

MST FUTURISM HOSTING THE CITY

BY SIERRA TASI BAKER

On December 3rd, 2020 Ta7taliya Paisley Nahanee and myself co-hosted MST Futurism: Decolonizing the City through a Matriarchal Lens with MST panelists Chief Janice George, Debra Sparrow, Angela George, Orene Askew, Cyler Sparrow Point, Salia Joseph, Sekawnee Baker, and Ocean Hyland from each of the Host Nations. The panel was specific to the context of what is currently known as Vancouver on our unceded **xʷməθkʷəy̓əm** (Musqueam), **Sḵwəxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw** (Squamish Nation) and **səlilwətaʔ** (Tseil-Waututh) (MST) territories.

During the panel myself and Paisley asked each of the panelists: What is your greatest dream for the future of this City? Here I've been asked to respond to the same question:

My vision for this city is being able to honour all the oral stories of this place, honour the ancestral laws and protocols of this place, honour all the place names of this place, honour the stewardship of this place, honour the original languages of this place, **hə́nqəmíhəm** and **Sḵwəxwú7mesh Sníchim**, and get to a place where in my daily life, I can do our daily cleansing practices, our cedar baths, our stewardship practices, to pray like we always used to.

My family has lived in what is currently known as the West Coast for over 809+ generations, or, since Time Immemorial. I am from the **Sḵwəxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw** and am also **xʷməθkʷəy̓əm**, **Kwakwaka'wakw/Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw**, **łingít**, **Xaayda** and Magyar/Hungarian.

MST territory has been a place of providence, transformation, generosity, and wealth since Time Immemorial. This is unceded territory. We have never ceded or surrendered title to our lands, rights to our resources, or authority to make decisions within our territory.

On my **Sḵwəxwú7mesh** side we lived in an over 60ft by 20ft Longhouse at the village of **Xwá'yxway**. Our Longhouse was destroyed and chopped down when the settler road around Stanley Park was being built in the 1880's with some of my relatives still inside. That was only 141 years ago. Lumberman's arch was erected as a victory by the settler's to celebrate driving us out of our home. Some of my relatives refused to leave the village of **Xwá'yxway**, and one family still lived there until 1923, only 98 years ago.

My family moved to the villages of **Xwméłts'stn**, **Slhá7ań** (Eslha7an), **Stá7mes**, and **Ch'iyáłkmes** which have been forcefully turned into reservations by the Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments. I grew up in the village of **Slhá7ań**.

I think there is a mistake that Vancouver is seen as existing in this post-colonial period, we're in a post-colonial world, and that's untrue. We are, in this exact moment, experiencing colonization and genocide. It's ongoing. A lot of people don't realize or recognize that they themselves

are actively participating in the erasure of MST people and colonizing our territory, especially urban planners, architects, politicians, landscape architects and developers. Often urban planners and designers are trying to create identity for a place, for a community, for a design when in actuality this land already has an identity rooted here since Time Immemorial and held by the people of this land, the **xʷməθkʷəy̓əm**, (Musqueam) **Sḵwəxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw** (Squamish Nation), and **səlilwətaʔ** (Tseil-Waututh) people.

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Why would you try and fabricate a global westernized identity, to fabricate a city that looks just like any other City when there's a people and a land and waters here that know who they are and know the best possible way to be in relationship to each other. That's erasure through planning, that's erasure through city building. If you're not respecting the sovereignty and inherent agency and identities of the Host families of this territory, you are colonizing this land.

If I can live my life in the philosophy of my people, and not have to come into colonial barrier after colonial barrier after colonial barrier, that's the future I want for myself and my children and my nieces and nephews and for all the people who have come to know this land. How incredible would that be, to be able to come to this territory and not just see another Western city?

I want to reinstate ancestral law in our territories again. Reinstate our ability to Host all the people who have come to live in this territory again; a part of knowledge and culture, sharing with each other, holding space for each other, in right relation to the lands and waters with us as your Hosts.

I don't know how many people feel “well-hosted” in this city. People are constantly being evicted, experiencing instability, there's thousands of people homeless, struggling, being criminalized for trying to survive this colonial nightmare and it doesn't feel like you're being hosted in a good way. In fact it feels like these colonial systems are doing exactly what they were designed to do.

I think people over history have just stopped expecting to be Hosted in a good way and we would love to be able to teach people that again, what it feels like to be Hosted in our territory. Not only that but if we can ensure right relation to each other, then we as the Indigenous stewards of this territory can ensure right relation to the land. If the land is healthy, the people are healthy. If the water is healthy, the people are healthy.