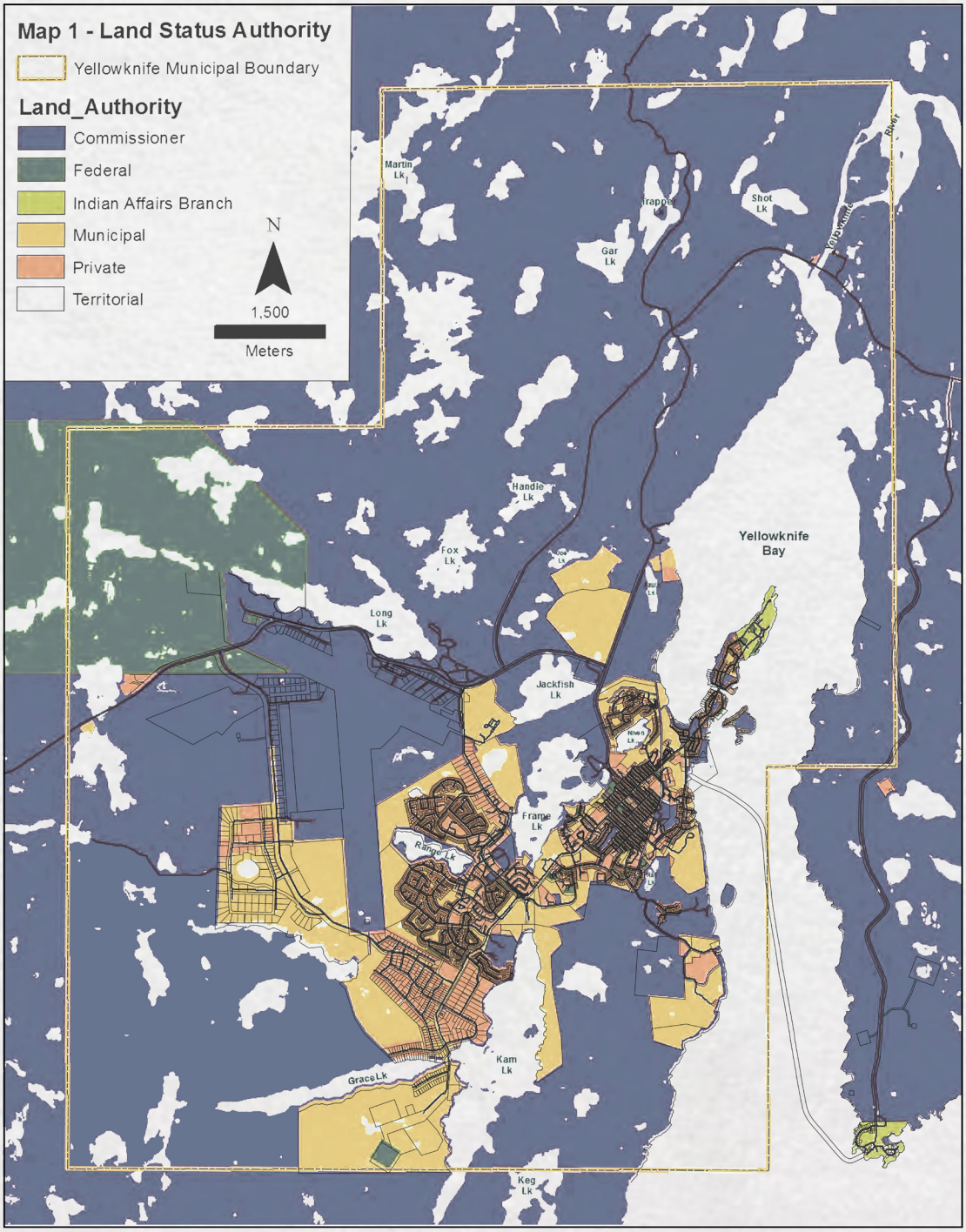
In short, while “land” may sound like a noun, it living as a verb: “A bay is a noun only if water is dead.” (Kimmerer 2015, 55)

The word ‘settlers’ evokes associations with structures and processes, uncomfortable realizations, difficult subjects, and the potential complicity in systems of dispossession and violence (Lowman and Barker 2015). In contemporary discussions on “Indigenous Homelessness,” discourse surrounding ‘space’ consistently raises questions about the fragmentation of land resulting from colonial land appropriation. This reveals visible threads connecting Indigenous dispossession from the land and the urban pathologies of “Indigenous Homelessness”, the relationship excels through which capitalist property in land was invented as the foundational unit of both “urban morphology and architectural typology”, shaping the production of spaces controlled by the [settler] “nation, state, and capital” (Fortin and Blackwell 2022, 2).

Brenna Bhandar describes property ownership as:

> “A bundle of rights that can be rearranged and redistributed depending on the social and political norms that legislators aim to promote... The degree to which each of these rights is protected varies; the ‘stringency’ with which each of these rights in the bundle, such as the right to use, possess, exclude, devise, alienate, etc., can be understood as existing in a hierarchy whereby some rights... are more powerful than others.” (Bhandar 2018, 19-20)

This being said, land relations are central not only to Indigenous worlds but also to settler worlds, adhering to the ideas of protection, rights, and access to land under the logics of property and resource use. In the Northwest Territories, land ownership is diverse, with Crown land and Commissioner’s land managed by different government entities. Private lands are primarily owned by First Nations with settled land claims, such as the Inuvialuit, Gwich’in, Sahtu, and Tlicho. Land agency oversee public lands through sales agreements or leases, granting legal



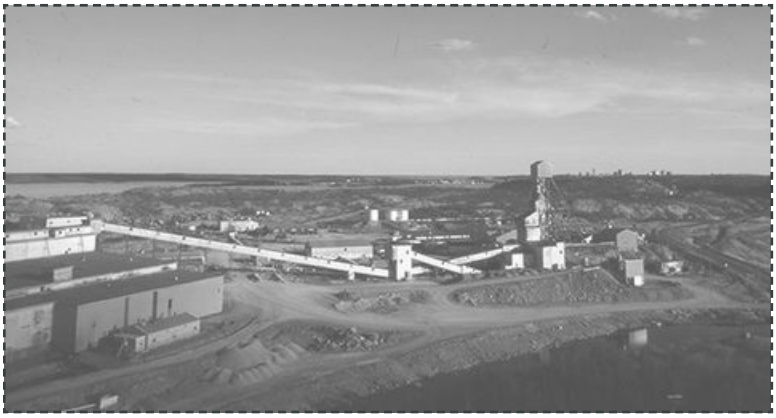
This map shows land ownership and land authority in Yellowknife.

occupancy rights to applicants (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians 2010). Conversely, municipalities handle land administration, including planning, zoning, and subdivision of municipal land. Additionally, Indigenous communities protect the IAB (Federal Crown Lands) Land, which is reserved for the use and benefit of Indigenous communities. Land relations are interlock within the colonial system of land administration. Mapping property ownership serves as a means to grant access, maximum use, produce property, produce difference, and universalize and separate (Liboiron 2021). Ultimately, this process shapes political attitudes towards connection to the land, making it a settler goal and traced to a social phenomenon in the North of “Indigenous Homelessness” consequence when land become a concept of ownership, fixed in the imagination, and delineates boundaries.

Land as Pollution

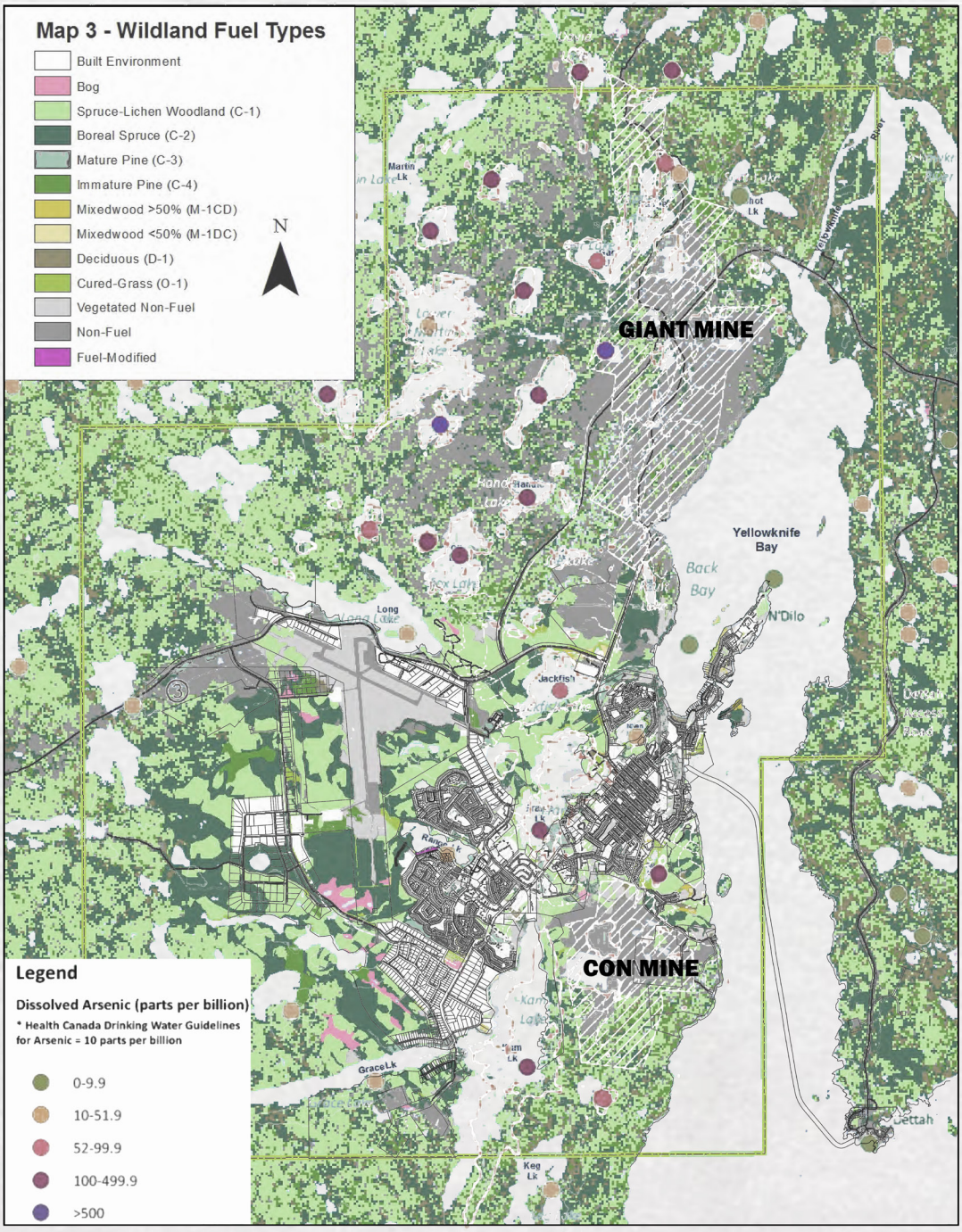
That being said, the notion of home is influenced by nature. When nature becomes vigorous within the limitations of harm, land relations become more managerial rather than reciprocal (Liboiron 2021). This leads to the devastation and disruption of home—a sense of home to the connection with land. This become segregated from settler goals, viewing land merely as a resource (Liboiron 2021). This perspective adopts a colonial understanding of nature, when universal humans can protect, extend, augment, better, use, preserve, destroy, interrupt, and/or capitalize on robust-within-limits nature (nature can handle human intervention up to a certain point) (Liboiron 2021).

This takes into account the impacts of industrial mining and settlement on Dene traditional land-use practices are evident, despite half a century of gold mining in Yellowknife causing environmental damage and health impacts on the Yellowknives Dene, who depended on the lands and waters for their traditional livelihoods. Mining has affected Yellowknives Dene land-use practices over a broad geographic area, prompting the Dene land-users to relocate the majority of their activities from the Wìì̀ìcheh (Yellowknife Bay) area to the Tinde'e (Great Slave Lake) area due to feelings of alienation, a sense of danger, and uncertainty associated with using lands and waters near abandoned mines (Degray 2020, 36).



Abandoned Giant Gold Mine (Giant Yellowknife Mines Ltd. 1991)

Gold mining activities in the 1930s, particularly arsenopyrite formation at Giant and Con, required crushing and roasting to extract the precious metal, resulting in the release of large quantities of arsenic trioxide (As2O3) and sulphur dioxide (SO2) into the environment via the mines' roaster stacks. Giant Mine, processing all ore contained in arsenopyrite formations, accounted for the majority of emissions, estimated at 7.5 tonnes per day between 1949-1953. The characteristics and movement of arsenic trioxide

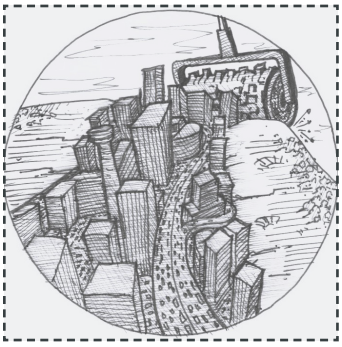


This map shows the vegetation affected by abandoned mining, exposing arsenic to the ecology surrounding Yellowknife.

in the environment posed environmental and health risks to the Yellowknives Dene communities at Dettah and N'dilǫ (Degray 2020, 8).

This reveals that historic emissions from the Giant Mine site continue to be a source of arsenic in the surrounding area, affecting the aquatic food web, lake sediments, surface waters, soils, vegetation, terrestrial birds, and snowshoe hares. Remediating the Giant Mine site involves not only restoring the land but also acknowledging the historical injustices experienced by the harmed communities (Degray 2020, 53). When land is commodified by settler societies, it collides with the pervasive reach of environmental colonialism, amplifying risks and uprooting Indigenous communities from their ancestral homes. On this backdrop, the plight of 'Indigenous Homelessness' becomes ensnared in the web of capitalist exploitation.

Pattern Use Agaisnt Capitalism

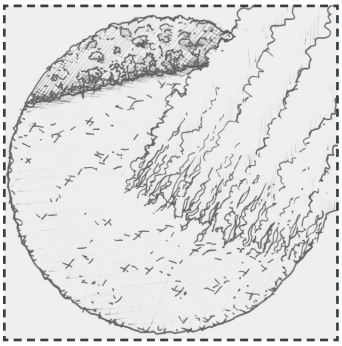


Culture and power as patterns of living are part of the patterns of occupying and using space (Downton 2020)

Linked to the capitalist context is an individualistic ideology that manifests in the built environment through individual ownership and appropriation of land, as well as the expression of identity. However, many patterns in architecture and urban design imply a shared appropriation of space, which contradicts this individualism.

Capitalist ideology defines success and the 'good life' in terms of individual or corporate achievements rather than the flourishing of neighborhoods or communities. Identity in the built environment is primarily expressed through individual or corporate identity, and places themselves are commodified, with their images and meanings bought and sold in the real estate market. Even communal issues such

as zoning regulations and urban design are often debated in terms of their impact on property values (Dovey 1990).



Human culture is a force of nature, everything we do affects the natural world in some way (Downton 2020)

The proliferation of patterns in the built environment is largely dependent on their ability to serve the production of commodities within the competitive landscape of capitalism. Dickens argues that capitalism commodifies land and buildings, valuing them primarily for their exchange value rather than their use value (Dickens 1980). The Pattern Language theory by Christopher Alexander, on the other hand, prioritizes use value over exchange value, suggesting a need for the decommodification of the built environment and a weakening of capitalism's influence (Dovey 1990).

In essence, many aspects of the pattern language require a shift away from capitalism as a prerequisite (Dovey 1990). While the precise socio-political order required for this shift is not entirely clear, it would likely involve elements of socialism, egalitarianism, non-hierarchical structures, small-scale communalism, and perhaps some degree of anarchy (Dovey 1990). While Alexander may not have fully articulated this complete picture, it's imperative to recognize that many patterns and their implementation processes are contingent upon substantial changes in the political and economic contexts of environmental design.

We are part of nature, and we are interdependent with nature (Downton 2020)

Pattern as Epistemological

The pattern language approach represents a paradigm shift in environmental design, demanding a corresponding shift in environmental epistemology. Implicitly phenomenological, the epistemological foundation of pattern language derives from the lived world of everyday experience. Rather than being empirically proven, patterns lies in their direct

connection to our experience of the built environment (Dovey 1990).

Other Kind of Pattern

In the intellectual climate of the 1960s and 1970s, influential critiques such as Bernard Rodofsky's "Architecture without Architects," Amos Rapoport's "House Form and Culture," and Robert Venturi's "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture" underscored the importance of intuitive processes and the ordinary in architectural design, contributing to the theorization of postmodernism. Simultaneously, Kevin Lynch's "Image of City" highlighted the experiences of users in navigating urban spaces, while Jane Jacobs' "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" critiqued urban renewal policies, fostering grassroots efforts at the local level. Even later critiques, like Kenneth Frampton's critical regionalism, emphasized traditional knowledge and cultural meaning in architecture, advocating for recognition of local context. Within this context, there emerged a surge of interest in Christopher Alexander's pattern language in academia, focusing on user empowerment, community participatory design, and the application of patterns in the design process.

Challenging in Pattern Language

Pattern has played a significant role in connecting with the back-to-the-land movement, yet it faces challenges in reflecting Christopher Alexander's work on the pattern language approach to environmental design is examine carefully in terms of the array of forces that hinder its adoption. Navigating a paradigm shift in environmental design poses challenges across epistemological, political,

ideological, and application, impacting both theory and practice.

Upon closer examination of A Pattern Language, it becomes evident that Alexander's intention extends beyond merely crafting a pattern language for design. Instead, his work offers a profound philosophical critique of the modern alienated condition, characterized by the detachment of humans from nature, rigid distinctions, and the divorce of professional architectural knowledge from everyday users (Bhatt 2010).

According to Alexander, vibrant community life transforms spaces from mere functionality to social vitality, unlocking potential for spatial, emotional, and affective learning and cognition (Bhatt 2010). Alexander's discourse on patterns delineates strategies for transitioning a space from functional to socially interactive, often challenging conventional perspectives in the process.

Despite its contradictions, Alexander's work stands out as an insightful experiential, emphasizing the importance of everyday experience in shaping the built environment. While he discusses and invited to varies communities, forming subsets within larger urban environments, he neglects his limitation to many indigenous communities. A Pattern Language argue that frameworks rooted in bodily knowledge can empower individuals and offer insights for rethinking the limitations of empiricism and relativism (Bhatt 2010). Moreover, Alexander's focus on the everyday user provides valuable insights into the self-determination increasingly seen in post-traditional societies (Bhatt 2010). Ironically, Alexander's pattern language engages in this modern reflexive project, empowering everyday experiences in

We cannot afford to despair, lives depend on it, all lives too (Downton 2020)

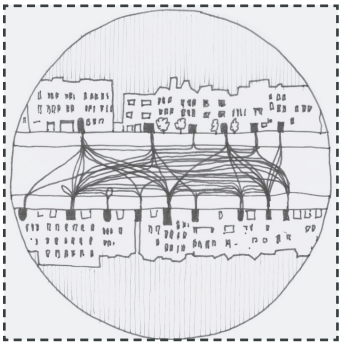
understanding the built environment and granting everyday users agency over space.

Pattern Language as Narrative

Pattern Language serves as a crucial starting point for initiating dialogue. As city dwellers, being witness experiential the intricate dynamics of urban core, observing how one navigate through spaces, gather, and interact. By observing these patterns, the everyday experiences of urban residents, laying a solid groundwork for comprehending the complexities of urban living. By recognizing and perceiving these patterns, it become a dialogue in conversation underlying needs, preferences, and challenges within cityscape, setting the stage for meaningful connection about urban, community, and social cohesion.

Patterns of “Indigenous Homlessness”

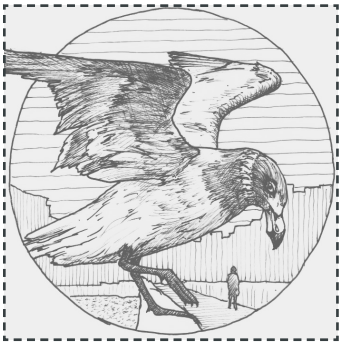
Observing my city, I am struck by the intricate performance of daily life unfolding in the public domain. The patterns on the streets folks may appear repetitive at first glance, but they reveal a complex tapestry of experiential. Every folks on the street becomes a participant in this ongoing rehearsal, each embodying their unique performance within the larger narrative of urban existence. The streets bear witness to the fractal patterns of behavior, where everything resists the scripted performance of everyday life. In the bustling downtown area, large groups converge to socialize, sharing stories and perhaps indulging in alcohol-related discussions. Smaller clusters form in quieter corners, offering moments of intimacy amidst the urban chaos. Yet, there are also solitary figures, seeking for rest in personal spaces, safeguarding their belongings and hidden stashes of alcohol. Stairwells,



Every action we take contributes to the patterns that define lives, reflecting the essence of culture (Downton 2020)

secluded areas behind fences, and front porches serve as stages for these private rituals, where individuals find refuge or seek respite (Hernandez 2015). Through these observations, a recurring theme emerges - alcohol emerges as a predominant preoccupation, shaping the rhythms and rituals of daily life for many within the urban landscape.

Recognizing patterns in both urban and Dene communities contexts opens the door to meaningful conversations about design and lifestyle. In urban settings, observing the flow of people on streets reveals patterns that shape daily life, much like the seasonal round observed in Dene communities, where activities are intimately tied to the land. Imagining a narrative that weaves together these patterns, one envisions a life deeply connected to nature and community. Starting a day with the arrival of new birds signals the beginning of spring, followed by engaging in traditional activities like crafting a birchbark canoe at the birch camp. As the seasons progress, activities shift seamlessly from fishing to berry picking, punctuated by visits to town for coffee and reconnecting with friends. The day unfolds with communal tasks like crafting log buildings, fostering a sense of shared purpose and belonging. Despite the allure of this lifestyle, the reality remains distant, serving as a reminder of the cherished values and traditions often overlooked in urban settings. Through recognizing and honoring these patterns, we can strive to bridge the gap between urban and Indigenous ways of life, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for the diverse narratives that shape our world.



Patterns serve as a bridge between human daily life and that of other species, offering a potential connection that transcends boundaries. (Downton 2020)

Patterns that remain as key to understanding the relationship between humans, culture, and nature (Downton 2020)

Pattern ~~Language~~ as Design Proposal

In this framework of knowledge, Christopher Alexander's approach challenges the conventional dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity. He advocates for transcending this binary perspective, describing his work as a pursuit of a quality that blends subjective experience with objective precision (Bhatt 2010). This notion suggests a departure from mechanical approaches to design, recognizing the importance of deep human emotions and needs in shaping our built environment. However, despite its potential for empowerment, there are limitations to the application of Pattern Language, especially in the context of issues like "Indigenous Homelessness." While Pattern Language offers a methodology for community empowerment, its implementation must be approached with caution to avoid perpetuating colonial tools or system. Perhaps removing 'language' and retaining only 'pattern' allows for interpretation beyond a mere linguistic construct or systematic approach. In this context, the focus of the pattern shifts to reimagining settler environments and being transparent in rearticulating urban spaces to natural environment. By expanding the concept of home beyond physical boundaries and integrating narratives, pattern can become a tapestry weaving the aspirations of the back-on-the-land movement, fostering healing and reconnection with the land, with a narrow focus on both ontological and spiritual dimensions of place. Through this approach, communities like Yellowknife can redefine their relationship with the environment and call upon agency to participate in the process.

This show the diagram how a person can tap into traditional knowledge access on land and remove from urban to land-based practices. Each reflect the seasonal cycle for activities on land and constant reflect on land.

Design process: Site for activating interventions relationship.

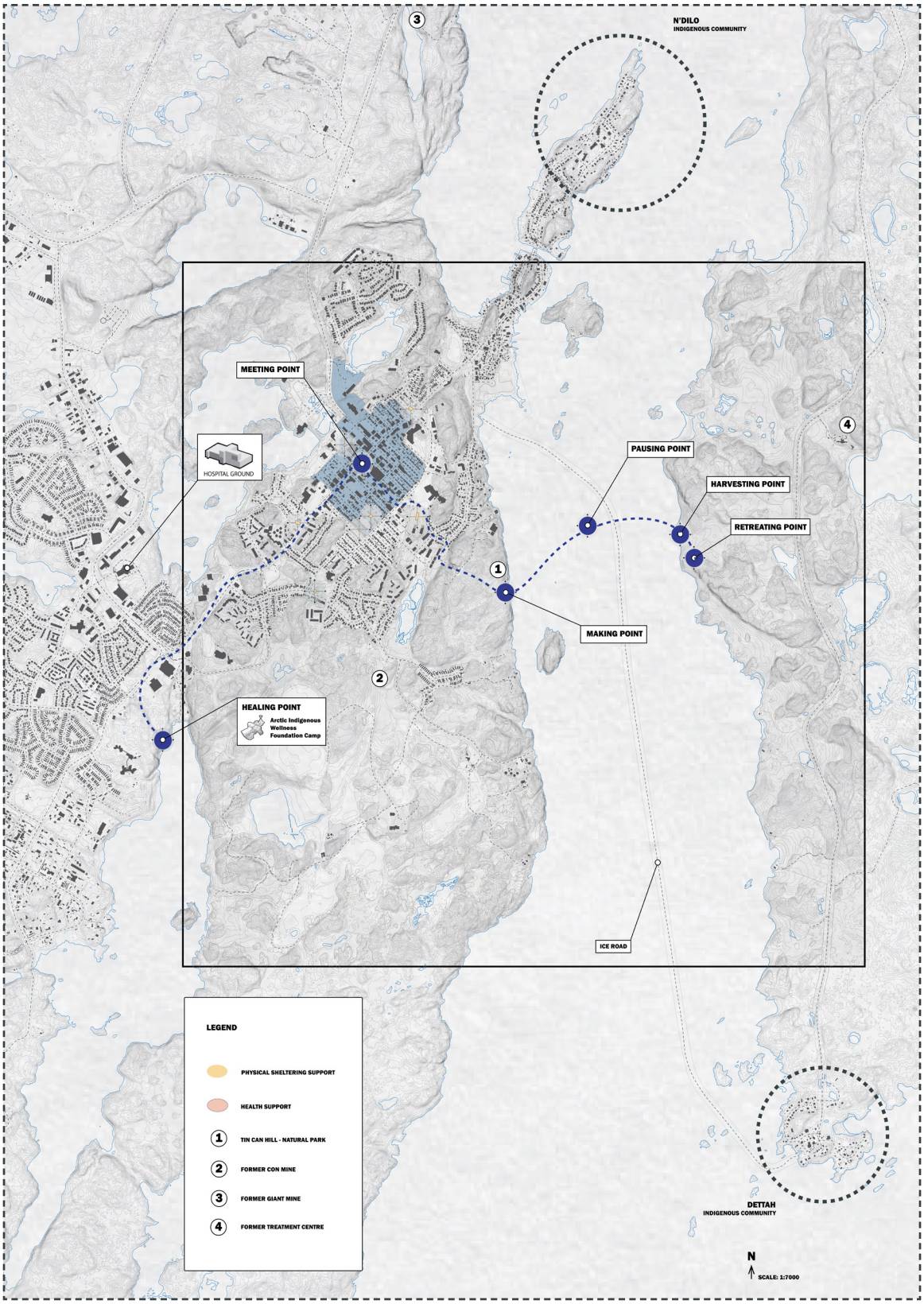
Chapter 5: Design Narrative

Intervention Points

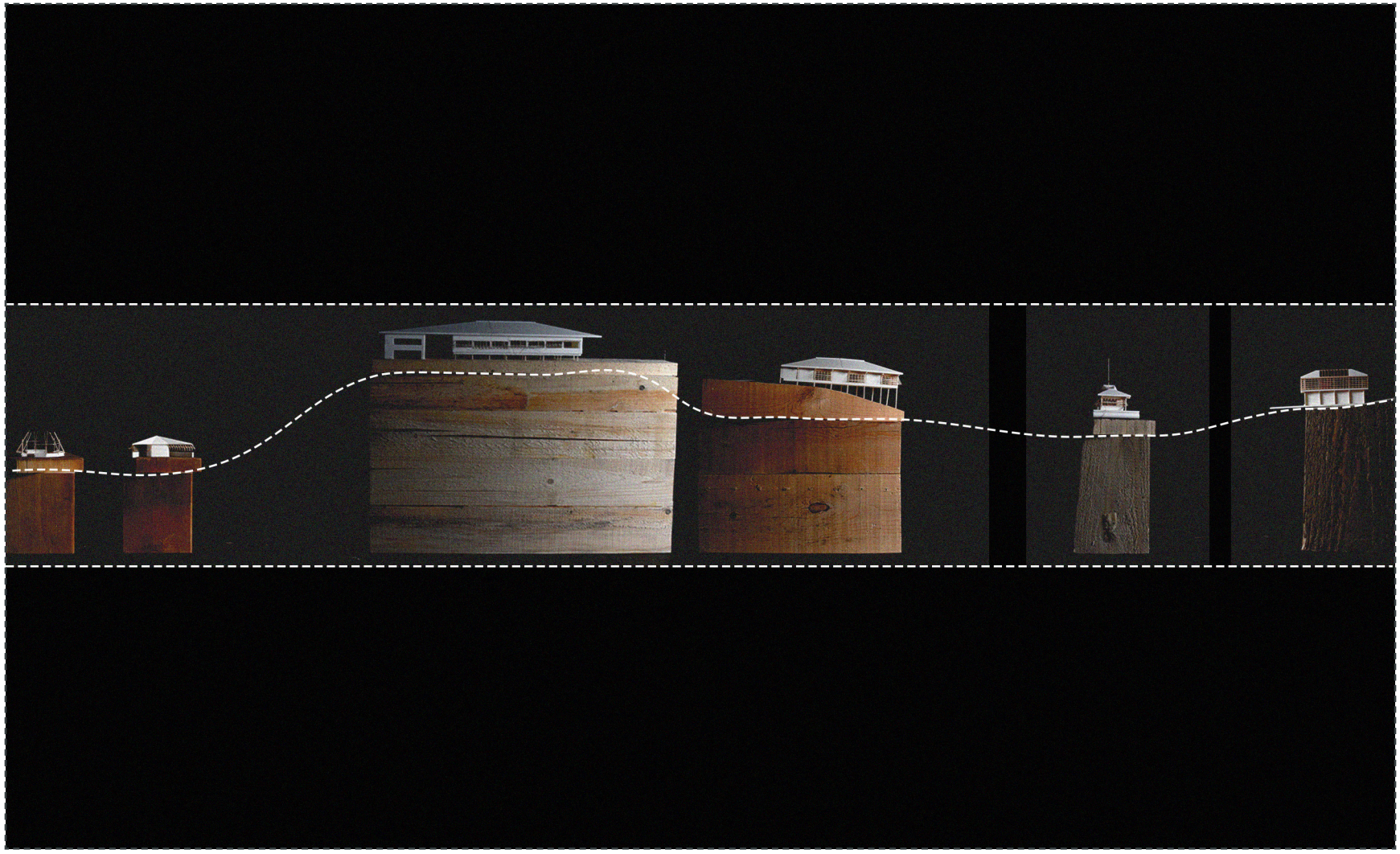
The design of each space is conceptualized as a narrative, weaving together the urban fabric of Yellowknife and facilitating movement across its landscape. These narratives are more than just design project; they are stories that link the ground and the stories of the land, emphasizing Yellowknife's dual identity as both an urban and Indigenous space. This recognition is crucial for reconnecting Indigenous rights within the city's core and its peripheries, stretching across land and water.

Proposed spaces in the city act as catalysts for dynamic interactions, blending and transitioning between urban areas and natural settings, enhancing land-based social activities and access to water. These interventions are not merely physical structures or project-based initiatives; they are imbued with a call for structural policy that considers the sense of home. Architecture takes spaces to reimagine and foster community healing practices on land, and to re-envision urban spaces as therapeutic landscapes. Each intervention serves as a multifunctional point for healing, meeting, creating, pausing, harvesting, and retreating.

The envisioned spaces include a healing camp offering traditional counseling, communal sitting circles symbolizing third spaces, accessible bus station, a right to public wash, makerspaces for communal workshop, canoe-making outdoor room by the water, fishing shacks for food security, greenhouses paired with seasonal storage for traditional medicine and birch sap collection, and serene spots for rest and reflection.



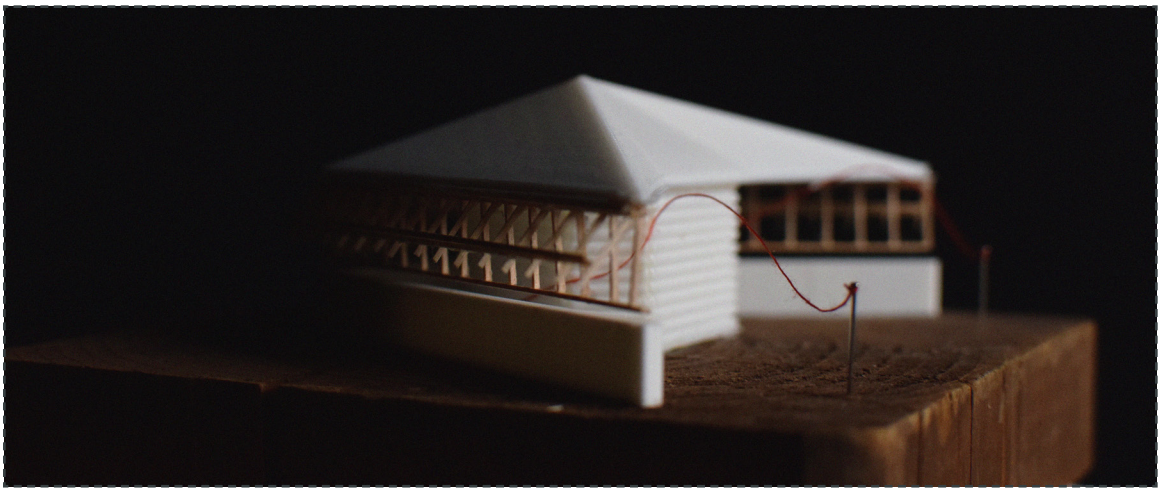
This community map displays six points and their interventions, also highlighting the locations of sheltering support and health wellness access points in Yellowknife.



These models demonstrate the relationship of the land with each intervention and how they are interconnected with each other. Each stands on its own, having its unique relationship to the ground, and as one walks from one to another, the model demonstrates the rhythm of the ground as one moves on land.

Moments

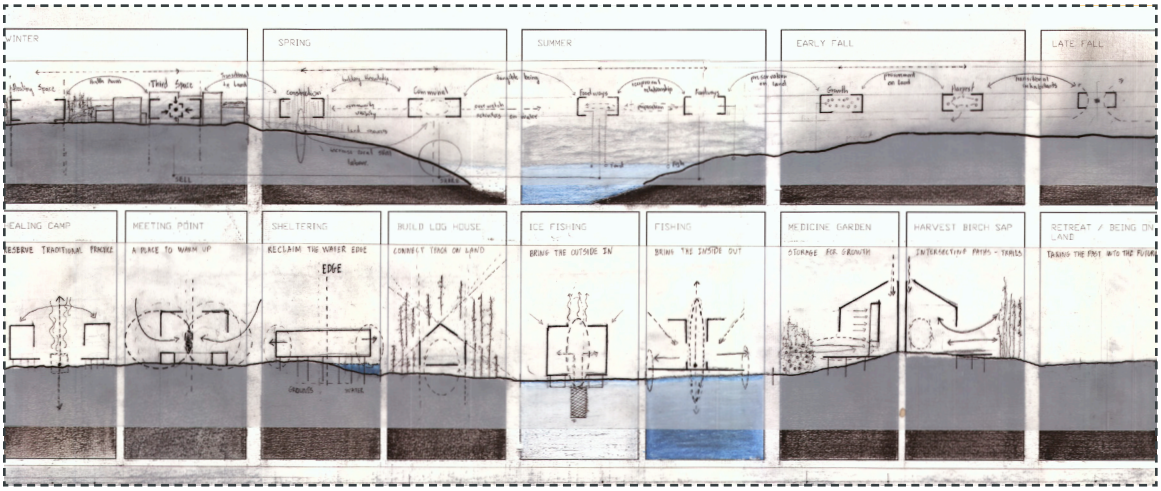
Moments, fleeting and transient, mark the passage of time in our lives. They are like coordinated points, brief instances that punctuate the continuum of existence. In architecture, these moments find expression within frames, each one a distinct entity nestled within the narrative of space. For my model, I chose materials that reflect this interplay of enclosure and openness: a wooden block as a sturdy base representing the earth, delicate wooden sticks forming frames, and solid white surfaces enclosing the space. Red threads symbolize the patterns of motion. Through openings, these moments these story in architecture begin expand into the land. Each moment, intricately connected to the next, forms part of a larger narrative that unfolds within the protective embrace of the enclosure, providing comfort. As one inhabits these spaces, the transparency between the frames creates a sense of home closer to and draws one to the landscape on each intervention on the land. Home unconsciously resides in the mind while patterns flowing by.



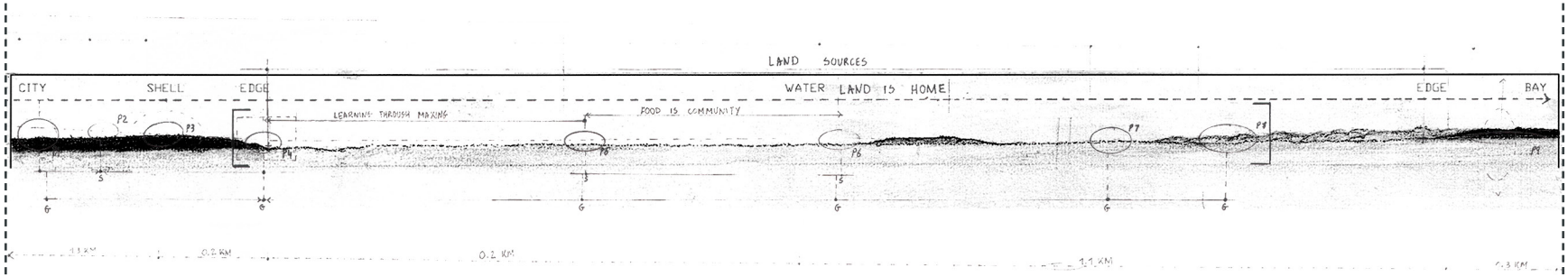
This photograph shows the model reflected in light, encapsulating themes of enclosure versus openness and threads of motion.

Openness

In these scenarios, there is a noticeable openness that seems to welcome interaction, as if the land itself is reaching out. This interplay creates a blur between architecture and the land, deepening their connection with the natural world. Architecture becomes a vantage point, facilitating this dynamic relationship by offering spaces that maintain a visible continuity between “in” and “out.” This form of architectural openness is not just structural but also metaphorical, paving the way for a secure and exploratory engagement with space. Such an approach invites an ontological healing journey, enriched by guiding the reader to understand and appreciate the land as a healing source. Each architectural intervention introduces unique methods of natural ventilation, serving as pathways to improve mental wellness in sync with the land’s natural flow, reminiscent of the Dene’s intrinsic land-based knowledge. This comprehensive interaction cultivates a deeper bond with home, integrating both the physical and cultural dimensions of the environment, and merging presence into the land’s expansive gestures.



This diagram illustrates the expansive on land through architectural form. The process diagrammatically to explore what architecture can bring in terms of openness and ground.



This sketch illustrates the potential site for conducting research, examining the relationships between the edge, the ground, distances between elements, water sources, and bays. It depicts the articulation of the natural environment, showcasing how movement on the land and interconnectedness among these elements contribute to healing.

Healing Point

This is a photo I took when I was visiting the healing camp in Yellowknife, summer 2023 .

Located just outside the urban fringes of Yellowknife, this healing point establishes a deep connection to the earth, devoid of any elaborate design interventions. Initiated in 2018, the healing camp serves as a sanctuary from the influences of western society, offering traditional healing practices primarily to the Indigenous community facing homelessness, and has since become more inclusive.

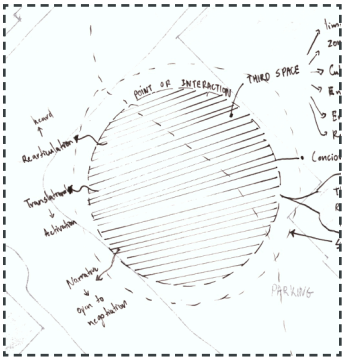
As one approaches, the camp's secluded nature becomes evident, connected to the outside world by a long, natural trail that meanders through the landscape, guiding visitors to its heart. Drawing closer the camp is arranged in a circular layout with tipis and canvas tents, centering around communal fire pits that not only warm the space but also serve as gathering points for communal interaction and gathering.

The camp is thoughtfully organized to support various program activities. It includes a dedicated kitchen area to support a breakfast program for Indigenous experiencing Homlessness. Privacy for personal guidance is afforded through two traditional counseling spaces, where elders can conduct one-on-one sessions, alongside areas designated for social gatherings and the teaching of Dene Laws.

Open to the public, the camp encourages wider community engagement with its programs and initiatives, demonstrating the vital role of land-based healing programs in Yellowknife. These programs bridge traditional healing practices with modern cultural healthcare approaches, underlining the importance of culturally responsive care in fostering wellness and community cohesion.

Healing Point: Immersive Experience at the Hearth of the Healing Camp.

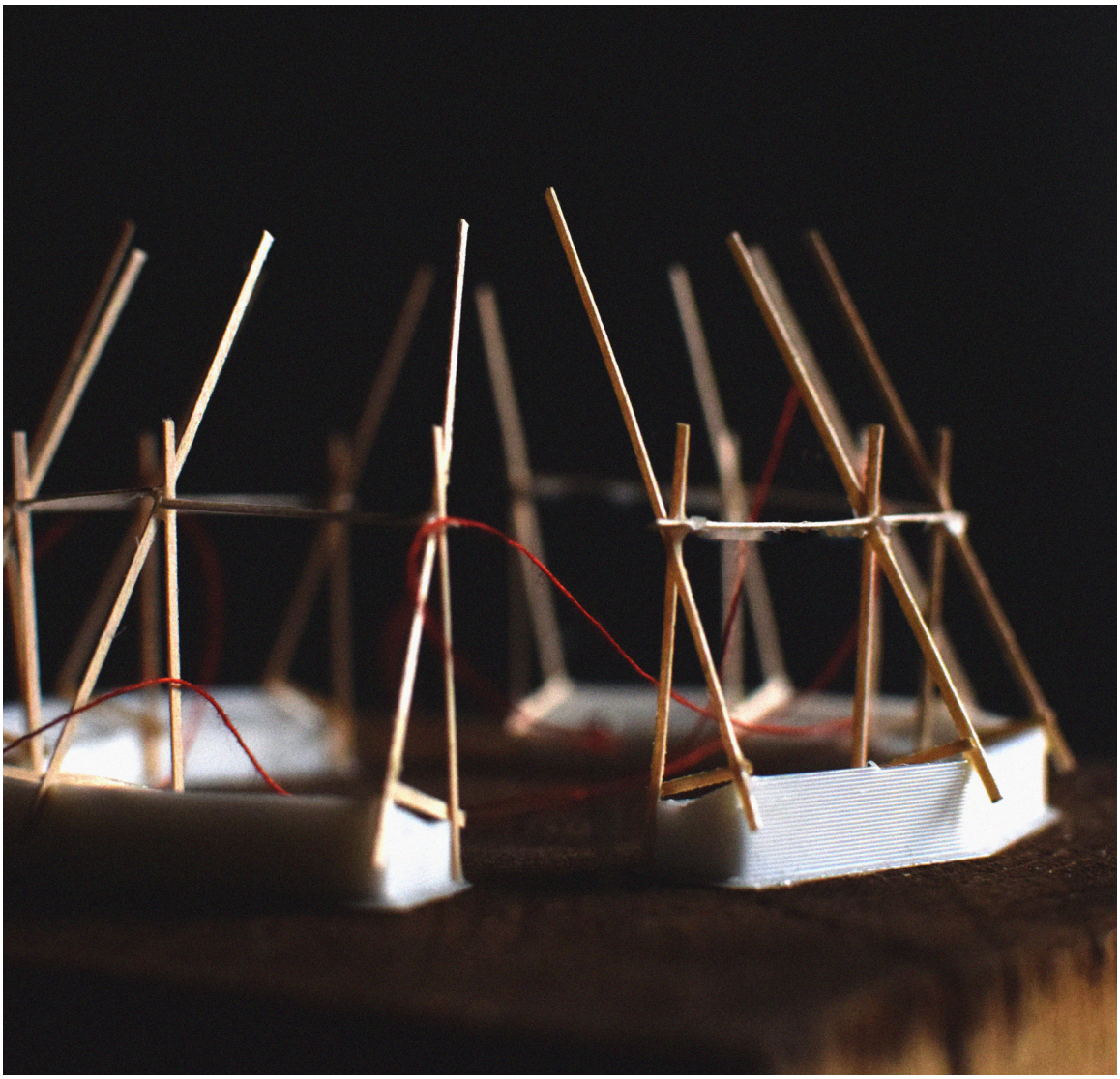
Meeting Point



Design Process: Encircle as Third Space intervention.

In transitioning to a meeting point, Yellowknife's downtown emerges as more than just a thoroughfare; it becomes a nexus of city connection and reflection. As this thesis explores, the downtown area serves as 'meeting spots' where people come together to share their experiences against the backdrop of urban life. Despite the lack of designated gathering spots, such as spaces where people on streets can convene, folks consistently find comfort zones to gather and camaraderie in the building corner nooks and crannies of the cityscape – be it doorways, stairwells, or benches. In these impromptu meeting spots, conversations unfold, stories are shared, and the realities of daily struggles, from substance abuse to familial challenges, are laid bare. It is within these interactions that the essence of community and shared humanity thrives, yet they also expose the deep-seated social issues associated with what we know as "Indigenous Homelessness."

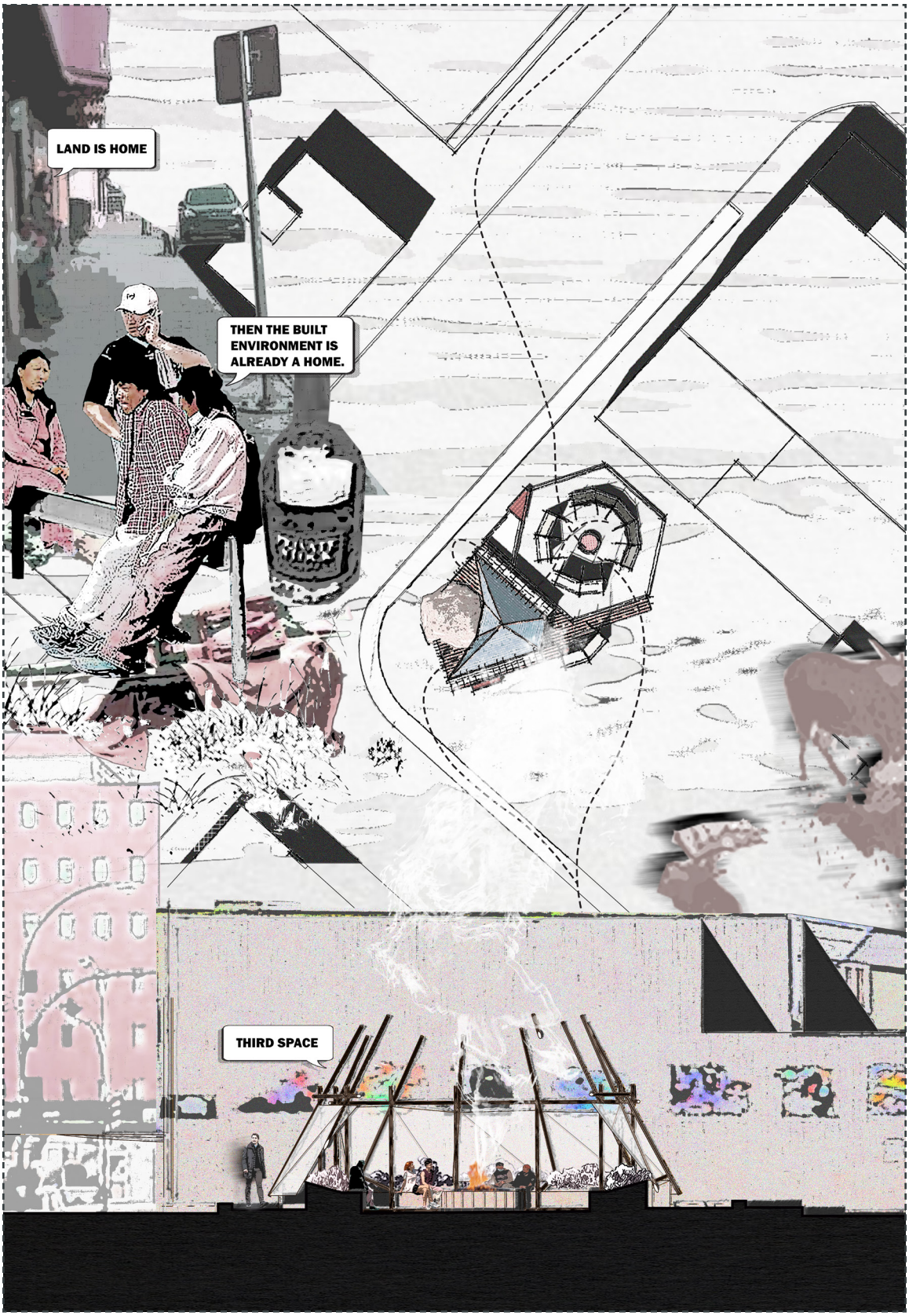
To reimagine downtown as a space that truly honors public rights and agency, interventions are proposed. Among these proposals are the creation of gathering sitting circles and the establishment of an accessible bus station equipped with public washroom. These interventions not only provide practical amenities for all citizens but also symbolize a commitment to fostering inclusivity and aspiration the underlying social disparities that contribute to "Indigenous Homelessness." By transforming Yellowknife downtown into a welcoming and equitable space for Indigenous right, we not only enhance the urban experience but also take a significant step towards reconciliation process to the systemic issues that perpetuate social inequality in our communities.



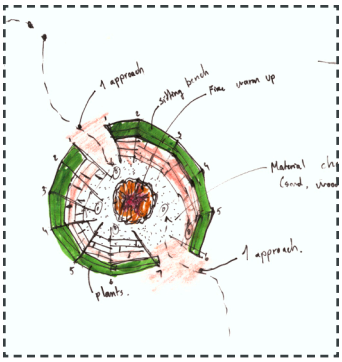
The model illustrates sticks for the frame, with strings depicting motions circulating in and out of the circle. The sticks demonstrate the relationship with the ground, while solid materials are raised to form sitting areas.

A Sitting Circle

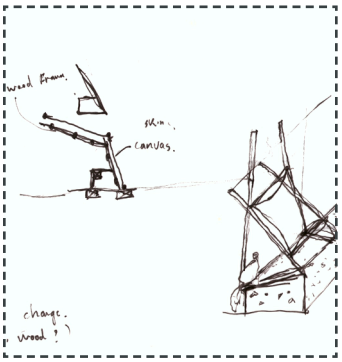
The concept of a third space intervention transcends the conventional notion of physical spaces and delves into a realm where cultural dialogue and understanding take place. Unlike the traditional interpretation where third spaces are defined by their function in relation to home and work, leading to places like libraries, coffee shops, or bookstores, this intervention focuses on creating a space



Gathering Circle: Where Smoke Meets Sky - A City's Anticipation and Response.



Design Process: An informal circle for the public to gather, share, or engage in dialogue - a seating arrangement as a focal point for public interaction.



Design Process:
Seating structure as an undestructive material, where shade frames around the seating, is a tectonic frame of lightness protected through a veil.

for meaningful dialogue between cultures of difference, particularly between Settler and Indigenous individuals (Mossman 2018). Situated at the wedge site center hearth of the city, known as the 50/50 lot, this third space sitting circle serves as a platform for - confronting and acknowledging the localized differences and distinctiveness arising from social and spatial relations (Bhabha 2006). The sitting circle within this space brings dialogue ‘in-between’ to signify the nature of the street’s narrative and participant at urban spaces through informal conversations about contemporary issues, localities, or environmental concerns (Mossman 2018). It acts as a conduit for articulating what the community can learn through conversation and understanding its roots in the history, political beliefs, and sensibilities of the North, fostering conversations that emphasize various scales – from territorial to community to street level. Within this liminal zone, the third space advocates for a synthesis of rights and responsibilities, bridging the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives. By creating an inclusive environment where all citizens can participate voluntarily or simply observe, the sitting circle encourages public engagement and discourse. As people gather around the fire anchor zone, they are invited to connect, concentrate, and liberate movement encounters, gradually immersing themselves in the inner circle to exchange stories and engage in deep listening. In this way, the third space intervention becomes a catalyst for transformative dialogue and community-building, promoting understanding and reconciliation in a diverse urban landscape. In winter, this circle becomes a warm hut for the city, transforming into a warming sphere, lighting a fire to spark more conversations and observing for those who pass by or sit by.

Design Process: A shell acts as bedrock, exposing protected inhabitants as one waiting within a shell.

A Place to Wait

Adjacent to the Sitting Circle stands a sheltering shell, strategically positioned to accommodate folks waiting for public transit along the bustling bus route. This intervention aims to improve access to public transportation by providing a welcoming waiting area for all who traverse downtown streets. Drawing inspiration from the Canadian Shield, the shell's design features a geometric form that opens like a wedge to embrace the corner of the street. Its wings gracefully extend, offering transparency and connectivity to the surrounding public activities, similar to the raven observing the city's rhythm. At its core lies a universal washroom, accessible to streetgoers and passersby, promoting hygiene rights for everyone. The exposed bedrock at the forefront establishes a tangible connection to the region's geological landscape while harnessing geothermal properties for one can sit. Within this space, one is invited into a state of reverie, a portal between transit points that connects folks to move back on land. As one await bus arrivals, the shell brings a sense of openness, encouraging users to embrace moments of stillness and watch the world goes by.

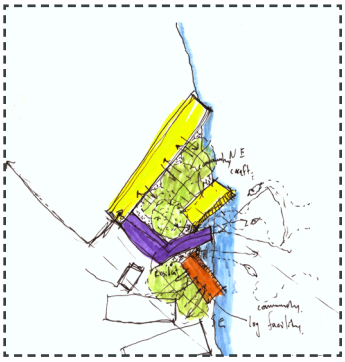
Capturing the essence of openness: A model of the shell structure stands gracefully as a portal, inviting motion to enter as it watches the world go by.

Meeting Point: Where time pauses and passersby become stories, while the watchful eyes of a raven oversee the cityscape and the rock waiting for shell.

Design Process: Contemplating the edges, cliff and ways to connect people with the water below.

Making Point

The proposed intervention aims to bridge the gap in the issue of “Indigenous Homelessness” in urban areas by proposing land-based healing to foster a sense of community and connection to home, particularly focusing on the urban peripheries. The proposal advocates for the adaptation of traditional community practices into urban spaces, with TinCan Hill, located on the outskirts of Yellowknife, chosen as the site for intervention due to its accessibility to essential services and connection to the natural environment. Three key interventions are proposed: firstly, the establishment of a home workshop to provide indoor spaces for traditional craft practices, enabling engagement in heritage preservation and community wellness activities. This workshop serves as a hub for intergenerational knowledge exchange and skill development in traditional building techniques, with access to localized materials and mentoring opportunities. Secondly, an outdoor room for canoe making is proposed, providing a sheltered space along the cliff edge elevated above the water’s edge. Lastly, a dock is proposed to facilitate active engagement with the water, fostering a closer connection to this natural element. Together, these interventions aim to create a multi-centered community space organized to support a return to a lifestyle not regulated by “industrial” time constraints. Central to this vision is the integration of work and communal activities, symbolized by the hearth as the heart of these activities, deeply rooted in the land and its traditions. The focus on a making point brings a connection to home and land in a safe environment, fostering a healthy relationship with the land for mental well-being and community balance, enabling one to transition between indoor and outdoor settings seamlessly.



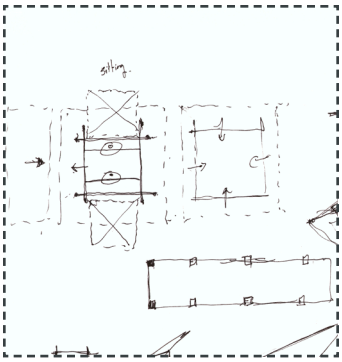
Design Process: steep topograghy, where social activities meet the water, and program site clustering extends to encompass its surroundings.

Home Workshop

As one arrives at this juncture, envisioning a home workshop, the decentralization of work emerges as a pivotal aspect of one's relationship with the land. Embracing traditional ways of knowing, particularly with a focus on work, becomes tangible—a process to be shared, learned, and experienced together. The workshop, situated in an open space with flexible arrangements, adapts to the changing needs and operable windows allowing for the flow of cool air. The indoor workshop, elevated on piles, contrasts with the grounded woodshop, creating a dynamic threshold between the two spaces and providing a shaded outdoor workspace. Here, one can craft sheds, boats, and tiny log houses using equipment from the woodshop while benefiting from the shared knowledge and expertise of peers. Moreover, the indoor workshop provides space for structured programs aimed at cultivating craftsmanship, particularly through beading arts. As the workshop grows, it strengthens connections between oneself and the surrounding world. Ultimately, the workshop hints at healing—a space of openness and warmth, related to a welcoming hearth.

Capturing the fluidity of movement, a thread weaving from one window to another lace the tapestry of the ground, where activities seamlessly blur the boundaries between "In" and "Out".

Making Connections: A Home Workshop Journey - Where traditional knowledge meets local materials, fostering social kinship and a home deeply connected to the earth.



Design Process: create a space that can accommodate flexible indoor activities, with a structure that flows with social interactions and offers views between enclosures to enhance comfort.

Outdoor Room

Perched on the edge of a steep cliff, this safe vantage point offers a unique space for working on traditional Dene birchbark canoes,baskets, drum frames, snowshoe frames, a practice deeply rooted in material culture and activities on the land. Constructed with the rugged Canadian Shield shores in mind, the room extends outward, elevated on the rocky outcrop, providing a physical connection to the surrounding land-view while engaging in working process. Object barks making typically occurs during the spring months, when the trees are abundant with sap, making it easier to harvest bark from large, straight-trunked spruce trees. The enclosure's walls, clad in logs, maintain a sense of traditional structure while embracing openness, with large openings and awnings allowing uninterrupted views of the natural surroundings. Work common at the heart as social contact constant informal contact among its other from peeling and rolling birch bark to sewing and shaping the canoe, tools, and building social connection. Here, architecture seamlessly integrates with a harmonious space for traditional crafts and connection to nature.

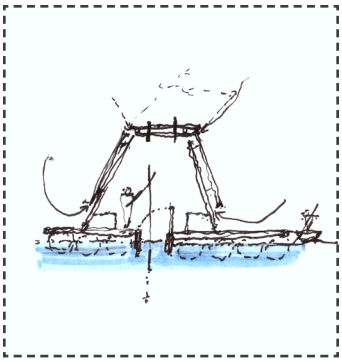
Capturing the edge as it merges with the ground, the outdoor room extends its wings, welcoming openness. Through this moment, the wall offers breathtaking views.

Canoe Narratives: Embracing the outdoor room as a space for tradition, healing, and continuous connection to land, from the making process to the journey on water.

Capturing the flow of the steep terrain cascading towards the water’s edge, this image encapsulates the seamless transition from the elevated intervention above to the tranquil dock below, highlighting the interconnectedness of land and water.”

Still on Water - Docking Point

A dock, a pivotal node of activity along the water’s edge, serves as a gateway to natural bodies of water, offering a stopping point for various activities such as floating, walking on ice, and crossing the bay. Its design strategically bridges the gap between preserving the communal belt of land while fostering a sense of playfulness, straddling the boundary between solid ground and the fluid expanse of the water.



Design Process: Air and Lightness in the Fish Shack.

Pausing Point

> Building strong relationships of reciprocity with the land results in the crumbling of settler capitalism because it fundamentally shifts the relationships people experience and what they believe about who they are, how they are in relation to and with land, and what they believe to be true. Being together on the land, learning with the land, and having a strong relationship with the land is antithetical to settler capitalism itself. (Freeland Ballantyne 2014, 76-77)

As one gently touches the water's surface, engaging in the passive yet profound act of fishing, a connection with land is forged—a connection rooted in intimate knowledge of being and place, submerged within the geographies of the lake. Fishing becomes more than a mere activity; it becomes a means of pausing on the water, attuned to the rhythms of the natural world. Those who partake in this practice develop a keen understanding of their inseparability from nature, reading its surface for clues as to what lies below. Lakes become architectural wonders, revealing the intricate dynamics of human-animal interactions. Land-based practices, including catching, preparation, procurement, and drying fish, are integral to building strong reciprocal relationships with the land for the Dene people. These insights, passed down through generations, form the basis of a rich tradition deeply ingrained in the relationships between people, fish, and the land. The intervention on water lies in the addition of fishing shacks along the shoreline, offering opportunities for folks to rest before jumping across the bay. These fishing shacks operate seasonally, serving as a circle relationship with all seasons, providing a pause for one to reconnect with the natural world while preserving the traditional practices and ethics of reciprocity involved in human-non-human interactions in fishing, both on land and submerged in water, as sources of healing.

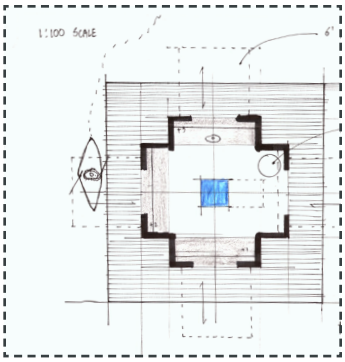
Design Process: Versatile Shack Walls for Year-Round Comfort.

Openness: as the structure floats, the four sides invite the stillness of the landscape while seamlessly connecting outdoor and indoor activities, harmonizing the bond between water and land, and offering a sense of belonging to the world.

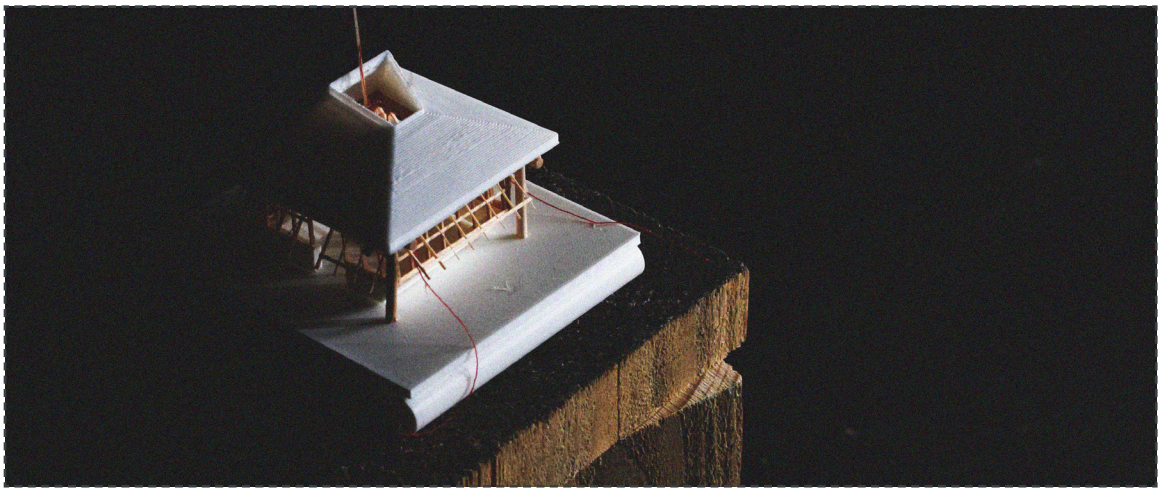
Summer is here

Nestled between these edges, a stream meanders along the waterline, where a fishing shack stands with an irresistible allure, inviting passersby. Positioned at the midpoint of the water, yet adaptable to various locations as needed, the shack seamlessly integrates into the natural paths, maintaining its connection to flow toward to the floating deck. As one docks and makes a stop, this intervention

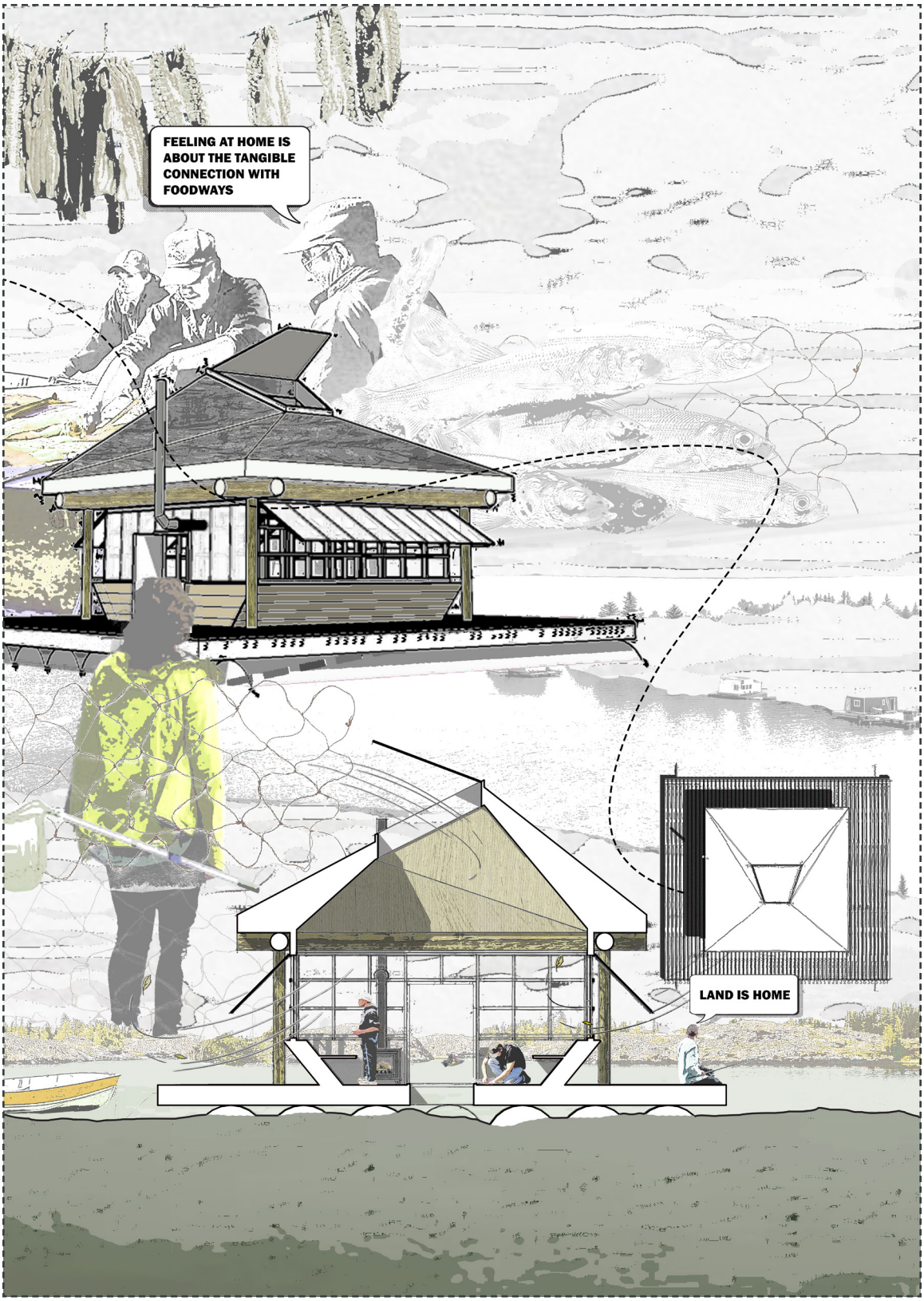
comprises a floating structure with a wooden frame and openings, allowing for ventilation and connection with the environment. During the summer months, the architecture seamlessly integrates the outdoor environment, providing shelter while preserving the connection to foodways. Folks can use the shack for cleaning, preparing, and drying fish, bridging the tangible and intangible relationships with the social and animal life on land. Upon entering, they are greeted by a luminous interior, illuminated by a central oculus that brings light into the space. As they pause within its confines on a sweltering summer day, they can rest and reflect, fostering connections with others and the environment. The fishing shack embodies a sense of home, creating a welcoming atmosphere where social relationships extend beyond human interactions. Through its adaptable design and thoughtful integration with the surroundings, the shack invites one to reflect on the seasonal cycle, feel right at home, and read the surface of the water for clues as to where fishing in the summer brings the day from the streets to the land.



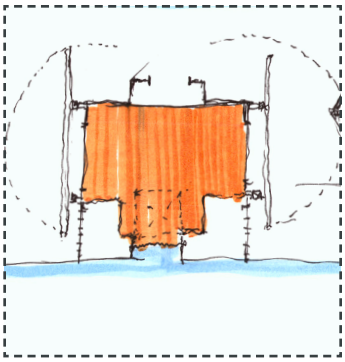
Design Process: a floor view opening up the space to bring the flow of activities in and out, fostering a relationship between water and enclosure.



Capturing natural light: A top-down perspective reveals the fishing shack's frame skillfully capturing the essence of light and through its oculus.



Capturing the Essence of Seasons: Fishing in Summer and Fall on the Lake - A narrative of human connection to nature, where water binds to the land, fostering human respect and offering moments of healing through the timeless act of fishing.

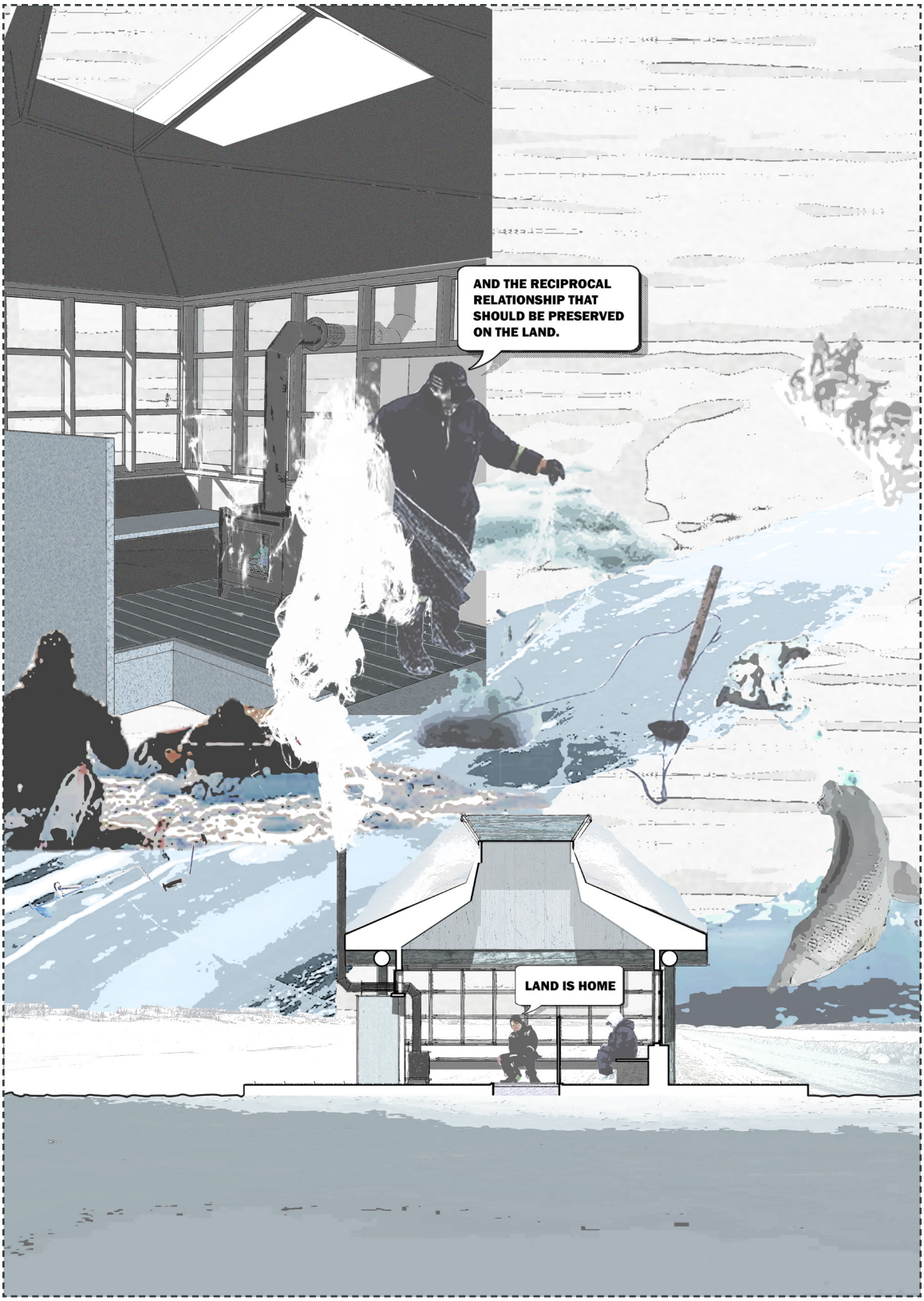


Design Process: Making a seamless transition from outdoor elements to indoor warmth, with adaptable panels for personalized comfort during winter.

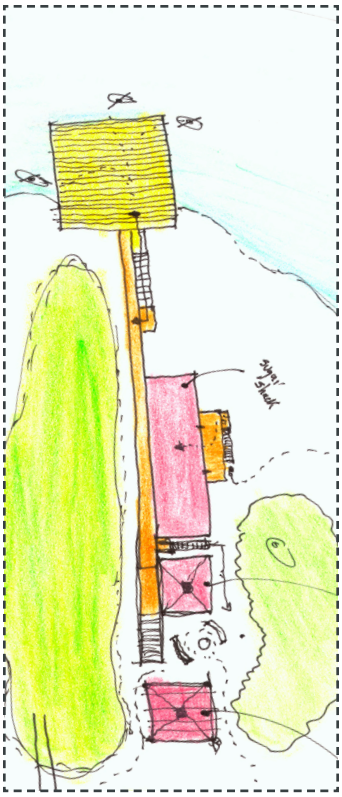
Winter is here

As the ice thickens on the surface of the water, it transforms into a road connecting distant points across the frozen landscape. Despite the biting chill, January brings a subtle warmth as the sun ascends higher in the sky, casting reflections off the snow that necessitate the use of sunglasses and sunscreen. An ice fishing emerges as a cherished pastime, offering a unique opportunity to take place. Although the winter sun may offer little in terms of warmth, its feeble rays provide a sense of comfort, especially within the confines of a fishing shack. Here, the sunlight streams in through the frames, casting a gentle glow and momentarily warming the interior. As the burner stove hums softly, its heat permeates the room, creating a cozy atmosphere conducive to relaxation and reflection. In the heart of this tranquil setting, the act of drilling a hole through the ice becomes a meditative experience, offering a glimpse into the world beneath the frozen surface. Within the shelter of the shack, one find comfort and healing, their spirits uplifted by the scenery on land of the winter landscape and the solidarity shared with fellow other folks in town.

Capturing Community Resilience: Street Outreach providing transportation to the ice road for folks at shelters seeking safe access to land-based activities during the winter season.



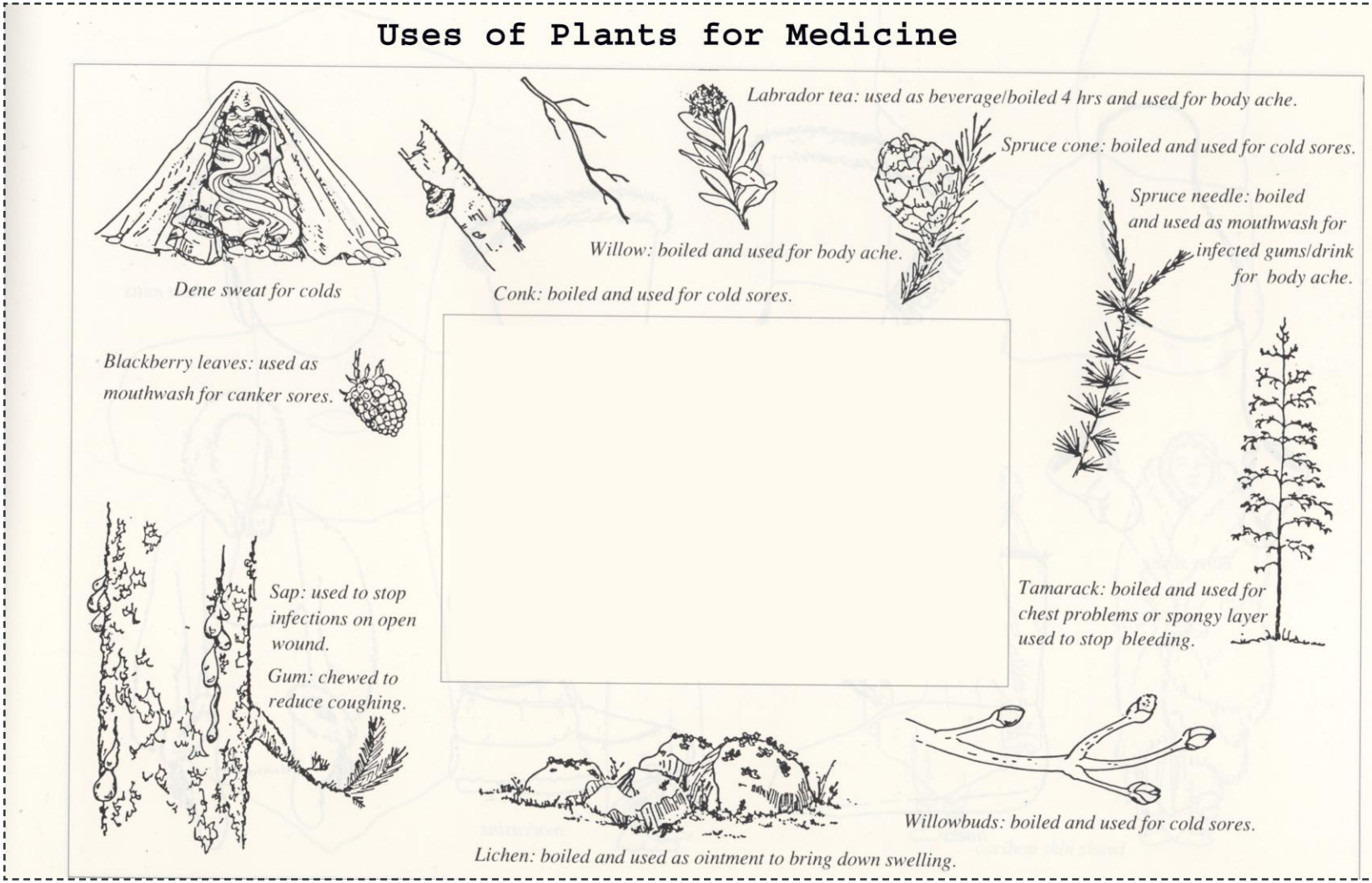
Nurturing Mental Wellness Through the Seasons: Fishing in Winter - Heal through frozen land, the humble fishing shack provides a sanctuary for those seeking support and peace in mind, through social active in the changing seasons.



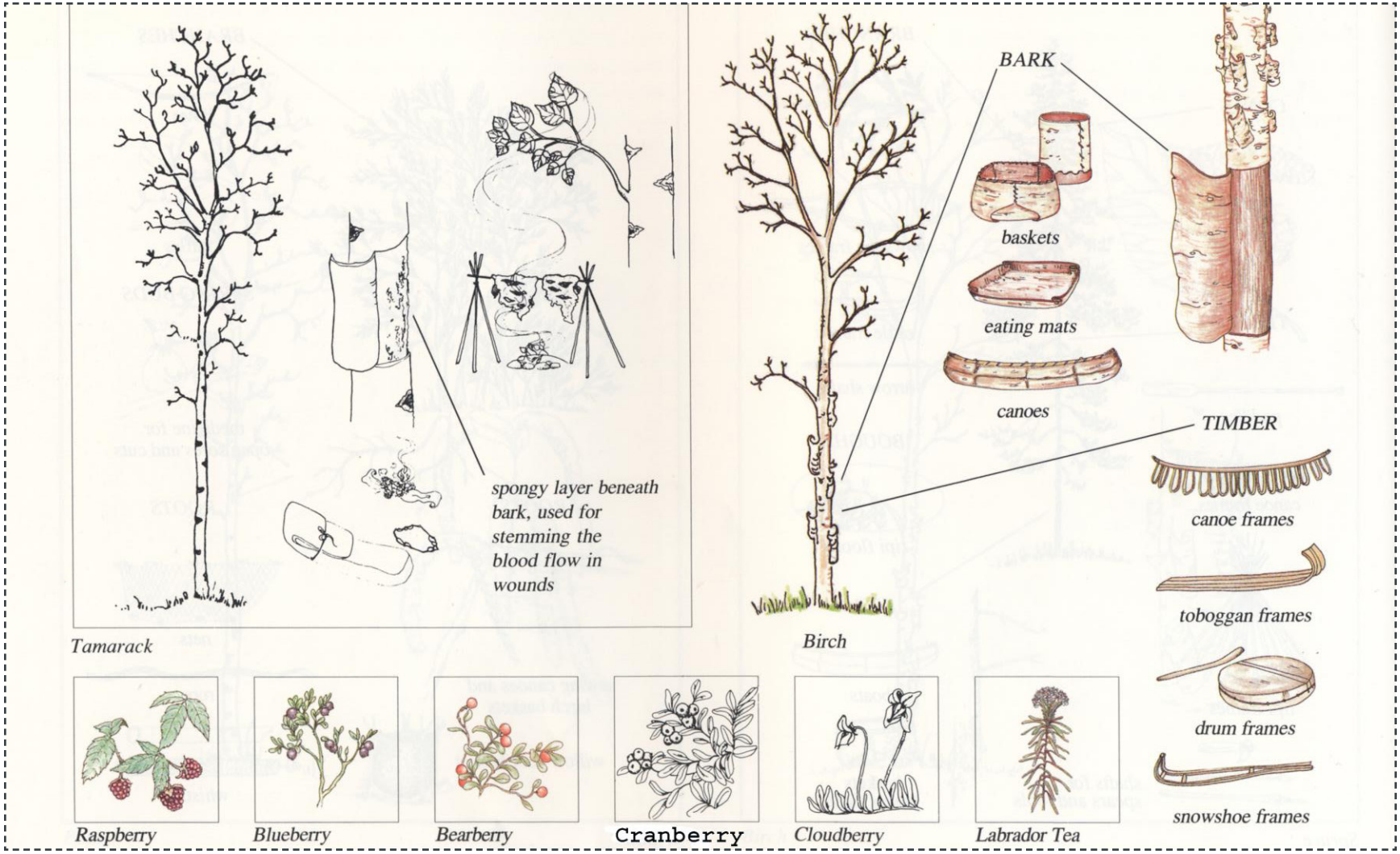
Design Process: upon arrival at the bay, a space is designated for food protection, encompassing relationships with a greenhouse, storage areas, trails, spaces for collecting or storing medicines, and areas for making birch sap.

Harvesting Point

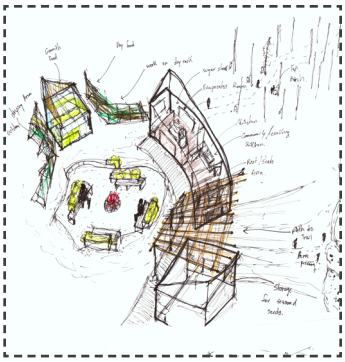
In the Subarctic region, Dene groups possess extensive traditional knowledge of harvesting practices, with each region boasting its own unique ecological characteristics. In the ecologically diverse NWT, inhabitants engage in the collection of berries, medicinal plants, and herbs to create traditional medicines for therapeutic purposes. This preservation and application of Dene knowledge, intricately embedded within the ecosystem, provide valuable insights into the optimal locations and timing for harvesting activities. A notable harvesting site lies across the Bay of Yellowknife, where an intervention is proposed to establish a greenhouse and a designated trail to the birch bush, providing access for harvesting programs and supporting agency. These initiatives not only assist individuals in traversing the land but also foster intergenerational exchanges, with elders passing down their wisdom to successive generations. Embracing the tradition of trade, the exchange of harvested resources, such as medicinal plants, for essential food items like dried fish or meat, tea, and sugar among community members, serves to strengthen social bonds and enhance community well-being. Additionally, this proposed site for harvesting programs contributes to ongoing knowledge generation about seasonal ecological conditions, which becomes ingrained in social memory and aids participants in the healing process. Efforts to cultivate food on the land, alongside traditional harvesting practices, contribute to food security, with surplus produce traded back to the community Food Bank. As ecological conditions evolve, so do the practices and regulations governing resource sharing, highlighting the dynamic nature of traditional practices in harmony with the environment.



The illustration depicts “A Dene Way of Life” - Harvesting plants and herbs to create medicine. This traditional practice serves as a means of producing healing remedies. The illustration also demonstrates how plants were historically used by the Dene to treat sickness. (Department of Education, Culture and The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre 2006).



The illustration depicts “A Dene Way of Life” - Type of berries and the use of trees in the areas. (Department of Education, Culture and The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre 2006).

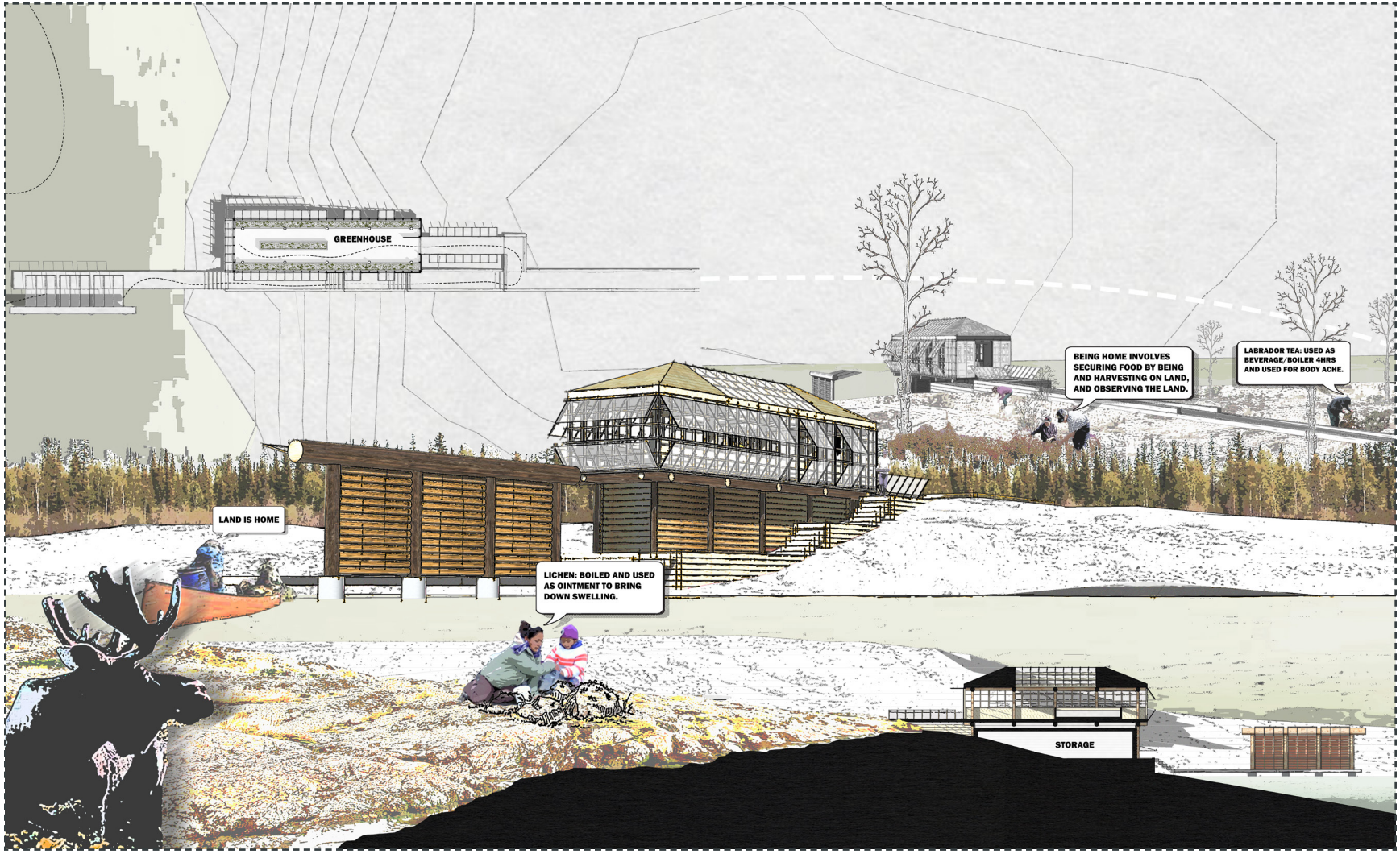


Design Process:
harvest and growth - the greenhouse program extends sowing, offering space for nurturing plants, harvesting produce, and make path to wilderness.

A Wild Garden

Nestled on the periphery of the bay, a greenhouse stands elevated on stilts, its presence commanding attention as it overlooks the stilnness of waters below. Serving as a sanctuary for traditional healers and participants alike, the garden within embodies a delicate balance between artifice and nature. It evokes a sense of the wilderness, where human intervention has tamed yet not subdued the wild essence that surrounds it. Constructed with a purposeful design, the greenhouse efficiently utilizes space, featuring thermal seasonal storage areas for dry foods and seedlings. Its wooden frames and translucent veils create a welcoming atmosphere, allowing ample sunlight to nourish the indoor crops. The connection to the land extends beyond the greenhouse, with the ground adorned in lush moss and vegetation foliage. The air is perfumed with the scent of labrador tea and birch sap, while the presence of wild plants, berries, and herbs adds to the sensory experience. As one cross the rugged terrain, the wild land fades into obscurity, replaced by the untamed sense of home on land, yet the greenhouse remains diligently cared for.

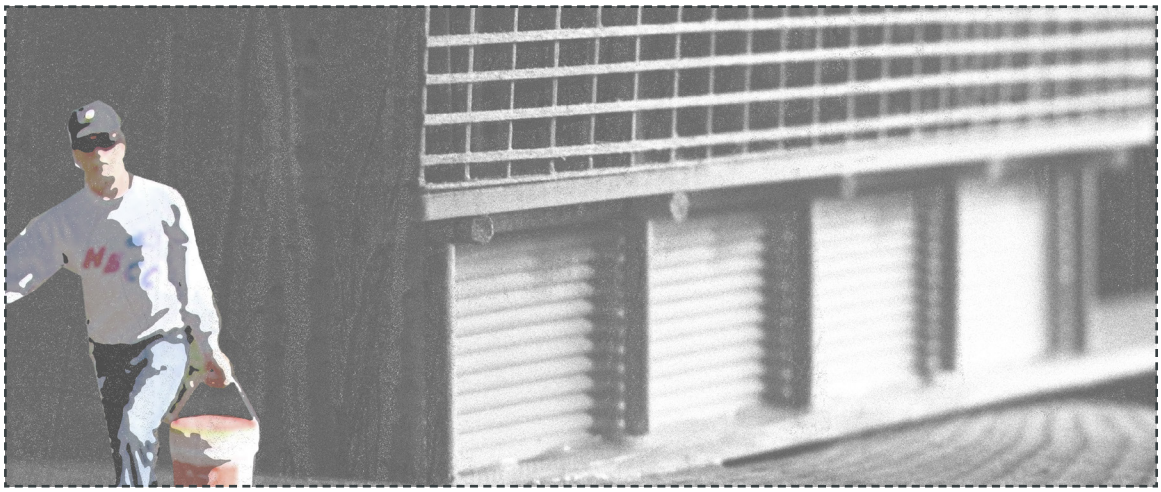
Capturing structure and nature, the lightly framed greenhouse stands on solid log supports, invitingly elevated to oversee its surroundings and seem as care all kinds of beings.



Step into the wilderness garden, where each footfall teaches symbiosis with nature, nurturing the land's resources and transforming the mind with traditional wisdom, make use of plants as healing properties.

Birch birch birch

Strolling along the back trails among the birch bush, one is immersed in the longstanding tradition of birch tapping practiced by the Dene people. Following a designated path through the wild garden, one arrives at a spring in late March, carefully selecting a birch tree with healthy sap running vertically, indicating the ideal time for tapping. With a gentle tap into the birch, sap begins to pour out from the trunk, a vital resource used by the Dene for cooking, medicine, and sustenance during travels across the land. For settlers, birch sap takes on a different role, often used for syrup-making and culinary purposes. However, for the Dene, birch tapping is imbued with a deeper significance—it embodies the spirit of the land, fostering a harmonious relationship between oneself and nature. As one walks along the trail, surrounded by the peace ambiance of the bush, a sense of connection to healing sounds is felt, guided by the wisdom of the elders. One immerses oneself in the sights, extending upwards to the sky, absorbing the scents and sounds of the bush, as the rhythm of the spring walks seamlessly blends with the vibrant pulse of life emerging all around.



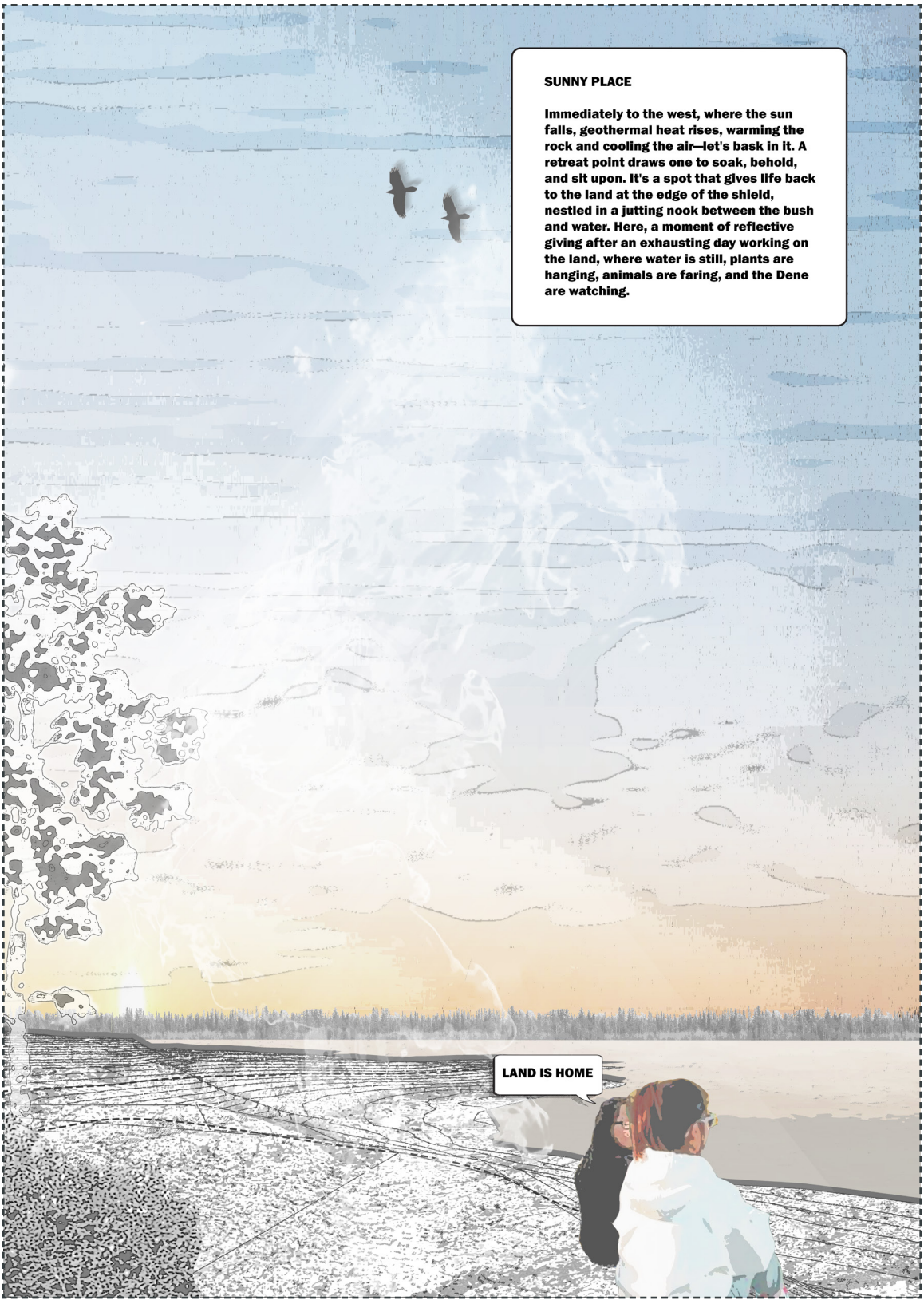
Capturing the essence of work, its path leads to the birch bush, where both mutually harvest from the land as it thrives within the inner growth of the greenhouse.

Birch: A Healing Source - Tapped for Medicine, Walking, Cooking, and Syrup Making. Respect and Preservation Uphold its Spiritual Essence.

Retreating Point

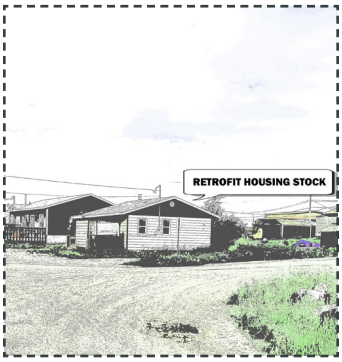
Retreating to this point offers a refuge where there are no tourist activities, settler environments, or the mainstream of Yellowknifers. It serves as a hideout where one can escape the marginalization often experienced on the streets. On the other hand, the reality of “Indigenous Homelessness” underscores the social political present in this city, where one experiences spectrum forms of homelessness, often grappling with sensory overload. For those ready to embark on a journey of rehabilitation and healing, the land offers invaluable support, fostering a reflective atmosphere conducive to healing through guidance of self-determination. Heal on land journey approaches are complemented by practical amenities such as access to traditional counseling, meals, gathering spaces, transportation portals, public washrooms, and spacemaker, woodshop. With the freedom to engage in activities like fishing, gardening, or collecting traditional medicine, folks find distracted to be on streets in the rhythm of home. By take the cycle of daily tasks, this retreat provides a much-needed respite, offering a moment to reflect on the day’s challenges and accomplishments. This retreat is an opportunity to unwind after a long day’s work, a favorite spot to spend quiet hours when the area is accessible to rest and feel the ground, earth, water, and sky – nature, allowing one to integrate with the land as home and reflect on the notion of home, a memory in the community. Retreating involves engaging in meditation, mindfulness, and compassion, where one respects the sacredness of the land, recognizing it as “home” ground. Free from external interventions, it offers a vantage point to gaze back at the Yellowknife across the bay, providing a different perspective on the landscape and one’s place within it.

Capturing the Transition: A narrative unfolds as the cityscape fades into the background, offering a glimpse of urban life from afar, while the path leads towards a serene refuge.



A narrative shows the mother and daughter sitting on land, with nothing but trees, water, and rocks visible on the horizon. A warm rock becomes a retreating point to soak and bask after a day’s work on the land.

Chapter 7: Conclusion



A view to a typical community landscape.

Through my research, I continuously question our role as settlers in engaging with the concept of “home” in relation to the broader social phenomenon of “Indigenous Homelessness.” I highlight how geography, architecture, and political engagement intersect, demonstrating how patterns in the built environment both enable and constrain the relations between structure and agency. My analysis critiques the connections between cultural and political approaches to land and the built environment, prompting a broader reflection on the importance of social context to tackle “Indigenous Homelessness” in Yellowknife.

This thesis rearticulates the notion that “home” should be prioritized in structural policy factors, including housing provision, land management, health, social sectors, and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. It views home as an avenue to healing that provokes reconciliation actions towards Indigenous rights and self-determination acts. This recognition is seen as a point of reparation and a shift towards a decolonial mindset in spatial practice, viewing land as an expansion of lived experiences. By leveraging patterns as a guiding principle for everyday rehearsal and resilience in spatial challenges, we can reform the production of spaces in Northern regions.

My visit to community.

The phenomenon of “Indigenous Homelessness” in the North is deeply rooted in the complex layers of colonial legacy, exacerbated by settler colonialism. Housing policies over the years have been identified as a root cause of this issue. The cultural dimension of home becomes fractured, leading to a sense of disconnection and instability within Indigenous communities. Addressing “Indigenous Homelessness”

My role is as a participant in a public agency.

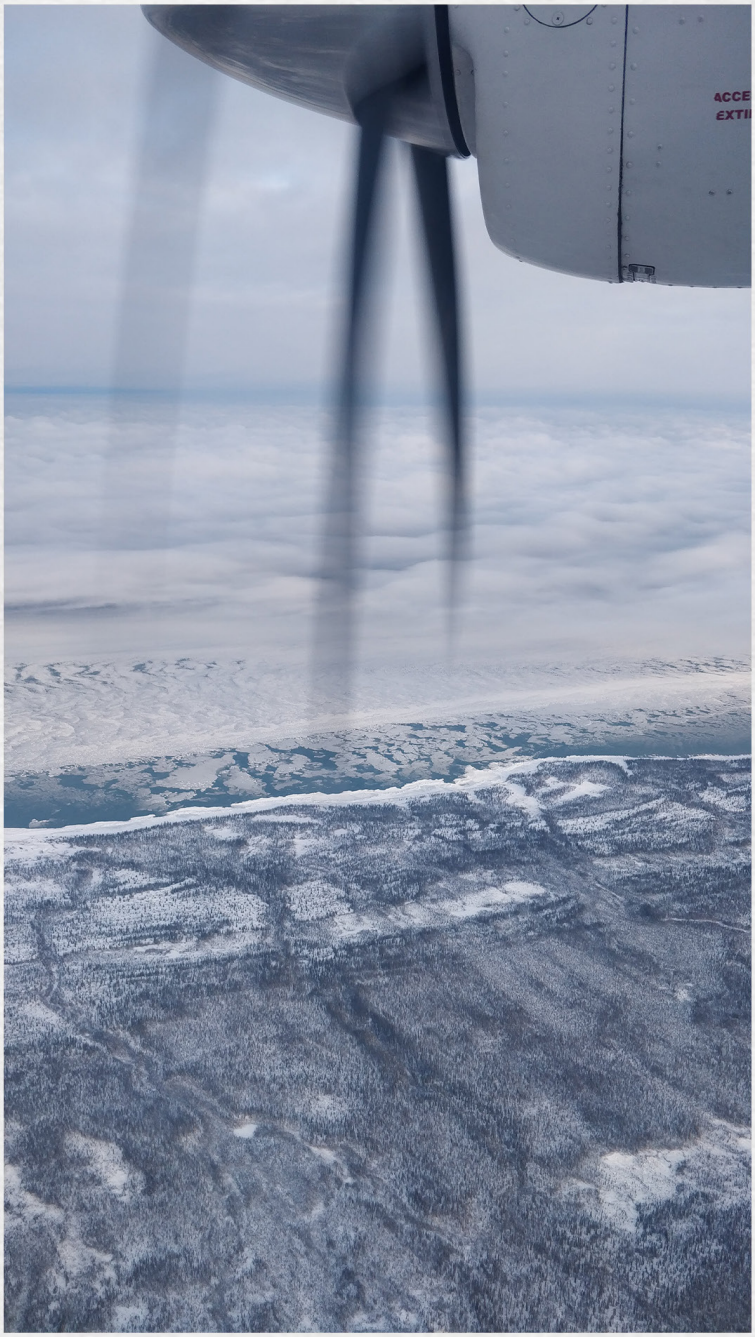
requires a long-term approach that acknowledges historical injustices and prioritizes culturally sensitive solutions to restore the bond between individuals and their homes.

My connection to this thesis is reflected in my experiences working in Housing as an public agency. These experiences are echoed in my visits to community. Each of my visits to the North entails flights in and out, offering a bird's-eye view of the landscape characterized by ever-shifting clouds and topographies. As a settler, my identity remains unchanged, oscillating between a sense of arrival at someone else's home and the realization of my own intrusion into it. However, the notion of home is complex in this context, existing within the jurisdiction of government property. My role involves tasks into various of housing practices, including land ownership, site preparation, neighborhood dynamics, design processes, community experiences, and technical considerations. These elements collectively shape the spatial relationships within the community, profoundly influencing the lived reality of its inhabitants.

In the future, I foresee public agency' evolving role incorporating diverse Indigenous voices into the design process, fostering a holistic approach for collaborative endeavors. This entails establishing informed methodologies founded on relationships and trust, facilitating dialogues where participatory and engaged approaches allow for shared storytelling. Through active participation, our collective efforts are shaped and guided towards meaningful outcomes. Working closely with communities fosters resilience and promotes healthy environmental practices. Listening intently and connecting deeply with the land, acknowledging its significance and the seasonal rhythms shared by all, becomes essential. Furthermore, striving

to build for extreme climates and sharing knowledge and resources to address logistical challenges in remote areas are crucial.

Central to this vision is the integration of patterns as a fundamental element, as proposed in this thesis. Implementing patterns in structural policy can serve as a guiding light towards creating meaningful homes. By incorporating patterns into the framework of policy-making, we can shape environments that foster a sense of belonging and healing. This approach recognizes the importance of home not just as a physical structure but as a dynamic space where cultural identity, community ties, and individual well-being intersect. Through thoughtful integration of patterns into policy, we can empower communities to actively participate in the design and development process, ensuring that homes reflect the constitutive meanings and cultural politics.



The essence of home transcends geographical boundaries, leading towards a critical geography of architecture that encompasses the meanings and cultural politics within diverse landscapes and worldviews, inseparable from the land within both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous paradigms.

Appendix A: Larry Jone's Letter

WRITTEN CONSENT

Study Title: Homelessness in North Slave Area - Yellowknife

Tai Nguyen Ha, of Yellowknife, NT is completing necessary study and thesis work to attain a Master of Architecture at the School of Architecture at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Tai and I have had several conversations pertaining to Homelessness in the North, and specifically Homelessness in the North Slave area, on the north side of the Great Slave Lake. We have discussed the history of North, primarily post-contact, and mainly the last century, and housing in particular, with a focus on the process of how settlements were created, complete with infrastructure, schools, health centres, local government offices, and several types of housing delivered under the National Housing Act.

It is generally understood the creation of communities in the North served to bring the Indigenous People of Denendeh, off the land, into communities as a point where services could be accessed, services, such as stores, schools, health services, houses, transportation links (air, water and land or ice roads) and related supports. In doing so, traditional Dene Metis, and Inuit connection to the land was impacted in many ways, traditional lifestyles diminished.

Our focus in discussion has been to consider homeless Indigenous persons, who are in their home, as the land is home. The urban environment in Yellowknife is on the land, and given that land is home, how to sort out a way of thinking about designing an urban to land connection and areas of use for homeless to reconnect to the past ways of being on the land. Some homeless individuals lament the loss of the connection to the land, and many groups are clear, reconnecting to the land is a healing process.

A note about myself, I have spent over three decades in housing, including direct activities involving the Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition which was formed in 1999. In all, I have spent over five decades, in all areas of construction in the North, site supervision, project management, community development activities, and general management in housing, including district management of programs, technical services, finance, portfolio management and partnering with NGO's such as the Salvation Army, YWCA NWT, Women's Centre, Transitional Homes, and various housing and community groups, serving Elders, Persons with Disabilities and Youth and many Indigenous communities.

Larrv Jones

I have discussed information presented to myself from Tai Nguyen Ha as his journey evolved in his study of homeless Dene, Metis, Inuvialuit, and Inuit, how they get by on the streets of Yellowknife. We have discussed ideas as to how other On the Land Program and Services endeavour to establish reconnection to the land to provide a setting familiar to homeless people to support them on their journey to making healthy positive choices, most approaches are set-up away from the urban centre. Tai in his work focused on how to include the urban community in the daily round of a person experiencing homelessness.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions of Tai related to his study, I received satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

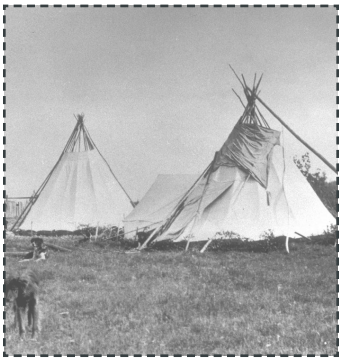
I am also aware that my comments from our discussions may be included in the thesis and/or publications that may come from this research, and time spent on the topics, initially I expressed that I preferred that my involvement would be anonymous. However, at this point, I am fine with my name and comments being included in Tai's work.

I am self-identifying as Dene-Metis, I was born here in my homeland of Denendeh.

If there are any questions, concerns or clarification required, please do not hesitate to contact me.

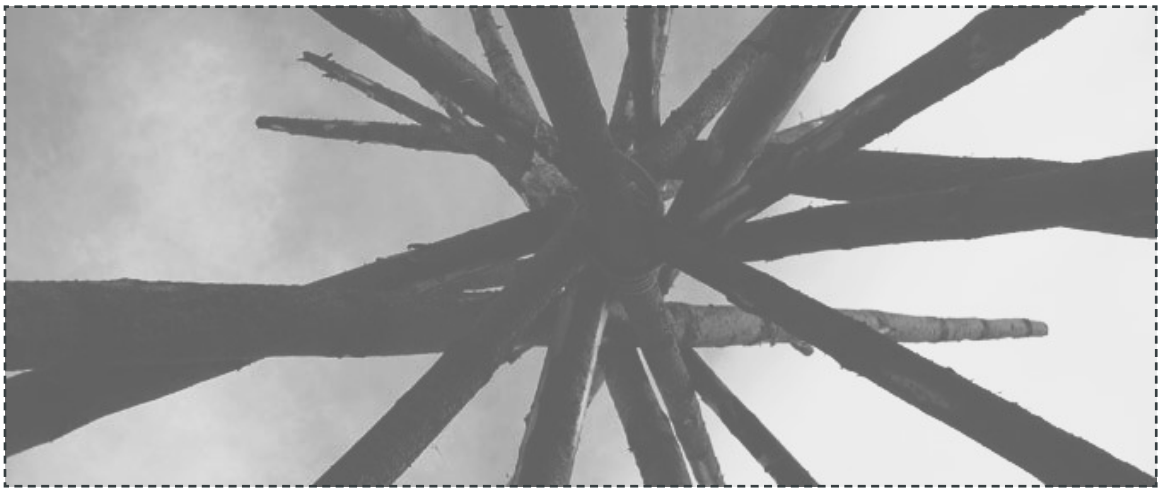
By providing my consent, I am not waiving my legal rights or releasing the investigator/student or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities.

Appendix B: Conical Lodge

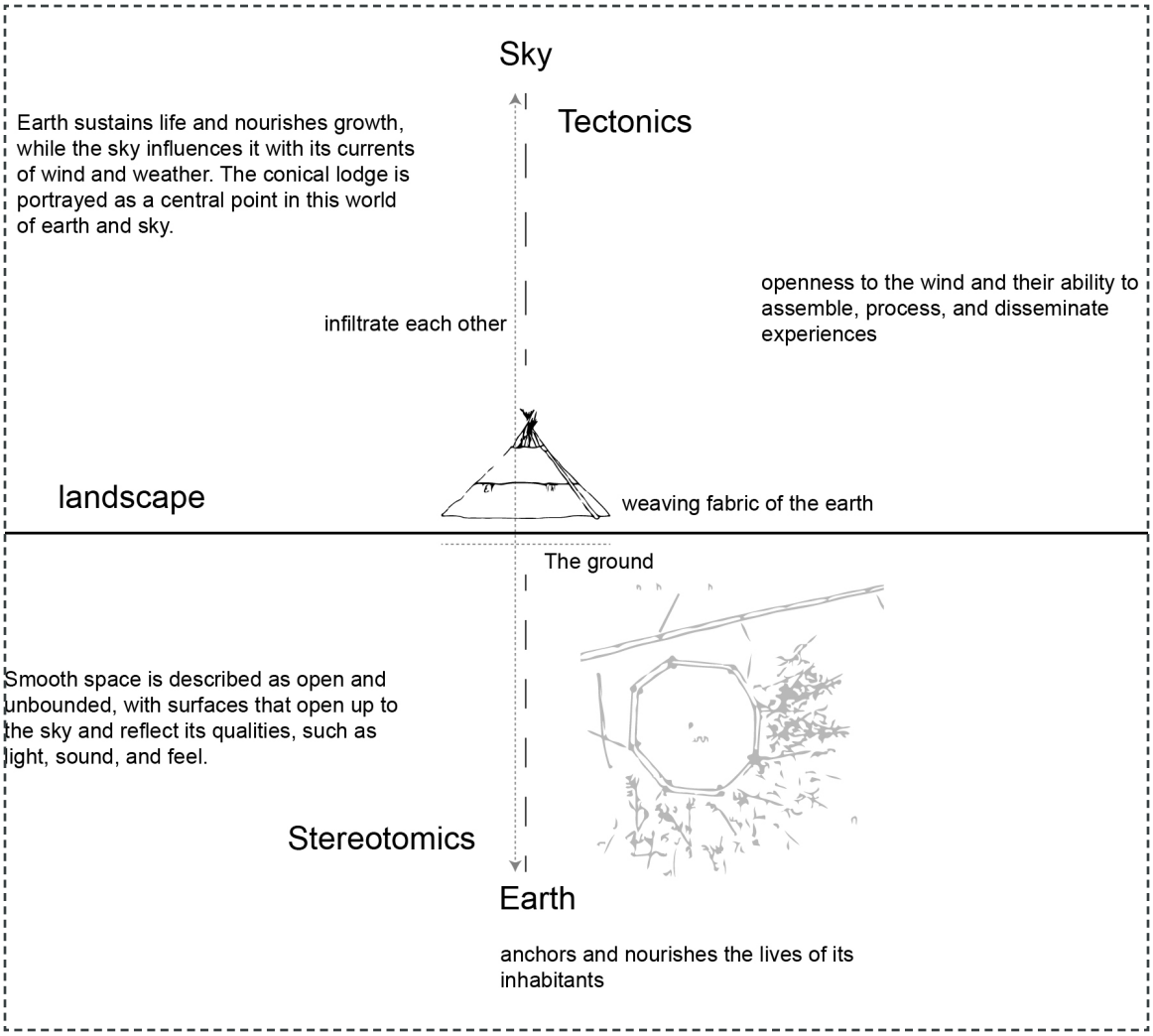


Camps at Fort Resolution (Evarts n.d)

In my research, I am drawn to summarizing a short writing on the Tłı̨chǫ Caribou Skin Lodge, focusing on its relationship with the land as a form of vernacular architecture deeply rooted in the soil of its territory and traditional practices spanning over 5000 years, if not longer. The history of the Tłı̨chǫ Caribou Skin Lodge transcends my imagination, embodying a dedication to cultural tradition rather than individual craftsmanship, passed down unconsciously through generations. Constructed from long, stout wooden poles converging at the apex to form a circular perimeter, the lodge is covered with prepared caribou skins meticulously sewn together. Upon entering through a portal flap, one is enveloped in an interior space centered around the fire, with light streaming from above, open to the sky and supported by the earth, creating an environment imbued with the connection between “Earth and sky.” Inside the lodge, there is no horizon; only the seamless vertical connection. Rather than being built upon rigid foundations, the lodge is intertwined with the very fabric of the earth, symbolizing a weaving and splicing of fibrous materials connecting



Looking up through the apex of the tent, the linear poles interweave to comprise a complex knot, reaching up into the open sky - Photo by Hilde Jåstad (Ingold 2013)



My interpretation diagram (Ingold 2013)

Within family dwellings, tipis are structured at regular intervals, with a culture hearth located outside where most activities take place.

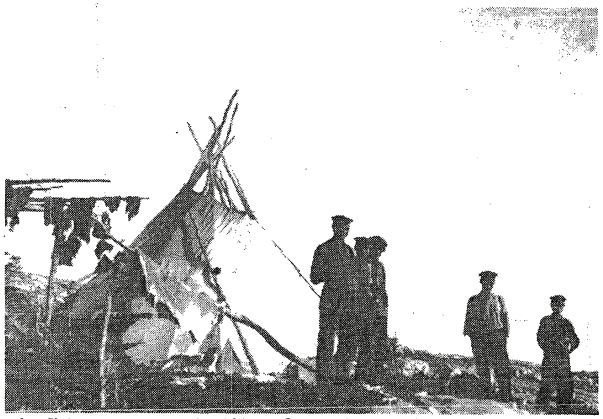
raw material. Furthermore, the conical form of the lodge is viewed as an upended spiral, representing a locus of growth and regeneration, where materials welling up from the ground mix with air and moisture from the atmosphere. At the heart of the lodge lies the fireplace, symbolizing both the binding and unbinding forces of life, where materials nourished by the earth are released to the sky in the smoke. This perpetual cycle of binding and unbinding is reflected in the conical form of the lodge, which should be understood not as a static geometric shape but as an upward spiral, with the hearth as its focal point (Ingold 2013).

Appendix C: Dene Log

The last log house remains as a testament to Dettah's community memory and oral tradition.

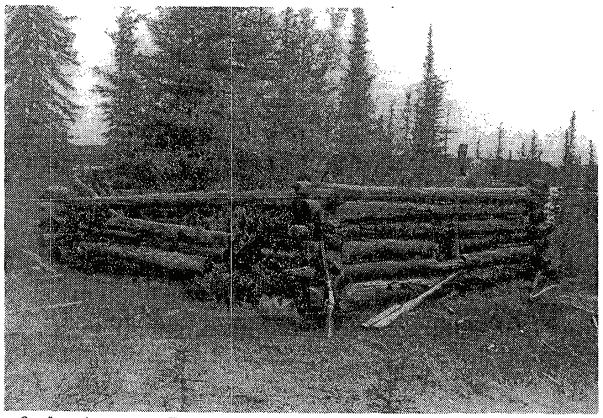
Details still remain as they stood on site: complex entities with rich histories, personal narratives, bodies of knowledge, and political implications that play a pivotal role in Yellowknives Dene lives.

The construction of Hudson's Bay Company buildings in Fort Resolution adhered to a pattern consistent with all trading posts established by the Company, reflecting the architectural traditions of northern Europe and France. The adoption of log construction by the Dene people was influenced by the availability and quality of European-made tools, particularly axes, which replaced traditional tools crafted from stone, bone, wood, and native copper. The introduction of cast iron stoves in the 1910s further facilitated the transition to Euro-Canadian housing styles, offering improved heating efficiency over traditional tipis. However, the houses built by the Dene did not necessarily carry the same connotations of permanence or "home" as those constructed by Europeans, serving primarily as shelter and utilizing natural resources. When no longer needed, Dene houses were either repurposed for firewood or symbolically returned to the land through burning, reflecting a non-material view of preservation focused on the land itself. As land claim negotiations continue, it is imperative to recognize the Dene's rights to their traditional territory and respect their values by leaving these houses to nature and the people who created them, preserving their significance through memory and oral tradition rather than material culture (Jacob 1987).

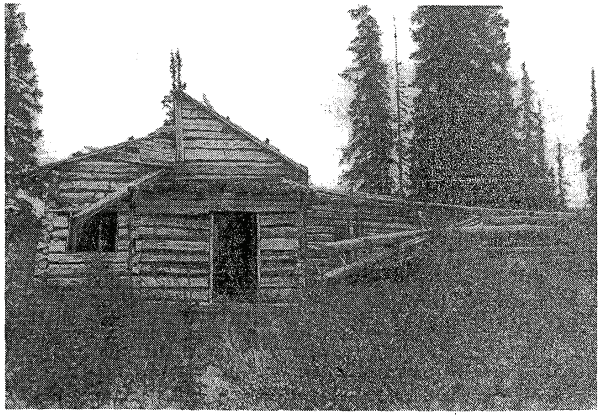


1. Chipewyan tipi, Artillery Lake, NWT, 1924
Public Archives Canada/PA-19698

2. Hudson's Bay Company dwelling, Fort Resolution, NWT, 1900
Public Archives Canada/PA-19541



3. Log house on Timber Bay, Artillery Lake, NWT



4. Log house in center of edaghecho Tue site, NWT

The evolution of building technology among the Dene people, influenced by European impacts, has led to the incorporation of local materials and vernacular forms, resulting in log structures that endure over time, serving as poignant reminders of cultural continuity (Jacob 1987)

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