

OCTOBER 2022



ASSIGNMENT

DR. BY

UNIT

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Lived Experience Declaration of Rights

A PRODUCT OF

The Canadian
Lived
Experience
Leadership
Network



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F: CANADIAN LIVED EXPERIENCE LEADERSHIP NETWORK

OUR TEAM



Team members not pictured: Cathy Dziak, Nancy Henderson, Mirza Nabeel Baig
Special thanks to Laura Norin for supporting this project

Left - right*: Pamela Spurvey, Samantha Blondeau, Alex Nelson, Jayne Malenfant, Debbie McGraw, Veronica Snooks, Michelle Bilek; Phoenix Winter, Daniela Mergarten, Rene Adams, Cheyenne Fath



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:

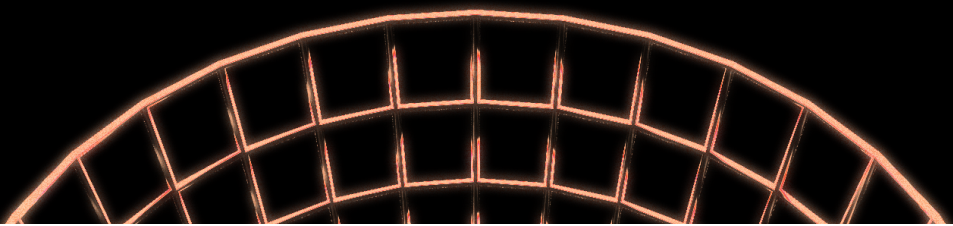
<https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/LEAC-7principles-final.pdf>

**OHCHR 2020:

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

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.



ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

- 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.

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.



*An activist
poem:*



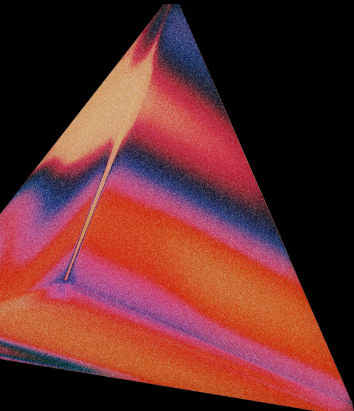
If you're trying to get power back

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?



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

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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