WOODWARD'S

Oral History Collection

Interview with:

Mike Krebs (MK),
Member of Woodsquat

Conducted by Jakob Knudsen (JK)

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"...My prognosis around organizing for housing is kind of grim but that's the most relevant thing about doing an oral history around something like Woodsquat being "What can we learn from it?" I think it was a new thing to me then but it's not new now and yeah, you can't talk about struggles around housing and poverty without talking about colonialism and settler colonialism..."

– Mike Krebs

JK: I've been reading Juan Tuari's work lately, about restorative justice as this ah... he talks about things from a similarly critical angle. He talks about restorative justice as it's marketed now as this sort of Indigenous legal practice and how it's enacted in spaces that are supposedly Indigenized as a misinterpretation of elements of Maori justice remarketed towards Indigenous people trying to assert their autonomy over their legal systems, or for their people being subjected to legal systems. Something that you brought up in your piece ["Demands" in West Coast Line, Fall/Winter, No. 41, 37/2-3, 2003-04. Pp 41-44. Edited by Aaron Vidaver] is organizing meetings during the Woodsquat and I was curious about how that looked in terms of like, what those tables looked like - people sitting at tables and discussing their demands and going around that sort of way?

MK: Yeah, well on that, I'll loop back to that article. I'll just say right out the get go that I was involved but I definitely wouldn't say I was one of the main people involved and, ah... well basically, at the time of the Woodsquat I was involved with a group called the Anti-Poverty Committee [APC], and... y'know... that was one of the things we were involved with - was trying to push demands for social housing. Mostly at the provincial level, y'know. Because that time it was relatively recent that the Gordon Campbell Liberal government had been elected and there was a lot of organizing going on. The amount of people involved is... I haven't seen that many people even just at protests in a long time. Y'know like... some of the labour rallies

that year had like twenty, thirty thousand people.

JK: Holy shit.

MK: We organized a home visit outside of Gordon Campbell's house a few months before the Woodsquat and that was like... I think we had a thousand people... and y'know home visit demonstrations are not very popular because they're often considered in poor taste and whatever. There was a lot of momentum and there was a lot anger towards the Liberal government at the time because of well... they did what they set out to do, which was basically like bring neoliberalism to BC for the turn of the century and that's exactly what was going on. So social housing was one of the things the Anti-Poverty Committee (APC) was trying to organize around, the issue of housing and... at that point gentrification had definitely been a thing in ah... around Commercial Drive neighbourhood in the late 90s early 2000s it was already definitely happening, but... the Downtown Eastside [DTES] it definitely was nowhere near as bad as it is now in terms of just... as a force of negative change in the neighbourhood. But it was obvious what was happening, and what could happen, and so, so we... Woodward's was always kind of on the radar, like... some of us had already been involved in some previous activism around Woodward's. I think there was analysis at the time that this was kind of like a key battle for the neighbourhood. Like if there was a successful struggle to have the building turn into social housing y'know that would act as a force at least not to stop gentrification, but at least to slow things down, y'know? Whereas if it turned into some sort of private investment whether it's condos or... there was a lot of proposals and a lot of investors who wanted to do a lot of things with that building. At one point it was owned by Cisco. They were just gonna use the space for ah... a gigantic server. Which of course then feeds a certain type of other development so it'd still contribute to gentrifica-

tion in a very different way y'know, but... I think that was sort of understood y'know... if anything could be done to slow down gentrification in the DTES having that building basically turned into government funded social housing would be a big thing.

JK: Yeah.

M: Um... but somebody else... this guy named Jim Leydon... he was the person who sort of initiated the occupation of the Woodward's building.

JK: Right.

MK: If you guys haven't interviewed him, he'd be a good person to talk to. I don't hold him in high view, I won't lie. I think he was an opportunist, I don't even know what his agenda was... I think basically he initiated the squat and at the time me and the other people who were doing this organizing were like... geez it seems a little bit... this seems really disorganized... like, if there was a goal that we always thought about, like, the idea of occupying the building, but there needs to be more of a like... organized force around this... but... I think quickly the Woodsquat really spiralled out of his control... like he was still around but... honestly I think he was involved more in like, electoral politics. And y'know eventually the Woodsquat was used as momentum to put COPE into office that year y'know so that... so that was a clear... we were like, sort of like, an anti-capitalist, Anti-Poverty Committee as an organization we were one of the many groups sort of involved in the squat. And yeah... so that's ah... I was reluctantly involved I guess you could say. We didn't, we didn't like sort of initiate it and we thought there was maybe some problems, but once it happened there was obviously momentum. Because it took off, and there was so

many different people involved - and I think really like... for myself and the other activists like, we were just one of many groups, or even just individuals involved who had our own idea who were sort of like... working together, and in some cases people were working against each other to sort of have a vision around it.

JK: Definitely.

MK: Yeah! So that process of like, I think formulating, I don't remember how exactly the conversations came up with that we should have demands y'know like.... I think at the time for me that seemed like a very ABC aspect of organizing like if you're going to do something, like, what is it for. Right? Y'know I think for some people the Woodsquat was like... y'know it was a very immediate like: "Hey, this is a safer place than a regular shelter. This is a better place than me being on the streets like... fucking by myself, y'know." There's people around here but... it was that safe. Especially once the squat was outside, y'know. I know there was a lot of violence going on within the squat like, it wasn't this pristine, magical place.

JK: Yeah, it wasn't a utopia.

MK: Yeah, but I think for some people that was what the squat meant to them. And for other people it was like... this is like... like... maybe not like a utopia, but this is an amazing space on its own terms. Y'know like it's not connected to a larger political struggle but like, in the now this is an amazing thing that's come up.

JK: Yeah, like you said before it's something that had momentum, right? Like from Jim Leydon made like, for whatever reason or for whatever motivation he had initiated that squat and then it took on a life of its own.

MK: Yeah.

JK: and in terms of involvement, was the APC sort of like... helping to create a capacity to initiate some sort of talks, or facilitate things, or...?

MK: Yeah, I think if I remember things correctly, and ah... again if you guys haven't already... the person who would know those specifics would be Ivan Drury, and he's still doing housing stuff to this day. And I think probably... isf it wasn't him it would be other people from the APC - I think - who initiated the process like, "Hey let's discuss this. Let's come up with some demands like what are we doing this for?" And I participated in those meetings, ah and they were within the squat. They were in the Woodward's building and.. for whatever reason I don't think... the first floor of the building wasn't accessible, it had all been bricked off.

JK: Oh really.

MK: So yeah that image on the front of me on the West Coast Line issue, of me walking through like... that's a second story window. Literally with ladders set up to like, go onto the awning, then onto the second floor. And the second floor was basically the main building, the main space. But I mean it was just a big... block size building and it was just a wide open space. People were sleeping all over the place, and ah... but yeah the meetings we just had a circle, a large circle because there was a lot of people just sort of sitting together and we'd have these, they were these regular meetings. And I'm sure probably meeting more regularly because I wasn't there all the time. I don't even know what a lot of those meetings looked like, but I definitely remember there were meetings just to sort of hammer out the demands. And yeah, at the time, there was a really different...

how do I put this? The... if there's sort of like a singular face of poverty in the DTES, it's really changed in the last while - and I think it's a positive thing, in that... not that there should be any sort of representation of poverty in the neighbourhood, but if there is, the DTES I feel is much more associated with being an Indigenous space than it used to be.

JK: Oh interesting.

MK: Y'know that... I'd say if I was to put a singular face, I'd say the neighbourhood is the space of Indigenous women, y'know. For all the positives and negatives that entails right now, and those realities. At that time, the face of the DTES was a... that of a white, male, drug user. And ah... the more visible... that's not to say that those aren't important issues, there's a reality of disenfranchised white working-class men who wound up in the DTES through the 80s and 90s for a variety of reasons...

JK: Yeah definitely.

MK: Um, and had become addicted to drugs. At that point mostly heroin, I think... and ah, yeah so there was, y'know that was the face of organizing and that was the face of sort of the neighbourhood. I think, I do feel in some ways like... I'm not going to say it was the first time it came up but, within the Woodsquat that definitely became apparent. Y'know like "Hey, like, there's actually... it's not just a single neighbourhood and it's not even just like a single community" y'know, and specifically there are a lot of Indigenous people in the neighbourhood. And I think... yeah the sort of... the opposition to that being discussed came from the space of we're all humans, y'know? We all need housing. And ah, y'know the very... the whitewashing of the dynamics of race and of colonialism, even at a level of like...

people within the neighbourhood y'know.

JK: Right.

MK: Yeah! It's just a... y'know "We're all in this together" sort of thing and well no we're not, and that's why we need to discuss these different experiences, and these different, blatantly colonial dynamics that are, that are y'know responsible for the neighbourhood to accumulate.

JK: Definitely!

MK: And ah... yeah! It did get dealt with in that conversation a little bit. I think things did change, cause ah... I think, again, I think now - 2018 - visibility of Indigenous people and Indigenous women as organizers in the neighbourhood has changed a lot.

JK: Yeah!

MK: At that time, that wasn't as ah... even if Indigenous people were statistically like, just as much of the community now as they were then, it wasn't treated that way in the organizing.

J**K: That's really interesting, what do you... do you think that there was a particular event prior to those meetings that made Indigenous activists step forward in that space to sort of assert... the land question as sort of something that needs to be dealt with at this... y'know because I kinda came up and started visiting, and living and growing up around the DTES after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was released... and I think after like... obviously I don't want to connect sort of the, like, the state idea of reconciliation with... with the increased visibility of Indigenous**

people.

MK: Right, yeah.

JK: Because like you said this was in 2002 that activists were like asserting the land question being a significant thing. Do you think there was something in that era, or some kind of event or thing in the activist community at that time that made those issues come forward?

MK: Yeah y'know... I'm not sure... I don't know, I think there's probably a series of things that account for it so I'm not really sure. I could speculate but I feel like, especially because ah... y'know like my own organizing within the neighbourhood has been fairly tangential. I mean even now like, my focus is the Indigenous community and that's largely the community in and around the Grandview Woodlands area...

JK: Yeah.

MK: I mean I have some personal connections to the neighbourhood y'know like... I talk about the previous face of the DTES like, that would be somebody that would describe my biological father because he was a white male and he was a heroin addict... I did used to run into him in the DTES [laughs] but I don't know... this probably would have been a lot of conversations in organizing spaces that I wasn't a part of y'know.

JK: Yeah.

MK: And if I was to guess like well, what caused that shift I'd be... I'd be missing a lot.

JK: Yeah fair enough.

MK: I feel like something started there. And there was even a period, um, part of the... one of the groups... people who were involved, who were affiliated with VANDU became like, what I think still exists, became the West Coast Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society [WAHRS].

JK: Yup!

MK: And I think too that, through that, I think that's were some of these differences played out because like... y'know after the Woodsquat was sort of pushed out of the building and continued on the streets out front, and then later... um... was mostly disbanded - but people still tried to keep going sort of like a Woodsquat and it migrated to different parks... that stuff at that point it was off my radar, it was different, other organizing but um... I do remember though there was a point where people were like... the result of those sort of tensions within it led to their being a Native-only squat.

JK: Oh wow, that's really interesting.

MK: Yeah, I think it was set up either in Crab Park or Victory Square.

JK: Yeah.

MK: Yeah but again I... the guy that I knew that was involved with that stuff, I've been out of touch with him now for like... over 10 years, I don't even know where he lives.

JK: Oh damn [laughs]

MK: Yeah. He was, but... y'know um... if you were trying to reach out to WAHRS–

[conversation interrupted by background laughter]

MK: Yeah, if you haven't already reached out to WAHRS, try reaching out to Chris Livingstone or anyone who remembers who Chris Livingstone is... I'm actually... I'm supposed to interview him too.

JK: [laughs]

MK: Not for my own work but for somebody else's work. But I've been out of touch with him now for a long time, I don't even think he's on Facebook anymore.

JK: [laughs] Well if we track him down we'll hit you up man.

MK: Yeah [laughs]

JK: Well that sounds really amazing like... the first thing that strikes me is almost like a class consciousness situation that comes up when those sort of issues come up... like you said the face of the DTES being... even with the Expo '86 stuff, like the big name out of that sort of like, the tragedy in that neighbourhood ah... ahhh fuck I can't remember his name this Swedish... this Norwegian lumberjack...

MK: Ahhh yeah - there's a building named after him.

JK: Yeah exactly, so like this transition from this more disenfranchised, white, working-class community there... and even that guy, like, from what I understand wasn't so much a drug user as just a se-

nior. So transitioning from sort of this focus on drug using and now like, you mention this very Indigenous identity there, and it's sort of this like... this growing encapsulation of different... different stigmas associated with that, mental health, and sort of older age, not working, to sort of drug using, to Indigenous people... it's sort of like... I mean I feel like a charitable reading of it might be that... there's like becoming more room and more solidarity and unity in that community, or it could just be that... it's... like the reality of that community is sort of revealing itself.

MK: Yeah.

JK: I'm not really sure.

MK: Yeah. And I do think, I think that within Woodward's that sort of struggle over the demands and some of the... ah... myself more so like Indigenous people who were involved in the squat who lived in the neighborhood at that time just pushing being like: "Look we're here, you can't ignore us anymore."

JK: Yeah.

MK: And I think that the eventual sort of like formal... formal demands from the Woodsquat did sort of reflect at least a compromise around at least some of it. The piece you're referring to I wrote that what like, 15 years ago, so I can't... I kinda remember, I've looked at it at some point in the last 5 or 6 years.

JK: [laughs]

MK: So I kinda remember some of what was in there but... yeah there was ah.. y'know I think that is part of the big things that changed.

Just people who are activists in the neighbourhood sort of asserting themselves. And in some ways it is around more overt, colonial, violence. Crisis issues like Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women like... this is fucking serious, y'know?

JK: Yeah, exactly.

MK: This isn't an issue that the neighborhoods facing that can just be like subsumed with like: "Oh we're all [inaudible] this, we're all poor people, were all doing this." No, like, this is very specific. So I can't point to moments, but I would say overall I think it is mostly just Indigenous people in the neighborhood making themselves visible and ah, y'know that's what's contributing more than anything.

JK: Yeah.

MK: And it's not to say yeah like... there's this dynamic or that... a variety of initiatives by Indigenous people pushes things like the TRC to happen. Because the TRC was the outcome of years of organizing by residential school survivors and their descendants, and that in turn feeds at organizing in terms of what limited funding becomes available, y'know, which can then be used to draw attention to these issues, fund health centers and things like that.

JK: Yeah, I think that in the piece what wound up being on the list of demands was a service provider or drop-in center for Native youth and stuff like that versus, like, I think your critique is that the organizers demands like... I guess that ties back into where we're at now in terms of like, how gentrification in the DTES has developed... you talk about social housing that's government funded and I guess like the platonic ideal of social housing almost functions like a co-op, versus what's going on which is for the most part private agen-

cies running supporting housing which looks like a carceral structure.

MK: Mhm.

JK: And the representation of Indigenous people in those space is very high, and then you look at like historic precedent of reservations and the pass system and things like that. Indigenous peoples lives being highly regulated.

MK: Mhm.

JK: I guess do you have any thoughts as to how neoliberalism has manifested in the DTES through structures like supportive housing? Like is that something that...

MK: Yeah, I think ah.... I think my own thinking is very much along the lines of what you're saying - that's how things appear, like, um... if there is funding it is for specific programs, and it's program-based housing um... which is not the same... not necessarily stable housing because a persons ability to stay in that housing is contingent upon being a part of a particular program.

JK: Definitely, yeah.

MK: And ah... and yeah, it can... I don't think there's any like... maybe there's the ability to document like, indirect like... conspiratorial nature of that. [laughs]

JK: [laughs]

MK: But if there isn't it's very convenient, it is very convenient.

in that those programs can also help... they help people, I'm not trying to say they don't help people.

JK: Yeah.

MK: They certainly help people, but at the same time, they keep the streets clean in another way.

JK: Yeah.

MK: In terms of keeping... and in the end, it has provided a form of housing that is not in direct competition with market housing. And to me, that's the big difference between the sort of program associate housing that is provided by the city like, the Portland Hotel Society (PHS) or Atira or Raincity, versus just like... BC Housing. Y'know like a big block like...

JK: Yeah.

MK: And obviously those things have their big block... Those BC Housing complexes have their own problems like it's not an end all solution, y'know? But it is interesting to me when I do think about that... interesting and sad it's the ah... that's how pervasive a neoliberal approach has become because I feel like... in the current era, in the Vancouver area... to advocate for social housing, y'know it is seen as kind of like off the spectrum of possibility, like it is almost seen as like a politically radical demand. Like it's not even associated with, like, center left. It's like a far left idea, y'know? The original impetus for social housing in the Canadian context was Trudeau 1.0, y'know like in the '60s, '70s, a federal program for social housing was like a capital "L" Liberal project...

JK: Oh that's fucked up. [laughs]

MK: [laughs] Y'know? Like... so it's like so you go from something that is completely centrist in terms of political spectrum in the '70s to being like... a far left idea because... y'know the ways neo-liberalism frames discussions around what is possible.

JK: Yeah.

MK: Yeah. It's fucking terrible. Ah... I guess ah, I do think that unfortunately those are the ah... like neoliberalism is a reality and I think gentrification is a big part of it,

JK: Mhm.

MK: It's not my focus, so I don't claim to have like a really in depth analysis of y'know like structures of capitalism and like... the inevitability of gentrification... [inaudible]... it's fuckin' tough. I haven't seen in Vancouver... ah... now seeing a lot of the organizing has spread out to the suburbs, y'know? Because what gentrification has caused in terms of like where a lot of homeless people have ended up like here or... other cities around the world that are facing this like... now like decades and decades of fucking like... violent gentrification, y'know like... I don't wanna sound down about it I just don't see it like... unfortunately I'm not seeing that much being done around it. In some ways it almost comes back to I guess what I even wrote in that Woodsquat journal, is like... these demands for like... y'know... government-funded social housing like... ah.... y'know it's... it's okay to put those forward and not even think that those are even possible.

JK: Yeah.

MK: Even just as a like... y'know I think it does... y'know whether it's neoliberalism as a form of capitalism or colonialism is that there are these sort of irreconcilable differences that are produced in these structures. That's what I was trying to get at with that Woodsquat article around demands as like... like... I mean I had a particular thinking around that time. I was very influenced by... I was previously more influenced by Anarchist thinking at that point... I was more reading Marxist writings, specifically within like a Trotskyist tradition.

JK: Yeah.

MK: So... yeah... it probably came out in that article for anybody who'd be familiar with it, it's just this transitional approach that... y'know ah... y'know as an organizer, part of your.. part of your goal is to raise consciousness among people. And... you can't just be like... no it's all like... we're just gonna organize towards revolution. In certain circumstances sure but in these times like that, the way I thought and saw about it was like... no, we're gonna like... we have a crisis of housing and so we're going to organize around housing, and we're going to put together things like demands that will like... that'd be appealing to people. And in the process they're going to see that... under capitalism this is just impossible. Even just this basic demand of government funded social housing. It's actually not structurally possible, y'know? And it has put us in conflict, and through that process people see that: "Oh okay, if we actually want housing, if we want our basic needs met... it's not possible." So then you go to another step politically.

JK: Yeah.

MK: So that's really what I was trying to get out in that piece and

ah... for better or for worse some of my thinking has changed around that some of it hasn't... y'know?

JK: Yeah, no, fair enough.

MK: And that may have come out just before we were talking about what I'm looking at in terms of Indigenous law, like... there's definitely like.... there's definitely a common thread there. I'm sort of saying like... "Hey, is this even possible, really? Do we even want to reconcile Indigenous forms of law with Canadian law?" Like no, it's not possible. So what do we do about that. So...

JK: Yeah, definitely.

MK: So I don't know if this is going all over the place...

JK: No no, I think that, I mean... I think there's a common thread in that... hold on... talking about conspiracies in neoliberalism like [laughs]

MK: [laughs]

JK: Man if I can tie that together... I mean it's just like... I guess something that has been on my mind personally lately has been the conceptualization of what a nation means and what does, like... what does the leadership of a nation or sort of like, what do the resources of a nation owe to the people who constitute it, you know what I mean like... ah christ I don't know [laughs] I almost had it. Like... like what does it mean to give a land acknowledgement as a means to honour the Indigenous presence on that territory and the Indigenous title to that territory while the members of that nation are homeless directly because of the colonial state, y'know? And how...

is there an Indigenous answer to that? And something that I've been thinking about is re-distributive practices in Indigenous practices through things like the Potlatch or Sundance gatherings... that sort of thing and like, social housing as a redistributive practice but that's sort of getting away from a single line like... that's over there and this is here and I'm still working on connecting the two.

MK: Yeah... well, I think there could be like... you were equating social housing to co-ops and I think there... even like within Vancouver there are different forms of housing ah... I feel that way towards like Native housing y'know like Vancouver Native Housing Society [VNHS] and Luma Housing and ah... y'know there's ah... from what I understand part of those were y'know... to put it one way is Indigenous people putting that demand to the state to be like: "Hey, [the] Federal government is only willing to fulfill its fiduciary obligations on reserves" - which they're not doing there anyway - so y'know from the '60s on you get like increasing growth of Indigenous communities in like, urban spaces, particularly like cities. So you get organizations coming in and saying: "Well look, we're here now like... you have this obligation." So there was a definitely reluctant agreement through the '80s for Federal and Provincial governments to start funding Native housing in city spaces.

JK: Right.

MK: Yeah VNHS was formed in 1984... Luma was formed in 1981... so... and now y'know if you want to ah... you look at the direction that VNHS has gone and now they're ah... I think from the 2000s on they talked about how they've turned towards a social enterprise model as a way to continue to fund it so y'know... ah... you can be critical of that or not be critical of it but its neoliberalism. It's neoliberal either way y'know. [laughs]

JK: [laughs] Yeah.

MK: In terms of the thinking behind it but also, that's just the position that the people involved with VNHS were put in. They feel like if they're going to continue to provide housing y'know like... they're not being provided that funding that like ah... through government funding services so now they're moving towards like having their own business or... I think Atira follows a similar model where Atira has the service provider section and then they have their private, for-profit like...

JK: SROs and that-

MK: Housing management company, right.

JK: Ah okay. I didn't know that... I don't know much about the way Native housing functions that way.

MK: Yeah! That's again... they're very open about that, that's how they operate. Atira property management they'll just do commercial property management for like... condos, completely unrelated to their SROs and that provides at least part of the funding for the other services they provide. But I do think that now it's a little bit more focused on the Indigenous community in the city aside from the DTES this is becoming an issue like... anecdotally, my son goes to a school that is mostly Indigenous students and most of the parents that I know that I'm friends with through those networks... live in either VNHS, or Luma, or BC Housing, or in my case I live in a co-op... y'know... but the ability to just rent in the neighborhood has become difficult. And this is a positive thing for the Indigenous community in Surrey. Like, they have a brand new Friendship Center that opened in 2012... the community there is growing, and it's positive!

It's probably because Surrey is probably a very difficult place to live when you are very spread out and it's not a cohesive community and it's growing now, and it's partly because people can't afford to live in Vancouver anymore.

JK: Yeah.

MK: Yeah! So I think... I do think it's gonna be a weird thing because you... talking about decolonization and you're still asking for government housing you know... I do think if anything it provides that space for community, and I think that can be an immediate need, and long term I think about more like... a transformative politics... y'know like something to like... just basic access to housing can play that dual or triple purpose.

JK: Yeah, definitely.

MK: It's not just the immediate needs it's like trying to think about things in terms of more like ah... y 'know... a transformative politics.... I think housing is still a key thing even if I'm not directly doing that organizing anymore.

JK: And I guess like just coming back to that event of like the Woodsquat and stuff... if you're organizing around... sort of like statefunded government housing... and there're organizers present that are saying well... this state is like a legal fiction according to this, there's like a... in terms of a transformative politics, you can't get much more transformative than that to say that... this state is founded on a fiction and what does that mean even for settlers who have also been disenfranchised by the settler colonial state.

MK: Mhm.

JK: So this sort of like... the... the organizers that aren't ready to answer to like their positionality as settlers on Indigenous, unceded territory are doing themselves a disservice as it ultimately just realigns them with colonial politics.

MK: Yeah.

JK: Which has always been rooted in capitalist imperialism which is now turning towards neoliberalism which atomizes people and individualizes them, so this turn to seriously consider Indigenous legal tradition and governance over a colonial state is a very powerful potential thing.

MK: Yeah.

JK: And also a very uncomfortable reality for a lot of settler organizers that are reluctant to think about their own privilege and their own complicity in a colonial state...

MK: Yeah.

JK: Do you feel like this has been a sort of... good ah... I hope I didn't misrepresent what you said at all or take it in a weird direction.

MK: No! Not at all, no. I mean, it's like an oral history but like obviously it's like... it's... I was an activist and still ah... still thinking about these things in my own way so yeah obviously it's gonna be ah.... y'know unlikely that it'd be like: "Well on this date I did this..."

JK: [laughs]

MK: Yeah it's just not that kind of interview, and yeah... hopefully ah... my prognosis around organizing for housing is kind of grim but that's the most relevant thing about doing an oral history around something like Woodsquat being "What can we learn from it?" I think ah yeah... it was a new thing to me then but it's not new now and yeah, you can't talk about struggles around housing and poverty without talking about colonialism and settler colonialism... it's ah... yeah. I hope that's what continues is like... in terms of... for like non-Indigenous people in Canada, is to ah... looking at this like... looking at this more intricate idea of class like "Oh yeah there's poverty, and there's like a working class, oh yeah and it's happening to Indigenous people too." It's just like... y'know ah... yes. We can say most Indigenous people are part of a working class broadly defined but that's only part of the story.

JK: Yeah.

MK: I think things have changed a lot. I did spend a lot of time working or trying to work in more non-Indigenous spaces y'know like... leftist... anti-capitalist spaces... and like... yeah... the idea of even talking about a settling like... even as a subject position was totally off people's radar for the most part. In terms of white Canadian leftists in my experience in the '90s, early 2000s it was just like *what*? Like "settler" was still treated like it was an epithet, like it was an insult.

JK: Right!

MK: It was like "No! No it's not, it's just this combination of privilege." Like it's privilege but it's based in a particular structure

like... it's not antithetical to like a more like... European Marxist or Anarchist tradition to look at like... settler as a particular subject, y'know? And it's not... it doesn't negate... connotations of class that exist in settler society but these things they have to be dealt with, right?

JK: Yeah man, definitely... that seems like a really awesome note to end on, thanks so much for your time!

MK: For sure.

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Produced in Response to:

Direct Action and the Archive:
A Screening of Sid Chow Tan's Video Journalism
& Woodsquat Open Archive by Josh Gabert-Doyon
@ Pollyanna 圖書館Library
02.11.18

This interview has been edited for clarity.

Thank you to Mike Krebs & thank you to organizer Vincent Tao, whose leadership and support was essential in realizing this project.

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