

August 23rd, 2023

- **AMO 2023: Practical Approaches to End Homelessness**

Reflecting on the CLELN Declaration of Rights

Presented by: Alex Nelson

OCTOBER 2022



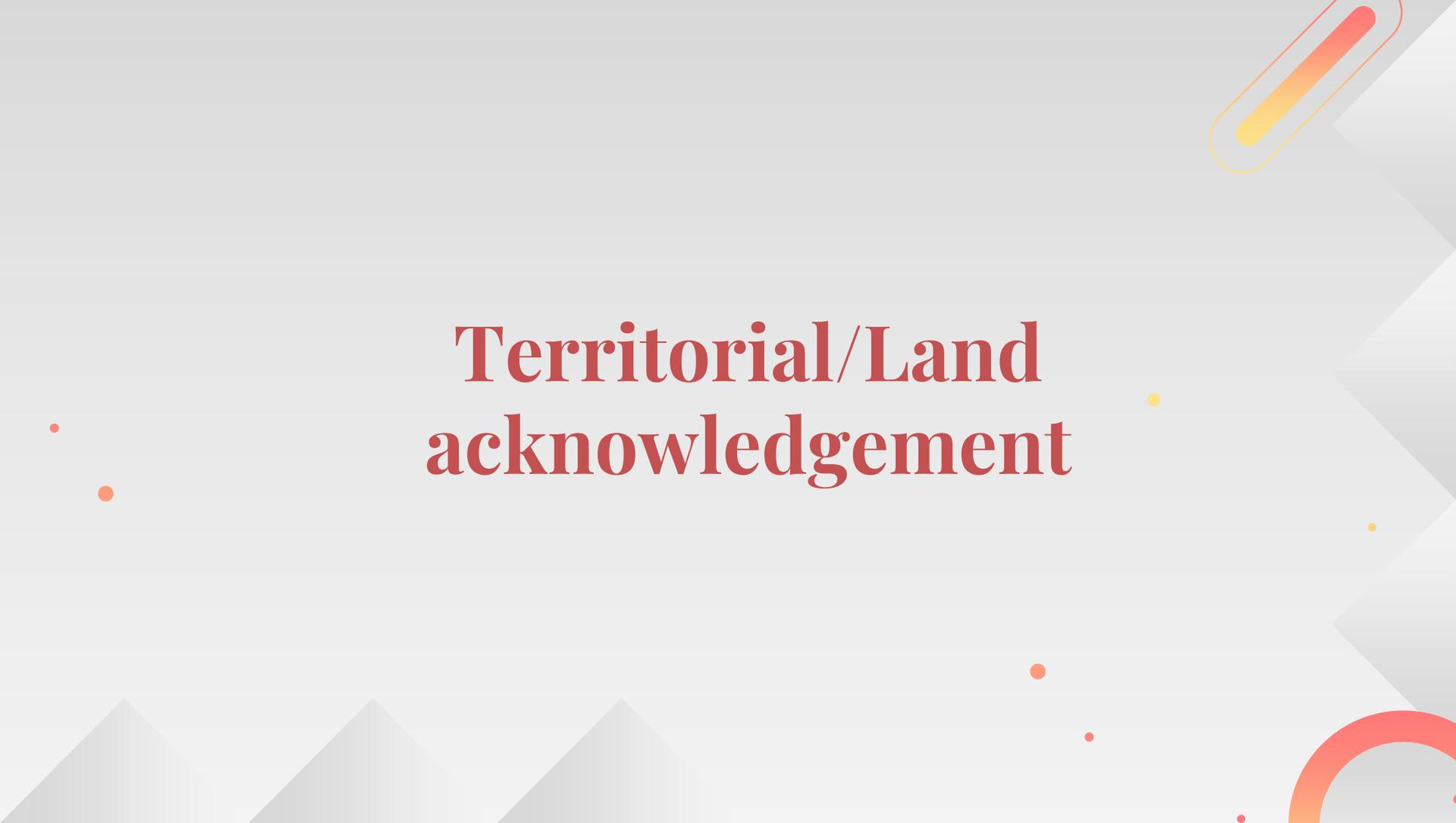
Lived Experience Declaration of Rights

A PROJECT OF



The Canadian
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Territorial/Land acknowledgement

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About The Canadian Lived Experience Leadership Network

Introducing the Declaration of Rights

- This project is part of the Canadian Lived Experience Leadership Network (CLELN).
- CLELN is a collective of diverse people with lived experience of homelessness and expertise in grassroots organizing, advocacy, mentorship and peer support.
- CLELN works to ensure that the voices of people with lived experience are in the forefront of all matters regarding homelessness
- We want to eliminate homelessness and housing insecurity through research, policy, advocacy, training, and collaboration.

OUR PARTICIPATION IS NOT
OPTIONAL. IT IS A HUMAN RIGHT

The Canadian Lived Experience Leadership Network (CLELN) is a group of housing advocates with lived experience of homelessness, working together to end homelessness through lived experience leadership. Since November 2021, our team has been working to update our guiding principles for leadership and inclusion of people with lived experience.*

Our team members are from various communities across so-called Canada: we do this work recognizing that the inherent rights and sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples have been systemically denied. We each bring a wide array of experiences, skills, and perspectives to the topics of housing and homelessness. We are grateful for the relationships we have been able to build with one another.

Lived experience in decision-making is more important than ever – as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recently said: “participation is a concern of ‘deep global urgency’”**

Throughout this project, we have had conversations about what we would want our rights to be when we are sharing our knowledge, learnings, and lived expertise. We offer this declaration knowing the state has failed to uphold our rights.

This zine showcases some of the ideas that have come out of our shared work, and our demands for the future of lived experience advocacy.

*Original publication - Lived Experience Advisory Council 2016:

<https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/LEAC-7principles-final.pdf>

**OHCHR 2020:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2020/09/right-participation-matters-more-ever-un-secretary-general>

LEADERSHIP

- I do not have to fit my experiences into anyone else's boxes:
 - My lived experience might not look like yours, because different communities face different causes and consequences of homelessness.
- I can disagree with other lived experts, and both our experiences are still valid.
- Words are powerful: listen to the language I use to describe myself – it may not be the same language for everyone.
- Take the time to get to know me. I'm a whole person, beyond my experience.
- My experiences are mine; my reality, my stories are mine, and I get to choose how and when I use them.



Leadership

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JUSTICE AND ACTION

- I am not a box-checking exercise. I am revolutionary.
 - My voice, and my experiences should be amplified to disrupt the status quo.
- Including people with lived experience should not create new ways for the system to harm me, or exploit communities I'm a part of.
- Creating change should make power-holders uncomfortable. I am always uncomfortable when I move through your spaces.
- I should have access to information about me, and be part of conversations that will impact me and my community.
- Recognize that we may or may not have the same education, training, or background but our lived experience is equal to other kinds of expertise.
- Lived experience leadership is tied to other struggles for justice and equity:
 - Find ways to build solidarity across our movements, and always seek to diversify your tables.

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Access to Resources and • Support

- My time, labour, and expertise are valuable, and compensation should be offered to recognize that.
- I can ask questions about when and how my information will be used and can change my mind about agreeing to participate.
- Support should be offered to make sure I can fully participate:
- Ask me ahead of time what I might need for accessibility.
- Make sure your timeline is flexible to ensure my needs are met.
- Make space for healing and grieving, this is real for me.
- I should not be the only person with lived experience at a table. We are stronger when we can shoulder each other up.

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NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

1. Bring the perspective of our lived experience **to the forefront**
 2. Include people with lived experience **at all levels** of the organization
 3. **Value our time** and provide appropriate supports
 4. Challenge **stigma**, confront **oppression** and promote **dignity**
 5. Recognize our expertise and engage us in **decision-making**
 6. Work together towards our **equitable representation**
 7. **Build authentic relationships** between people with and without lived experience
- 
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Thank you!

Stay in touch- we invite you to join us to build housing justice

Email: alex@housingrights.ca

Website: www.cleln.ca **Facebook:** Canadian Lived Experience Leadership Network

With thanks to our supporters:

The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, the Maytree Foundation, the Wenner-Gren Foundation, and United Way Edmonton

JOIN US TO BUILD HOUSING JUSTICE

We believe in the phrase “Nothing About Us Without Us”. At the Canadian Lived Experience Leadership Network (CLELN), we work to make sure people with lived experience of homelessness are meaningfully included in decisions that impact us.

WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER:
this is your invitation to join us, as peers,
allies, and collaborators.

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*An activist
poem:*



If you're trying to get power back
Those words and labels can stigmatize;
Catering to the unexposed
We shouldn't have to be so soft:
What do we want to call ourselves?



Questions and discussion

*The lines of this poem come from jot notes from our team meetings

Thank you

We would appreciate your feedback - let us know if you want to stay connected!

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Agenda:

- 12:00-12:15 Introduction and welcome
- 12:15-12:35 CLELN team review of Declaration of Rights
- 12:35-1:30 Discussion

What's Next?

- Our next steps for the project will include:
 - Drafting the revised Principles
 - Building a glossary of lived experience defined terms
 - Launching the Principles once drafted, hoping to change decision-making processes to reflect these Principles
 - You can find out more about our work on the CLELN website, or contact us through Facebook or email
- We will have a Principles page on the CLELN website soon

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Discussion:

1. What do you think is missing from the broader lived experience conversation, or in the advocacy spaces you're a part of?
2. How can lived experience work be part of achieving justice for our communities/making a concrete difference for housing?
3. How can we build cross-movement solidarity into our shared or overlapping lived experience work?
4. What is next for your work and how can we amplify it?

We want to hear from you!

1. What do you think about the declaration of rights? What would you change or add?
2. How could a tool like this be useful in your work- have you seen a need for these community-held resources in your work? What else could be useful?

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Who are we?

