



Think Big, Think Bold, Think Black

**Lessons from the 2024
Liberated Land Trust Tour**

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**Canadian
Network of
Community
Land Trusts**

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This report was collaboratively written by Nat Pace, Jane O'Brien Davis, and Keisha St. Louis-McBurnie.

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Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Contents	3
Introduction	1
Context	2
The Black, Southern History of Community Land Trusts	2
Black Community Land Trusts in Canada	4
B3 Discussion Group	4
Opportunities	4
Challenges	4
Profiles of Host Organizations	5
Oakland Community Land Trust	5
East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative	11
Rondo Community Land Trust	14
New Communities Inc.	17
Lessons Learned	18
Lesson 1: B3 CLTs respond to displacement.	18
Lesson 2: B3 CLTs can promote reparative change.	18
Lesson 3: Affordable homeownership can promote racial equity.	19
Lesson 4: CLT Coalition-building is powerful and pragmatic.	19
Lesson 5: Solidarity is needed.	20
Lesson 6: Resident-led acquisition strategies are successful.	20
Lesson 7: A New Approach to Cooperative Housing	21
Lesson 8: There is no single financing solution.	21
Calls to Action	22
Conclusion	23

Introduction

Black communities are spearheading Canada’s growing community land trust movement. These Black-led, Black-serving, and Black-focused (B3) organizations acquire, develop, and steward affordable housing, commercial spaces, and cultural gathering places on community-owned land.

In May 2024, a delegation led by the [Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts](#) embarked on an international study tour, dubbed the *Liberated Land Trust Tour*. The delegation spent ten days meeting with community land trusts, aligned organizations, and allies across the United States.

Canadian Delegation	U.S host organizations
Hogan’s Alley Society (Vancouver, BC)	Oakland Community Land Trust
Little Jamaica Community Land Trust (Toronto, ON)	East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative (Oakland, CA)
Upper Hammonds Plains Community Land Trust (Halifax, NS)	California Network of Community Land Trusts
Weymouth Falls Community Land Trust (Digby County, NS)	Rondo Community Land Trust (St. Paul, MN)
DownTheMarsh Community Land Trust (Truro, NS)	New Communities Inc. (Albany, GA)

The overarching goal of the trip was to identify replicable practices, gain new perspectives, and forge international relationships to support the successful development Black-led and serving CLTs in Canada.

This report provides an overview of the tour and shares key lessons learned. It begins by providing context and describing the collaborative planning process. Next, profiles of each host organization are shared. It concludes with lessons learned alongside calls to action for CNCLT, government, and funders.

Context

The Black, Southern History of Community Land Trusts

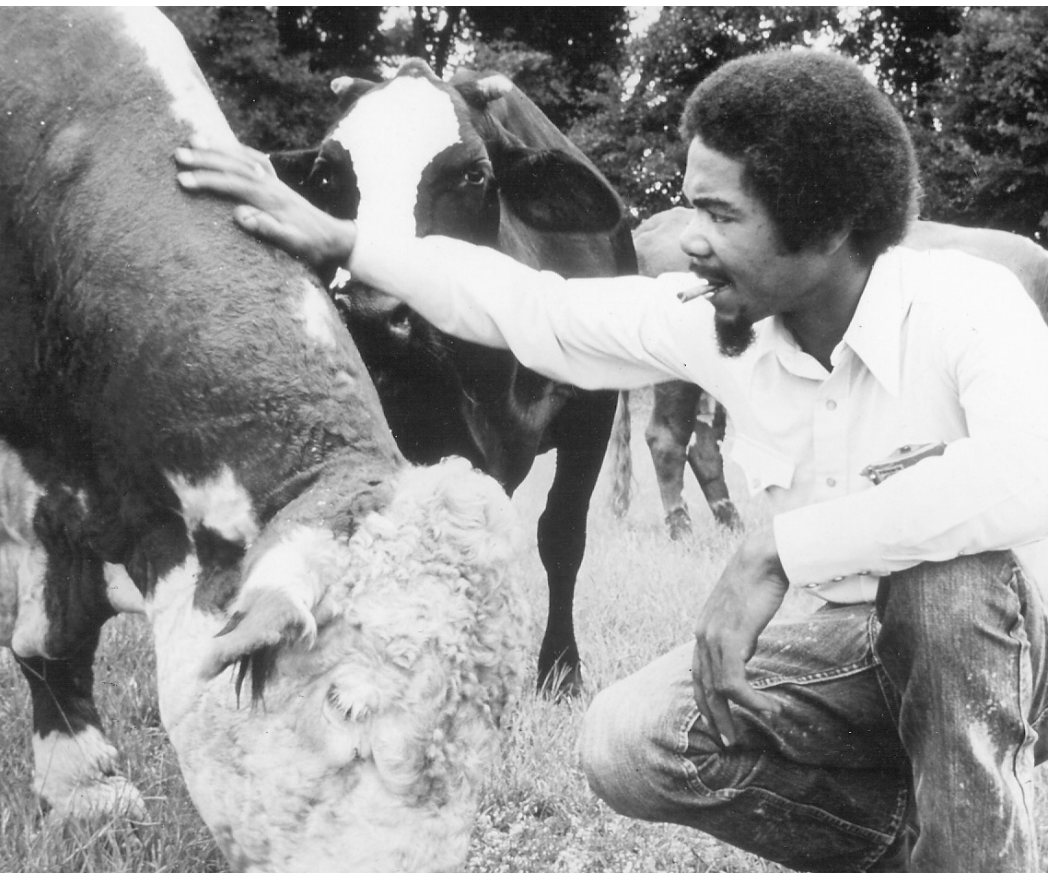
“I remember discovering that land trusts were rooted in a Black experience; that propelled me forward.”

Curtis Whiley, Upper Hammonds Community Land Trust

The first community land trust was a radical response to the anti-Black racism and ongoing displacement of Black tenant farmers in rural, southwest Georgia. At the time, white landowners routinely evicted Black households and farmers in retaliation for registering to vote and participating in Civil Rights activism.

In the 1960s, a collective of Black visionaries and select white allies created a new type of organization called a “community land trust”. They envisioned a community-governed non-profit organization that offered affordable access to agricultural land and housing through long-term leases. The model was inspired by environmental land trusts, as well as agrarian reform movements across the world.

New Communities Inc (NCI) was incorporated as the first community land trust in 1969. NCI would eventually acquire close to 6,000 acres of land, said to be the largest parcel of land owned by Black Americans at the time. In its early days, the project featured about 10 homes, a community market, print shop and 2,000 acres of working farmland. This was just the beginning of the vision its founders had laid out.



One member of New Communities Inc., Stanley, tends to livestock ([source](#)).

NCI's ultimate vision was never realized. In the 1980s, the land was foreclosed following years of drought and discriminatory rejection from relief programs by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). NCI was one of hundreds of victims impacted by the USDA's racism.

It would be over three decades before NCI would receive any reparations for the damage and land loss caused. In 1997, Timothy Pigford, alongside 400 other Black farmers, filed a class-action lawsuit (Pigford v. Glickman) against the US Secretary of Agriculture (Dan Glickman) alleging that USDA's allocation of resources was biased against Black farmers. Two years later, the farmers won a \$375 million settlement.

In the 2010s, NCI soon filed its own claim, alleging that discriminatory lending contributed to the failure of NCI's agricultural business and the loss of its land. A decade later, NCI members were finally awarded a \$12.8 million settlement and purchased a 1,600 acre site. This site, now known as Resora, was the final tour destination and is described later on. This remarkable story was captured by the 2016 documentary [Arc of Justice](#) and a case study by the [International Community Land Trust Centre](#).

The fact that community land trusts emerged within the Civil Rights Movement and struggle against anti-Black racism is significant. In a society marred by continued land loss within Black communities, the issues that NCI fought against are still deeply relevant today. Though NCI did not ultimately remain a community land trust, as explored later in this report, its fame as the origins of the movement continue to inspire Black community land trust organizers across the globe.



Resora plays multiple roles as a retreat center, working farm, and agricultural campus (photo by CNCLT).

Black Community Land Trusts in Canada

B3 Discussion Group

The Canadian Network of Community Land Trust hosts a discussion group of members representing B3 community land trusts from throughout Canada, with representation in British Columbia, Ontario, Québec, and Nova Scotia. Their first in-person meeting occurred at the CNCLT's inaugural conference held in Toronto in October 2023. As an outcome of this meeting, members proposed a study tour to the United States, where there are more operationalized B3 CLTs to learn from.

Opportunities

B3 CLTs are community-led projects with transformative potential within the affordable housing sector, their respective communities, and beyond. There are many opportunities to nurture and grow the movement of B3 community land trusts:

- **Support a community of practice** through regular convening of CNCLT's discussion group
- **Community Resilience Cohort** – CNCLT runs a capacity-building for BIPOC-led CLTs. It is now supporting a debut cohort, two of which are B3 organizations.
- **Promoting international knowledge exchange** with other B3 organizations through study tours and hosting international guests at CNCLT gatherings.
- **Using CNCLT's platform to foster a national dialogue** on the impacts of urban renewal, and displacement by development on Black communities.

Challenges

In addition to challenges facing Canadian CLTs at large, there are specific challenges B3 CLTs in Canada are forced to navigate, including:

- **Lack of operationalized B3 CLTs in Canada to learn from.** Compared to the United States, B3 CLTs in Canada are in much earlier stages of development.
- **Lack of public dialogue around reparative justice for Black communities.** Black history in Canada is poorly understood overall, leading to limited public discussion of reparative justice for Black communities. For B3 CLTs to gain buy-in, there must be a wider understanding of their work's situatedness in histories of displacement and divestment.
- **Lack of understanding of CLTs amongst aligned funders.** A lack of understanding of the community land trust model prevents funder buy-in.

The Liberated Land Trust tour is a response to these challenges.

Profiles of Host Organizations

Oakland Community Land Trust

Origins

Oakland CLT (OakCLT) was founded in 2009 through a collaboration of local anti-poverty organizations. The land trust aims to preserve and create housing and economic opportunities for low-income and/or racialized Oakland residents.

Founded at the height of the foreclosure crisis, the CLT was initially created to enable community ownership of foreclosed homes. With federal funding, OakCLT acquired and rehabilitated 20 dilapidated single family homes, which it then sold using a shared equity model. Since then, the CLT has pivoted and become involved across the housing spectrum and beyond, stewarding commercial spaces, community gardens, and cultural amenities such as artist studios.

Holdings

Fifteen years into operation, the Oakland Community Land Trust stewards a robust community-owned portfolio of 45 properties including shared equity homeownership, rental, commercial space, and community gardens. The organization uses a ground-lease model that enables perpetually affordability of assets.

We met with homeowners who credit the land trust with improving their quality of life through permanently affordable housing. OakCLT uses a shared equity model where the CLT owns the land, conveyed through a 99-year ground lease, while the homeowner owns the physical home. Purchasers are qualified based on their income at the time of sale. Resale restrictions prevent residents making significant profit.



Oakland CLT uses ground leases to enable permanent community ownership of land alongside resident control of buildings (graphic by [OakCLT](#)).

The CLTs support its renters to transform their homes into tenant-owned, limited equity cooperatives. We met with several residents participating in a cooperative conversion, which they sought out to put more decision-making power into the hands of residents and encourage an even stronger sense of stewardship of their homes.

Acquisition Strategies

While initially focussed on single family homes, their research led to a shift of focus towards small site properties. OakCLT's research revealed 88% of local housing stock is within buildings with fewer than 25 units, with no dedicated funding or programs to preserve their affordability, spelling a major displacement risk.

OakCLT employs a bottom-up acquisition strategy through a partnership with the [Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment](#) (ACCE), a grassroots advocacy organization. ACCE identifies at-risk properties where their members are under threat of displacement. ACCE works with OakCLT to acquire, rehabilitate, and transition the buildings to community ownership. The partnership has successfully preserved affordability within [several buildings](#).

The CLT also responds to ad-hoc acquisition opportunities. Staff emphasized the importance of flexibility to respond to and evaluate spontaneous opportunities.

Funding

Properties have site-specific financing structure:

- One property is entirely financed by the City of Oakland, through a mix of bank loans and donations.
- Oakland's *Acquisition and Conversion to Affordable Housing Fund* provides loans to eligible borrowers for acquisition and rehabilitation costs. This program is the result of advocacy by OakCLT, the ACCE, and City Councillor Carroll Fife.
- Another property was acquired by working with the then-tenant to create a community investment offer to raise capital, which is detailed below (See Hasta Muerte Coffee Cooperative).
- OakCLT was one of several CLTs across the US to receive a multi-million dollar donation from Mackenzie Scott's Yield Giving Foundation.

Two pieces of advice were shared:

- OakCLT does not leverage properties to acquire more real estate. The CLT believes this strategy endangers the housing security of residents at its buildings, and goes against its mission.
- By design, rental income only supports breaking even on properties plus small maintenance fees to support staff. Rents do not support other staff activities such as advocacy or research. The CLT believes that it should support residents, rather than the reverse.

Governance

Like many CLTs, OakCLT uses the traditional tripartite board: 1/3 of seats are for lessee directors (CLT homeowners, renters, or other lessees of OakCLT's land), 1/3 community directors (local experts and Oakland residents), and 1/3 for organizational directors (appointed from mission-aligned local organizations). There are currently 7 board directors, with by-laws permitting up to 15. All board members live in Oakland and are members of the land trust.

OakCLT prioritizes resident leadership on its board as the portfolio has expanded, and residents have slowly come onto the board. OakCLT invests in building their resident members skills so they can effectively serve on the board. Capacity building and leadership development is key to enabling resident participation on the board.

Community and Member Engagement

OakCLT is known for their resident-first approach, as demonstrated by an engaged board of residents and community members. Oakland has a seven-person staff team, four of which are CLT residents. Residents also regularly gather for social events. The strength of the relationship between residents and the CLT was evident. During our visit, many CLT residents came to meet our delegation and speak to the ways in which living in the CLT's permanently affordable homes has improved their lives.

"In Oakland, I saw deep roots of community, how it was at the forefront of everything they were doing."

Djaka Blais, Hogan's Alley Society

Property Snapshot 1

Hasta Muerte Coffee Cooperative

The Hasta Muerte Coffee Cooperative was acquired by the CLT in 2019. The business was embroiled in a national news story for refusing service to police. Soon after, their landlord put the building up for sale, jeopardizing the future of the co-op. Fortunately, the cooperative had negotiated a **first right of refusal clause** into their lease. With just 48 days to match a \$960,000 offer, they partnered with OakCLT.

With the CLT's support, the cooperative set up a "Private Offering" security (a financial instrument representing financial value, usually in the form of a stock, bond, or option). Community investors were offered a **return of 0-4%** on their investment over a **five-year term**; many chose a 0% rate, making the overall interest on the loans around 1%. Investor capital and donations enabled OakCLT to purchase the mixed-use building, which also included two apartments. OakCLT owns the title and leases space to the coffee shop. OakCLT aims to repay the private investors with soft debt from the City of Oakland as it moves to rehab the residential units.

This case demonstrates that **CLTs can prevent displacement of small business**, but **adequate financing** and **policy tools** (such as the right of first refusal) will be needed to support such endeavours.



Delegates meet with CLT residents over coffee at Hasta Muerte.

Property Snapshot 2

Carrillo Corner

Carrillo Corner is a 7-unit affordable live-work complex. Current residents are in the process of establishing a limited equity housing cooperative, a shared form of permanently affordable homeownership for multi-unit buildings. Residents will collectively own the building while OakCLT will steward the land in perpetuity.

Working artists Dixie and Mario Carillo purchased storefronts in the Ivy Hills neighbourhood during the 1970s. Over time, they renovated and rented units as affordable live-work spaces for other artists. After Mario passed away, Dixie wanted to sell, but wanted it to remain an affordable live-work space for artists. After many years of discussion, the property was acquired by OakCLT in 2018 at a fair, but below market rate, once OakCLT secured financing from the City of Oakland's Site Acquisition program.

This case demonstrates the **importance of relationship building** between CLTs and their community. OakCLT's community reputation meant that Dixie Carillo **recognized the CLT as a worthy successor** for her beloved property, knowing that it would be committed to affordability and community service. It also highlights the impact of **acquisition funding programs** in preserving affordable housing. Finally, the journey to converting to a limited equity housing cooperative demonstrates how **cooperative structures can layer onto community land trusts** in order to offer another degree of preservation and community wealth-building.



Delegates met with staff and residents at Carrillo Corner.

Property Snapshot 3

Mom's House

In late 2019, a collective of homeless Black mothers (“Moms 4 Housing”) engaged in civil disobedience by occupying a vacant Oakland home owned by a real estate speculator. The group aimed to draw attention to the scale of speculation in Oakland, where there are 4 vacant homes for every unhoused person.

Moms 4 Housing called upon the owner to sell the house to a CLT, but were ultimately forcefully evicted by the county sheriff. Less than a week later, Moms 4 Housing announced that OakCLT would purchase the house.

The home has since been rehabilitated and is now operated by Moms 4 Housing as transitional housing for mothers and their children. One of the original occupiers, Carroll Fife, went on to become elected to Oakland City Council where she championed the creation of the *Acquisition and Conversion to Affordable Housing Fund*.

This case demonstrates how CLTs can **support grassroots organizing** and provide a viable vehicle for **acquisition and rehabilitation** of distressed housing assets, and recognize that **housing is a human right**.



After acquiring the property, OakCLT completed a thorough rehabilitation, ensuring a healthy and safe environment for its next life as a transitional housing project.

East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative

Origins

The East Bay Permanent Real Estate Cooperative (EBPREC) organizes communities of colour in Oakland to cooperatively steward real estate, working towards a goal of “Land without Landlords” and within the ethos of “Restorative Economics”. EB PREC was born from a collaboration between the [People of Colour Sustainable Housing Network](#) and [Sustainable Economies Law Centre](#), and officially launched in 2018. The first staff position was funded through a crowdfunding campaign.

Unlike OakCLT, EBPREC is not a community land trust, but rather a permanent real estate cooperative. Similar to a CLT, EB PREC works to collectively and perpetually own land for community benefit. EB PREC does have a separate non-profit organization to hold land without being taxed.

EB PREC chose the cooperative structure for several reasons: firstly, in order to avoid being restricted by government regulations related to the acquisition of capital (nonprofits can’t sell securities); and second, to enable community wealth-building through redistribution of surplus money to members.

COMPARING OWNERSHIP MODELS			
	Capitalist	CLT	PREC
Legal Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private Ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 501C-3 Non-profit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CA Cooperative Corporation
Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not affordable, or Rent Control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perpetual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perpetual
Income level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low to Mixed Income
Org Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landlord 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Membership Co-op
Property Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landlord 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual ownership, rental, or cooperative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident Co-ownership
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loans, private wealth, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loans, grants, subsidies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selling shares, loans, grants, subsidies
Wealth Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wealth Consolidation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No or Limited Equity for Residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited Equity for Residents, Cooperative wealth building

EBPREC shared this comparative chart with the delegation.

Holdings

In roughly 5 years, EBPRECs has come to own **\$11M in assets** that encompass housing, commercial, and cultural spaces. A selection of sites are listed below:

- COOP 789 is a 4-unit building housing a majority of people of colour. The property was acquired through community donations and is currently being rehabilitated.
- Prince St House was donated by an Elder. EB PREC is working with an arts organization to place artists and educators into the project.
- California Ave House was acquired through an “owner group”, an acquisition strategy detailed below. After being denied a mortgage from her local bank, a community member approached EB PREC to propose co-purchasing a home. They visited the property and worked out the financing together.
- Esther’s Orbit Room and The Barn are culturally significant multi-site acquisition purchases in 2021. The properties are part of the [7th Street Thrives](#) project, EB PRECs partnership with Bay Area Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). This project aims to reactivate a former Black business and cultural corridor that was displaced by urban renewal, highway construction, and BART rails.
- Pippin St project is a 10-unit apartment complex acquired in 2023. Two units are occupied by EB PREC members who provide cooperative education to residents.

Acquisition Strategies

EBPREC has multiple acquisition strategies, including “owner groups” and land donations. Owner groups are created by members who propose projects or acquisitions and work with EB PREC to purchase homes. EB PREC also has a public property intake form for community members to see if EB PREC could support acquisition of their homes. Lastly, acquisitions from the private market have also been negotiated, in the case of Estehr’s Orbit Lounge and the Barn.

Funding

EBPREC sells organizational membership shares for up to \$1,000 each. Income generated from shares is held in a general fund and used to purchase, develop, build, rehabilitate, manage, and permanently preserve the affordability of real estate. Shares can be purchased by residents of 23 US states, with efforts to expand the offering. Shares produce a 1.5% annual return over a 5-year term.

In their model, “rent” paid by residents is called “contributions”. Contributions pay off the property or support maintenance. Any surplus is given back to members, with a percentage of the contribution going into an equity account. The organization has also accepted donations. EB PREC has not, however, sought out traditional bank loans.

Governance

EB PREC's board is advisory only. Decision-making stays in 500+ person membership, which is made up of:

- Staff owners, who support day to day operations, community participation, and member acquisitions
- Community owners, who live in the East Bay.
- *Resident owners*, who live and work in EB PREC properties.
- *Investor owners*, who own member shares and receive dividends.

EBPRECs governing documents and security offerings are freely [available online](#). As founder Noni Sessions put it, "We can't sell each other our keys to freedom".

Community and Member Engagement

In addition to annual member meetings, community owner meetings run every other month, where members provide updates or acquisition proposals. Members are educated on cooperative values and ownership. When residents move into EBPREC property, they also attend six learning sessions to support them in making decisions together to maintain their home and navigate conflict.

Rondo Community Land Trust

Origins

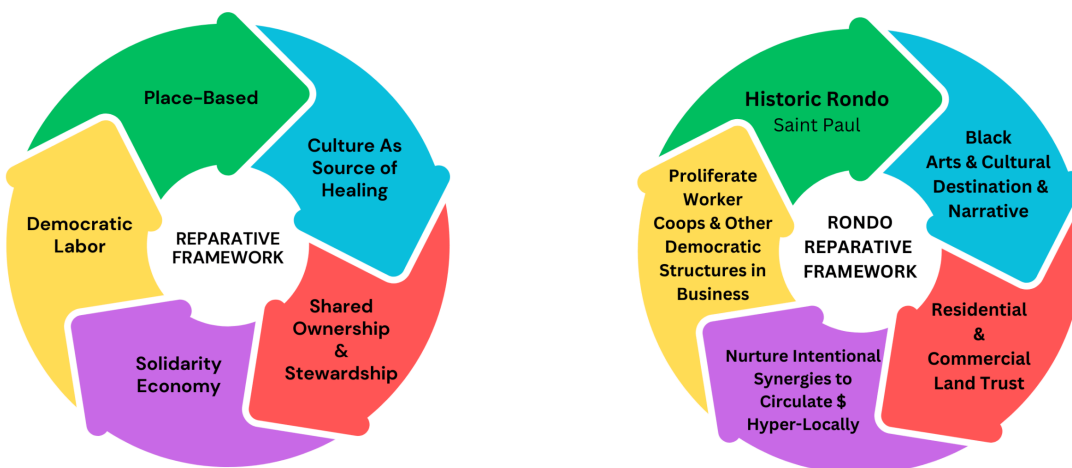
Rondo CLT is based in Rondo in St. Paul, Minnesota. The historic Rondo neighbourhood was once a thriving Black business corridor. In the 1960s, over 700 homes and 300 businesses were destroyed by the construction of the I-94 interstate.

Rondo CLT is involved in both the construction and acquisition of affordable housing and commercial spaces. It emerged in 1993, acquiring its first single family home just two years later. In 2021, under new leadership, the organization entered a new stage of growth. In under three years, the organization more than doubled its housing portfolio (48 homes to 120 homes). This was steered by a three-year Capacity Plan that included staff, fundraising targets, and capital targets.

Their work is guided by their organization's [Reparative Framework](#). They define their approach to reparative economic development through five key elements, quoted below:

1. **“It is place-based:** Each place carries a unique history, acting as a sanctuary of memories and a mirror of cultural identity. Reparative strategies will, therefore, be more resonant and surgical if tethered to place with data that starkly document past harms in dollars-and-cents terms.
2. **It sees culture as a source of healing:** Economic violence doesn't just have financial impacts; it also tears the social and cultural fabric of communities. Reparative efforts that exclusively tend to the revitalization of wealth do not provide the depth of healing our communities are hungry for. Culture carries ancestral ways of relating to one another, offers solutions, and heals unseen wounds.
3. **It emphasizes shared ownership and stewardship:** As is made evident by our lived experience, ownership in the capitalist system doesn't protect us from wealth stripping and other forms of economic violence. Shared ownership models—land trusts and cooperatives—broaden political and economic power. It gifts us structures that spread risk, share reward, and spur mutual accountability.
4. **There is a focus on building a solidarity economy:** A solidarity economy centers relational and human values in the production and exchange of goods and services. When we match economy building with place-based strategies, we set the conditions for circular economies.
5. **There is a commitment to democratic labor:** We believe in people power and that democratic workplaces produce better results for local economies and workers.”

The graphic below illustrates how each of these five elements maps onto their work in historic Rondo.



Holdings

As of 2024, Rondo’s portfolio includes both affordable homeownership, rental housing and commercial spaces. Their housing portfolio is roughly split between 80% ownership and 20% rental. Their housing portfolio’s focus on homeownership is in response to Minnesota’s racial homeownership gap, where just 30.5% of Blacks own their own home, compared to 77.5% of whites. Homebuyers receive both pre- and post-purchase stewardship education to ensure the asset is properly managed.

Rondo Community Land Trust's first commercial project was the opening of Selby Milton Victoria. This mixed-use development features affordable senior housing and over nine thousand square feet of commercial space. Commercial rent sits at \$7 per square foot, compared to market rate around \$35. During the trip, we toured the in-construction Business Incubator space. The space will include approximately 2,300 square feet of commercial space as a “mini-mall” with seven open air stalls for local entrepreneurs.

Acquisition Strategies

Rondo uses a variety of strategies to amass its real estate portfolio.

- The Homeowner Initiative Program (HIP) sees Rondo CLT assist households at or below 80% Area Median Income (AMI) purchase single-family homes or duplexes of their choice. Participants receive funds to boost their buying power as well as a grant to cover the cost of essential repairs to the home. Rondo staff provide support throughout the entire process, from identifying properties to closing the deal.

- The Business Initiated Program (BIP) will create business ownership opportunities with a focus on supporting small, local, and minority-owned businesses. Rondo CLT will assist business-owners in purchasing and fixing up commercial spaces of their choice by offering financial assistance and guidance.
- Rondo CLT also coordinates the construction of new homes for purchase or rent.

Funding

Rondo CLT leverages both public and private investment to drive down costs and create affordability for commercial and residential tenants and owners. This includes traditional fundraising, foundation investments, and collaboration with local community development financiers. Rondo shared that their clear articulation of their reparative framework helps attract investment and informs their programming.

Rondo's HIP and BIP programs can be layered with additional initiatives that put the reparative framework into practice.

- The Right to Return program provides additional funding to HIP-approved households who were displaced by the I-94, or their descendants.
- The Inheritance Fund is a city-funded program administered by Rondo which provides an additional down payment assistance to HIP homebuyers who meet the descendency requirements.
- The Right to Return Business Program bridges business ownership opportunities to those who were displaced by the construction of I-94 or their descent.

Governance

The CLT is governed by a 12-person, member-elected tripartite board (1/3 lease holders; 1/3 community members; 1/3 experts). All leaseholders are members.

Rondo CLT is part of a regional CLT coalition, which ensures a flow of communication between the seven community land trusts in Minneapolis-St. Paul. Rondo has been able to leverage money from the coalition, demonstrating the power of working together. They are also part of the state-wide Minnesota Community Land Trust Coalition, as well as the Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers which gathers nonprofit community development organizations.

New Communities Inc.

“Being here was almost surreal. Looking out and thinking about what could have happened here, and then knowing what they are doing now with the land is so positive”

Shekara Grant, Weymouth Falls CLT

In its current incarnation, New Communities Inc (NCI) owns Resora, a 1600 acre site in Albany, Georgia. NCI purchased the site in the early 2010s, its name inspired by the “resilience and resourcefulness” of Black people. Resora plays multiple roles as a retreat center, working farm, and agricultural campus. During a site tour, we learned about the agricultural education program as well as the crops produced on the farm, including pecans, satsuma oranges, muscadine grapes, and flatland rice.

New Communities Inc. differs from other host organizations as it is neither a community land trust nor a real estate cooperative and it is not pursuing additional land acquisition at this point in time. Though it is recognized as the original community land trust, after the loss of its original land and subsequent acquisition of Resora, the organization pivoted their original vision.

NCI has been transforming the site into a place of healing and education, through:

- **Historical research and slave descendant tracking:** Unknown to NCI at the time of purchase, the site was formerly a slave plantation owned by one of the state’s largest slave owners. There are efforts to connect with the descendants of those enslaved on the Resora property, with two descents being located.
- **Intercommunal bridge-building:** Connections are being made with local Indigenous and Latinx communities, who participated in a land blessing. Each area was blessed by Chief McCormick of the Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe.
- **Renaming landmarks:** Several fixtures and roads have been renamed after significant local Civil Rights figures.
- **Working farm and agricultural education:** The land is used to employ and cultivate a variety of crops. Working with aspiring farmers, the land research lab for testing, site-learning, and production.



Mrs. Shirley Sherrod, one of the founders of the CLT model, met with the delegation.

Lessons Learned

Below are key lessons learned from the tour. Quotes are from the delegation's reflective discussions on the final day of the trip.

Lesson 1: B3 CLTs respond to displacement.

The loss of wealth faced by Black communities across North America cannot be overstated. The value of stolen Black labour through enslavement is beyond estimate and foundational to the economic development of both Canada and the US. Several generations later, the era of urban renewal introduced another massive wave of destroyed community wealth. In St. Paul, An estimated [\\$157M of intergenerational wealth](#) was lost by the interstate construction through the Rondo neighborhood.

Across North America, B3 CLTs are responding to and repairing repeated histories of displacement through the long-term stewardship of culturally significant sites. The community land trusts we visited each viewed their work as a continuation of previous generations' efforts to establish communities of care and build community wealth. These projects offer healing to Black communities through reclamation of land and prevention of future displacement.

“The South to me represents the epitome of the deepest exclusion because not only was there slavery but there were Jim Crow laws. And despite that, we’re sitting on a property [Resora] where slaves were. What would they ask of us? If they could speak to us, what would they say to us? I know they would be blown away, absolutely stunned, that this place is now owned by people who look like us.”

Dr. June Francis, Hogan’s Alley Society

Lesson 2: B3 CLTs can promote reparative change.

“Land trusts can be more than what they are today in the Canadian context... there are so many opportunities to be more radical and more bold ... and that's rooted in our legacy as Black people across the continent”

Keisha St. Louis-McBurnie, Little Jamaica Community Land Trust

Black community land trusts are not defined simply by Black leadership, but by their mission to facilitate reparative development to address historical injustices, thus departing from traditional community development frameworks.

B3 CLTs may have different values, priorities and occupations when it comes to potential acquisitions, organizational governance, and focus on cultural significance in assessing a property's value. Lands that hold specific cultural significance to Black communities may be seen as undesirable by non-Black CLTs as well as by actors (funders and policy-makers) that are driving policy priorities.

“What are we doing differently to make it permanent, sustainable change? The things they were saying then, are the same things we’re saying now. What are we doing differently today that’ll ensure that our children and our children's children don't have to convene again?”

Melisa Marsman, Upper Hammonds Plains Community Land Trust

Lesson 3: Affordable homeownership can promote racial equity.

While shared equity homeownership is one of the defining characteristics of CLTs in the US, it has yet to be taken up by Canadian CLTs.

Shared equity homeownership programs and publicly-funded down payment assistance we studied were responding to racial homeownership gaps. Canada's overall homeownership rate in Canada is 72.61%. It sits at an average of [44.50% for Black households](#).

Black CLTs in Canada express strong interest in offering affordable homeownership to their communities. Taking the impacts of historic and contemporary displacement into account, there is an argument that shared equity homeownership allows homeowners to build modest equity answers to a system-barriers that has prevented Black communities from stewarding generational wealth.

Lesson 4: CLT Coalition-building is powerful and pragmatic.

Coalitions can be powerful and support larger, more cohesive asks. This was evidenced by Rondo's participation in both metro- and state-wide coalitions. While the B3 CLTs are building national coalitions across Canada, refining collective asks and aims could help leverage greater investment and growth in the sector.

“There’s a lot of power in us working collectively, especially since we have representation across the country. If we can have commonalities with things that are happening in Albany, Georgia, St. Paul, Minnesota, and Oakland, California, I think that we can find similarities between what’s happening in our country.”

Shekara Grant, Weymouth Falls Community Land Trust

Lesson 5: Solidarity is needed.

“Hearing Coco [former Rondo CLT Deputy Director] speak was powerful, we need to not be afraid to step out and get more white people involved in what we’re doing.”

Kaitlyn Patterson, Upper Hammonds Plains Community Land Trust

The role of allyship from non-Black people was raised several times during our trip. At Rondo CLT, the Deputy Director spoke about her positionality as a white American of Italian descent, whose ancestors participated in the colonization of Libya, and how that motivates her to work towards reparations for Black communities in America. What is critical to advance our movement are shared values, understanding, and an interest to use our individual and collective power to do the right and just thing.

Lesson 6: Resident-led acquisition strategies are successful.

In addition to leading acquisitions of buildings already for sale, several of the organizations we visited implemented resident-led acquisition strategies. For example:

- Both [EB PREC](#) and [OakCLT](#) also shared online intake forms where existing tenants can express their interest in collaboratively organizing for their building’s acquisition.
- OakCLT’s partnership with Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE) identifies acquisition opportunities in buildings occupied by ACCE members. These buildings were often already organized through their work with ACCE.
- Rondo’s Homebuyer Initiation Program also allows homeowners to co-purchase a home of their choice with the CLT.

None of these strategies has been implemented by Canadian CLTs, yet they represent viable opportunities for expanding land trusts’ holdings and encouraging leadership by residents.

Lesson 7: A New Approach to Cooperative Housing

OakCLT has acquired rental buildings where tenants began organizing to convert their building into housing cooperatives. This offers an additional opportunity for CLT residents to take a lead in the management of their homes. EB PREC also supported its owner groups to purchase housing and convert it into cooperative housing projects.

While CLTs in Canada do own cooperative housing, this has typically been through new construction or the acquisition of existing cooperatives. The approach of a CLT acquiring a rental building is yet to be demonstrated.

Lesson 8: There is no single financing solution.

During the trip, we studied several acquisition and development financing strategies. EB PREC and OakCLT (through their partnership with Hasta Muerte Coop) sold securities to investors in order to raise capital for acquisition. The US' more robust philanthropic sector and a network of community development finance institutions reduces CLTs' reliance on traditional lenders. Still, traditional fundraising and public grants were still used.

Calls to Action

After this trip, we are renewed and inspired to continue our work supporting B3 CLTs. The following calls to action are a starting point.

To the Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts:

- Support coalition-building through continued (inter)national convenings and knowledge exchange between B3 community land trusts.
- Document and share best practices from the growing ecosystem of B3 community land trusts and other Black land stewardship organizations.
- Work with B3 CLTs to develop collective asks for the public, private, and philanthropic sectors.

To Government:

Provide core funding to help Black-led CLTs thrive.

Most tour delegate organizations are largely volunteer-led organizations, operating off of piecemeal program-based funding. In this context, their accomplishments thus far are incredible.

In Canada, all successful CLTs have received substantive public and philanthropic support. Similar investments should be made into B3 CLTs.

Further, the money set aside for Black communities within the National Housing Strategy has not been fully utilized. Barriers to its utilization include capacity to apply for the funds. Administrators of this fund should learn how to remedy this issue from Black communities. on.

Currently, B3 CLTs throughout Canada are largely led by dedicated volunteers and operate off piece meal program-based funding. Given these limitations, the accomplishments of these groups are incredible. However, it is imperative that the government honour this work with sustainable financial support. There are several existing government funded initiatives, including the Affordable Housing Fund: Black-led organizations, are undersubscribed due to lack of capacity within the sector for B3 CLTs and other community housing providers. Sustainable core funding is needed to build technical capacity within the sector for B3 organizations.

Provide Black-specific acquisition funding and “right-size” programs.

To make Canada’s existing real estate acquisition and development programs more impactful for Black communities, targeted investment is needed for tools and resources designed using an equity lens to facilitate land acquisition and development for Black communities. These specialized tools are essential for addressing historical injustices and enabling equitable, sustainable progress in community development. Although the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s Affordable Housing Fund: Black-led Organizations already exists, there are certain barriers stopping this fund from being impactful for Black communities. These include:

Acquiring tenanted buildings may not be community serving (if tenants are not Black). Acquisition programs are less impactful in divested Black communities (especially African Nova Scotian communities) where there simply are not multi-unit residential buildings to acquire.

Conclusion

We celebrate the Liberated Land Trust Tour as a success. Clearly, the tour provided “proof of concept” that Black-led community stewardship of land and real estate is possible. A suite of reliable, successful practices were gleaned from our host organizations. We eagerly anticipate the testing of these solutions in Canada.

Importantly, we established strong international relationships between Canadian and American community land trusts. Our greatest hope was that, by visiting operationalized organizations in the US, we would learn how they overcame common challenges in their early development. We extend our gratitude to our hosts who shared wisdom on generating community support, navigating conflict, raising capital, and developing their real estate portfolio.