

# EXPANDING INDIGENOUS LAND DEFENCE BEYOND BURNABY MOUNTAIN: PART 2

By Emily Luba

Two parts of an anti-colonial resistance co-exist in Burnaby: apartments on land with relatively affordable rents in Metrotown are being defended for use as homes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents against developer and government greed, and land on Burnaby mountain is being defended against corporate ownership and pipelines for Indigenous peoples’ traditional use sites.

Stop Demovictions Burnaby holds Canada accountable for displacement by recognizing the nation-state’s roots in the dispossession of Indigenous people from their territories. Our fight against evictions emphasizes that both public and private property must be abolished because all property forces Indigenous land relations into bounded legal packages that are the domain of Canada’s colonial power. We strive towards a different set of land-relations instead of continuing to perpetuate colonial definitions of “property”.

Some settlers seem more comfortable viewing Indigenous land as existing outside of urban areas, such as on Burnaby Mountain. They are glad to partner their environmental activism against extraction project with Indigenous land defenders. For example, Burnaby’s former Mayor Corrigan opposed the Kinder Morgan pipeline and shared the stage with Indigenous groups while destroying the homes of Indigenous people in Metrotown. Stop

Demovictions Burnaby considers colonialism to include all aspects of Canada’s political life and economy. When we talk about demovictions and the fight for affordable housing as beginning with colonialism, we sometimes get pushback.

As Stop Demovictions Burnaby organizer and Nuuchah Nulth resident of Metrotown, Sadie Morris, has articulated, intergenerational trauma rooted in residential schools, child apprehension, police violence, and other factors, impacts Indigenous peoples’ ability to find and keep housing. Housing for Indigenous people, including urban Indigenous people dispossessed of their territories, is political. Almost ⅓ of homeless people in Canada are Indigenous, as are nearly half of children in the foster care system. A lack of affordable housing increases the intensity of these systems and we must defend urban Indigenous homes as part of our fight against displacement in Metrotown to truly abolish them.



## MORE THAN A MORATORIUM: FIGHTING EVICTIONS PAST THE OCTOBER MUNICIPAL ELECTION

By Zoe Luba

Although it is significant that grassroots organizing against demovictions forced Corrigan out of city hall, his replacement, Burnaby Green party endorsed independent candidate Mike Hurley, does not have all the answers to the demovictions crisis. Hurley hinged his campaign on a moratorium on demovictions -- although this is a start, we need more than a moratorium. If Hurley can put in his moratorium, it will temporarily halt displacement. But the replacement apartment units he demands will allow developers to continue to attack the neighbourhood

with towers composed almost entirely of luxury strata units. His only qualification on development is to replace the lost rentals, with no restrictions placed on the number of gentrifying units sandwiched alongside the replacement rentals. Hurley’s moratorium will make relatively wealthy condo owners the vast majority in Metrotown and the historically diverse, working class community will be lost. A real solution to the demoviction and gentrification of Metrotown must attack the market, not cater to it.

Before the municipal election, Stop Demovictions Burnaby hosted a town-hall with the Burnaby Greens to question them on their electoral platform, and put forth the People’s Plan for Development without Displacement in Metrotown. The People’s Plan calls for tenant-run non-market housing for current and future Indigenous and working class residents by

### ABOUT | CONTACT

If you have a story to tell about evictions and displacement in Metrotown, please call Sean at 604-365-9009, email us at [organize@stopdisplacement.ca](mailto:organize@stopdisplacement.ca)

[www.stopdisplacement.ca/stop-demovictions-burnaby/](http://www.stopdisplacement.ca/stop-demovictions-burnaby/) | <https://www.facebook.com/stopdemovictions>

We Won't Go is affiliated with Stop Demovictions Burnaby, a grassroots community campaign to stop evictions and mass displacement in Metrotown, and is published on the occupied territory of the Qayqayt, Kwikwetlem, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam nations.



re-zoning single family homes and existing apartments into tenant-controlled, non-market buildings. Although the Greens did respond to some of the demands put forth, they were only able to propose the reforms possible within the confines of city hall - a parliamentary system that was founded on and remains bound by the intertwined power structures of capitalism and colonialism. Real solutions to the housing crisis can only be found by the community in the streets, where the only confines are the limits of our imaginations.

**It begins with colonialism**

Although it is impossible to destroy colonialism through a colonial parliament, city politicians must make every effort to improve the living conditions of Indigenous people living under their power. This can act as a form of reparations -- redistributing stolen wealth, land, and resources back into Indigenous communities. It is the least a politician can do, short of burning down the chambers they control.

Stop Demovictions demands that Burnaby uses its \$1.5billion surplus to protect urban Indigenous homes by constructing non-market, tenant-controlled, permanent housing for urban Indigenous people. Housing for urban Indigenous people in Canada is political - more than 30% of homeless people across BC are Indigenous, despite making up just 7% of the population. Stop Demovictions is calling for Burnaby to use its billion dollar surplus for another form of tangible support -- constructing an Aboriginal Friendship Centre in the City of Burnaby - a cultural space that is sorely missing. Such a space could include Indigenous Counselling services, youth programs, prenatal services, general labour programs, education programs, talking circles and support services for elders.

**Spend the Surplus!**

The Burnaby Green Party initially stated they would invest \$10 million a year into affordable rentals and co-ops, but after the October townhall, they increased this promise to \$20 million a year -- this would allow for the construction of only about 100 units of non-market housing. Pending matching funds from

the provincial and federal government, this could result in up to 300 units built. But a few hundred units of affordable housing when thousands are being destroyed is mere crumbs, when the people need bread.

Decades of austerity budgets under provincial governments of all Party stripes have created a vicious cycle of astronomical rents and near-zero vacancy rates that has pushed thousands of people out of their homes and onto the streets. The surplus must be used to disrupt this cycle, and end homelessness in Burnaby, by housing all homeless people in tenant-controlled, non-market, permanent housing. In the meantime, homeless people must be protected and allowed to move into buildings across the city which sit empty - the gross contradiction between empty buildings and homelessness must be eradicated.

**What Next**

The results of the Burnaby civic election are important to recognize as they demonstrate the power grassroots movements have to alter the electoral field, although this landscape is not where the systemic, structural change we need will occur - the changes we need necessitate the destruction of city hall. Under capitalism and colonialism, politicians really have little control over the material conditions of their constituents, because these broader systems have overarching control. And so, Stop Demovictions Burnaby will continue to work to expand our field of influence while simultaneously building tenant power outside of the state -- we will keep fighting to create a world without systems of public and private property that place the rich above the rest of humanity.



**Allan and Family**

**How long have you lived in Metrotown?**

5 Years

**Have you found a new home yet?**

No

Gergo Farkas is a photographer, Stop Demovictions member and former Metrotown resident. His Metrotown Portrait Project documents the rapid gentrification of Metrotown as well as the residents threatened with eviction.

If you are a Metrotown tenant and are interested in being featured in Gergo's photo project you can contact him at emailme@gergofarkas.com.

**How does this situation make you feel?**

Anxious, betrayed, angry.

**Did you receive any help or support to find alternate housing?**

No

UPCOMING STOP DEMOVITIONS BURNABY EVENTS

**Monthly Townhall** - Wednesday **November 7th** at 6:30PM at the Burnaby Neighbourhood House at 4460 Beresford St.

**Organizing Meeting** - Tuesday **November 13th** at 6:30PM at the Marlborough Elementary School Portable at Royal Oak Ave and Sanders St.

**Organizing Meeting** - Tuesday **November 27th** at 6:30PM at the Marlborough Elementary School Portable at Royal Oak Ave and Sanders St.