

The Future of Home

Reimagining Diasporic Belonging
in an Uncertain World



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Reimagining Diasporic Belonging in an Uncertain World

by Luke Correia-Damude & Janine Pierre

A major research project submitted to OCAD University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Design in Strategic Foresight and Innovation.

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Abstract

Canada's longstanding narrative of opportunity and stability has positioned it as a key destination for migrants. However, rising costs of living, housing constraints, and pressures on public services are increasingly challenging this value proposition. At the same time, Guyana is undergoing rapid economic transformation driven by oil discovery, creating new conditions of opportunity that are reshaping migration patterns and prompting renewed engagement from diaspora communities.

This research addresses the challenge of understanding how migration, disruption, resilience, and shifting value systems are transforming the meaning of home for Guyanese diasporic communities connected to both the Greater Toronto Area and Guyana, and how these dynamics shape decisions about opportunity, belonging, and community across borders.

Using an explorative qualitative approach, the study employs a braided methodology that integrates three strands: (1) systems analysis of structural forces shaping housing and migration, (2) narrative inquiry grounded in lived experience, and (3) foresight methods to examine shifting future expectations. This design approach informs how these strands are brought together, moving iteratively between lived experience and systemic conditions to generate interpretive insight. Primary data was collected through in-depth,

semi-structured interviews with 18 participants across multigenerational, kinship-based networks spanning Toronto and Guyana. This approach captures how meanings of home are constructed relationally across time, place, and family.

The research introduces the Home Realization Framework as an original interpretive model, accompanied by visualizations and future-oriented scenarios, to explain how home is realized through the interaction of structural forces, lived experience, and evolving place-based expectations. Together, these findings reveal how home is not a fixed condition but an adaptive process, shaped through ongoing negotiation across places under conditions of uncertainty.

This study contributes a relational and future-oriented perspective that connects lived experienced to systemic change, offering insights for design, policy, and community practice aimed at supporting more adaptive and equitable conditions for realizing home.

Keywords: Toronto, Guyana, migration, home, diaspora, identity, belonging, resilience, foresight, value proposition, multigenerational interviews, kinship lines of inquiry

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Land Acknowledgements

This work is grounded across multiple lands. In Toronto, within what is now known as Canada, we acknowledge the ancestral territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabeg and the Huron-Wendat, who are the original owners and custodians of this land, with enduring relationships to it across generations. We are mindful of the relationships and responsibilities that shape how land is lived on and understood today.

In Guyana, we recognize the First Peoples, including the Arawak, Carib, Wapichan, Macushi, Wai Wai, Patamona, Akawaio, and Arekuna, whose deep and ongoing relationships to land, culture, and community continue to share ways of living, belonging, and understanding of home.

Across both lands, these places have been shaped by histories of colonization, displacement, and dispossession, and the conditions under which home is found, built, and sustained are not neutral, but uneven and often constrained. This study examines how home is understood and experienced within and across these conditions, with the aim of contributing to more thoughtful and equitable ways of living, belonging, and building home in the future.

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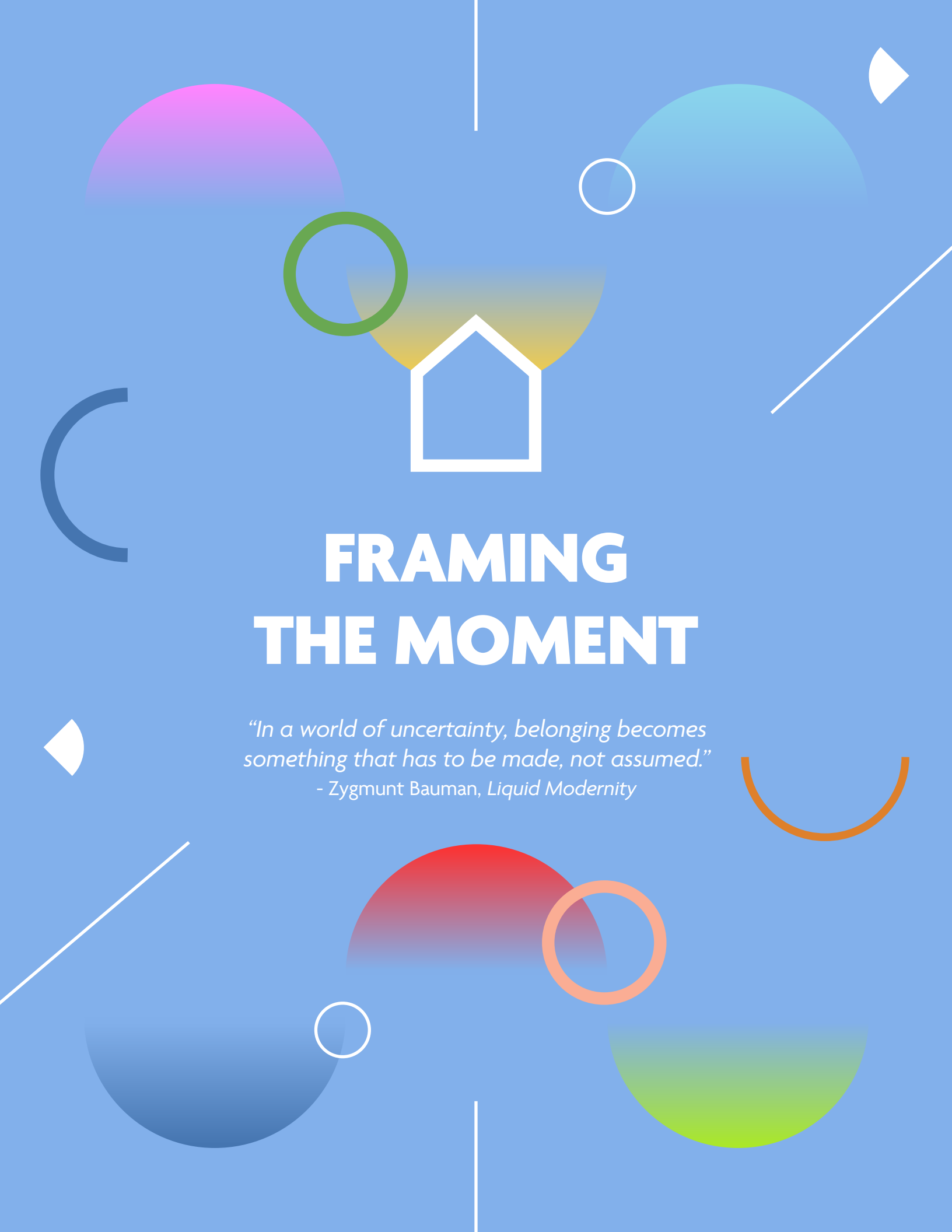
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FRAMING THE MOMENT

“In a world of uncertainty, belonging becomes something that has to be made, not assumed.”

- Zygmunt Bauman, Liquid Modernity

Why Now: Global Polycrisis

The conditions shaping contemporary life today are increasingly marked by overlapping disruptions that extend across economic, political, environmental, and social systems. Across much of the world and more recently, these interconnected crises are increasingly being recognized and framed as *polycrisis*. Polycrisis refers to the convergence of overlapping, interconnected, and reinforcing disruptions that shape the conditions of everyday life. These disruptions do not occur in isolation. Instead, they interact across systems, producing cascading effects that are difficult to contain or resolve through fragmented interventions (Heinberg & Miller, 2023). As Heinberg and Miller further described in their report *Welcome to the Great Unraveling*, polycrisis reflects “*the tangles of global environmental and social dilemmas that are accumulating, mutually interacting, and worsening*.”

While contemporary discourse increasingly frames this moment as one of “polycrisis”, this framing often reflects a Global North perspective. Many communities, particularly across the Global South, have long navigated overlapping and interlocking crises as an enduring condition rather than a newly emergent one (Ruwanpura et al., 2025). Recognizing this longer trajectory is critical, as it shifts polycrisis from a description of recent instability to a lens for understanding how uneven development has shaped lived conditions over time.

What once appeared as separate crises are increasingly experienced as a single, entangled condition shaping everyday life. As global risk assessments note, shocks in one domain now rapidly trigger consequences across others, intensifying instability at multiple scales (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2025; World Economic Forum, 2025).

The pressures contributing to these conditions are wide-ranging and mutually reinforcing. Housing unaffordability and precarity intersect with migration and displacement, economic inequality and precarious work, climate and environmental risk, political instability, and declining trust in institutions (Edelman Trust Institute, 2026; World Bank Group, 2020). At the same time, mounting strain on essential public services such as healthcare, education, and housing supports,

further erodes the foundations that once underpinned social stability, as trust is shaped by institutions’ perceived ability to reliably and effectively deliver these services (OECD, 2024). For many households, the systems that once promised stability now feel increasingly strained or uncertain, reflected in the fact that more people report low or no trust in government than high trust (OECD, 2024). This research demonstrates that when taken together, these forces signal not a series of discrete crises, but a broader rupture in how security, opportunity, and belonging are produced and experienced.

Beyond these pressures, fragmentation intensifies as geopolitical, societal, and economic divisions reinforce one another, weakening collective capacity to respond and adapt. In this context, instability becomes normalized and uncertainty shifts from episodic disruption to a persistent feature of daily life (World Economic Forum, 2025). What once felt temporary or exceptional increasingly becomes the background condition through which people must organize their lives, reflecting how interlocking crises are embedded within longer historical trajectories of uneven development rather than isolated or short-term disruptions (Ruwanpura et al., 2025).

Systemic Nature of the Crisis

A defining feature of *polycrisis* is its systemic character. Shocks in one domain amplify vulnerabilities in others through feedback loops that compound risk over time. As a result, solutions designed for discrete problems often prove insufficient when faced with interconnected failures.

What emerges instead is a condition in which instability is embedded in daily life. Anthony Giddens (2009) argues that uncertainty has become a structural feature of contemporary society that individuals must continuously navigate. For many households, this condition is materially experienced as persistent precarity, shaping expectations, decisions, and long-term planning (Standing, 2011). In this way, uncertainty is not simply an external condition, but something that quietly structures how people plan, adapt, and make sense of the future.

Home as the Interface of Polycrisis

While polycrisis is most commonly articulated at global and institutional scales, it becomes most visible in the lived realities of everyday life. Home functions as the primary site where these pressures are experienced, absorbed and negotiated. Behind the statistics are individuals and families making difficult decisions to cope with rising costs, constrained options, and uncertain futures (CivicAction, 2025). In Toronto, many residents are “being forced to make impossible choices between family, career, financial stability, and quality of life” (CivicAction, 2025). In Guyana, similar dynamics emerge, where everyday life is shaped by conditions characterised by vulnerability, risk, complexity, and uncertainty, reinforcing how households must continuously adapt within constrained and shifting circumstances (Holliman et al., 2022). These pressures surface not only in policy debates and economic indicators, but around kitchen tables, in family conversations, and in the everyday calculations that shape where and how people live.

Households increasingly bear the burden of systemic failure. As highlighted in the *Toronto's Vital Signs 2024* report, rising costs push many into trade-offs between housing, food, care, and mobility, with four in ten residents reporting that their household income is not enough to meet their needs (Toronto Foundation, 2024). Financial stress, overcrowding or displacement, delayed life milestones, and intensified intergenerational support strain have become common features of this lived reality. In relation to these factors, home functions not only as shelter and a buffer against these instabilities, but also as a site of mounting pressure. The place expected to provide steadiness increasingly becomes the place where broader systemic stresses are felt most acutely.

Distinguishing Housing from Home

These conditions make it necessary to distinguish between housing and home. Housing refers to physical shelter and a basic human need, but it also increasingly treated as an economic asset, and a commodity within housing markets (UN-Habitat, 2022). In contrast, home is defined as “a set of relationships and practices through which people create and maintain a sense of belonging” (Boccagni, 2020). While housing remains central to the creation of home, research increasingly

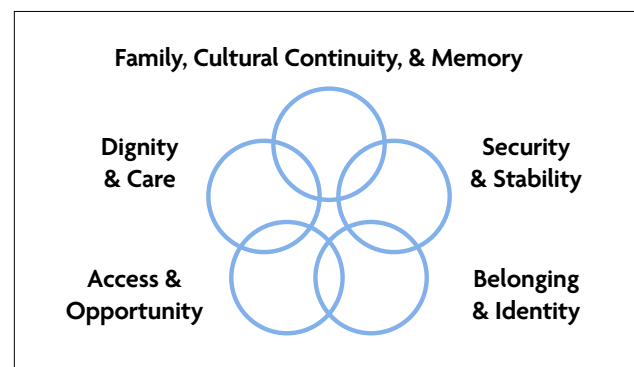
frames housing as one component within a broader system of social determinants, where well-being depends on access to housing that is affordable, secure, and suitable, rather than housing alone (Bentley et al., 2025). As a result, the gap between housing as a commodity and home as a lived experience becomes more visible.

Together, this distinction reveals that home is not experienced as a single condition, but through a set of interrelated components that shape how it is understood and lived. Drawing on thematic analysis of interviews with participants across Toronto and Guyana and informed by our comparative examination of how home is valued across both contexts, we identified five key components of home: *security and stability*, *belonging and identity*, *access and opportunity*, *dignity and care*, and *family, cultural continuity, and memory*.

Five Components of Home:

1. **Security and Stability:** We are safe and will remain so.
2. **Belonging and Identity:** We can be ourselves without ostracization or persecution.
3. **Access and Opportunity:** There are means available to use for growth and development.
4. **Dignity and Care:** We can live with respect and support in our health and well-being.
5. **Family, Cultural Continuity, and Memory:** We can honour our heritage, family, and beliefs within the greater context of society.

Figure 1: The Five Components of Home



Through our research we developed five key components integral to the realization of home. These elements are pillars upon which an optimal state of home is realized across time and geographies.



A hope for a more considered future. A mural on a building in Toronto that inspires passers by to pursue a considered live that they love (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

These components reflect the core dimensions through which home is experienced and evaluated, reflecting the range of conditions people seek to establish and sustain in their pursuit of home. They make visible the criteria through which individuals assess whether home is sufficient, sustainable, or worth pursuing, and highlight how decisions emerge through the balancing of competing priorities.

We use these components as analytical lenses throughout the report, particularly in the Experience of Home section, where they structure the comparative analysis across contexts and generations. They also serve as anchors for examining how external and internal forces interact with the components, shaping the conditions under which home can be realized in practice.

Why This Moment Matters

As polycrisis intensifies, long-standing expectations associated with home are being renegotiated. Assumptions of stability increasingly give way to uncertainty, prompting individuals to reassess where and how to live, what success means, and what can realistically be passed on to future generations. Decisions about home increasingly reflect not

only aspiration but also risk management under uncertain conditions. Questions that once seemed straightforward, such as where to settle, what opportunities to pursue, or what the future might hold, now carry deeper uncertainty and consequence.

Polycrisis is reshaping values, aspirations, risk tolerances, and forms of belonging. Accelerating risk and shrinking response windows heighten uncertainty and urgency, placing pressure on institutions and households alike (World Economic Forum, 2025). Home becomes both a strategic and emotional anchor that orients how people navigate instability and imagine viable futures for themselves. It is where global disruption becomes personal, and where decisions about resilience, belonging, and opportunity are most deeply felt.

This project responds to this historical inflection point by treating home as dynamic and an adaptive system rather than a fixed condition. By examining how home is lived, negotiated, and reimagined under conditions of global disruption, this research establishes why this moment demands renewed attention to belonging, security, and care. In doing so, it asks how the meaning of home evolves when the systems that once promised stability can no longer be taken for granted.

Why These Two Places

This research focuses on Toronto, Canada and Guyana as two interconnected contexts shaped by migration, history, and shifting socio-economic conditions. The selection of these sites is informed by our positionality as researchers with ancestral ties to Guyana who are currently based in Toronto, and by the distinct dynamics unfolding in each place.

How Polycrisis is Impacting Toronto and Guyana Today

Polycrisis does not manifest uniformly, but takes shape through the specific social, economic, and environmental conditions of a place. The following comparison highlights how these dynamics unfold differently across contexts. Today in Toronto, polycrisis is experienced through the erosion of

Figure 2: Issues Impacting Toronto and Guyana



TORONTO, CANADA

4 in 10 Toronto residents say their income is not enough to meet basic needs (Toronto Foundation, 2024)

Food bank use has **more than doubled since 2019**, reaching record highs (Daily Bread Food Bank, 2024)

1 in 4 children live in poverty in Toronto (Campaign 2000, 2023)

Climate-related extreme heat events are increasing, with **heat waves causing disproportionate risk in dense urban areas** (City of Toronto Climate Reports)

Toronto's population grew by **over 125,000 people in one year**, intensifying system pressure (Statistics Canada, 2023–24)

Emergency shelter demand has surged, with **over 10,000 people using the system nightly** (City of Toronto, 2024)

Public trust in institutions is declining, with **less than half of Canadians expressing strong trust in government** (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2024)

Healthcare wait times have increased, with **millions of Ontarians lacking access to a family doctor** (Ontario Health Coalition, 2024)

Nearly **50 percent of residents report worsening mental health linked to financial stress** (CAMH, 2023–24)

Housing still plays a role, with over **30 percent of households considered unaffordable**, reinforcing broader instability (CMHC, 2024)



GUYANA

GDP growth reached **43.6% in 2024**, among the highest globally (World Bank 2024/IMF 2024)

Despite growth, **poverty remains uneven, especially in hinterland regions** (World Bank, 2023–24)

Emigration and diaspora connections remain strong, with **large portions of the population living abroad, shaping economic and social flows** (Migration Policy Institute, 2022)

Inflation and rising costs have increased pressure, with **food prices rising significantly in recent years** (FAO, 2023–2024/ Guyana Bureau of Statistics Inflation Releases)

The population is small (~800,000) but facing **rapid urbanization and migration shifts** (UN, 2024)

Healthcare access remains uneven, with **rural and interior communities facing major service gaps** (PAHO 2023/World Bank)

Climate vulnerability is high, with **over ninety percent of the population living on low-lying coastal land at risk of flooding** (World Bank Climate Data, 2021)

Oil revenues exceeded **\$2.5 billion annually**, transforming the national economy (Natural Resource Fund, 202–2024)

Income inequality persists despite growth, with **gains concentrated in certain sectors and regions** (IMF, 2023–2024)

Infrastructure systems are under pressure, with **rapid development outpacing planning capacity** (IDB, 2022–2024)



A street in the village of Beterverwagting, Guyana, situated on the edge of Georgetown. A town traditionally impacted by poverty that is seeing massive infrastructure development. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

stability, where rising costs, increasing poverty, and growing pressure on social systems are making it more difficult for households to maintain security and plan for the future. In Guyana today, it takes the form of rapid but uneven transformation, where economic growth is creating new opportunities while access to infrastructure, services, and stability remains inconsistent. Together, these contexts illustrate how polycrisis reshapes the conditions through which home is pursued and realized, producing experiences defined by both constraint and uneven opportunity.

Canada's Promise & Guyana's Emerging Promise

Under conditions of polycrisis, the meaning of home is not shaped by personal aspiration alone. It is also shaped by what places are able to offer, sustain, or withdraw over time (Antonsich, 2010). While pressures discussed previously are global in nature, they are lived locally. Housing affordability, access to care, economic opportunity, environmental stability, and trust in institutions are all experienced within specific places. These conditions influence how people make decisions about where to live, invest, raise families, or imagine their futures.

Place, therefore continues to matter.

Even in a world defined by mobility and transnational connection, the ability to build and sustain a sense of home remains tied to the environments in which people are situated. Nations, cities, and regions



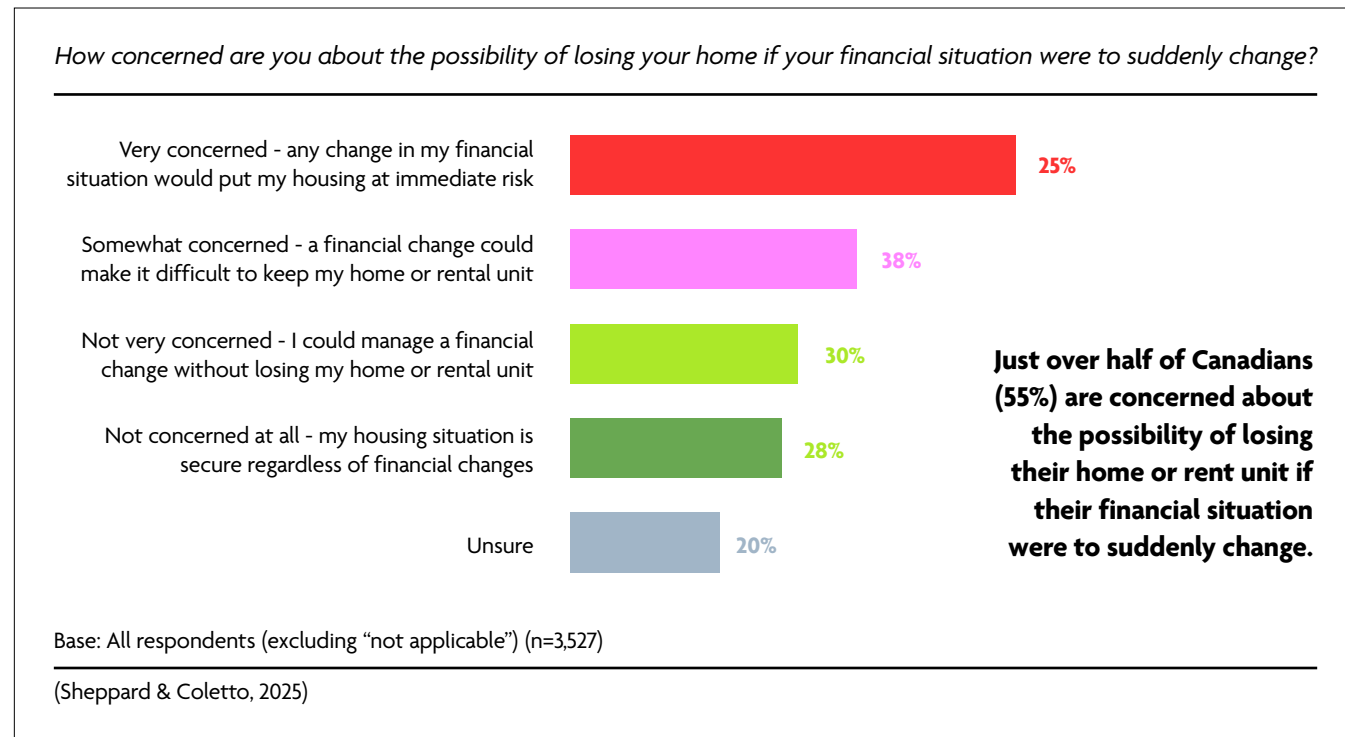
Toronto developers continue to develop condos in an attempt to keep pace with the housing demand and stock shortages in the city. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

communicate implicit promises about what life within them can provide (Massey, 2001). These promises shape migration pathways, settlement decisions, and long-term strategies for stability and belonging. For diasporic communities, these decisions are rarely made in relation to a single place. Instead, they are negotiated across multiple locations at once (Bocagni, 2020).

This project focuses on Canada (with an emphasis on Toronto) and Guyana because together they represent two distinct yet interconnected contexts through which contemporary global change unfolds. Canada has long been a destination synonymous with stability, opportunity, and institutional support, influencing the migration paths of generations of Guyanese families (Goel, 2025). Guyana, by contrast, was historically positioned as a site of departure, yet is now undergoing rapid transformation that is altering how it is perceived by its diaspora and the world (T. R. Blackman, 2025).

The pairing of these two places is not incidental. Rather they reflect different paths within polycrisis. Canada represents a mature system in which long-standing promises are increasingly under strain, while Guyana represents an emerging system in which new promises are being formed. Examining these contexts together makes it possible to understand how the meaning of home is negotiated between erosion and emergence, stability and acceleration, memory and future possibility.

Figure 3: Canadians' concern about the possibility of losing their home if their financial situation changes



In our discussions with members of the Guyanese diaspora, home is rarely anchored in a single geography. Instead, it is shaped through ongoing relationships between places that hold different meanings across time. Historically, Canada has represented safety, stability, and a pathway toward greater opportunity for future generations (Ignatieff, 2019). Throughout much of the twentieth century, Guyana was associated with constraint, volatility, and limited opportunity (Chukwudinma, 2022). Migration between the two was not simply a matter of preference, but often of survival and aspiration.

"Guyanese people have long known migration as the single most defining narrative of our country."
- Grace Aneiza Ali, *Luminal Spaces*

Canada became the place where security could be built, while Guyana became the place that was remembered, supported, and, in some cases, left behind. Yet this relationship has never been stationary. Kinship ties, remittances, property ownership, cultural practices, and family obligations have continued

to connect these places across decades. For many Guyanese-Canadian families, decisions about where to live, invest, care for relatives, or imagine the future are made across both contexts simultaneously. As Boccagni (2020) explains, "calling home refers to the symbolic and practical work through which people actively construct a sense of belonging across places." In this sense, home is not located exclusively in Canada or Guyana. It is produced through relationships that span both.

Rather than just comparing two separate national experiences, this project goes further and examines how the meaning of home is negotiated between a place historically associated with arrival and a place historically associated with departure. Under conditions of polycrisis, however, these meanings are shifting. Canada's long-standing promise of stability is increasingly strained, while Guyana's long-standing association with constraints is being challenged by rapid economic transformation. As a result, Canada and Guyana are entering distinct but simultaneous periods of transition.



The Toronto skyline at night. This view of the horizon line becomes increasingly cluttered with condos and office towers each year. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

Immigration pathways from the 1950s onward enabled significant Guyanese migration, particularly during periods of political and economic uncertainty (Vezzoli, 2014). For many families we spoke with, Canada represented not just security, but educational opportunity and the possibility of a better future for the next generation. Housing became central to this promise. Homeownership functioned not only as shelter, but also as a marker for belonging, stability, and middle-class success. Within diaspora communities, building a home in Canada was closely tied to the belief that permanence could be secured through settlement, as migration patterns were often structured in ways that enabled "entire Guyanese families [to] have emigrated" (Vezzoli, 2014).

Today, however, this promise is under visible strain. Canada faces mounting pressures related to housing affordability, rising rents and ownership barriers, escalating cost-of-living, labour precarity, and strain on public services. These pressures are reshaping how stability and well-being are experienced and prompting broader reconsideration of what conditions are necessary for a place to support a good life. As these pressures intensify, they reshape the conditions through which people can establish home, stability, and a sense of belonging.



A bird's-eye view of Guyana's largest city of Georgetown. The cityscape and Demerara Harbour Bridge show evidence of rapid development and modernization with many new housing schemes and buildings dotted throughout the city. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

Housing affordability illustrates the widening gap between promise and reality. Historically, housing markets were considered affordable when homes were priced at roughly three to four times annual household income. In recent decades, housing costs in Toronto have risen far beyond this benchmark (Leon & Iveniuk, 2021; Moffatt, 2026). Today, the average home price has reached approximately \$1.1 million, while income has grown by only 15 percent (Leon and Iveniuk, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2025). Service systems are also under pressure. According to the Ontario College of Family Physicians, 4.4 million Ontarians are living without a primary care physician (Ontario College of Family Physicians, 2024), and infrastructure gaps are widening, with Toronto facing an \$18 billion renewal deficit (MacMillan, 2025). These conditions do not erase Canada's promise, but they destabilize it. Canada has come to represent an established promise now facing structural limits.

Guyana presents a potentially contrasting trajectory. For much of the twentieth century, the country was associated with outward migration and restricted socio-economic development. By 2010, emigration rates had reached fifty-six percent, with more than eighty percent of university-educated nationals leaving the country (Benjamin, 2018; Vezzoli, 2014). Migration, for many, was widely understood as necessary. As Guyanese artist Dominique Hunter reflected, "our greatest aspiration should be to leave" (Ali, 2019).

In recent years, however, Guyana has entered a period of rapid transformation. Driven by oil discovery and foreign investment, the country is experiencing significant infrastructure expansion, job creation, and middle-class growth. As the World Bank observes, “Guyana stands at the threshold for a new era, shaped by rapid economic growth, demographic change, and rising expectations” (World Bank Group, 2020). This transformation introduces both opportunity and risk. Guyana faces resource dependency, environmental vulnerability, governance constraints, and uneven development. It represents an accelerated promise: a place of rising expectation in which stability is still being formed.

Taken together, Canada and Guyana reflect opposing trajectories. Canada’s stability narrative is weakening even as its institutional structures endure, while Guyana’s opportunity narrative is expanding alongside new forms of uncertainty. Diaspora communities increasingly navigate decisions across both contexts, negotiating their sense of belonging in relation to shifting opportunities and constraints. As Blunt and Dowling observe, “home is not simply a place but a set of relationships and practices that connect people to places across space and time” (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Home is therefore not given. It is made and remade across places. As conditions shift across countries and regions, the question of where and how to build a life becomes less about permanence and more about navigating opportunity, security, and belonging across places.

Studying these contexts together makes visible how risk is recalibrated, how aspirations shift, and how belonging evolves. Seen comparatively, these dynamics reveal that perceptions of opportunity, stability, and future possibility are not fixed, but continually reassessed across places. For the Guyanese diaspora, these shifts are not abstract but lived through ongoing decisions about where and how to build a life across borders. Home, then, emerges not as a stable destination, but as something distributed, negotiated, and constantly in flux. This raises a critical question: *how do individuals and families navigate these shifting conditions to build and sustain a sense of home?*

The Research Journey

This section outlines the methodological approach that shaped this research. The project was intentionally iterative, with the research evolving in response to emerging insights and lines of inquiry. This chapter delves into the study’s structure, participant engagement, and analysis methods. It explores how individuals interpret and negotiate the meaning of home through migration decisions amidst social, economic, and environmental uncertainties.

Primary Research Methods

These methods were employed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the broader context and its historical background. A mixed methods approach was adopted, incorporating diagnostic and evaluation frameworks alongside ethnographic and qualitative research. These diverse inquiry approaches yielded robust data and insights that informed our synthesis and foresight ideation.

Diagnostic and Evaluation Frameworks:

- Proposition Canvas
- Adaptive Cycle
- Horizon Scan (Drivers and Trends)

Ethnography (Lived Experience):

- Qualitative Interviews

Evaluation, Systems Thinking and Foresight Frameworks:

- Components of Home
- Points of Leverage
- Strategic Foresight

Secondary Research Methods

Secondary methods were used to support and extend the primary methods, enriching interpretation, strengthening connections across findings, and deepening the overall understanding of the research.

Diagnostic Frameworks:

- Iterative Inquiries
- Rich Context Mapping
- Environmental Scans
- Stakeholder & Ecosystem Mapping
- Causal Layered Analysis

Evaluation and Foresight Frameworks:

- Future Scenarios
- Cone of Plausibility

(Please Note: Select outputs and supporting material developed through these methods are included as supplementary documents located in the *Appendix* section.)

Research Question

The central question guiding this study is:

How are migration, disruption, resilience, and shifting values transforming the meaning of ‘home’ for Guyanese diasporic communities connected to both the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and Guyana, and how do these dynamics shape decisions about opportunity, belonging, and community across borders?

This research is framed not as a hypothesis-driven study, but as a design-led exploratory inquiry into how the meaning of home is shifting under contemporary conditions of uncertainty. Rather than seeking to test predetermined assumptions, the project is oriented toward understanding how individuals and families make sense of change amid destabilizing forces as they unfold within their everyday lives.

The research also looks at how polycrisis impacts value systems and identities tied to home, and what new forms of belonging, resilience, and collective meaning emerge in response. This involves examining how people navigate competing pressures across geographic, economic, social, and cultural domains, and how they reconcile inherited narratives of stability with evolving landscapes of opportunity.

Beginning the Inquiry

To explore this question, the research began with a broad interest in how disruptions are reshaping the conditions under which people pursue stability and belonging. Early exploration focused on developing an understanding of polycrisis, resilience, and housing instability, examining how overlapping economic, environmental, and social pressures were transforming housing systems and creating new uncertainties for individuals and families.

As the inquiry developed, it became clear that housing challenges could not be understood solely through markets, policy, or infrastructure. This revealed a gap between how housing is typically analyzed and how home is experienced. The concept of home is also deeply relational. It is shaped by identity, relationships, belonging, and emotional life. Understanding how individuals interpret and pursue home therefore requires approaches that allow meaning to emerge through narrative and lived experience rather than measurement alone.

For this reason, the research adopted a design-led, exploratory, and qualitative research approach. Design research is an iterative, human-centred methodology that explore complex systems by connecting lived experience with broader structural conditions, generating insights across scales (Dorst, 2011). As Dorst (2011) notes, “design problems are ill-defined and open-ended, requiring the simultaneous development of both the problem and the solution.” Design research methods are particularly well-suited to exploring complex social questions where lived experience intersects with broader systems (Jones & Van Ael, 2023). Housing and migration are often framed in economic or policy terms, yet they are also deeply shaped by cultural meaning, relational life, and personal histories. A design-led approach enabled the research to move between individual experience and systemic context, identifying patterns and relationships that connect personal narratives with structural conditions.

Qualitative inquiry was central to this approach because the meaning of home is inherently subjective and personal. As Mallett notes, “the home touches so centrally on our personal, emotional, and social lives that it is fundamental to our sense of being” (Mallett, 2004a). Understanding how individuals interpret belonging, stability, and opportunity therefore required approaches that focus on lived experience and meaning-making.

How the Research Focus Evolved

The research developed through an iterative process of exploration and refinement. Early stages of the project focused broadly on questions of resilience, polycrisis, and housing instability. Initial explorations examined how overlapping disruptions were reshaping housing systems and creating new pressures on individuals seeking stability and security.

As the project progressed, the focus gradually shifted toward understanding how individuals interpret and pursue home under these changing conditions. Through literature review, analysis of structural trends and emerging signals, systems mapping, and conceptual exploration, it became clear that decisions about where to live or migrate are often shaped by the perceived value propositions associated with different places. These value propositions include not only economic opportunities, but also access to safety, belonging, institutional stability, and future possibility.

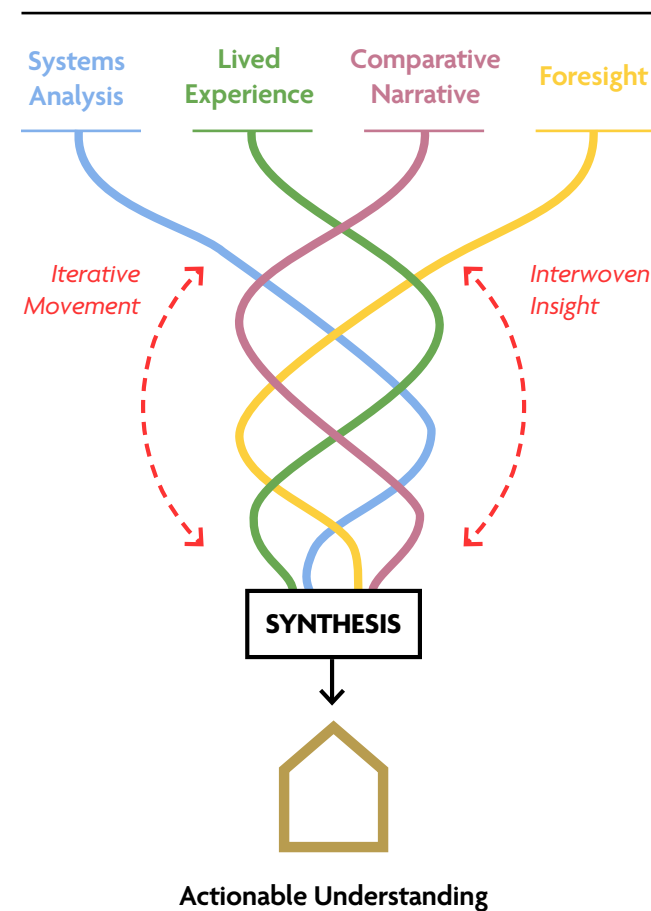
This shift in focus led the research toward examining how individuals evaluate the benefits, risks, and trade-offs associated with different locations when making decisions about home. In this context, migration can be understood not simply as movement between places, but as a process of negotiating different value propositions associated with place, opportunity, and belonging.

Canada and Guyana emerged as particularly relevant contexts for exploring these dynamics. Historically connected through migration pathways, these locations represent contrasting economic, institutional, and social environments. As previously outlined, Canada has long been associated with stability and opportunity, while Guyana has historically been characterized by outward migration. However, recent economic and geopolitical changes are beginning to reshape these expectations. Examining these two contexts together provides an opportunity to explore how the value proposition of home may be evolving across different environments. With Toronto being the second largest Guyanese diasporic community in the world (Kaseram, 2026), it acts as an ideal venue for tracing migration and decision making patterns over generations. It became evident to us that utilizing the diasporic network connecting Guyana and

Toronto served as a valuable framework and method for assessing the patterns and decision-making processes of a community that spans diverse cultures, geographies, and time periods.

Designing the Research Approach: A Braided Methodology

Figure 4: Braided Methodology



A braided methodological approach integrating systems analysis, lived experience, comparative context, and foresight.

As the research question gained more clarity, it became evident that no single method could adequately capture the complexity of the problem. The study therefore developed a braided methodological approach that integrates multiple strands of inquiry. This structure allows the research to move between structural context, future expectations, and individual interpretation of home.

The first strand examines the broader structural context shaping housing and migration. This includes economic pressures, institutional conditions, and destabilizing forces that influence mobility patterns and housing systems. Situating the research within the context of polycrisis allows the study to examine how overlapping global disruptions influence the stability and accessibility of complex systems.

The second strand incorporates a comparative perspective examining experiences across two interconnected contexts: Canada, particularly Toronto, and Guyana. Examining these locations together enables the research to explore how different social, economic, and institutional environments shape how individuals interpret and experience place-based value propositions.

The third strand focuses on lived experience and narrative inquiry. Through qualitative interpretation, the research examines how individuals interpret and negotiate the meaning of home in relation to identity, belonging, relationships, and future aspirations. These narratives provide insight into how individuals evaluate the perceived benefits and trade-offs associated with different places.

Finally, the fourth strand incorporates foresight perspectives to explore how expectations surrounding home and opportunity may be shifting. Foresight approaches support the examination of long-term structural trends and emerging signals that influence how individuals, institutions, and governments interpret future possibilities associated with different places.

Together, these strands allow the research to examine how individuals interpret the value proposition of home across changing structural conditions, future expectations, and lived experiences.

Analytical Lenses

Several conceptual lenses guided the interpretation of the findings. These helped situate individual narratives within broader understandings of home, migration, and belonging. Relational understandings of home provide an important foundation for the research. This perspective recognizes that home is not simply a physical location, but is constructed through

relationships, identities, and lived experience (Mallett, 2004a). Expanding on this Manzo and Devine-Wright (2021) highlight how these relational and experiential dimensions are central to the meaning of home. Home is therefore shaped through social interaction, cultural meaning, and emotional attachments to place.

The research also draws on transnational and transmigration perspectives, which examine how migrants sustain relationships and identities across multiple places simultaneously (Boccagni, 2020; Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2021). These perspectives help explain how individuals negotiate belonging across borders and maintain connections between different locations.

Foresight-oriented frameworks also informed how change and uncertainty were interpreted throughout the research. Concepts such as the adaptive cycle, iterative inquiry, the four visions of the futures, and the cone of plausibility supported the analysis of how conditions evolve, how expectations shift, and how individuals and systems navigator possible futures.

In addition, the study adapts the concept of a value proposition to examine how individuals evaluate the perceived benefits, costs, and trade-offs associated with living in different places (Lanning & Michaels, 1988). We also established that home itself has a value proposition complete with its own guiding components which enable individuals to realize their optimal state of living.

Building to these theoretical lenses, the research developed a set of analytical frameworks to support the interpretation of the fieldwork. These include the Components of Home, the Forces shaping home, and the Value Proposition of Home. While informed by existing literature on belonging, migration, and place, these frameworks are an original concept, developed through an iterative process of synthesis across literature review, systems mapping, and early pattern recognition within the data. Rather than functioning as fixed theoretical models, they were used as interpretive structures to organize and analyze participant narratives. This approach enabled the research to examine how individuals evaluate, prioritize, and negotiate different dimensions of home, while allowing for comparison across participants, generations, and geographic contexts.

Engaging Participants

As the research moved toward lived experience, engaging participants became an essential part of the inquiry. Recruitment began with the intention of working with two large kinship networks within the Guyanese diaspora. However, as the research unfolded, participation developed through smaller clusters connected through family relationships, migration histories, and long-standing social ties. This approach allowed the research to capture relational perspectives on migration and home while also reflecting the ways migration experiences are often shared and transmitted through family and community networks.

Our participant cohort was comprised of 18 individuals across the Guyanese diaspora in Toronto and participants living in Guyana. This included immigrants, second-generation individuals, and participants across multiple generations, enabling the research to capture intergenerational perspectives on migration, housing pathways, and belonging.

Participant recruitment was structured through an external snowball approach, rather than directly through the researchers' personal networks. Initial participants were identified through community referrals, allowing potential participants to emerge through existing social and migration networks. Some participants shared overlapping connections to the researchers or with other participants, reflecting the interconnected nature of the Guyanese diaspora.

All participants in this study are confidential to uphold personal anonymity and foster a safe environment for sharing histories and knowledge. Guyana has a history fraught with political division and violence. As researchers, we wanted to ensure that the participants felt free to speak without any apprehension or fear of reprisal.

Reflexivity and Research Position



Photo of Janine Pierre (L) and Luke Correia-Damude (R).

This research is also shaped in part by the positionality of the researchers. Both researchers are first-generation Guyanese Canadians and maintain cultural connections to the Guyanese diasporic community in Toronto. This shared background provided familiarity with migration histories, community dynamics, and cultural meanings associated with home and belonging.

As researchers, we occupied both insider and observer positions in relation to the communities we studied. This required ongoing reflexivity about how our positions and histories influenced both what was shared and how it was interpreted, aligning with Audrey M. Kleinsasser's (2000) emphasis on reflexivity as central to producing "good data". In this way, reflexivity functioned not only as a safeguard against bias, but as a generative practice that deepened the quality and credibility of the data by requiring continual interrogation of our assumptions and interpretations (Kleinsasser, 2000).

We decided that it would be beneficial to actually embark on a trip to Guyana so that we could meet our participants in person and experience modern day Guyana. This enriched our understanding of Guyana as a physical place and allowed us to hold deeper and more personal interviews with participants. Being on the ground in Guyana also allowed us to capture research photography that contributed to the richness of the report.

Additionally, our backgrounds in design and strategic foresight informed the interpretive nature of the analysis. This orientation emphasizes synthesis, systems thinking, and the exploration of lived experience in relation to broader structural change, shaping how patterns were identified, connections were made, and insights were developed across scales. Engaging in this way strengthened the integrity of the research by making visible the ways our perspectives shaped both the data itself, and the conclusions drawn from it.

Limitations

This study has several limitations related to sampling and scope. As an exploratory qualitative study, this research prioritizes depth of insight rather than statistical representation. The participant group is representative of a smaller qualitative sample (18) instead of a larger quantitative one. Our participants group reflects experiences primarily within Guyanese diaspora networks connected to Toronto and Guyana. As a result, the findings should not be interpreted as representative of all Guyanese migrants or diaspora communities.

However, the cluster sampling approach enabled the research to capture rich intergenerational perspectives and shared migration narratives that may not emerge through other recruitment strategies. The relational structure of the participant clusters provided insight into how meanings of home are shaped collectively through family relationships, migration histories, and community networks. These insights support a deeper understanding of how individuals interpret place-based value propositions within evolving social, economic, and cultural contexts.

What This Research Contributes

While this research engages with themes commonly explored within migration and housing research, its contribution lies in moving beyond policy-centric or market-driven frames that often dominate these fields. Traditional analyses tend to focus on measurable indicators such as affordability, employment outcomes, or demographic flows. Although these dimensions are important, they offer only a partial view of how home is experienced and negotiated in practice.

This project centres the lived experience, intergenerational perspectives, and the relational dynamics that shape decision-making within families and kinship networks. In doing so, it connects system-level conditions to everyday interpretations of belonging, stability, and opportunity. Rather than isolating housing as a technical issue or migration as a demographic trend, the research examines how these forces intersect with identity formation, cultural continuity, and aspirations for the future.

By highlighting values and meaning-making, the study surfaces how individuals actively reconfigure their understanding of home amid uncertainty. It emphasizes the ways in which decisions about where to live, invest, or remain connected are shaped not only by economic constraints, but also by emotional ties, memories, obligations, and perceptions of dignity and care.

As such, the research contributes a relational, future-oriented perspective that links structural conditions to personal agency. It reveals how people interpret shifting promises across places and generations, and how these interpretations inform strategies for navigating change. Through this home emerges not merely as a physical asset or migration outcome, but as a dynamic site where belonging, resilience, and identity are continually negotiated.

The Sum of Its Parts

Taken together, this methodological approach reflects the iterative and exploratory nature of the research. By combining systems analysis, foresight perspectives, and lived experience through a braided methodological approach, the study is able to examine how individuals interpret and negotiate the meaning of home across different structural conditions and life contexts. These methods provide a comprehensive understanding of how migration decisions are shaped by the perceived value propositions associated with different places, and how these interpretations are influenced by shifting social, economic, and environmental conditions.

Navigating This Work

This report is organized into five main sections, each building on the last to guide you through a journey of inquiry, reflection and foresight.

The map illustrates key moments and how ideas connect across the work.

EXPLORATION:

- We begin by exploring polycrisis, examining how overlapping disruptions are reshaping national conditions and the stability they once promised.
- We then look at two nations through the lens of each of their value propositions, to understand how they implicitly offer security, opportunity, and belonging, and how these promises are evolving.
- Building on this, we map the trajectories of Canada and Guyana, exploring cycles of growth, constraint, and renewal to understand how past and present conditions shape future possibilities.
- We examine emerging tools, policies, and strategies, identifying how innovation is responding to shifting conditions of home, belonging, and social stability.

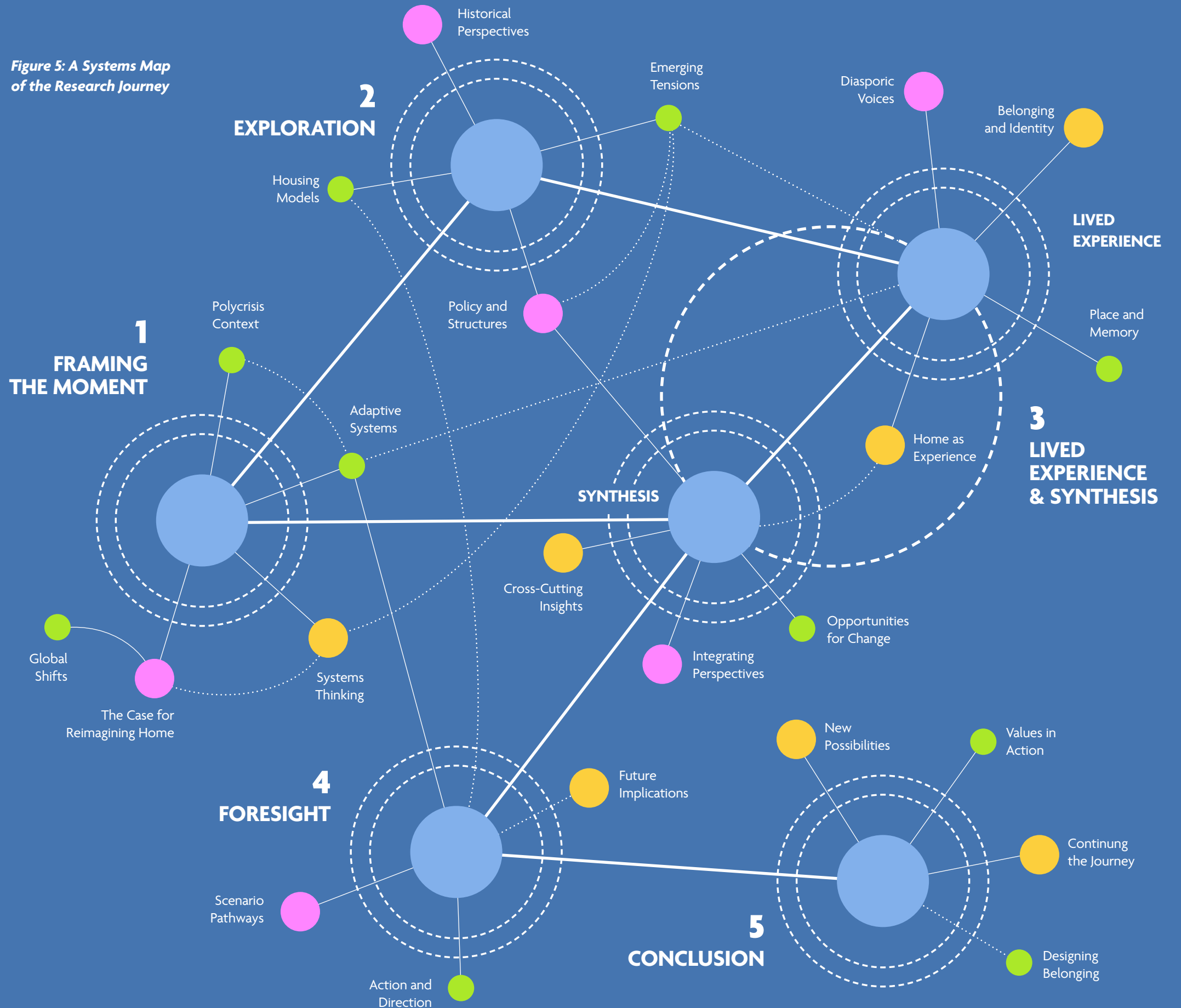
LIVED EXPERIENCE AND SYNTHESIS:

- With this context, we turn to lived experience, drawing on participant insights to understand how these forces are encountered in everyday life and how decisions are made across borders.
- We synthesize these perspectives to surface key insights, revealing how people interpret, negotiate, and respond to changing conditions, and why these dynamics matter.

FORESIGHT:

- Finally, we look to the future, outlining possible pathways and identifying principles that support more resilient realizations of home under ongoing change and uncertainty.

Figure 5: A Systems Map of the Research Journey



Legend:

- Major Sections
- Supporting Ideas
- Key Moments
- Detail Points
- Strong Connections
- Emerging Connections

EXPLORATION

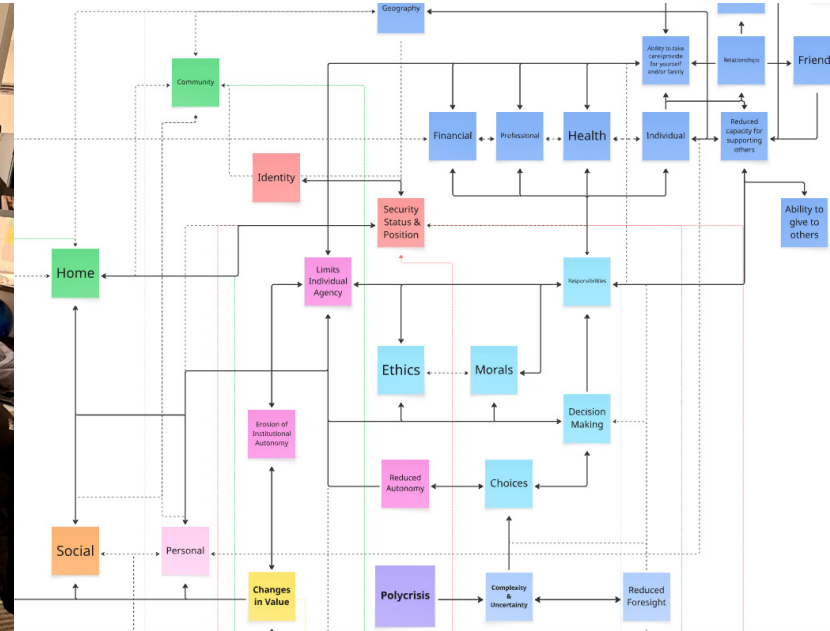


Photo of Luke (L) and Janine (R) during a collaborative working session, reflecting the partnership and shared inquiry that shaped this research. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

How We Got Here

As researchers, we chose to explore the very diaspora that we are both connected to. As second-generation Canadians, we are the first in our families to have been born on Canadian soil. Our parents migrated here in search of home, opportunity, and a better life. For them, this was largely achieved. Canada proved to be a fertile landscape for growing a family, building a career, and achieving success. We were both raised in the Greater Toronto Area, surrounded by family, honouring Guyanese traditions, and socializing in tightly knit diasporic communities. We grew up eating roti, curry, pepper pot, and garlic pork. We danced to calypso and soca music at family gatherings and were regularly regaled with tales of “back home”.

Guyana was a constant in the hearts and minds of those around us and, despite most having left decades earlier, Guyana remained an important piece of the culture, identity, family dynamics and community makeup we were a part of. As Toronto developed and sprawled, so did we, and this connection to family and the Guyanese community became more strained. Uncles, aunts, and cousins were moving farther away to maintain their expectations of home in an increasingly inaccessible city. During this time, we were transitioning into adulthood, our professional careers, and ultimately each starting our own families. Over time, we each felt Toronto was becoming increasingly difficult to navigate, more expensive to live in, and that sense of closeness and belonging that once defined it felt more distant.



We met at OCAD University in 2023 as new students in the Strategic Foresight and Innovation graduate program. We held a shared interest in the study of complex systems and discussed how polycrisis was impacting our city. These discussions made us consider how these pressures were impacting newcomers to the country. It was evident that Toronto had undergone significant changes since our parents moved here. This made us question whether it remained a viable option for those seeking a home that could offer them opportunities and the foundation for a better life.

At the same time, we began to see family and members of our Guyanese community moving back to Guyana, where their resources would get them farther and new opportunities awaited them due to the oil prosperity which is currently transforming the country. We saw clear choices being made in the pursuit of realizing an ideal state of home, but the currents appeared to be reversed. Toronto, once a hub for the Guyanese community is now seeing that same community leave the city and, in some cases, return to a country they had once fled.

Our shared interests, observations and cultural connection to Guyana brought us to this subject and ignited this journey of discovery for us. We decided to leverage our shared passion for systems, design, and foresight methods to gain deeper insights into our heritage, as well as migration patterns, housing dynamics, and numerous other evolving factors that shape our world.

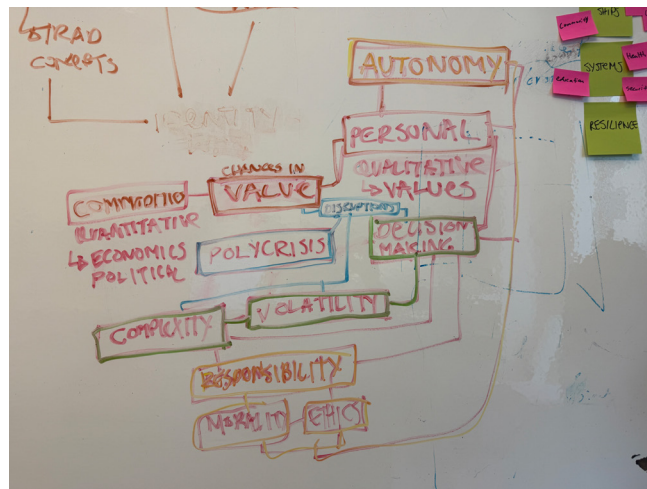
Tracing the Origins of the Inquiry

To start this journey, we first must understand how Guyana and Canada (with a focus on Toronto) came to be where they are today. We have structured this exploration through two distinct concepts: the value proposition and the adaptive cycle. We are using these concepts to examine the national promise of each country and how these promises have evolved throughout its histories.

When this project refers to the *value proposition* of home, we are referring to the perceived balance between the benefits a place offers, and the costs required to access them. In this context, we use value proposition to understand how tacit and explicit national promises are used in the decision-making process of realizing home.

From there we follow the phases of growth, collapse and re-birth as depicted in the adaptive cycle framework to identify which phase of the cycle Canada and Guyana currently find themselves and where they could possibly go.

Each concept offers perspectives which anchor the findings and provide context for the current moment. This allows us to situate our findings within broader patterns of change and to better understand what the future might hold.



Early whiteboard sketch mapping relationships between polycrisis, value systems, and decision-making, highlighting shifts from quantitative to qualitative values. (Photo credit: Pierre, 2025).

Understanding National Identity Through Value Propositions

The concept of a value proposition was first introduced by Michael J. Lanning and Edward G. Michaels in their influential paper *A Business is a Value Delivery System*. The concept provides a way of understanding how organizations define what they promise to deliver and why that promise justifies the investment asked from those they seek to serve (Lanning and Michaels, 1988). In this research, the concept is extended beyond markets to examine how individuals and families pursue the conditions necessary to build and sustain a sense of home. Fundamentally, a value proposition is the communication of benefits and value that influences decision-making. In business, it's designed to attract consumers. In a social context, the value proposition is conveyed through policy, infrastructure, and public identity. While leaders and nations may not explicitly create value propositions in the way they are defined by Lanning and Michaels, their actions, policies, and relationships with those who live within and across their borders effectively offer something similar.

Other examples have emerged in different contexts. For example, the Boston Consulting Group describes a national value proposition as, "A strategic articulation of the economy's potential attractiveness to firms, capital, and labor. It expresses why businesses will relocate or start new enterprises there, why investors will fund those businesses, and why skilled, talented people will migrate there" (Dahr et al., 2023).

The American Dream is a value proposition that most can recall without ever being explicitly taught it, it is a promise of great prosperity, opportunity and self-determination. It is articulated in the Declaration of Independence as the quest for "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (Jefferson et al., 1776). Canada's value proposition is harder to define but has also been long standing. Canada's founding constitutional principles are, "peace, order, and good government" (Ignatieff, 2019). Guyana has gone through turbulent periods of socio-political volatility and economic hardship. As a British colony their identity was tied to the commonwealth. As a young independent country their value proposition was focused on

self-determination and survival. Guyana's modern-day offering is one of prosperity, modernization, and opportunity (Aljazeera, 2025).

These are examples of the value proposition concept being utilized and practiced outside of its initial intention, and in the case of the "American Dream" these proclamations of value predate the development of the framework. This expansion of its application allows us to understand how value is developed, interpreted, and evaluated outside of business and in broader contexts.

We applied the value proposition framework to understand the perceived benefits and values associated with living in a particular place and how they relate to the costs, risks, and trade-offs required to access them. These benefits may include safety, opportunity, belonging, or institutional support, while the associated costs may take the form of financial barriers, social exclusion, uncertainty, or limited access to care. This framing is significant because decisions about where to live, settle, or remain connected are rarely based on practical considerations alone. They are shaped by how individuals and families interpret what a place offers in relation to what it demands.

To better understand each nation's current promise (or value proposition), we used the adapted value proposition framework to examine the beliefs, benefits and opportunities these nations communicate as central to the composition of their national identity and public persona. We determined that each value proposition is made up of interconnecting principals, complete with its own unique offerings. We did this to benchmark what is promised in the principles of the value propositions against what has transpired in each of these countries and in the lived experiences of their people.

See *Supplement A: Value Proposition Canvases for Canada and Guyana* in the Appendix for the comprehensive analysis for both Canada and Guyana. This framework informed how we identified the principals of these nation's value propositions.

Reflections on the Canadian Value Proposition

Over the last half century, Canada has been offering a semblance of the same value proposition to residents and prospective newcomers. While many of these elements in the remain relevant and ideal facets of a thriving nation, these foundations appear to be transitioning into north star aspirations rather than a lived reality for Canadians today. Based on the values and corresponding policies that have been broadcast since the 1970s, we determined six principles that comprise Canada's long-held value proposition.

Six Principles of Canada's Current Value Proposition:

1. Multiculturalism and Cultural Preservation
2. Equitable Immigration and Meritocracy
3. Safety, Stability and Lawfulness
4. Universal Social Services and Quality of Life
5. Economic Opportunity and Social Mobility
6. Human Rights and Protection

1. Multiculturalism and Cultural Preservation

The Promise:

The right to maintain cultural identity while fully being part of Canadian Society. This is a value offering that was cemented into Canadian policy by Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau in 1971. His transformational policy initiative was the first of its kind and carved out a stance for Canada as a progressive nation, open to diversity and cultural co-existence (Parliament, House of Commons, 1971).

"...although there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other." - Pierre Elliott Trudeau

Multiculturalism was further etched into the constitution in 1982 through section 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982) and the 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism act (Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988).

The Reality:

Toronto is one of the most multicultural and diverse cities in the world with almost half (forty-seven percent) of its population being immigrants to Canada (2021 Canadian Census, 2021). In this way, we can see a thriving multicultural city functioning and existing as interwoven communities, however equity for these ethnic groups is not balanced.

A 2024 Toronto Police Service report indicated that hate crimes had risen by nineteen percent from the previous year. Anti-black bias occurrences were up sixty-two percent in 2024, compared to the previous year and anti-south-Asian hate crimes nearly tripled (Toronto Police Service, 2025). While multiculturalism is a real and celebrated feature of Toronto's identity it still faces prejudice and racial tension.



Dan Bergeron's public art piece, "Faces of Regent Park," captures the neighborhood's diversity during major revitalization, merging portraits with local graffiti and urban textures to symbolize community strength, resilience, and identity in a time of uncertainty. (Photo credit: Correia-Damde, 2026).

Toronto's reputation as a diverse melting pot implies that it is an environment of acceptance and inclusion, but this multiculturalism is met with profound inequality. Seventy-seven percent of Toronto's unhoused identify as a part of a racialized group (2024 Street Needs Assessment, 2025). These examples show that racialized groups disproportionately impacted and face the most hardships. For those seeking refuge from oppression and racially motivated violence, they may be shocked to find out that the country which promised unity and cultural sanctuary faces its own issues with intolerance and discrimination.

2. Equitable Immigration and Meritocracy

The Promise:

In 1967, Canada introduced a points-based immigration system which used assessment criteria to determine the fit of each applicant based on metrics such as education, skills, language comprehension, and employment opportunities. This approach replaced the previous immigration protocol of prioritizing immigration through a hierarchy ranking of the applicant's country of origin (Meister et al., 2021). This shift in policy created increased access based on meritocracy and positioned Canada as an extremely appealing option for those looking to migrate in search of home.

"Anyone of any race or ethnic origin is capable of pursuing his or her interests without persecution."
- Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988

The Reality:

The lived reality for many skilled workers coming to Canada is in dire opposition to the offering of merit and skill-based opportunity. Migration scholar, Karun Kishor Karki calls this, "the mirage of meritocracy in employment;" (Karki, 2026), which is a broken connection between the promise of meritocratic opportunity and the barriers faced to achieve this (Karki, 2026). In many professions, foreign credentials are not recognized in Canada and require lengthy, not to mention costly, recertification (Mahboubi & Zhang, 2024). This creates a huge barrier and forces many people to abandon their area of expertise, in order to survive in this country. This devaluation of foreign credentials leads to higher risk of unemployment and diminished earning potential (Foster, 2006).

"I don't think the Canadian dream is accessible to everyone equally. For some, the Canadian dream is holding pretty well, but for others, it's failing."
- Rupa Banerjee

3. Safety, Stability, and Lawfulness

The Promise:

Canada's promise of "peace, order, and good government" dovetails into a value proposition centered on political stability, low crime rates, absence of civil conflict, and predictable rule of law (Ignatieff, 2019). For immigrants leaving their countries due to political turbulence and civil unrest, these tenants are likely the most attractive and vital benefits Canada has to offer.

The Reality:

Canada remains a generally safe and law-abiding nation. This value offering has stayed true over many decades especially in comparison to other nations (World Population Review, 2026a). In 2021, Toronto was listed as the 2nd safest city in the world behind Copenhagen. This was based on a scoring metric including, digital, health, infrastructure, personal, and environmental security (Sharma Nag et al., 2021). Despite the accolades, public perception of safety is under scrutiny. One in three Canadians feel that immigrants increase levels of crime in Canada (EnviroNics Institute, 2024), a viewpoint that is unsubstantiated but carries significant weight and imbues aggression towards the immigrant population, ultimately threatening their feeling of safety. Seventy-six percent of Torontonians feel that crime has increased over the last year but the reality is that crime rates have reached a 20-year low, according to the Toronto Police service (Thayaparan, 2025). This is also reflected in a 2024 study indicating two thirds of Canadians feel disconnected from their community (Angus Reid Institute, 2022). These indicate that people feel unsafe and vulnerable in their community, which could be a symptom brought on by cultural division and increasing prejudice.

4. Universal Social Services and Quality of Life

The Promise:

For many, the shining beacon within the Canadian value proposition is open access to universal health care and a good quality of life. The implicit promise is that Canada offers not merely economic opportunity but comprehensive well-being, access to healthcare when sick, education for children, support during unemployment, and infrastructure that functions reliably (IRCC, 2025).

The Reality:

The promise of these amenities and services remains but the quality and access are diminishing. Many of Toronto's most essential services and infrastructures are under severe strain and are now experiencing a cascade of adverse effects. The Ontario College of Family Physicians (2024) outlines this domino effect through the primary care system. It is estimated that close to one million Toronto residents are currently without family doctors, which is double the amount it was in 2024. This lack of affiliation to a family practice clogs up emergency rooms and walk-in clinics, it breeds substandard care due to a lack of continuity and opens the door for oversights in the patient care journey. The gap in care continues to widen with sixty-five percent of surveyed family doctors in a 2023 study stating that they plan to leave their practice within the next five years (Ontario College of Family Physicians, 2023).

"Without meaningful change, we will see the health of people and our communities deteriorate."
- Dr. Tara Kiran, Ontario College of Family Physicians

The Ontario Secondary School Teacher's federation outlines similar failures. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is the largest in the country. It serves an estimated 239,000 students across 579 schools. Currently, it faces a \$58 million CAD structural deficit. Class sizes regularly exceed 30 students which makes it challenging to teach and leads to educator burnout alongside sub-optimal learning environments for students. Special education and support staff have been cut, mental health and well-being supports have also been slashed. TDSB trustees have estimated that there is a \$4.4 billion CAD backlog in repairs and improvements that need to be made to schools across the city (Toronto District School Board, 2025).

Within Toronto's public services we see alarming indication of an infrastructure crisis emerging there as well. The city is faced with an \$18 billion CAD infrastructure renewal gap between what is budgeted and what is needed to keep target service levels between now and 2034 (MacMillan, 2025).

Services and infrastructure are still operating despite budget cuts and funding backlogs. But the question remains how long can they continue without compromising quality, safety, and scale of services?

5. Economic Opportunity and Social Mobility

The Promise:

Canada offers the opportunity to ascend one's socio-economic conditions/status through access to employment, education, and business opportunities. This opens pathways to investment, housing and accumulation of wealth (Roy & Cheatham, 2025).

The Reality:

Affordability, cost-of-living, and employment opportunities are currently in crisis within Canada (Banerjee et al., 2024). Canadian household debt is the highest among the G7 countries and over half of the population claims to be living paycheck to paycheck (McClelland, 2019). These obstacles are affecting people nationwide, but appear to be disproportionately impacting immigrants. Unemployment rate for immigrants in Canada is more than double that of Canadian-born workers and many that are employed claim they are taking positions for which they are overqualified with staggering wage gaps, earning close to half of what their Canadian born counterparts do (Mahboubi & Zhang, 2024). Even their second-generation kin are experiencing the impact. The children of immigrants who are born and educated in Canada are experiencing diminished earnings in comparison to the non-immigrant population despite a higher proportion of them holding university degrees (Banerjee et al., 2024). This shows that there is a double standard at play within the country with profound inequality in opportunity and access for immigrants and their families. Despite these inequalities, Canadians in general, are struggling with cost-of-living, with forty-two percent claiming their debt has become overwhelming (Angus Reid, 2021).

Toronto was once a city in which housing was attainable for all economic classes. According to the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board (2026), housing prices in the 1970s were on average 3-4 times an annual income which was an attainable amount for most working Canadians. Adjusted for inflation, housing prices have increased by over five hundred percent in 2026. Contrary to the implication of accessibility and opportunity in the Canadian value proposition, housing is no longer accessible or affordable for most Canadians (TRREB MLS, 2026). A primary reason for the disconnect between housing affordability and public need is the conflation between homeownership as a source of



A boarded up building that was once affordable housing in Toronto. Now set to be re-developed into a higher rent condominium. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

housing, and homeownership as a means of investing to amass wealth (Mohiuddin Ahmed & Nemtin, 2023). This financialization of housing is not a new concept, property has been used as a commodity for centuries but the degree to which the market has been held as a long-term investment has toppled Toronto into a housing affordability crisis (Martine, 2022).

“The growing dominance of financial actors in the housing sector, which is transforming the primary function of housing from a place to live into a financial asset and tool for investor profits.”

- August Martine

Due to this disconnect, more people are opting to stay in the rental market causing rental fees to increase in line with property prices. One in five renters in Toronto are spending half of their monthly income on rent which is well over the thirty percent threshold recommended by economists (Herbert et al., 2018; Royal LePage, 2024).

It appears that the desire for social mobility and the achievement of the middle-class ideal has been tethered to the Canadian identity for generations. Canadian housing expert, Dr. Mike Moffatt suggests that the scarcity and affordability issues occurring in the housing market are gutting the middle class and diluting the cultural mosaic once found in Canadian life (Moffatt, 2026). This strangulation of housing stock is also raising rents based on the inflated value of the properties, ultimately pushing residents out of the major cities in search of affordable housing (Syed, 2024).



Four mailboxes on a house, which means that there are four separate apartments inside this small house. An indicator of density and housing scarcity. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

“Out-of-reach home prices are reducing family formation, accelerating inequality, entrenching intergenerational wealth gaps, and turning meritocracy into patrimonial capitalism, where what your parents own matters more than what you earn.”

- Mike Moffatt

6. Human Rights and Protection

The Promise:

The 2025 Canadian Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration affirms that Canada's self-identity as a humanitarian nation includes promises to protect refugees fleeing persecution, maintain robust family reunification programs, and uphold international human rights commitments. The country frames refugee resettlement and the acceptance of asylum seekers as expressions of core Canadian values with settlement support and eventual citizenship as natural progressions within the Canadian experience for newcomers (IRCC, 2025).

The Reality:

The Canadian Human Rights Commission (2025) has found that our country values human rights and protections with eighty-six percent of Canadians feeling that human rights are a social and democratic benefit for the country. Simultaneously the Commission has received its highest volume of accepted discrimination complaints in five years (Malischewski, 2025). This suggests that even though Canadians express strong support for human rights, a

growing number are experiencing gaps between these ideals and their lived realities.

Despite decreases in refugee claims in 2025, protections for asylum seekers have stalled due to a massive backlog, leaving many refugees waiting in uncertainty upon arrival in Canada (Government of Canada, 2026a). According to The Refugee Family Reunification Project (2026), a refugee applying for permanent residence in Canada today could wait as long as 8 years to receive their permanent residence status and there is a backlog of over 150,000 protected persons/refugee applications waiting to be processed. They can only begin the process of sponsoring their family overseas after their permanent residence status is secured but there are an estimated 42,000 overseas family members with pending applications for sponsorship who could be waiting longer than 8 years to be reunited (Refugee Family Reunification, 2026). This shows that while Canada might have a progressive immigration policy, the process is long and arduous. This indicates that Canada's human rights commitments are not only defined by policy, but by the speed and consistency of their delivery, which is currently under strain.

Reflections on Canada's Value Proposition

Taking these critical factors into consideration, it appears that the lack of evolution and innovation within the value offering that Canada continues to prop up is leaving migrants, residents and onlookers wondering if it is more of a façade than a good faith promise.

Canada's national identity, or as we have framed it, its value proposition, has been described as “aspirational branding” (Lodoen, 2019) and is considered a deep myth within our causal layered analysis (see *Supplement B: Causal Layered Analysis*).

“Canada's reputation as a peaceful, tolerant, and equal-opportunity nation is a myth perpetuated to obscure longstanding power structures that serve (and have always served) the agenda of Canada's hegemonic core.” - Dr. Shannon Lodoen

Examining Guyana's Value Proposition

Guyana has gone from socio-economic adversity into becoming one of the largest untapped oil reserves in South America and through this new found resource prosperity, the country is also experiencing rapid infrastructure development (Roy, 2026).

To define a value proposition for Guyana is more challenging because, up until the last decade, Guyana was not a destination for immigration, and it was culturally understood that those who had the means would leave Guyana to pursue education and employment elsewhere (Mishra, 2025). In many ways the implicit proposition offered to the nation was that one should leave to pursue better opportunities.

The components Guyana's value proposition has drastically changed over the last 10 years as foreign investment and resource interest are flooding into the country and allowing the government to pursue nation building projects, once out of reach (Roy, 2026).

The value proposition from the previous half century was very different than what is being communicated today. Unlike Canada, Guyana's offerings saw shifts that coincided with changing political regimes and strained socio-economic conditions. These offerings were often stifled due to corruption, external political interference, and inequitable access (Richardson & Menke, 2026).

To understand Guyana's current moment, one must understand that the country has been shaped not only by its own aspirations but equally by external interference. Guyana gained independence from Britain in 1966 under President Forbes Burnham and his party, People's National Congress (PNC), but that transition was deeply compromised from the start. Declassified documents confirm that the United States and Britain actively intervened in the 1964 elections changing the voting system, funding opposition parties, and enabling fraud to prevent Cheddi Jagan's communist-aligned People's Progressive Party (PPP) from taking power, despite the PPP winning the popular vote. The USA and Britain were fearful of the rise in communist power within south America and so they intervened (Prados & Jimenez-Bacardi, 2020).

Burnham's government promised sovereignty, racial unity under the motto, "One People, One Nation, One Destiny," and collective self-sufficiency but in practice governed through authoritarianism, economic mismanagement, and the entrenchment of the same racial divisions it claimed to dissolve, pitting the country's Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese communities against one another in a rivalry that shaped politics for generations (Platt & Platt, 2020). The result was decades of instability, poverty, and outward migration that hollowed out the professional class and embedded departure into the national consciousness (Mishra, 2025).

This is a history of a country whose founding promise was built on a stolen election, whose national unity was never fully realized, and whose people learned early that survival often meant leaving. This is the foundation upon which Guyana's rapid transformation is being built.

Guyana is currently in an era of prosperity and optimism. They have come out the other side of collapse with a steadfast vision of development and modernization. Prosperity from foreign investment in Guyanese oil extraction is positioning the nation to become one of the wealthiest in South America (The Economist, 2023). Currently Guyana has the highest GDP growth rate in the world, averaging forty-seven percent year over year since 2022 (IMF, 2025). In 2015, Guyana discovered massive oil reserves that would transform their country over the next decade. Over 11 billion barrels worth of recoverable oil is flowing beneath the soil in Guyana's Stabroek region (Chang, 2025). This discovery triggered a huge amount of foreign interest and investment and this influx of investment has transformed what was formerly one of the world's poorest countries into a thriving petrostate and resource extraction hub (Balbi, 2024). Energy giant ExxonMobil has made a funding commitment of over \$60 billion USD to Guyana. As of September 2025, nearly \$8 billion USD has been paid into the Guyana Natural Resource Fund and 6,200 native Guyanese workers have been employed by ExxonMobil, representing seventy percent of their workforce on the ground. ExxonMobil has also spent approximately \$3 billion USD with local suppliers in Guyana (ExxonMobil, 2025). While ExxonMobil is the largest investor in the oil sector at the moment, The caches of oil in the country

have created a rush of foreign interest from global powers. This flood of money into the country has sparked rapid and major scale development.

Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali was voted in as president of Guyana in August 2020, he ran on a platform of One Guyana, centred around unifying the country through infrastructure and public service development while stewarding the ethical management of the country's vast oil wealth (New Room Guyana, 2024). Ali is now the face of the People's Progressive Party (PPP).

Guyana is emerging out of a turbulent period in their nation's history and propelling forward with a new and optimistic value proposition for the future of the country. This refreshed value proposition falls into 6 principles:

Six Principles of Guyana's Current Value Proposition:

1. Economic Prosperity and National Transformation
2. Infrastructure Development and Connectivity
3. Housing and Homeownership for All
4. Free Education and Skills Development
5. Healthcare Modernization
6. Wealth Distribution and Social Protection

1. Economic Prosperity and National Transformation

The Promise:

The national budget has increased by twenty-one percent for an allotment of \$6.6 billion USD which is set to fund infrastructure, healthcare, education, housing, and agriculture. (The Caribbean Council, 2025). President Ali positions this pivotal moment to seize opportunity and sidestep the trappings fallen into by other petrostates through developing the country and converting short term oil wealth into long term prosperity for all of Guyana.

The Reality:

Guyana has amassed huge amounts of wealth over a very short period. While this money is being utilized for rapid development and modernization of infrastructure, it is important to remember that most Guyanese are still living in poverty. Poverty rates in Guyana continue to be among the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean with fifty-eight percent surviving on less than \$7 USD per day and one-in-three Guyanese living in extreme poverty, surviving on less than \$4 USD per day (Village Voice, 2024).



The front entrance of a house in Georgetown. The grounds are flooded and the building appears in disrepair. Evidence of the housing inequity in Guyana. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

This new wealth has not yet reached those who need it most and with the GDP rapidly growing, so too does cost of living. Foreign investment boosts the economy and delivers better paying employment for many but exacerbates hardship for those living in poverty. Increased wealth and higher disposable incomes trigger inflation and increases prices of goods and services. This means that quality of life and affordability decline for those who are not benefitting from the prosperity (Egoumé-Bossogo, et al., 2003).

Remittances from the Guyanese diaspora have been a source of funding support for Guyanese citizens since their independence (Federal Reserve, 2024). Remittances from family and loved ones in the Guyanese diaspora increased by forty-four percent between 2019 and 2023, from \$380 million USD to \$549 million USD, making the estimated 1.5 million Guyanese living abroad their own form of foreign investors or what Terrence Blackman calls, "Silent Partners" (T. R. Blackman, 2025).

For this promise of prosperity to truly resonate with all citizens, the people need to see the money generated from the nation's oil, flowing down to all socio-economic levels. Only time will tell if this is a value offering in the midst of realization or an empty promise.



Construction workers in the midst of improving and expanding the road and irrigation infrastructure in Georgetown, Guyana. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).



The Demerara Harbour Bridge in Georgetown, Guyana is the largest testament to rapid expansion and development in the country. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

2. Infrastructure Development and Connectivity

The Promise:

The PPP government is committed to building a lasting foundation for future generations. By modernizing infrastructure with new roads, highways, and bridges, and advancing the digital landscape through expanded telecom and internet networks, they are creating a more connected and efficient nation for all (World Bank Group, 2020). Over the last four years, 61 kilometers of new highways and roads have been built with \$196 billion USD allocated in 2026 for further transportation expansions (DPI, 2025c). The largest and most visible infrastructure development is the Demerara Harbour River Bridge which towers over Georgetown, standing as a testament to development and prosperity. This landmark project took only four years to erect and signals the opportunity and vision of unification that the PPP hold for the country (DPI, 2025d).

The Reality:

When we walked the streets of Georgetown in January 2026, it was impossible to miss infrastructure development in process. Roads are being widened and paved, drainage and irrigation is being modernized, while new buildings are being built on every block. The government is sending a clear message that this newfound wealth is being invested back into the country. Development in hyperdrive can indicate growth and prosperity but many also fear that it could be an alarm bell which signals a lack of foresight or strategy, which could plummet Guyana into, what

many refer to as, the Dutch Disease, where massive spending on infrastructure does not end up equating to economic diversification (The Economist, 2023). With all sectors expanding at the same time, it leaves the nation vulnerable to paralysation across multiple systems if the economy or government experiences a crisis. As Edouard Mein and Michaël Goujon (2022) outline in their paper, “40 Years of Dutch Disease Literature: Lessons for Developing Countries”, when a nation is deriving the majority of their gross domestic product from a single resource exploitation, such as oil or minerals, it can end up toppling the stability of that nation. This lucrative export of a single resource causes inflation that ends up pushing the value of the currency beyond the reach of other export industries, making their products no longer affordable or competitive to import partners. If commodity prices decline, this drop in profitability could destroy an economy which has sacrificed export viability of other industries in the service of great wealth of just one (Ebrahimzadeh, 2003; Mein & Goujon, 2022). The idea of Dutch Disease stands as a warning to nations not to throw things into imbalance by focusing everything on a single resource. Guyana has not fully succumbed to Dutch Disease just yet, but many feel that it is on a trajectory towards it.

“The gratification of wealth is not found in mere possession or in lavish expenditure, but in its wise application.” - Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

The origin of the name the “Dutch Disease”: 1950s the Netherlands discovered one of the world’s largest natural gas fields. The Dutch began exporting gas on a massive scale. This boom in natural gas exports was very profitable for the country but drastically drove the value of their currency up. This made Dutch manufactured goods much more expensive and they lost any competitive edge in the global market. Ultimately this flatlined productivity for many industries and resulted in significant unemployment and economic strife in the country. From the outside the Netherlands looked very prosperous but internally, the country was struggling and entire industries collapsed. This occurrence coined, The Dutch Disease, stood as an early and well documented example of this phenomenon. The name was first used in a 1977 article, of the same name. in The Economist (The Economist, 1977).

3. Housing and Homeownership for All

The Promise:

The current government is focusing on affordable housing investment. President Ali and the PPP plan to make housing affordable and accessible for all Guyanese residents. They aim to empower the nation by offering affordable property allotments to any citizens who apply, as well as low-cost housing schemes that are attainable through lower interest rates. This means that more Guyanese can qualify for manageable loans which allows for more investment and development of single-family homes and housing infrastructure (The Guyana Chronical, 2026).

The Reality:

Guyana’s Department of Public Information (2026) outlines that in 2020 the government began an application system in which Guyanese citizens who reside in the country could apply for an allotment of land upon which they could develop a residential property. Lots are appointed based on income bracket. The allotments are prioritized for lower income, young professionals and families in need (DPI, 2024). The government reported to have exceeded their project goal of 50,000 house lot appointments. The recipients are resoundingly in target segments of the population with ninety percent of the lots being delivered to low-income Guyanese, forty-seven percent to single women, and fifty-four percent were young professionals aged 21-35 (News Room Guyana, 2025).



Mortgages and loans are becoming more accessible and attainable for average working individual in Guyana. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

These allotments are a huge step towards realizing house ownership, but the development of the actual houses themselves is the responsibility of the lot recipients. This poses the risk that despite having purchased a lot from the government at a severely subsidized rate, citizens may not be able to afford the cost of development. The government is trying to combat this by raising the mortgage ceiling at the national building society and they have also introduced steel and concrete subsidies, so it is easier for residents to afford the materials needed for building (I News Guyana, 2026). Housing schemes are also being developed across the country to address the affordable housing gap with 95 new affordable housing development schemes built or breaking ground since 2020 (News Room Guyana, 2025).

There are critics that fear there is some ethnic segregation at play in how these allotments and loans are being issued. The Village Voice news outlet in Guyana cites a reversal of Burnham-era racial exclusion and accuses the current administration of creating an “architecture of exclusion” where housing contracts are awarded disproportionately to the Indo-Guyanese. Under Burnham the Indo-Guyanese suffered palpable segregation and the concern is that the PPP is allowing the pendulum to swing the other way, creating inequity and marginalization for yet another demographic of citizens (The Village Voice News (Guyana), 2025).

4. Free Education and Skills Development

The Promise:

As of January 2025, Ali's administration has abolished tuition at all government-run technical schools as well as the University of Guyana. The mission is to educate the country on Guyanese soil and make access to education open and unimpeded. This tactic will ideally keep more Guyanese inside the country, working on nation-building projects. The PPP wants to stop the "brain drain" (local talent leaving the country for opportunity) of the Guyanese population and utilize the nation's citizens for powering the state (New Room Guyana, 2024).

The Reality:

The current administration is making great strides to create educational opportunities that will keep citizens rooted in Guyana. As Guyana's Department of Public Information outlines, in addition to reinstating free education, the government is offering a new scholarship for online education at international universities. This is another example of keeping the population anchored while supporting them in gaining knowledge and skills from outside institutions. To support the increase in foreign investment, Guyana is also building a new oil and gas training college as well as a hospitality institute (DPI, 2023).

Employment opportunities are substantial for skilled workers in Guyana today and this is generating appeal to the Guyanese diaspora. Guyana saw repatriation of 122,000 people between 2016-2023, which equates to fifteen percent of the residing population of Guyana (Crowley, 2024). This return is a clear sign that opportunity is presenting itself inside the country.

Despite great prosperity and an optimistic outlook, the risks of "Dutch Disease" still loom. If oil faces a crash due to geopolitical conflicts or shifts in political power, the foundation of this massive system overhaul could crumble.

5. Healthcare Modernization

The Promise:

Guyana is on a mission to modernize every aspect of infrastructure and public service. Today's offering is one of cutting-edge technology and quality care. Guyana is making huge investments into creating a world class healthcare system (Shaw et al., 2025).

The Reality:

For those with means in Guyana it is currently common practice to leave the country for medical attention. Many travel to other Caribbean countries or the America to private clinics and the Guyanese medical system is treated as a last resort (Sooklall & Jagarine, 2025). Guyana's ministry of health reports that the 2025 budget in Guyana allocated \$686 million USD into healthcare with six new hospitals being built across the country, ensuring that rural medical facilities will be connected to an online network through satellite internet with digitized patient records (Ministry of Health Guyana, 2025; Shaw et al., 2025).

This not only creates local healthcare jobs but discourages citizens to seek services elsewhere. Until these initiatives, Guyana's healthcare infrastructure was among the worst in South America (Stabroek News, 2023). We must consider that while major innovations are occurring, there is much work to be done to elevate all levels of their healthcare, such as job creation, education, training, and expertise retention, before they can become a world-class healthcare provider (Guyana Times, 2025).

6. Wealth Distribution and Social Protection

The Promise:

The government has indicated that portions of the new oil wealth will be shared and distributed to the citizens of Guyana as direct payments as well as through the development of the country. Residents and members of the diaspora possessing Guyanese identification are eligible for a one-time payment of close to \$500 USD (Duncan & Marks, 2024). Money will flow to the workers of Guyana through increased minimum wage, which is also made possible through the oil profits. This puts more money directly into the hands of Guyanese residents and helps to improve the lives of lower income citizens (The Caribbean Council, 2024).

The Reality:

This claim that oil wealth is being equitably distributed to the people is under question. Many feel that these funds are not meaningfully benefiting those who need the most support (Village Voice, 2024). By issuing payouts and raising the minimum wage the government is making a clear statement of effort however one-time cash grants do not translate into a sustained

effort to alleviate poverty for the fifty eight percent of the population experiencing it. Increasing minimum wage only benefits those who are employed and small amounts of money issued as benefits is only a band aid solution. Many, including the Guyana Human Rights Association, feel that the handouts are a smoke screen to distract from mismanagement and misappropriation of funds by the government handling of the Natural Resource Fund (Stabroek News, 2024).

Dr. Terrence Campbell who was a committee member for the Natural Resource Fund has filed a judicial review, claiming that the \$2.6 billion USD that has been withdrawn from the fund has been misused by the government. He believes that the government has been using these funds to bankroll other operations that are outside of its mandate. There is apprehension surrounding the way in which the resource dividends are being treated in the larger picture of the country's strategy and foresight. Accounting Firm, Ram & McRae flag that the government has transitioned the oil prosperity into an assumed budget line and are making decisions as though it is a cornucopia of profitability. The country could be put into a position of risk if markets shift or resources dry up (Ram & McRae, 2026).

Reflections on Guyana's Value Propositions

Guyana's value proposition offers a sharp lesson in the difference between a promise made and a promise kept. For most of its post-independence history, the country's implicit offer to its own people was, in effect, that leaving was the wisest choice. Decades of political instability, authoritarianism, racial division, and economic mismanagement ensured that departure became embedded in the national consciousness rather than pride of place (Mishra, 2025). What Guyana reveals is that a value proposition is not only what a nation projects outward, but what it communicates through the conditions it actually creates and for generations, those conditions were stark and opportunity lived elsewhere.

The shift now underway, driven by oil wealth and large-scale infrastructure investment, represents a genuine re-authoring of that proposition (Roy, 2026). But the history is cautionary: a new promise built on resource wealth alone, without addressing the structural inequities, governance failures, and racial tensions that

made the original promise hollow, risks repeating the same cycle.

Guyana today is not just an emerging opportunity, it is a test case for whether a nation can deliberately redesign its value proposition from the inside out, rather than having it collapse under the weight of what it failed to deliver.

What Value Propositions Reveal

A value proposition draws together a nation's lived historical experience and its ambitions for the future. The worth of these value propositions lies in its follow through and delivery. Is the promise of benefit and opportunity attainable or achievable? Or is this just a utopian dream framed as a reachable reality?

Through our consideration of these value propositions in comparison to actions taken by these countries over the years, truths reveal themselves. Some offerings within these propositions are earnest and pursued with intention. Others have revealed themselves as disingenuous or assumed myths. When we examine the value proposition, we can then discern which elements are working, which are failing, and which were never possible or genuinely pursued.

Applying a value proposition framework to benchmark stated values against real-world conditions allows for a clearer assessment of where promises align with lived realities. Ultimately, the propositions that a nation puts forward are promissory notes or advertisements of value that attract or reassure people in their pursuit of securing opportunity and belonging.

This is why it is integral for a nation's value proposition to be as earnest and achievable as possible. People are making monumental decisions involving migration and displacement based on the tacit and explicit communication of benefits and opportunities a nation's value proposition promotes. Later in this paper we will explore how home itself has its own set of components and propositions that act as guiding principles in the realization of a viable home.

Depending on where a nation is within its evolutionary progression, a value proposition can either be a proclamation of hope or a defence of eroded promises. In Canada affordability, access scarcity, and

aging infrastructure has made it near impossible to deliver on the benefits and values proposed over the last 50 years. In Guyana, there has never been a more prosperous and future-oriented era in the country's history. However, generations of poverty and stagnation have made this mission of development a monumental task. Here we see two nations on opposing ends of a cycle. Both in need of a revitalized value proposition that reflects the reality of their nation and a realistic portrayal of what is possible for their people.

Systems go through iterative cycles and continuously travel through phases of growth, conservation, collapse, and rebirth (Holling & Gunderson, 2002). To gain a deeper understanding of the current phase of the cycle that Canada and Guyana are experiencing, we now turn our attention to examining the "Adaptive Cycle." This diagnostic tool allows us to see where they stand today and where these nations are emerging from within their distinct cycles. By understanding the current position, we can more accurately consider the future and potentials for fortifying resilience, change, belonging and the future of home.

Adaptive Cycle: Growth, Collapse, Reorganization, and the Moments in Between

From speaking with our research participants, it became clear that the process of seeking out and building a home is a series of choices that are impacted by the state of one's surroundings and the conditions they find themselves in. Environments in flux that are experiencing turmoil offer less potential for vitality and landscapes of opportunity and resource density allow for growth and resilience (Holling & Gunderson, 2002).

The adaptive cycle is a powerful foresight and diagnostic tool that can help to predict future states or potentials. By using this framework in our examination of Canada and Guyana we can see where these nations may be headed and what part of the cycle their current system is entering and exiting from. The developers of this framework, C.S. Holling and Lance H. Gunderson assert that all complex systems move through iterative cycles of growth, conservation, collapse, and reorganization (or rebirth), the adaptive

cycle helps to understand the moment while contextualizing what came before and what is to come.

A good example of an adaptive cycle is a forest: *It starts from the nutrient rich soil and grows into a towering ecosystem, only to become brittle and burn down in a forest fire. The ashes rejuvenate the soil and the cycle starts again. Over its lifetime a system will have many cycles in which it regrows out of collapse and within these moments of collapse are where innovation and evolution occur* (Holling & Gunderson, 2002).

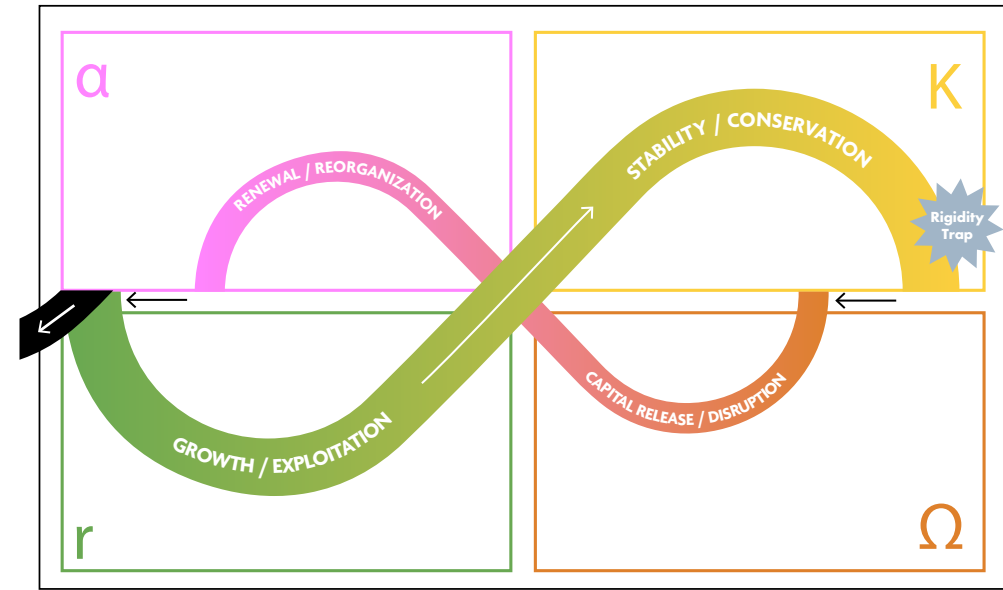
Resilience is a catalyst for survival and success. It drives people and systems toward change and the realization of potential. In all journeys of identifying home, people aim to remain resilient and harness the three elements that embody it.

Persistence allows for navigation through hardship or barriers to remain resolute and focused on the desired outcome. Adaptive capacity allows for adjustment and the ability to pivot in order to realize success through new paths and ways of thinking. *Transformability* embraces drastic change as a means of realizing an end goal. Being open to change allows for evolution and conversion which can lead to finding home in an unexpected form. Weather leaving the place where you were born or choosing to stay rooted in your homeland, resilience is a key element in the realization of home.

The following section outlines the adaptive cycles of both Canada and Guyana. These cycles are constructed through a synthesis of each nation's historical trajectories, policy decisions, infrastructure development, and broader socio-economic conditions over time. Drawing on literature review, systems analysis, and comparative contextual research, the adaptive cycles interpret how each country has moved through phases of growth, conservation, collapse, and reorganization.

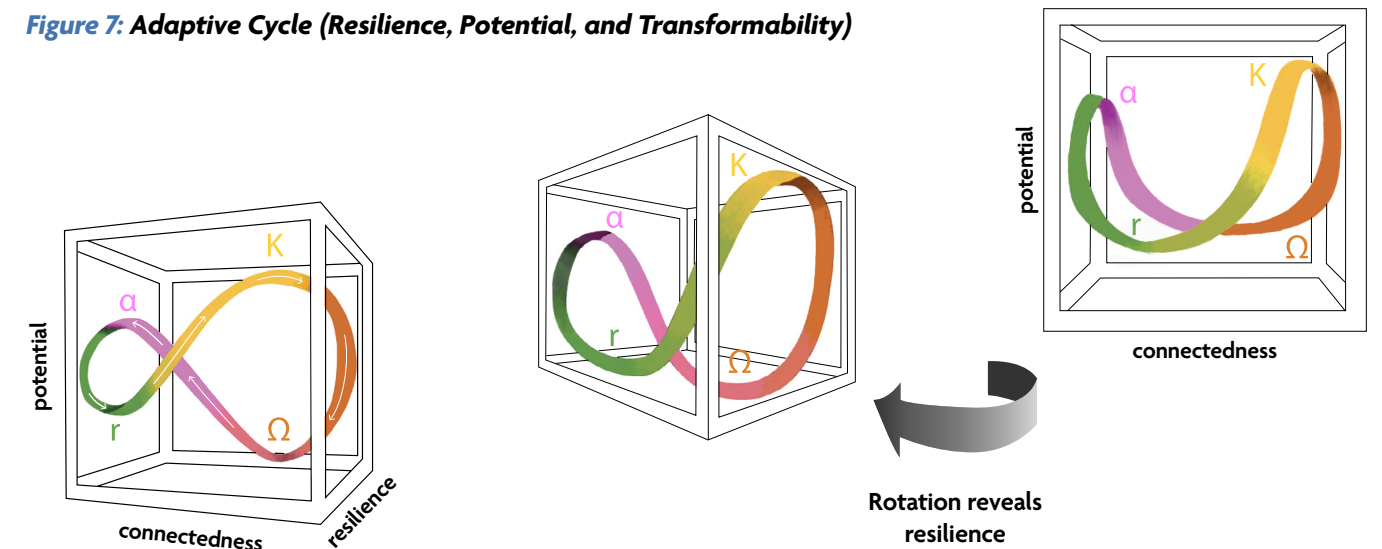
See pages 33–36 for an overview of Canada's adaptive cycles and pages 37–42 for an overview of Guyana's.

Figure 6: Overview of the Adaptive Cycle



The adaptive cycle is a framework developed by C.S. Holling and Lance H. Gunderson. As depicted in the illustration above it shows how complex systems move through four repeating phases: *growth and exploitation*, *conservation*, *release or collapse*, and *reorganization*. In the growth and conservation phases, potential and connectedness build up, but this also creates rigidity as resources and structures become locked in, which gradually reduces resilience. During release, stored potential is suddenly unleashed and the rigid structures break down, temporarily lowering both connectedness and resilience but creating space for novelty. In reorganization, that freed potential is recombined into new configurations, and the system can regain resilience and flexibility, setting the stage for another round of growth or a different future path.

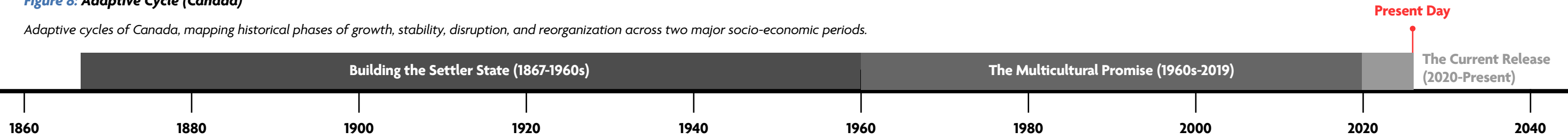
Figure 7: Adaptive Cycle (Resilience, Potential, and Transformability)



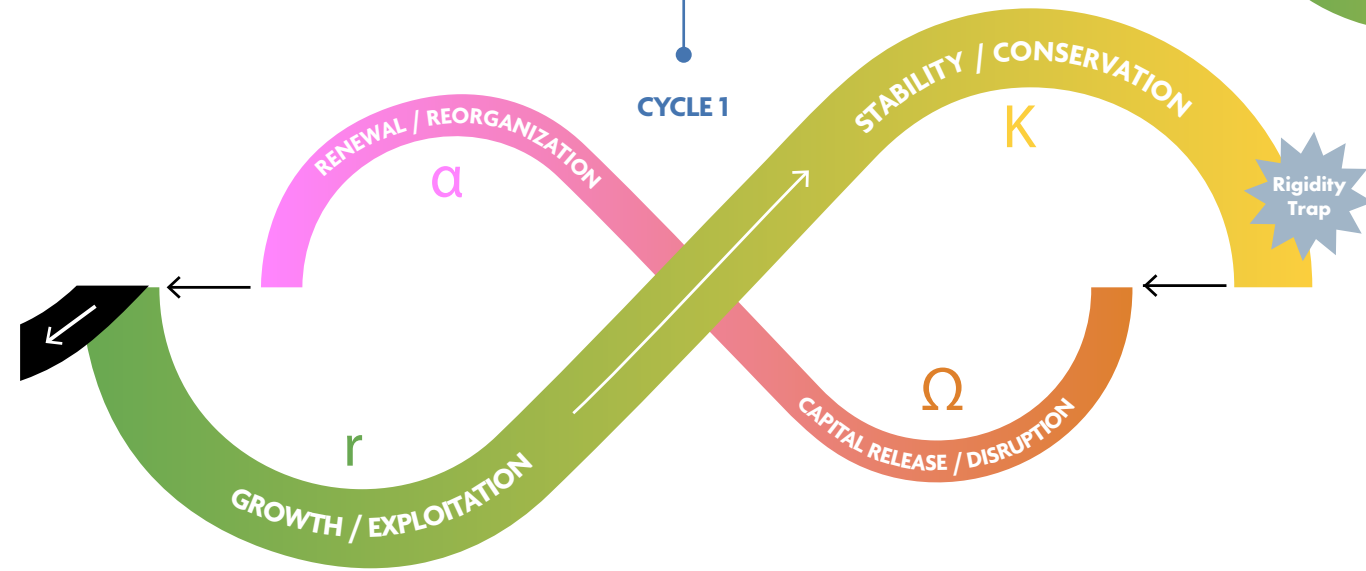
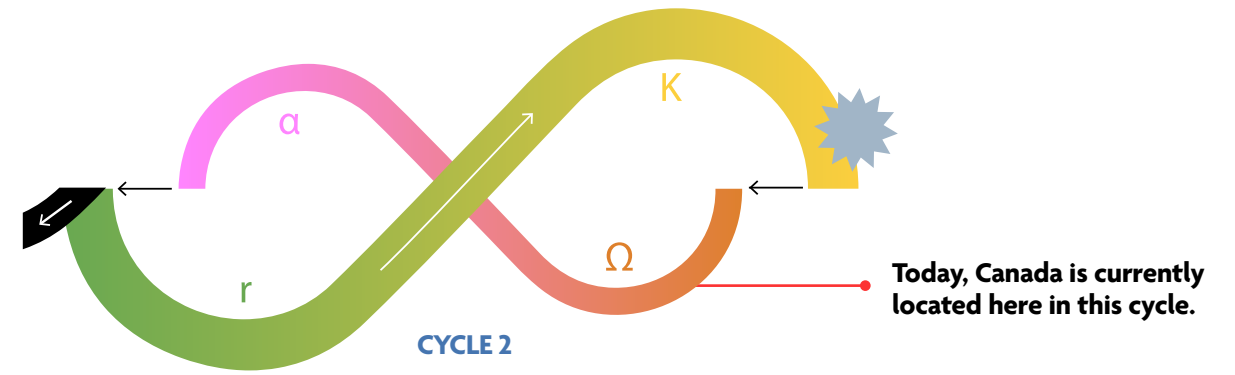
In the adaptive cycle, *resilience*, *potential*, and *transformability* are like three spatial axes that describe where the system sits at any moment. Resilience is the capacity to absorb disturbance and stay functional; it is higher in growth and reorganization, and lower in late conservation and release as systems become either rigid or disrupted. Potential is the stock of resources and options; it builds through growth and conservation, peaks just before collapse, then is released and recombined in reorganization. Transformability reflects how tightly elements are linked by rules and feedbacks; it is low and flexible in growth and reorganization but high and rigid in conservation, which stabilizes performance yet makes the system more brittle and prone to abrupt release.

Figure 8: Adaptive Cycle (Canada)

Adaptive cycles of Canada, mapping historical phases of growth, stability, disruption, and reorganization across two major socio-economic periods.



Cycle 1 (1867-1982) Summary:
Canada's early growth through settler expansion and institution-building stabilized over time but became rigid, with underlying social tensions.



Cycle 2 (1971-Present) Summary:
Canada's multicultural promise drove growth and stability but is now entering disruption as rising costs and institutional strain erode its value proposition.

- Legend:**
- Historical Eras
 - Cycles
 - r - Exploitation/Growth
 - K - Conservation
 - Ω - Capital Release/Disruption
 - a - Renewal/Reorganization

Table 1: Adaptive Cycle Overview (Canada)

CYCLE 1	
Building the Settler State (1867-1960s)	
r - Growth/Exploitation (1867-1914)	K - Stability/Conversation (1914-1960s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confederation (1867) creates the Dominion of Canada; aggressive territorial expansion westward Dominion Lands Act offers free 160-acre homesteads to attract European settlers Transcontinental railway completed (1885) the physical backbone of nation-building Immigration policy is explicitly racial: Chinese Immigration Act (1885, expanded 1923), continuous-journey regulations exclude non-Europeans Value proposition: free land, new beginnings, build a white settler nation Rapid, dispersed, entrepreneurial growth Resilient with much potential and opportunity on the horizon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two world wars and the Great Depression consolidate institutions and slow immigration Average immigration ~146,000/year through this period “White Canada” policy remains firmly in force; immigration restricted by national origin Welfare state institutions accumulate; universal healthcare introduced (Hospital Insurance Act 1957; Medical Care Act 1966), public education systems expand System appears stable but is increasingly rigid racial exclusion framework out of step with post-war global norms, civil rights movements, and domestic labour needs Brittleness building beneath the surface
The Multicultural Promise (1960s-2019)	
Ω - Capital Release/Disruption (1960s)	a - Renewal/Reorganisation (1967-1982)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The racial exclusion framework collapses under internal and external pressure White Canada policy increasingly indefensible in the post-civil-rights era Labour market needs cannot be met by European-only immigration The old system is exhausted; stored capital (institutional credibility, labour demand) is released 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Points System introduced (1967): replaces national-origin criteria with skills-based selection a fundamental redesign of who can come Multiculturalism declared official policy (1971): Pierre Trudeau redefines Canadian identity Immigration Act of 1976: creates distinct family, economic, and refugee classes; formalises humanitarian commitment Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982): constitutionalizes equality, non-discrimination, and minority language rights Value proposition reborn: Canada welcomes the world; diversity is strength; work hard and the middle class is yours Rapid innovation, new identity, new institutional architecture Resilience and potential

CYCLE 2	
r - Growth/Exploitation (1971-2000s)	K - Stability/Conversation (2000s-2019)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multicultural identity grows rapidly; immigration numbers surge (under 100,000 to 256,641 by 1993 under Mulroney) Multiculturalism Act (1988) codifies policy in law Housing remains affordable; healthcare and education are well-funded Social contract holds: immigrants arrive, contribute, integrate; visible minorities grow from marginal to defining feature of Canadian cities Refugee resettlement programmes expand; family reunification operates within reasonable timelines The value proposition is tested and appears to be working This is the golden age of the Canadian multicultural promise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System matures and becomes more rigid Express Entry (2015) streamlines economic immigration but also bureaucratizes it Immigration targets keep rising: 250K to 300K to 340K Housing prices begin exponential climb (Toronto real prices up 475-522% since 1970; incomes show small growth, flat in comparison) Credential non-recognition entrenched: 26.7% of educated immigrants overqualified; “Canadian experience” becomes barrier Healthcare strain mounts: family doctor shortages growing; ER wait times lengthening TDSB accumulates \$4.4B repair backlog; per-student funding falls behind inflation But the consensus holds: Canadians still broadly support immigration, still trust institutions, still identify as multicultural System appears stable but is accumulating rigidity, over-connectedness, and unaddressed contradictions
The Current Release/Disruption (2020-Present)	
Ω - Capital Release/Disruption (2020-2026)	a - Renewal/Reorganisation (2026-?)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19 is the trigger, but brittleness was pre-existing Post-pandemic immigration rises to 400K+ permanent residents; temporary residents rise to 2.5M+ Housing crisis: homes cost 14x income in expensive markets; up to 77.8% of income spent in Toronto Healthcare crisis: nearly 1M Torontonians projected without a family doctor by 2026; 2.5M Ontarians without one provincially Education crisis: TDSB \$58M structural deficit; \$1,500 per-student funding shortfall; staff shortages, large class sizes, and dwindling support Hate crimes at historic highs: 443 incidents in Toronto in 2024 (up 203% since 2014); anti-South Asian hate speech up 1,350% Social consensus collapses: 58% say “too many immigrants”; 60% feel disconnected from community; 62% perceive rising crime Institutional trust declining: 25-yr erosion across political parties, universities, schools, professions Refugee system overwhelmed: claimants >50% of Toronto’s homeless; family reunification 50+ months; 150,000 backlog Black second-generation Canadians earn less despite higher education; \$249K lifetime gap for Black men 	<p>The a-phase has not yet begun in earnest Canada is still in active release.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New programs for training family doctors Primary Care action plan Upskill training for nursing Awarded increased scope of treatment for nurse practitioners New affordable housing initiatives Reforms to business tax write offs to promote spending New subsidies for low-income families Ramping up oil extraction and planned advancement on Canada’s controversial oil pipeline New trade deals with India and China to bring more affordable products into Canada (electric vehicles, etc.) 2025-2027 Immigration Levels: planned cuts to permanent resident targets signal possible reorganization Federal election and its policy aftermath will determine direction

Figure 9: Adaptive Cycle (Guyana)

Adaptive cycles of Guyana, mapping historical phases of growth, instability, and transformation across colonial, post-independence, and oil-driven periods.

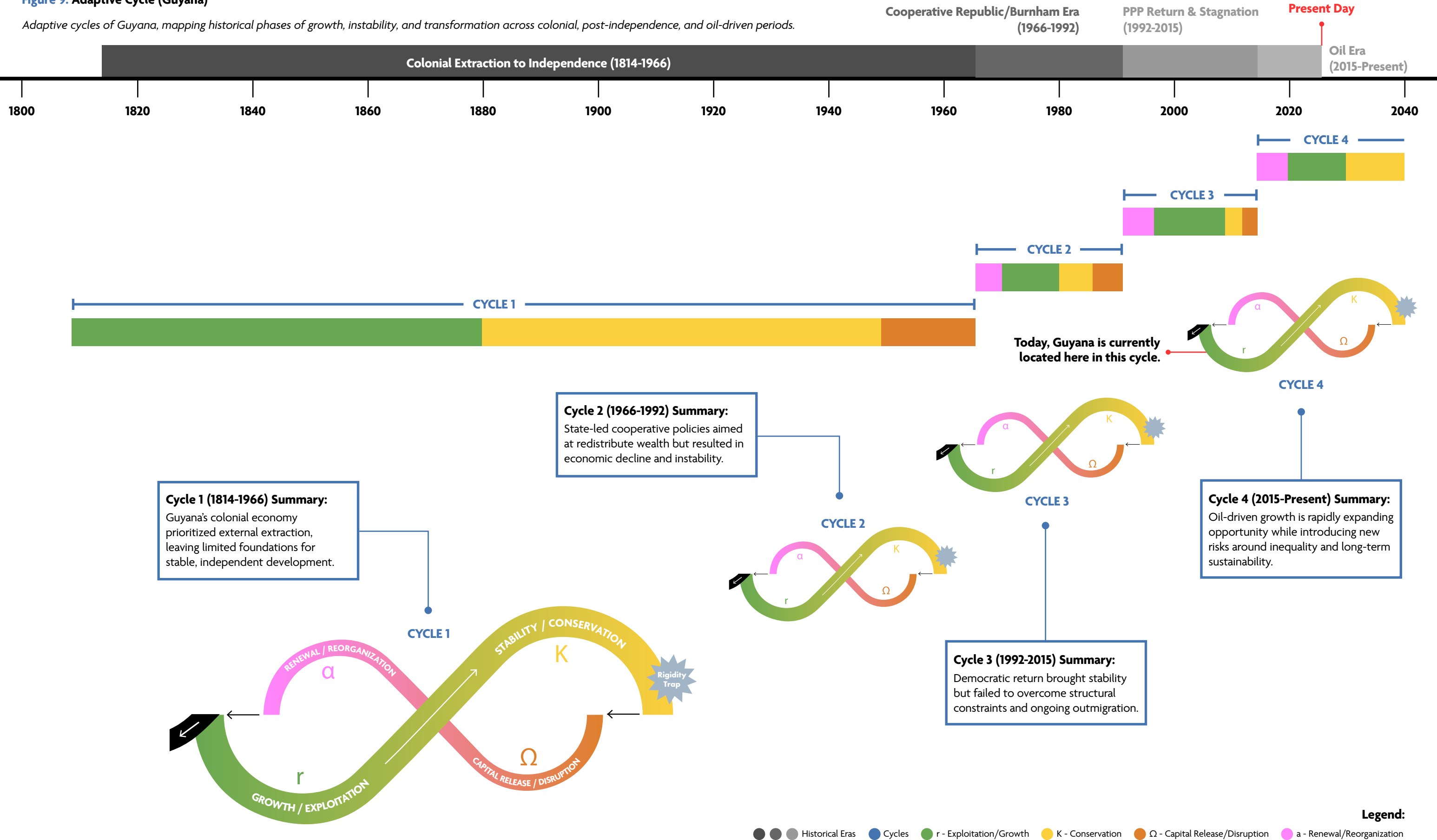


Table 2: Adaptive Cycle Overview (Guyana)

CYCLE 1	
Colonial Extraction to Independence (1814-1966)	
r - Growth/Exploitation (1814-1950s)	K - Stability/Conversation (1814-1950s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British establish plantation economy: sugar, rice, timber Indentured labour imported from India (1838–1917) after emancipation of enslaved Africans Gold discovered (1879); bauxite mining begins (early 1900s) Rigid racial/class hierarchy Caste System: European/Portuguese at the top, Indo-Guyanese in agriculture, Afro-Guyanese in urban employment and civil service, Chinese-Guyanese in labour, food service, and small business Colonial institutions exploit resources and generate wealth for the mother country Independence movements crystallise along ethnic lines by 1950s 	
Ω - Capital Release/Disruption (1950s-1966)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Britain suspends constitution (1953) after PPP election victory alarms Cold War powers PPP splits along racial lines (1957): Jagan (Indo-Guyanese) vs. Burnham (Afro-Guyanese) Racial violence erupts (1962–1964); over 170 killed Britain and the U.S. intervene to install Burnham's PNC over Jagan's Marxist PPP Colonial order collapses; independence on May 26, 1966 Stored colonial capital (institutions, infrastructure, social order) collapse 	

CYCLE 2	
The Cooperative Republic/Burnham Era (1966-1992)	
a - Renewal/Reorganisation (1966-1970)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independence creates new national identity and institutional possibilities Cooperative Republic declared (1970); Guyana becomes a republic Burnham articulates value proposition: sovereignty, self-determination, cooperative socialism New institutions, new rhetoric, new possibilities 	
r - Growth/Exploitation (1970-1980)	K - Stability/Conversation (1980-1985)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nationalization of countries greatest resources bauxite (national companies: GUYBAU/DEMBA, 1971) and sugar (National company: GuySuCo, 1976). Free education introduced from nursery through university (1976) “Feed, Clothe and House the Nation” campaign launched Cooperative institutions proliferate across sectors and the idea of “comrades” is socialized National pride and self-reliance rhetoric at peak Rapid institutional and ideological growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System becomes rigid Slides into a one-party state under Burnham Elections rigged (1968, 1973, 1980); opposition suppressed Resources concentrate in PNC patronage networks; corruption becomes commonplace in government and beyond Nationalized industries prove inefficient; economy declines Brain drain accelerates Infrastructure deteriorating Social services underfunded System over-connected, corrupt, and brittle

The Cooperative Republic/Burnham Era (1966-1992) <i>continued</i>	
Ω - Capital Release/Disruption (1985-1992)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burnham dies (August 1985) Desmond Hoyte inherits collapsing system IMF structural adjustment imposed Economy enters extreme poverty level Infrastructure crumbles; healthcare and education systems deteriorate Cooperative socialism as a value proposition is fully exhausted Brain drain reaches crisis levels Thousands of skilled citizens leaving System collapse in 1992 with first free and fair elections under Carter Centre oversight PNC loses power to Jagan's PPP after 28 years 	

CYCLE 3	
The PPP Return & Stagnation (1992-2015)	
a - Renewal/Reorganisation (1992-1997)	r - Growth/Exploitation [Modest] (1997-2010)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cheddi Jagan returns to power Introduction of democratic government Market reforms begin; cooperative socialism abandoned New relationship with international financial institutions Value proposition shifts: democracy, open markets, modest development Resilience in the face of poverty and in the wake of corruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jagdeo elected president Brings hope of growth and development Slight reduction in poverty Infrastructure improvements, but at modest scale Still a very poverty-stricken country Brain drain continues relentlessly Emigration reaches 56% by 2010 By 2022, 36% of Guyana's native-born population living abroad largest diaspora ratio in the world Growth never achieves the velocity needed for meaningful transformation Remittances become a critical economic lifeline
K - Stability/Conversation (2010-2015)	Ω - Capital Release/Disruption (2010-2015)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPP's long incumbency rigidifies; governance concerns mount PPP loses 2015 election to APNU+AFC coalition under David Granger System is not brittle enough for full collapse, but is stagnant Guyana remains one of the poorest countries in the hemisphere Awaiting a new catalyst to push it into the next phase 	

CYCLE 4
The Oil Era (2015-Present)
a - Renewal/Reorganisation (2015-2020)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ExxonMobil discovers massive oil field (2015) Reorganizes Guyana's entire economic paradigm overnight 2016 Production Sharing Agreement signed between Guyana and Exxon: 2% royalty, 75% cost recovery, zero corporate tax (widely criticized as among the worst oil deals globally) First oil tapped December 2019 PPP wins contested 2020 election after months-long recount; Irfaan Ali becomes president New a-phase driven not by political revolution but by geological discovery Entire national narrative, economic planning, and institutional framework reorganised around oil
r - Growth/Exploitation (2020-Present)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GDP growth 43.8% in 2024 fastest in the world; averaging 47% annually since 2022 Oil production: 616,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 2024 Approaching 900K bpd by late 2025 Over \$5B in cumulative government oil revenues National budget: US\$6.6B in 2025 (21% increase) US\$7.0B+ projected for 2026 Housing: 53K+ house lots allocated (47% to women, 54% to youth, 90% to low-income) 15K new lots and 8K homes planned for 2026 40K homes pledged over five years Education: free university tuition restored at UG (January 2025) for first time in 30 years Tuition abolished at all government technical institutions 39K+ GOAL scholarships awarded Healthcare: six new regional hospitals under construction (\$38B investment) Paediatric & Maternity Hospital; cancer treatment centre National Electronic Health Record System launched Jan 2026 Infrastructure: New Demerara Harbour Bridge opened (Oct. 2025) 61.1 km of new highways \$196.1B transport budget for 2026 Linden-Lethem corridor underway Direct wealth distribution: \$100,000 GYD cash grant per adult (2025, 2026) \$200,000 GYD per household (2024) Disability grants "Because We Care" school grants Cost-of-living measures: VAT removed on building materials, fertilizers, agrochemicals; fuel subsidies Steel and cement subsidies "One Guyana" narrative: branding, diaspora engagement tours, rhetoric of unity Diaspora return: 2,162 formal remigrants in five years \$35M allocated in 2026 budget for repatriation efforts 58% of citizens still live in poverty 32% in extreme poverty despite \$6.2B in oil revenues Remittances increased 44% During the boom ordinary citizens more dependent on diaspora, not less Food inflation at 75% (vs. official headline of 2.5%); staples like rice up 50%

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural Resource Fund transparency under legal challenge: US\$2.61B withdrawn in three years Opposition and civil society call governance structures "rubber stamps" Ethnic patronage persists: Afro-Guyanese firms received 10.4% of government contracts (7.1% by value) despite being around 30% of population Healthcare staffing gap: 0.214 doctors per 1,000 (WHO benchmark: 1.0) VP Jagdeo says 12 new hospitals will need 8,000 staff Guyana does not yet have Oil dependence: 88% of export earnings from oil Dutch Disease risk acknowledged by IMF as "not yet present but high" Brain drain not reversed at scale: 2,162 returns vs. 300,000+ diaspora abroad Original ExxonMobil contract unchanged: 2% royalty remains on the block which produces all current oil Improved terms apply only to future blocks
K - Stability/Conversation (2030s-?)
<p><i>Scenario A (Healthy Conservation):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oil revenues diversified into agriculture, services, and human capital Natural Resource Fund governed transparently Ethnic patronage reduced Healthcare and education systems staffed Economy diversifies before oil declines Sustainable middle-income <p><i>Scenario B (Petrostate Rigidity):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oil dependence deepens Ethnic patronage concentrates benefits Natural Resource Fund depleted without accountability Dutch Disease hollows out other sectors 58% poverty persists despite GDP growth Brittle K-phase catapults Guyana into the next Ω-collapse phase

Canada's Adaptive Cycles

"At the edge of chaos, complex dynamic systems are at their most creative." - Stuart Kauffman

Canada's adaptive cycles reflect a mature system that has moved through extended periods of growth and consolidation, but it is now in a phase of strain and structural release. Historically, Canada experienced a long growth phase marked by nation-building, institutional development, and the expansion of social systems that supported stability, opportunity, and upward mobility. This transitioned into a prolonged conservation phase, where systems became highly interconnected and optimized, reinforcing Canada's global reputation as a stable and prosperous nation. However, this success has also produced rigidity, as complex interdependencies across housing, healthcare, infrastructure, and labour markets have reduced flexibility and increased vulnerability to disruption. In the present moment, Canada is increasingly exhibiting characteristics of the collapse or release phase of the adaptive cycle. Mounting pressures such as housing unaffordability, strained public services, and rising cost of living indicate that existing systems are no longer able to sustain the value proposition they once promised. These breakdowns are not isolated but systemic, reflecting the limits of a highly interconnected and resource-intensive system. At the same time, early signals of reorganization are emerging, as governments and institutions begin to experiment with new policies, infrastructure strategies, and economic approaches to restore stability. This places Canada in a transitional moment between collapse and reorganization, where the potential for renewal exists but is contingent on the ability to adapt existing structures and reconfigure them toward more resilient and equitable futures.

Guyana's Adaptive Cycle

"A system in climax has within it the seeds of its own destruction" (adapted from Holling & Gunderson, 2002).

Guyana's adaptive cycle presents a contrasting trajectory, characterized by a system emerging from prolonged constraint into a new phase of accelerated growth. For much of its modern history, Guyana experienced conditions associated with limited growth and stunted opportunity, leading to large-scale emigration and the formation of a significant diaspora. This historical context reflects a system that struggled to sustain a robust growth phase, with instability and limited resources shaping a national narrative in which opportunity was often found elsewhere.

In recent years, however, Guyana has entered a rapid growth phase driven by resource abundance, particularly through oil discovery and foreign investment. This influx of capital and opportunity has increased potential and reduced immediate constraints, enabling infrastructure development, economic expansion, and renewed national optimism. At the same time, this growth remains fragile. The system has not yet transitioned into a stable conservation phase, and risks associated with resource dependency, governance, and uneven development persist. As a result, Guyana exists in a high-potential but volatile stage of the adaptive cycle, where rapid expansion must be carefully managed to avoid premature rigidity or future collapse. This positions the country at the early stages of a transformative cycle, where the decisions made now will shape whether growth evolves into sustained stability or reproduces historical patterns of imbalance.

What the Adaptive Cycle Shows Us

Taken together, the adaptive cycles of Canada and Guyana reveal that national promises are not static declarations, but dynamic conditions shaped by where a system sits within its broader lifecycle. While the value proposition articulates what a place claims to offer, the adaptive cycle exposes whether the underlying systems are capable of sustaining, eroding, or transforming that promise over time. In this way, the gap between expectations and lived reality is not incidental, but rather a consequence of the specific phase's system capacity, and constraints.

Through our exploration, the following becomes clear:

- Periods of growth offer the greatest potential for aligning promise with lived experience.
- Growth phases create the conditions to expand opportunity, strengthen institutions, and build more equitable foundations.
- This makes early, intentional intervention critical, as decisions made during growth shape how long systems can sustain stability and how they absorb future disruption.
- Without foresight and effective governance, systems move more rapidly toward rigidity and collapse.
- Collapse, then, is not an anomaly but a predictable outcome of systems that exceed their capacity to sustain their own complexity.

These trajectories are not self-determined. They are shaped by a complex set of political, economic, environmental, and social forces that influence how systems evolve over time. To better understand what is driving these shifts today. The following section examines trends and initiatives which are currently being implemented. These contemporary examples of innovation are laying the essential groundwork for successful transitions, enabling each nation to move into its next phase of the cycle.

On the Horizon

We conducted a horizon scan of drivers and trends that are impacting the realization of home. This scan looked across Canada and Guyana. The drivers impact the functionality and health of these nations. The trends are mitigation tactics and initiatives currently being used to address the shifting landscape.

While a comprehensive analysis can be found in *Supplement C: Horizon Scan*, we have highlighted some key elements which are informing current conditions in Canada and Guyana.

Canada: Drivers and Trends

Canada is experiencing sustained pressure across many systems as affordability challenges, supply constraints, and population growth reshape access to belonging and opportunity. These pressures are occurring alongside demographic shifts such as population aging and changing household structures. As housing stress increases, its effects are being felt across labour markets, health systems, community stability, and long-term economic competitiveness.

Drivers

Financialization of housing

According to the Canadian Human Rights Commission (2026), housing in Canada is increasingly shaped by financial logic, where homes are treated as assets for accumulation as much as places to live. This shift influences pricing, investment behaviour, tenure patterns, and the availability of housing for end users. As capital gains and speculative activity become more embedded in the system, access to housing becomes more unequal and more detached from household need. The growing financialization of housing is intensifying debate over whether housing should primarily function as a commodity, an investment vehicle, or a social good (CHRC, 2026).

Affordability crisis

Data from Statistics Canada (2024) indicates that increased unaffordability in Canada has shifted from a cyclical pressure to a structural condition affecting how people live, work, and plan for the future. Rising prices and borrowing costs are making it increasingly difficult for households to access stable housing and afford essential goods, particularly in major urban areas. These pressures are reshaping family formation patterns, delaying key life milestones, and widening inequality across generations and income groups (Habitat for Humanity, 2024).



Massive new luxury homes and multiunit houses are being developed by property investors which reduces stock of affordable housing and access for lower income residents. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

Newcomer settlement strain

Canada's immigration model relies on attracting and retaining newcomers, but growing pressures are weakening settlement outcomes (Nicol et al., 2025). Many newcomers face housing precarity, unstable rental conditions, and a widening gap between expected opportunity and actual living conditions. As a result, retention, integration, and confidence in Canada's long-standing promise of upward mobility through settlement may be affected. Housing affordability and stability are therefore becoming a key factor in how immigration, inclusion, and national growth are experienced (CCHR, 2021).

Aging population and changing household needs

A Government of Canada (2024) report on housing needs for seniors outlines that Canada's aging population is increasing demand for housing that is affordable, accessible, adaptable, and connected

to care. Many older adults face rising costs, limited suitable housing options, and pressure to remain in homes that may no longer match their physical or social needs (Puxty et al., 2024). This is expanding favour for aging-in-place, supportive housing, intergenerational living, and more integrated community-based care models. Housing is therefore becoming more central to how dignity, independence, and later-life well-being are supported (Cociña et al., 2025).

Infrastructure backlog and uneven urban capacity
Canada's ability to accommodate growth is shaped not only by housing supply, but by whether cities have the infrastructure to support it. Aging transit systems, repair backlogs, servicing gaps, and delayed capital investments are limiting where and how growth can occur (MacMillan, 2025). These constraints affect both development timelines and the quality of everyday urban life. Infrastructure capacity is therefore becoming a critical condition for housing delivery, economic resilience, and public trust (Angel & Weltman, 2025).

Hybrid work and spatial reorganization

Hybrid work continues to reshape how Canadians relate to home, neighbourhood, and city space. As commuting patterns shift and daily routines become more flexible, housing preferences, office demand, and local economic activity are changing as well (C.D. Howe Institute, 2024). This is altering the relationship between downtowns, suburbs, and neighbourhood-based living. Over time, hybrid work is contributing to a broader spatial reorganization of urban life and reshaping what people value in where they live (Schirle, 2024).

Social fragmentation and erosion of trust

A survey by Habitat for Humanity (2024) surfaced that the housing crisis is creating many negative knock-on effects. Housing, affordability and accessibility strain is intersecting with broader social pressures related to isolation, precarity, trust, and belonging. Economic stress, polarization, hate incidents, and weakening neighbourhood attachment are contributing to a more fragmented social landscape. These dynamics make it harder for communities to sustain cohesion and resilience, especially in high-pressure urban environments. As a result, belonging is becoming an increasingly important concern in housing, planning, and public policy (Habitat for Humanity, 2024).

Trends

Regenerative Economies

An economic, cultural and community focused system that prioritizes investment on a societal level over sheer profit. The goal is to give back more than you take away. Profit is not only monetary. The health and vitality of the entire system is what makes for prosperity. a regenerative economy treats ecological health, social belonging, cultural continuity, and financial return as inseparable (Dark Matter Labs, 2025).

Signals/Precedents:

- **Fogo Island Inn:** A luxury hotel and restaurant in Newfoundland founded by business innovation leader Zita Cobb. The Inn pays fifty percent of guest revenue back to the people doing the work (vs. the thirty percent industry standard), filters wastewater before returning it to the ocean, preserves endangered craft traditions through furnishing the inn with local artisanal works, and deliberately caps its size at 29 rooms to stay within the community's relational capacity. It adds approximately \$50 million annually to the local economy and employs roughly a third of households on Fogo Island (Dark Matter Labs, 2025).
- **Axten Farms:** A multigenerational 6,000-acre grain farm in Saskatchewan that transformed its entire practice around regenerative agriculture by eliminating chemical inputs, rebuilding soil health, and creating enough economic stability to employ more local workers and enable employees to buy homes in the town of Minton (Ahmed et al., 2025).
- **Ecotrust Canada:** A portfolio of regenerative community programs including community fisheries and regenerative ocean farming (seaweed and scallop cultivation) on Indigenous homelands in Northern British Columbia. Designed to make financial profit while benefiting indigenous communities instead of exploiting them (Ecotrust Canada, 2026).



Fogo Island Inn, an innovative relational community approach to business in the east coast of Canada. (Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons).



Ecotrust's regenerative fishing operations in British Columbia. (Photo credit: Shannon Lough).

Innovation in Ownership Systems

As homeownership becomes less attainable through conventional pathways, interest in shared-access models is growing. Co-ownership, shared equity, and related alternatives are emerging as ways to lower entry barriers and distribute risk across households. These models signal a shift away from the assumption that ownership must always be individual, nuclear-family based, and financed through standard mortgage structures. Over time, they may reshape how ownership, security, and wealth-building are understood in high-cost housing markets.

Signals/Precedents:

Consumer-facing co-ownership platforms

- **Ourboro:** Connects potential home buyers with private investment that co-invests five to fifteen percent of a home's value as down payment support (up to \$250K), taking an equity share in return. No monthly payments, the future appreciation (or loss) is divided based on contributions when sold. Geared toward 10-year ownership cycles (Berkow, 2025).

- **Husmates:** A matchmaking and fractional property listing platform that matches co-buyers for shared homeownership, handling legal agreements for equity splits and exit strategies. Focuses on long-term co-owners (friends/family/strangers) rather than an investor context (Bhatt, 2022).
- **MLI Select:** A Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) mortgage loan insurance product for multi-unit residential properties (over five units like apartments and co-ops). This is insurance against lender default risk. It is important because most lenders will not finance high-ratio mortgages (low or no down payment) without insurance. MLI Select lets developers and borrowers qualify for up to a ninety five percent loan-to-value (only five percent downpayment) on a 50-year amortization, which lowers monthly payments at reduced insurance premiums. In order to qualify, projects must score high enough on a points matrix that considers affordable rent, energy efficiency, and accessibility features (CMHC, 2026).
- **Keyown.com:** A property tech platform for co-ownership where users make a 2.5% downpayment to occupy homes owned by investors with no full mortgage needed. The platform handles equity management, payments, and exits agreements all digitally. It is currently piloted in Toronto condos with 60 units and is expanding to single-family homes (Vincent, 2021).

Non-market and collective housing

Non-market housing is gaining legitimacy as a serious strategic response to long-term affordability failure. Rather than being treated as marginal or supplementary, community-led and non-profit models are increasingly seen as necessary parts of a resilient housing system (Cohen, 2024). This trend reflects a growing recognition that private market delivery alone cannot meet the range of housing needs across cities and communities. It also suggests a shift toward more diverse tenure models and stronger public interest in collective ownership structures.



An example of a multi-unit housing development owned and managed by the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

Signals/Precedents:

- **CMHC First-Time Home Buyer Incentive:** Government shared-equity program (CMHC-backed) where buyers get five to ten percent of purchase price as non-repayable loan, repaid via equity share on the sale (CMHC, 2026).
- **Community Land Trusts (CLT):** CLTs acquire land collectively for use as affordable housing. It leases homes while retaining community control and maintaining access. There are over 20 CLTs in the Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts. Notable CLTs in Toronto include:
 - **Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT):** Holds and facilitates 241 affordable housing units in Toronto with an additional 226 units in development. PNLT houses over 500 tenants and has 1085 members in the organization (PNLT, 2026).
 - **Kensington Market Community Land Trust (KMCLT):** Protects diversity in Kensington Market and acquires land for cultural/community spaces amid gentrification. KMCLT currently owns and operates a mixed-use, 12 unit building (KMCLT, 2025).
 - **Co-operative Housing Land Trust (CHLT):** A network of 4 trusts (Bathurst Quay, Naismith, Colandco, and tenants non-profit redevelopment cooperative) preserving 32 co-ops with 10,000 members (CHFT, 2026).



The new Regent Park community with large housing towers filled with mixed tenure residents and amenities such as the athletics grounds seen in the foreground. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

- **Housing Co-ops:** non-profit, resident-owned communities where members buy affordable shares (not individual units) to access housing at cost covering mortgages, taxes, and maintenance without investor profits. Democratic boards (elected residents) manage operations.
 - Toronto hosts around 180 co-ops via Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto (CHFT), housing approximately 50,000 people in diverse sizes from row houses to high-rises.
 - **Spruce Court Co-operative:** A historic housing community in Toronto's Cabbagetown neighbourhood. Established in 1913, was the first experiment in social housing in Toronto and remains a vibrant resident-owned co-operative today. The 78 units in the co-op were designed around the "Garden City" movement where housing communities were built off of courtyards and gardens instead of in a tenement style (D. Smith, 2015).
- **Regent Park Revitalization Project:** This social housing revitalization transformed Toronto's oldest public housing project by delivering 3400 new homes in a mixed-income and "mixed-tenure" which is a mixture of housing access types including, subsidized rental, market rental, and condo ownership. This mixed-tenure approach ensures no displacement and sustainable density. The development incorporates cultural, recreational, and community facilities to enrich the amenities and offering of the area. The revitalization is more of a neighbourhood than a housing project. It has arts and performance hubs, retail stores, restaurants, an aquatic centre, public library, and a athletics centre sponsored by Maple Leaf Sports Entertainment (Cohen, 2024).



Dunn House. University Health Network in Toronto took a parking structure they owned and transformed it into 51 monitored housing units for unhoused Torontonians. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

Workforce housing

Housing is increasingly being framed as a factor that affects economic productivity, service delivery, and regional competitiveness. When workers cannot afford to live near jobs, cities face labour shortages, weakened retention, and greater strain on essential sectors. This reframes affordability from a household issue to a structural economic one. It also opens space for new partnerships between employers, governments, and civic actors focused on housing access.

Signals/Precedents:

- **Company subsidized downpayments:** C.F. Crozier and Associates is a Toronto based engineering firm that is offering \$20,000 down payment grants for employees that are first-time buyers, creating retention and incentive to work at the company (A. Smith, 2021).
- **Toronto Hospitality Union:** Has reserved affordable homes for members of the union through the Regent Park housing Co-op (CHFC, 2026).
- **Employee Benefits:** Many companies are offering rent subsidies, employee housing and cost of living salary increases for workers required to live in more expensive geographic regions (AMO, 2025).

Housing being reframed as healthcare infrastructure

Housing and property ownership are powerful tools for change. As we have seen, housing has been treated as a commodity for investment and wealth generation, but it is now being used to increase potential in other areas. Affordable and accessible housing is now being seen as a direct fortification of the healthcare system. By creating more housing for the unhoused and at-risk priority groups, we can alleviate the strain being placed on the urgent care system.

Signals/Precedents:

- **Dunn House:** University Health Network in Toronto took a parking structure they owned and transformed it into 51 monitored housing units for unhoused Torontonians that were frequent Emergency Room patients. The findings showed that ER visits dropped fifty-two percent from 1,837 a year, hospital stays fell seventy-nine percent, saving \$413,000 CAD in ER costs and over \$2 million CAD in inpatient costs annually (Casey, 2025).
- **At Home/Chez Soi:** A housing study across Vancouver, Toronto, and Ottawa. The study facilitated by UHN and ICES, found that residential stability cuts ER visits by twenty-six percent and unmet health needs by eighteen percent over four years. Unhoused people are 14-18 times more likely to visit emergency departments than those with housing in place (Jaworsky et al., 2016).

Guyana: Drivers and Trends

Guyana is undergoing rapid economic transformation driven by the expansion of offshore oil production. This growth is generating significant national revenue and accelerating investments in infrastructure, housing, and public services. At the same time, the pace of change is creating new pressures related to labour shortages, governance capacity, and cost of living. Long-standing dynamics such as migration, diaspora engagement, and social inequality continue to shape how this transformation is experienced across the country.

Drivers

Cost-of-living strain

Despite rapid national growth, many households continue to face everyday affordability pressures. Rising prices and uneven access to the gains of development create a contradiction between macroeconomic success and lived experience. This tension can shape how people evaluate whether change is truly improving quality of life. Cost-of-living strain is therefore becoming a key test of whether prosperity feels meaningful and shared.

Rise of Dutch Disease and uneven distribution

The scale and speed of oil-led growth creates the risk that other sectors may be weakened or overshadowed (Ebrahimzadeh, 2003). As investment and attention concentrate around the oil economy, inequality and imbalances can deepen between industries, regions, and social groups (Mein & Goujon, 2022). This makes economic diversification more difficult and raises concerns about whether growth will be resilient over time. The challenge is not only to grow quickly, but to ensure that development remains broad-based and sustainable (Ebrahimzadeh, 2003).

Labour shortages and skill gaps

Guyana's rapid economic shift is creating strong demand for labour, training, and institutional capacity (T. Blackman, 2025b). The pace of change means that local skills pipelines may struggle to keep up, especially in technical fields and essential services. This can increase dependence on imported labour or external expertise, even as public expectations grow for local participation in new opportunities (Karki, 2026). Workforce transition is therefore emerging as a major

issue in how Guyana converts growth into long-term capacity.

Rapid development

Guyana is moving through a period of ambitious infrastructure expansion. Roads, bridges, utilities, airports, hospitals, and other public projects are becoming central markers of national modernization (DPI, 2025a). These investments are intended to improve connectivity, attract investment, and materialize the benefits of economic growth in everyday life. Their visibility means that infrastructure delivery is becoming a key measure of state performance and public confidence.

Diaspora engagement and transnational influence

Diaspora communities are becoming more visible as economic and social actors in Guyana's transition. Return migration, investment, financial contributions, and transnational networks are shaping development in ways that go beyond remittances alone (T. R. Blackman, 2025). This reflects a shift from seeing the diaspora only as a population abroad to seeing it as part of a distributed national future. As this grows, questions of belonging, participation, and who gets to shape development are becoming more significant.

Governance accountability and distribution of wealth

The success of Guyana's growth depends heavily on how oil revenues are governed and distributed. As public resources increase, so do expectations for transparency, fairness, and visible national benefit. Questions of accountability, fund management, and institutional integrity are becoming central to political legitimacy (Stabroek News, 2024). In this sense, governance is a defining condition of whether resource wealth strengthens or destabilizes the country's future.

Social inequality, ethnic division, and national cohesion pressures

Guyana's rapid transformation is unfolding within an already complex social and political landscape. Historical divisions, uneven development, and concerns about inclusion continue to shape how change is experienced across different communities (The Village Voice News (Guyana), 2025). If growth is uneven, tensions may intensify. National cohesion depends on whether development is seen as fair, shared, and meaningful.

Trends

Full scale development

Signals/Precedents:

- **Demerara Harbour Bridge:** Over \$300 million USD four-lane cable-stayed bridge spanning 1.8km which replaced inefficient floating ferry. The new Bridge cuts travel time by eighty percent (DPI, 2025a).
- **Guyana Gas-to-Energy project:** A new construction of a \$1 billion USD natural gas plant will double Guyana's power capacity and reduce electricity costs by fifty percent (Cavcic, 2025).
- **Affordable housing schemes:** Guyana's Ministry of Housing is delivering over 50,000 affordable residential lots across 67 new schemes. These developments deliver thousands of turnkey homes. While many are still under construction, the initiative will positively empower the realization of homeownership. Funded by oil revenues to offset land and housing costs, the Government is providing subsidies to enable low-income families to build equity (News Room Guyana, 2025).



Driving across the Demerara Harbour Bridge in Georgetown Guyana. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

Access to loans and subsidies to advance home ownership

Signals/Precedents:

- **Government Land Allotments:** Citizens of Guyana can apply for a significantly reduced parcel of land upon which they can build a new home (News Room Guyana, 2025).
- **Steel and Cement Subsidy Programme:** Provides government backed vouchers for steel and cement for building new homes. This subsidy was introduced to help with building costs for construction of homes on the Government land allotments (DPI, 2025b).
- **Home Construction Assistance Programme:** Low-interest mortgages via local banks and subsidies for lot recipients, enabling thousands to build equity. Republic Bank of Guyana is offering five percent interest on residential mortgages and 3.5% for lower-income tiers, with total financing options to support getting more Guyanese into the housing market (Guyana Revenue Authority, 2020).

The rise in single family and professional housing

Signals/Precedents:

- **Young Professionals Housing Scheme:** The Ministry of housing in Guyana is developing 288 housing units for young professionals in the country. Already about half of the houses have been completed and the intention is for these homes to be purchased or rented by working young professionals (Mohw, 2023b).
- **Single Family Home Market Surges:** Oil revenues fuel single family home subdivisions and gated communities. Residential transactions are now favouring single family homes and condo purchases as families and professionals opt for equity over the rental market where rents have increased by sixty-six percent (Statista, 2024).



An example of young professional/condo style living in Georgetown, Guyana. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).



Examples of large and newly constructed single family homes in Guyana. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

Diaspora engagement as development strategy

Signals/Precedents:

- **Diaspora Unit (Ministry of Foreign Affairs):** A government instated department that collects diaspora data, promotes investments and skills transfer from migrants to local Guyanese, and facilitates structured contributions to national goals like housing and infrastructure (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Guyana, 2025).
- **Diaspora Engagement Strategy/Action Plan:** A policy that is in progress in Guyana which expands diaspora focused department staffing, boosts youth exchanges, and lobbies the diaspora for more remittances or philanthropy (Orozco, 2023).
- **Diaspora Grant Program:** A grant program designed to entice the Guyanese diaspora to return or invest in the nation. An approximately \$670 CAD cash grant issued to passport or ID holders. The money is meant for business or property investments (Canadian Caribbean Institute, 2024).



Cutting edge technology is part of the modernization seen at Cheddi Jagan international airport in Guyana. (Photo credit: Delano, 2026).

Modernization

Signals/Precedents:

- **Digitization of health records:** The government is in the process of digitizing all medical records across the country. This is an initiative to keep pace with the hospital development across the country and bring Guyana's health data into the digital age (Meusa, 2025).
- **Airport of the Future:** The Cheddi Jagan International Airport has been overhauled and retrofitted with some of the most advanced airport and travel technology. The airport now has biometric monitoring, self-check-in kiosks, and flight information display systems (Guyana Chronicle, 2025).

Why These Drivers and Trends Matter

The drivers and trends identified through this horizon scan are not background context, they are the structural forces actively reshaping what it means to make a home in Canada and Guyana right now. They reveal that housing is no longer a standalone issue, but an interconnected variable of a broader system also under strain.

The experiences participants described are relational to the drivers at play in their environment. When someone describes feeling priced out of the city where they built their life or weighing a return to Guyana for the first time in decades, those are not purely personal decisions. They are responses to forces and drivers active around them. The drivers are what the system is doing to people. The trends represent how governments, institutions, and communities are attempting to respond. These trends exhibit innovation and resilience which continues positive momentum in the development of desirable a place to live.

National Tensions Shaping the Realization of Home

Across Canada and Guyana, this shift is already taking shape in different ways. While the specific conditions vary, a shared pattern is emerging: realization of home is being reshaped by the capacity of systems to respond to growing and interconnected pressures. In both Canada and Guyana, housing has become a key site where broader tensions around access, opportunity, and stability are made visible, revealing how national promises are being tested in practice.

Canada: Stability vs. Accessibility

In Canada, the dominant tension is between the promise of stability and the reality of constrained access. The country continues to project a value proposition rooted in security, opportunity and upward mobility, yet rising costs, limited housing supply, and uneven access are making these conditions increasingly difficult to attain. Stability remains a defining feature of Canada's system, but it is no longer broadly accessible, becoming increasingly tied to wealth and position.

Implication: This signals a shift from a system that once expanded opportunity to one that is now managing

scarcity. If this trajectory continues, stability risks becoming increasingly exclusive, weakening trust in institutions and reshaping Canada's role as a destination for opportunity.

Guyana: Opportunity vs. Equity

In Guyana, the central tensions lie between rapid opportunity and uneven distribution. Oil-driven growth is expanding what the country can offer, reshaping national identity and increasing access to development and homeownership. However, this expansion is occurring faster than the systems required to support it, creating gaps between national progress and lived experience.

Implication: Guyana is at a critical inflection point, where growth can either translate into long-term stability or reinforce new forms of inequality. Its future will depend on how effectively this opportunity is distributed, and whether its systems can evolve to support inclusive access to stability, belonging, and care.

Implications for the Future of Home

Based on the insights in this section, home emerges as a complex relational system shaped by how individuals interpret place-based value propositions, the extent to which those places can uphold them, and the choices made to sustain or adapt the conditions of home over time. Addressing current challenges will therefore depend on rethinking how systems are structured to support stability, belonging, and long-term resilience. It will intentional coordination across housing, policy, finance, and community infrastructure (Angel & Weltman, 2025).

While these patterns reveal how things are changing, they do not fully explain how these changes are experienced, interpreted, or navigated by individuals and communities. Questions remain around how people define home under conditions of uncertainty, how decisions about staying, leaving, or returning are made, and how belonging is negotiated across places. To explore these questions, the research turns to lived experience. The following section draws on interviews across Canada and Guyana to examine how evolving conditions are shaping and being shaped in everyday life.



The old Regent Park development is now abandoned and can be seen behind the aquatic centre that is situated inside the revitalized Regent Park of today. A testament to progress but also a spectre of unsuccessful housing strategy in the city. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026)



A community health centre situated within Regent Park. An example of empathetic community assets and services. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).



Neighbourhoods and houses such as these in Georgetown Guyana, are becoming increasingly owned and inhabited by single families. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

LIVED EXPERIENCE AND SYNTHESIS

The Experience of Home

This section presents the findings from the fieldwork. It focuses not only on where participants locate home, but on how they interpret its possibilities, navigate its limitations, and make decisions within and across different systems and geographies. Across interviews, participants described home not only as a place, but as something negotiated across contexts, relationships, and moments of transition. Decisions about where and how to live were rarely based on a single factor. Instead, they reflected a complex balancing of stability, opportunity, belonging, and personal or collective aspirations, often under conditions of uncertainty.

We also identified patterns and surfaced cross-comparisons to better understand participants' lived experiences and perspectives. As the analysis developed, it became clear that an additional layer of meaning was emerging beyond individual narratives. This necessitated a more systematic analytical approach, leading us to the creation of our own framework. This framework aims to enhance interpretation, reveal underlying dynamics, and bolster the overall insights derived from the research. We call this conceptual framework the "Home Realization Framework".

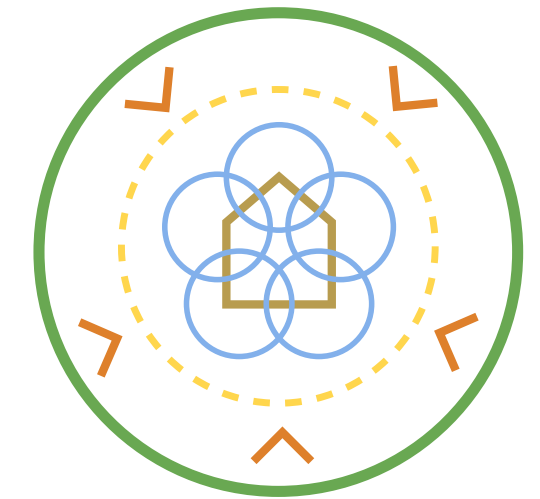
The Home Realization Framework

The *Home Realization Framework* is a conceptual model designed to understand and contextualize the variables involved in the realization of home as a holistic construct. The framework brings together three interacting variables that are evaluated in relation to one another:

- The forces that attenuate the realization of home
- The place-based value propositions that inform the potential of home
- The collective components that make up an ideal home

The realization of home emerges through the continuous negotiation between these variables. Rather than being fixed, home is shaped by how individuals assess what they need, what is available to them, and the conditions that influence both.

Figure 10: The Home Realization Framework



Legend:

- Individual's Realization of Home
- External and Internal Forces
- Place-Based Value Propositions
- Five Components of Home
- Individual's Meaning of Home

This figure maps home as a layered system in which realization emerges from the interaction of multiple variables. The green boundary represents one's realization of home, defining the overall conditions and result of the negotiation of these variables. External and internal forces (reddish-brown arrows) shape what is possible and attainable, thereby influencing the place-based value propositions being offered (yellow dashed line) and access to the five interconnected components of home (blue circles): security and stability, belonging and identity, access and opportunity, dignity and care, and family cultural continuity, and memory.

At the centre, the individual's meaning of home (tan outline of a house) reflects how these components are interpreted and prioritized based on lived experience. Together, this demonstrates that the realization of home is not guaranteed but shaped by the dynamic relationship between place-based conditions, structural forces and individual interpretation.

As outlined earlier in this study, a nation's value proposition plays a central role in shaping decision-making, offering an implicit promise about what can be achieved within a given place. However, this promise is not experienced uniformly. It is shaped, enabled, or constrained by a range of forces that influence a place's ability to honour it in practice.

Through this research, five core components have been identified as essential to the composition of a flourishing home. These components represent the needs individuals seek to fulfill, but their realization is not guaranteed. Both internal and external forces shape how these components are accessed, prioritized, and sustained over time.

Ultimately, the realization of home is determined through ongoing process of evaluation: individuals assess where the components of home can be viably accessed, and to what extent destabilizing forces may enable, constrain, or disrupt that access. It is within this balancing of possibility and constraint that home is not only imagined, but lived.

Forces that Attenuate the Realization of Home

There are external and internal forces at play that shape how the components of home are interpreted, prioritized, and realized over time. These forces are important because they explain why the value of home shifts across contexts, generations, and moments. They reveal that home is not evaluated in isolation, but through the interaction between structural conditions and lived experience, where external realities shape what is possible and internal perspectives shape how those possibilities are understood. In this way, the forces provide the underlying drivers that influence how the components are weighted, negotiated, and ultimately acted upon.

External Environmental Forces

External environmental forces refer to the broader structural and contextual conditions within which home is pursued and experienced. These include natural, socio-political, and economic environments that shape the degree to which individuals are able to achieve stability, belonging, opportunity and care. The degree of stability or volatility of these conditions

directly influence one's capacity to remain resilient and to balance the components of home over time.

Natural Environment

Extreme weather, resources, land, space, food, crops, and other natural elements that impact one's surroundings.

Socio-Political Environment

Social Environment: Community, equity, dignity, crime, safety

Political Environment: Policy, leadership, corruption, war, corporate and foreign interference

Internal Forces

Internal forces refer to the subjective and relational dimensions through which individuals make sense of home. These include personal histories, cultural grounding, evolving aspirations, perceptions of risk and opportunity. Together, these forces shape how external conditions are interpreted, influencing decisions about where to live, what to prioritize, and what trade-offs are acceptable.

Foundation

Foundation refers to what home is built upon. This includes early life experiences, family structures, cultural grounding, ideologies, and the initial conditions that shape one's understanding of stability and belonging.

Interpretation

Interpretation reflects how individuals interpret these conditions. It includes how people understand risk, opportunity, stability, and belonging across different places and moments in time.

Aspiration

Aspiration refers to what individuals and families seek from home. This includes goals related to security, mobility, identity, care, and the kind of life one hopes to build or sustain.

Place as the Offering

Place-Based Value Propositions

function as the offering layer within the framework, representing what a place makes possible in terms of opportunity, stability, belonging, and care. They define the range of conditions available to individuals, shaping what can be pursued, evaluated, and ultimately realized as home. These offerings are not experienced equally, but are mediated by internal and external forces and interpreted through lived experience.

The Five Components of Home

Across all generations, geographies, aspirations, and migration stories, we discovered five consistent thematic threads that emerged as central components of the concept of home. Throughout our conversations, participants consistently sought to achieve certain absolutes in their pursuit of home. These components represent the fundamental dimensions through which home is experienced and evaluated. Together, they define what individuals desire from home and provide a structure for understanding how home is constructed in various contexts.

Components

1. **Security & Stability:** We are safe and will remain so.
2. **Belonging & Identity:** We can be ourselves without ostracization or persecution.
3. **Access & Opportunity:** There are means available to us for growth and development.
4. **Dignity & Care:** We can live with respect and support in our health and well-being.
5. **Family, Cultural Continuity, & Memory:** We can honour our heritage, family and beliefs within the greater context of society.

These components are significant because they represent a fundamental baseline in the evaluation of home which requires balance. Achieving homeostasis requires continuous recalibration due to shifting forces that attenuate the realization of home, but these components are a constant. They make visible the criteria through which individuals assess whether home is sufficient, sustainable, or worth pursuing, showing how decisions emerge through the balancing of competing priorities. Rather than operating independently, the components are continuously weighed against one another, requiring trade-offs that shape migration, settlement, and long-term life trajectories. While these components represent the essential dimensions of a flourishing home, they are not equally available across all contexts. The extent to which they can be realized depends in part on what different places are able to offer.

Realization: Where the Forces, Propositions, and Components Intersect

Realization

Realization refers to the lived outcomes that emerge from the interaction between the components of home, the placed based value propositions, and the forces that shape them. It captures what is ultimately achievable in practice, given existing constraints, resources, and trade-offs. It reflects how aspirations are fulfilled, adapted, or deferred over time.

Realization ultimately grounds the framework in lived experience, showing how abstract values and intentions translate into actual conditions of home. It reveals gaps, alignment, or tensions between what individuals seek and what is possible, making visible how decisions are acted upon and how home is ultimately experienced. In this way, realization connects evaluation to outcome, demonstrating how the components and forces materialize in everyday life.

Through the development of this framework led us to reevaluate our primary research question.

Primary Research Question:

How are migration, disruption, resilience, and shifting values transforming the meaning of 'home' for Guyanese diasporic communities connected to both the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and Guyana, and how do these dynamics shape decisions about opportunity, belonging, and community across borders?

What we have discovered is that the meaning of home does not change. It is the realization of home that is actively maneuvered. Our initial assumption was that forces of polycrisis were transforming the meaning of home across generations and geographies, but our field work has surfaced that there are distinct components that make up home which do not waiver across time and space. Destabilizing forces throw the homeostasis of these components of home into flux which forces resilience and adaptability within our decision making.

Navigating the Lived Experience

The findings were analyzed through the combined lens of components, forces and realizations to understand home as a dynamic and evolving process rather than a fixed state. Together, these elements make it possible to examine not only what individuals value in home (components), but also how those values are shaped (forces) and what is ultimately experienced in practice (realization). This approach allows the research to move beyond where people locate home, to understand how they evaluate its possibilities, navigate its limitations, and renegotiate its meaning over time. By structuring the analysis in this way, the framework captures the full arc from intention to outcome, revealing how home is continuously constructed across changing conditions, contexts, and life stages.

When we refer to generations in the findings, we mean:

- **First-generation:** The first generation to immigrate to Canada from Guyana.
- **The 1.5-generation:** People who immigrated to Canada from Guyana as children alongside their parents.
- **Second-generation:** Children of the first generation who are the first of the diaspora to be born on Canadian soil.
- **Third-generation:** Children of the second generation. Two generations past the original migration from Guyana.

Across generations, these components and forces impacting the realization of home, remain central for those we spoke to. The way in which each participant arrived at or pursued these elements was distinct for each, but common throughlines and outlooks touched every journey.

We have organized our findings and observations within the components and forces of realizing home because they act as containers for insights from our discussions and research. They establish what the participants' stories reveal about the lived architecture of home.

Personal Reflection



(Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

“For those who leave one place for another, impelled by choice or trauma, remaining connected to homeland is at once beautiful, fraught, and evolving.”
- Grace Aneiza Ali, *Luminal Spaces*

Capturing Collection Memory

Our research took us to the heart of Guyana, in its nation's capital of Georgetown, as well as here in Toronto, allowing us to move between contexts that are both personally familiar and deeply connected. At times, this experience felt less like research and more like moving within a community we already belong to. There was a palpable feeling of shared understanding and cultural awareness. The stories of family, migration, sacrifice, resilience, and connection felt communal due to cultural and personal values instilled upon us. When hearing stories about grannies cooking meals or family gatherings, we could easily envision our own family within many narratives. It was refreshing and surprising to find so much commonality with people who were strangers up until their participation in this study. This bond speaks to the power of cultural continuity and affirms that home is comprised of common needs that are realized in different ways but tether us together.

Framing the Components that Encompass Home

How our conversations with participants developed and validated the components of home (*Security & Stability, Belonging & Identity, Access & Opportunity, Dignity, & Care, Family, Cultural Continuity, & Care*).

Security & Stability

All immigration stories shared in this study involved feelings of insecurity, which acted as the major catalyst for change and migration for those participants. For those who fled during or after Guyana's independence from Britain in the late 1960s, it was a journey spurred on by violence, segregation and ideological dissidence. Whoever had the financial means and connections left Guyana as a response to immediate threats. Many left behind good jobs, assets, and loved ones, putting their hopes and aspirations on hold. These participants knew that by leaving their lives would change rapidly and that better opportunity and stability awaited them outside of their homeland.

With Guyana's distinction as a member of the Commonwealth revoked due to its independence, Canada and the United States became primary relocation destinations. Canada's progressive immigration laws and fertile employment market made the country an ideal second home. However, these participants were also forced to deal with a permanent loss of the home they knew. This form of erasure created a type of haunted space, where those who fled live both inside and outside of themselves as they mourn the destruction of what they knew as home and navigate the development of their new reality. This type of severing from a homeland was coined as the “door of no return” by Dionne Brand in their examination of migration and displacement within the slave trade (Brand, 2001). For participants who immigrated, security and stability functioned as a foundational milestone that needed to be realized before they could meaningfully engage in developing other components of home. Only once these conditions were established could other elements of home-building be pursued and practiced.

“I saw the wisps of smoke coming up in the street and said, ‘That’s my home.’ There were 11 of us living in that house. My grandfather came down the stairs saying, ‘They killed my son, they killed my son.’ This was in the middle of all the political stuff that was going on in Guyana... my father was a senior civil servant.”

- Interview participant

“I just know an intense, intense sense of loneliness in those early days... I didn’t think about it. You know, we were still recovering from the whole tragedy. I never really thought about Canada. We were kind of just Guyanese people that came to Canada.”

- Interview participant

All participants who immigrated immediately sought connection with family and members of the Guyanese diaspora upon landing in Toronto. This layer of familiarity and shared cultural upbringing softened the impact of arriving in a new place. Having connections to people with a shared origin acted as a buffer and a preferred means of knowledge exchange for learning the folkways, mores, and taboos of Canadian culture. In instances where Guyanese diasporic support was not available, participants relied on support from immigrants from other countries also living in Canada. A shared understanding and tacit support system developed between newcomers and those who had established themselves, functioning as an informal infrastructure through which knowledge, resources, and guidance were exchanged.

Participants fondly recalled the support they received from other immigrants throughout their journey. For example, a South Asian family offered a participant and his brother, a basement apartment for rent, despite their young age and lack of proper qualifications. The landlord would watch over them and often leave them food in their apartment to ensure they were eating properly after their shifts at work. Additionally, an African friend provided guidance on applying to become a taxi driver, which helped to earn more money than other employment options available. Many participants expressed their gratitude for the international clubs at their schools, which played a crucial role in helping them make friends and gain insights into Toronto.

This cultivation of community displayed in Toronto also reflects the support structure and social dynamics developed in Guyana. Intergenerational living and reliance on neighbours for support is common practice in Guyana. A “village mentality” was a way of life for most of our participants who grew up in Guyana. Their stability and sense of security derived from the relationships they forged and the trust their community held with each other.

For participants who remained in Guyana, one of the fundamental mechanisms for maintaining resilience during periods of national instability was reliance on family and community networks. With a collapsed economy, and underdeveloped infrastructure, they collaborated with their neighbours and family members to pool resources, raise children and protect their community. A similar village mentality brought security and stability to those who emigrated from Guyana. By seeking out others within the Guyanese diaspora and bonding over shared experiences, these participants laid a strong foundation in a new country.

“The neighbours would look after us and oversee us, cook for us. That’s the kind of relationship we had. So, they [parents] didn’t worry.” - Interview participant

For second-generation Canadians, security and stability were largely taken care of by their parents who were primarily focused on establishing a baseline that would be a jumping off point for their children and families. While food, shelter, and education were essential for the first-generation, their children were able to build beyond this baseline, expanding the definition of security and stability to include health, well-being, and quality of life. A stable and secure home for their families became increasingly defined not only by material provision, but also by the prioritization of mental and physical well-being for both parents and children.

“I think it’s going to be a huge shift from their grandparents, what they give to me versus what I’m here to give to my kids.” - Interview participant

For many first-generation Canadian participants, the country provided a platform for advancement. Through hard work, ingenuity, and careful planning, this generation achieved stability and security for their families by advancing economically and through homeownership. This growth-oriented focus on establishing home in a new country obscured the intangible factors that shaped its construction, including belonging, identity, and emotional connection.

“I prioritized healing and avoiding the mental sickness my father experienced over saving for a house.” - Interview participant

In our interviews some first-generation Canadians described falling short of achieving stability and security in Toronto, as barriers proved too significant. In many cases, the responsibility of realizing these conditions was deferred to the next generation. One participant, reflecting on her experience as part of the 1.5 generation, recalled growing up with limited resources and spending years on waitlist for subsidized housing. Her father, an experienced electrician in Guyana, faced credential barriersthat delayed his ability to work, while her mother relied on informal cash jobs such as cleaning and babysitting, compounding the family’s financial strain.

In this story, insecurity was systemic, rather than violence-based. It manifests as housing precarity, credential traps, and the absence of navigational support. Responsibility and perseverance ultimately transferred to the next generation. It was the participant who learned how to navigate the system and acquire support for the family. She would go on to earn graduate education and achieved the milestone of homeownership. In the end, it was the participant who ended up providing stability and security for her family. So, for some, establishing the foundation of security and stability can span generations in a journey filled with sacrifice, education, and perseverance.

“My parents never had the tools to advocate for us. I’ve broken a lot of cycles... my parents couldn’t make it as homeowners, but that’s something I’ve always wanted. It feels accomplished.” - Interview participant



(Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

Belonging & Identity

Belonging and identity are central to how the feeling of home is understood and experienced. It is also a component that encounters the most nuance and turbulence. It is possible to hold a sense of belonging in a hostile environment just as it possible to feel alienated in a setting of acceptance. Many participants describe a tension in which they were simultaneously aware of being ‘othered’ while developing a sense of identity tied to belonging.

Guyana has historically been divided across racial lines with deep institutional inequities perpetrated by the ruling parties. For participants who immigrated to Canada, racial prejudice met them here as well. Acceptance and belonging in Canada existed on a sliding scale, often shaped by the colour on one’s skin, particularly for those who arrived between the late 1960s and 1980s.

Indo-, Chinese-, and Afro-Guyanese participants recalled incidents of racism and prejudice along their immigration journey in Canada. In contrast, lighter-skinned, mixed, and Portuguese-Guyanese participants did not share these experiences. Many of them did experience a feeling of exoticization or “positive othering” from early encounters with other Canadians. The attention was curious and inviting, unlike the scrutiny placed upon individuals of darker complexions.

For most these encounters were not significant barriers to building community and finding a sense of belonging. For others, Canada felt impenetrable and oppressive.

“I did feel very othered in school, but I just didn’t know it at the time. I didn’t understand that’s what it was.” - Interview participant

“We grew up feeling othered, we grew up feeling not part of it, unless we joined kind of the status that comes with like a Canadian status, by getting houses and doing these things.” - Interview participant

According to some participants, Afro-Guyanese men appeared to struggle the most with feeling accepted in Canadian culture. This could be related to the shift in identity these men would have experienced in their migration journey. In the Burnham era (1964-1985), the Afro-Guyanese population held most state jobs and controlled the state apparatus. They were perceived within the ethnic and economic class system to be “higher-class” (Chukwudinma, 2022). Today, there is a reversal in Guyana with the top ten percent of the income bracket being represented by Indo-Guyanese and the majority share of government positions and contracts being awarded to Indo-Guyanese people and businesses (Constantine, 2022). This reversal also existed in Toronto with racialized populations

experiencing inequity and systemic racism (Banerjee et al., 2024). For some Guyanese men who left their country in pursuit of a better life, Canada felt like a closed door, where their credentials were not recognized and the level of work and social acceptance they once held had been stripped from them.

“[My father] resented being in Canada, feeling that he was treated poorly and lacked economic opportunities, which contrasted with my mother’s family’s view of finding opportunities in Canada.” - Interview participant

“[In Guyana] He had a job, he felt valuable and important... and this [in Canada] was probably a job that he felt was demeaning.” - Interview participant

For women and those who were in a marginalized ethnic group within Guyana during the 1960s-1990s, Toronto felt far more accepting and was largely seen as a landscape of opportunity and growth. There was an acknowledgment from most participants that, while there has been the presence of racial bias, Toronto’s diverse makeup afforded the space to hold a personal identity in a community of belonging among people of varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

“I came alive when we arrived in Canada... the move provided mental and spiritual freedom and independence.” - Interview participant

Belonging was realized by participants through creation of hubs or the development of their own community inside of an existing infrastructure. Much like it was for developing a sense of security and stability, participants would bond with family and others from their diasporic network to recreate the “village” mentality and closeness within Toronto. This fostered a sense of belonging within the hub, creating a supportive network that contributed to the development of their Canadian identity and sense of belonging within the broader Canadian society. Many lived intergenerationally out of necessity due to affordability constraints, but this arrangement was already familiar through traditional Guyanese ways of living. This communal living embedded support and care into the structure of home, increasing their potential for growth.



(Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

“We here with my in-laws for all the years... until they passed away. And now, my daughter and son-in-law live upstairs. This has been a kind of multi-generational house the whole time.” - Interview participant (who remained in Guyana)

Many participants shared memories of three generations living under one roof. This type of living promoted reciprocal care structures in which each generation contributed to the support and care of the other. These types of living situations were common for most, but also seminal for the growth and development of a family unit in a new country. Often, these families would live near relatives and friends. In a few cases, houses, apartment units in the same building and single apartment units would be shared by a combination of siblings, cousins, uncles, aunts, grandparents, and friends together. This level of cohabitation and intergenerational living pushed the notion of recreating the village into a single property. These hubs allowed for their collective development in the early days as newcomers. They also provided valuable knowledge transfer and a way to share Guyanese values with the younger generation. As all generations settled into their new identities in Canada, the older generation was the steward of memory, tradition and culture, while the younger generation was the conduit to the new world.

Examples of what we call, “the matriarchal anchor” appeared in many participant stories. This is when an extended family immigrates and chooses to live together or in proximity of each other. Within this hub, the mother or grandmother (the matriarch) of the family becomes the governing force in how they live, what values are promoted, and has a governing stake in the family. This matriarch figure becomes the anchor to Guyana, guiding how cultural practices, teachings, and ways of life are integrated into the Canadian experience.

“My entire sense of belonging came from belonging to my grandmother. She superseded our parents. They were still being parented by her. She was the godmother. She was the hub.” - Interview participant

“No one should ever be made to feel like they don’t belong in her [Granny’s] house, even an uninvited neighbourhood child.” - Interview participant

These matriarchal hubs were unanimously inclusive and welcoming to those within the community. This was not a protectionist outlook concerned with preserving quality of life for Guyanese in Toronto; it was about cultivating a community in which those within its orbit felt welcome and a sense of belonging.

Despite experiences of racial injustice and broader social divisions, Guyana remains a highly diverse society where everyday practices of co-existence and mutual respect were common among participants. Care was expressed collectively, with strong social norms ensuring that children were supported and that basic needs were met within the community. Congregation, celebration, and the sharing of food are central elements of a thriving Guyanese community. In the context of scarcity, poverty, and resource inequality, these practices became cultural expressions of care and inclusion. Food and togetherness acted as mechanisms of support and continuity.

“The Friday Night Boys have been playing cards together for over 30 years. They even have keys to my place. I get the Trinidadian, I get the white guys, I get everybody together.” - Interview participant

The process of finding belonging was initially collective. Families often helped each other get settled and find their footing in the country, as a group. This approach frequently required sacrifice and, in some cases, the deferral or reshaping of individual identity. Some participants worked jobs beneath their qualifications, others postponed aspirations for higher education to contribute financially, and others even sold assets such as property and businesses in Guyana to afford down payments on family homes in Toronto.

These decisions were made with the collective in mind, underpinned by a shared understanding that individual success was collective success. No one would be left behind. Many participants shared examples of their siblings or parents helping them to afford their first home or invest in their business. Participants even spoke of their parents and grandparents sending sponsorship forms back to nieces and nephews still in Guyana, encouraging them to come and live with them in Toronto.

A constant connection to Guyana persisted, often accompanied by a strong pull for those who remained to join family members abroad. For those who chose not to leave, or were unable to do so, this ongoing migration introduced tensions, as the departure of loved ones called into question their own sense of belonging and identity.

“In those days, you always think that overseas is better. So that was it. To me, they’re more organized and everything over there... I felt they were doing much better than us.” - Interview participant

As first-generation Canadians who immigrated in the 1960s and 1970s enter later stages of life, a generational transition is underway. For some, this signifies a passing of the torch, with matriarchs no longer ruling. Within many of these family dynamics, no clear succession plan was articulated and the bond that was held together by matriarchal figures starts to separate. More preferred conventional western values and living arrangements took hold and the hub drifted apart. This shift was not intentional. Instead, as families navigated grief and a lack of communication, they gradually moved away from established ways of living and toward more Western norms.

“The biggest loss of belonging for my generation is the inability to easily recreate home in different places, a skill my grandmother mastered. She made it possible to create a strong sense of home anywhere, without relying on Canadian status symbols, like owning houses.” - Interview participant

“When that home dissolved... when our parents decided not to live in the same house anymore. It was the same as a divorce. There had to be rituals around bringing everybody back together. But we had always just been in each other’s lives. And then we all drifted.” - Interview participant

For some participants, this was a motivating factor to move back to Guyana. The loosening of Canadian bonds, coupled with the cost-of-living crisis being faced in Toronto, sent some back to Guyana in search of the belonging they once held in Canada. After decades of emigration shaped by an idealized view of life in Canada, many Guyanese residents are now using this period of economic growth, in Guyana to adopt western models of living. The generalized image of Canadian life, characterized by a single-family house with a two-car garage and a well-paying job, is now being mimicked in Guyana, where property and economic growth are becoming feasible for more people.

“Young Guyanese are insistent on owning a home, regardless of what. They want a home. Even if they’re not married, they apply for houses.” - Interview participant

What is notable is that the traditional Guyanese ways of living and organizing home as a hub for intergenerational support has been instrumental for the resilience and prosperity of the Guyanese diaspora in Toronto. As housing access and affordability become increasingly strained, there is a growing shift toward more communal and alternative ownership and living arrangements among second- and third- generation members of the diaspora. Most of the younger participants described living in shared or family-based households. This return to the “village” reflects a strategy of resilience and conservation. Many in Toronto feel belonging requires adapting how they live in order to remain rooted there.

“If I were now transitioning now [from Guyana to Toronto] at the age of 39, how that would look... from a financial perspective, and then look at the housing market, look at the rental market... the transition would be totally different.” - Interview participant

“Finding a sense of home and belonging has been a long process... I only recently found that feeling again by living in conjunction with family in a supportive environment, connected to my cousin and uncle.” - Interview participant



(Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

For some participants in the first-generation, belonging was not something they expected to fully experience themselves, but rather something they sought to secure for their children and future generations. Many viewed their own migration as a necessary sacrifice, positioning themselves as a transitional generation tasked with establishing the conditions for integration and stability. As a result, belonging was something that they were building for their children.

This is reflected in the strong emphasis placed on education. Most of the first-generation participants stated that open access to education and healthcare were among the most significant benefits of moving to Canada. For Canadians, education and healthcare are a right and these provisions reinforce a sense of stability and contributed to feelings of belonging for many.

“My dad always said: education is the one thing nobody can take from you.” - Interview participant

Access & Opportunity

Access and opportunity are two of the largest promises Canada has outwardly offered within its value proposition. This perception was grounded in the availability of education, healthcare, employment, and pathways for civic participation. As a G7 country, Canada offered a stable economic environment with opportunities for employment, investment, and long-term growth (Ignatieff, 2019).

For those who arrived in Toronto between the 1960s and 1980s, these conditions were particularly pronounced. Surpassing Montreal as the largest city in Canada in the 1980s, Toronto was the epicentre for business and development (White, 2003). Participants who immigrated during this time largely benefitted from this growth phase. Employment was accessible, housing and cost-of-living were relatively affordable, and markets were stable and expanding. For many, asset building and wealth accumulation were achievable through steady work and saving.

“For my parents [in Canada], financial independence was getting a job, stay in the job, and climb the ladder.” - Interview participant

For some participants, the promise of opportunity and access to services in Canada did not align with their understanding of how to access and navigate them. This gap required a high degree of ingenuity and made these participants more reliant on social capital built through trusted relationships. One participant was not taken seriously in her intentions of buying a house until she met one of the few black female real-estate agents in Toronto at the time. This agent was able to advocate for her. Other participants would co-sign on loans for friends and family while some forged trusted bonds with bankers and businesspeople who could vouch for them and influence outcomes. The Guyanese experience in Toronto at this time included identifying opportunity and creating a strategy around how to attain it. For many this process was less of a straight line and more of a maneuver.

“Every night I’d leave half the cash from my shift on the table and every morning my brother would deposit it in the bank. Eventually the bank manager started talking to him. He noticed we keep depositing money and we never take any out... When it came time for a mortgage they didn’t want to approve us... but that same bank manager personally backed us up and got it done. He told them he trusted us.” - Interview participant

For this generation, homeownership was not only about securing housing, but about establishing a legacy. Achieving a better quality of life and providing more for the next generation was central in the decision to relocate and create a new home. Canada offered access to education and healthcare, while opportunities for employment and income generation created a pathway for families to establish a strong foundation for the future.



(Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

“I never sold that house because it was a family house. It took the stress off. Everyone knew if something happened, they could always go there.” - Interview participant

“My parents gave me the opportunity for a better life and education in Canada.” - Interview participant

Over the past two decades housing in Toronto has become increasingly unaffordable, with limited access to quality and stable housing options. Second- and third-generation participants living in Toronto noted they feel they have lost the ability to realistically plan for homeownership in the places they call home. While some were able to realize this dream, others have been forced to adapt and reframe their expectations of what opportunity looks like.

Greater emphasis is now placed on access to services, infrastructure, culture, and community, as material assets become increasingly out of reach. The landscape of opportunity has shifted. Younger generations are redefining opportunity, placing greater value on emotional well-being, community, and autonomy, while viewing traditional goals like homeownership as either out of reach or not worth the sacrifice. Opportunity is now defined in different terms, including time, support, and connection. This includes having time to spend with their children, time for healing, time to build intentional community. The house and job that the previous generation treated as the proof of opportunity are, for these participants, either unachievable or come with too much sacrifice.

“Access to services has improved now, with resources like service navigators and case managers available to help families, which were lacking when we immigrated.” - Interview participant

“For my children, health, employment opportunities, and education are the top priorities with health being number one, which includes mental health and overall well-being.” - Interview participant

“Key advantages include access to education, financial benefits such as the child tax benefit, and access to services that were previously unavailable. For myself, key advantages include employment opportunities and the ability to establish an Education Savings Plan (RESP) for all three of my children, an opportunity I never had.” - Interview participant



(Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

This shift in access and opportunity is a major deciding factor for those who chose to migrate back to Guyana. In the past those in Guyana looked to Canada as a place of opportunity and advancement. Now, some members of the diaspora are beginning to look back at Guyana with a similar sense of possibility.

“We had better opportunity to come back here. On a personal and professional side. We wanted to start our own business. Better chance of doing that here, because of what’s going on economically.” - Interview participant

“Some of the young people I know, nieces and nephews [in Guyana] they’re doing very well. They work their tails off, but they’re using the opportunity that’s there. They have their own home, a beautiful family, a car, and they go on vacation every year to Barbados or Miami. When they were kids, their parents didn’t do that. They couldn’t afford it.” - Interview participant

“You go to bars, go to the restaurants, and you can see it. There’s money being spent now that didn’t exist 10 years ago...Because of oil and gas, job creation, salary increases, and homeownership.” - Interview participant

Dignity & Care

For many Guyanese people, care has historically taken place within the home, creating a strong preference for family-based care over institutional care. For many in the older generation, honour and dignity were closely tied to caring for family members at home and allowing them to age in place. Participants frequently recalled caring for parents and grandparents within the home, including providing end-of-life care in a family setting.

As housing trends shift in Guyana, there is a growing preference for single-family dwellings and preference for separated single-family homes. This shift is connected to a rising middle class, increased incomes, and greater access to housing loans (Mohw, 2023b). What some participants see as progress, others see as deterioration of support, care and dignity for the elder population in Guyana.

“Many older persons were left to fend for themselves. They had to do their cooking; they had to do their cleaning and all those things for themselves. Which I believe should not have happened. There should have been some system in place from the perspective of both institutions as well as the family themselves to ensure that these persons are properly cared for.” - Interview participant

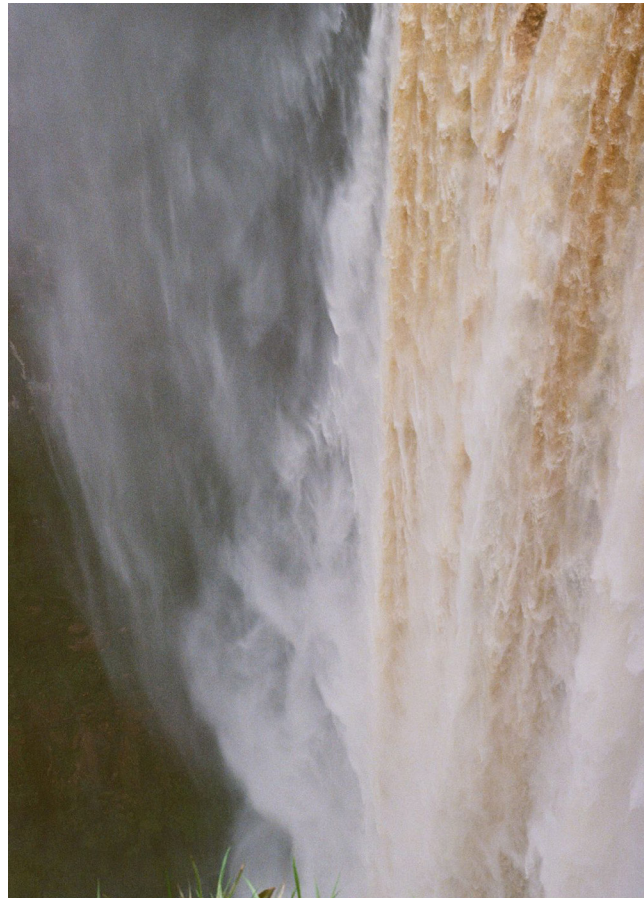
As a young professional class emerges in Guyana, shifting aspirations and living patterns are beginning to disrupt traditional systems of care. This is not to suggest that responsibility for eldercare rests solely with family networks; however, in the absence of sufficient support from government and healthcare systems, these transitions risk leaving vulnerable populations without adequate care (Guyana Times, 2025). Without careful monitoring and adaptation of existing support structures, many individuals may fall through the cracks.

A recurring insight across participant discussions was the reluctance within Guyanese households to openly discuss mental health. Second- and third-generation participants described a disconnect between the more open and evolving perspectives on mental health and well-being in Canada and the cultural norms they were raised with, which often limited what could be openly discussed.

For the older generation, dignity was closely tied to the privacy and sanctity of the home, a space where generations of family convened and coexisted. Personal struggles were not typically shared, and seeking external support was often viewed as taboo. Younger generations in the diaspora are beginning to challenge these norms, demonstrating that dignity can also be found in seeking help and engaging with public support systems. In this context, dignity is increasingly expressed through self-advocacy and the prioritization of care.

“In the Guyanese and Caribbean communities, there’s no such thing as having open talk with your parents. When you walk outside, your business stays inside the house. It’s what’s under the carpet. Not me, but my mom’s generation does not believe in getting outside help.” - Interview participant

“I want to be able to tell my children it’s okay to tap into those services. You’ve got social workers, you’ve got child and youth workers, you’ve got ECEs at the school. Let’s tap in. If I can’t help you or if you’re not comfortable talking to me about something, let me help you tap into that confidential service... I never had that.” - Interview participant



(Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

Many acknowledge that Guyana is making huge strides in modernizing and developing their healthcare system. Guyana is pouring huge amounts of resources and training into modernizing hospitals and healthcare throughout the country.

“Public hospital is not what you knew. Oh, it used to be bad... You could be dead for a whole day and they wouldn't know you were dead. But now a friend just got a heart operation at the public hospital. Public!” - Interview participant

However, some participants express concern that mental health remains a blind spot for the nation, despite these broader developments.

“You can't have development happening and the streets are full of these kinds of people [mentally ill]. It gives persons a different perspective it's like if you're catering for certain groups of people and you abandon other groups.” - Interview participant

These forces are deeply interconnected, as dignity and care are shaped through experiences of belonging and place. The lack of consultation and communication with the public in Guyana concerning its rapid development is striking some as short-sighted. This failure to prioritize the needs of the broader population over the aspirations of governing bodies highlights a disconnect between decision-making and public needs.

“People are saying, ‘Are we going to eat roads?’, meaning there's a sense that money is just being spent on infrastructure while other people's needs go unmet.” - Interview participant

Dignity and care are becoming key dimensions of opportunity for the next generation. This shift in narrative enables younger generations to experience pride in seeking wellness and accessing the support systems available to them.

“That's where I think it's going to be a huge shift from what their grandparents gave to me, versus what I'm here to give to them. We never talked about the birds and the bees. I didn't know what healthy relationships were. It impacted me. I made mistakes. So yeah, that's the big thing I want to change in my parenting model: accessing outside services.” - Interview participant

Family, Cultural Continuity, & Memory

The members of the diaspora with whom we spoke with remain strong and enduring connections to their ancestral home. They stand as interpretations of stories and teachings shared across generations. In the shock of migration, recreating familiar communities, habits, and customs serves as a support system and guide towards perseverance and resilience.

All participants who emigrated from Guyana brought cultural memories and representations of the land they departed. Upon arriving in Canada, they settled in by surrounding themselves with family and friends from Guyana. These memories and items allowed them to recreate the dynamics and community familiarity they were accustomed to. Cultural foods and music brought a sense of security and belonging to frequent gatherings which allowed them to create their own versions of traditions, bringing familiarity to

a new land. As participants acclimatized and became more accustomed with their Canadian surroundings they began to introduce local Canadian elements into their hybridized traditions. Skiing, camping and regional Canadian food began to show up in the cultural fabric of the Guyanese-Canadian traditions being formed.

“Everything was brought up. Gathering was primarily around food and the garlic pork, the black cake, the pepper pot, the chow mein, everything. And of course, those meals had to go to the camping weekends, you know, beautiful, big Tupperware filled with chow mein already made. And that kind of thing.” - Interview participant

“Growing up I was regularly eating with 10 to 12 people. The family lived in close proximity, which made daily visits and gatherings possible.” - Interview participant

Gathering and togetherness were central to maintaining connection and preserving culture. Staying close and making time to gather ensured that the younger generations would be able to learn about Guyana and retain the family stories and tales of the country they once called home.

“My parents were very adamant about me knowing that history, colonization, transatlantic slavery, indentureship. ‘You need to know this history of why we are in this place.’” - Interview participant

With guidance from the “matriarchal anchor” or other first-generation members of their community, they passed down knowledge and history across generations, co-creating new customs along the way. Through this shared new experience, cultural memory and input from elders, these diasporic networks formed distinct Canadian ways of celebrating and honouring their homeland while simultaneously creating new traditions. This strong sense of family, togetherness, sharing of traditions, and celebrating heritage became a normal experience for most participants. Many were acutely aware that their community and family exchanges were more interconnected and spirited than those of their Canadian-born friends.

“A lot of my Canadian friends were envious of our gatherings. There was a rigidity to their family gatherings. They didn't have that level of fun. They heard laughter, they heard jokes, that loud cackling.” - Interview participant

For some the increasing cost of living and housing crisis in Toronto is eroding the strong feeling of community they felt in the Toronto of the past. This is an catalyst for participants to return to Guyana or move out of Toronto. The increased feeling of separation and isolation within communities was vocalized by numerous participants who repatriated to Guyana.

“In Guyanese culture, that's a big thing. Everybody knows everybody. Growing up in my neighbourhood, I knew everybody.” - Interview participant

“I returned to the strong village support system to raise my son.” - Interview participant

Force Dynamics

How shifting dynamics of external (natural and socio-political environment) and internal forces (foundation, interpretation, and aspiration) have attenuated the realization of the components of home.

Lived Experience: External Forces that Attenuate the Realization of Home

The largest sustained migration exodus from Guyana coincided with the political and economic strife that occurred after their independence from Britain in 1966. Under Forbes Burnham's authoritarian governance, ethnic tensions, and deteriorating economic conditions drove emigration that eventually included all social classes and ethnic groups (Vezzoli, 2014). This environmental shift in the country uprooted the components of home and completely changed the lives of many Guyanese forever. Many participants of this time recall their departure from Guyana as an unavoidable conclusion. The environment had become so harsh that they were forced to move.

“My brother worked in the government and got us on the last plane out of Guyana before they shut down the airport in 1962.” - Interview participant

“People left very much not because they wanted to leave. Back in the 60s, we would have been a breadbasket, the most developed country in the entire Caribbean. Everything worked. But communism wasn’t supposed to come over and destroy everyone.”
- Interview participant

These participants spoke of this shift as a force that swept in and completely destabilized the way society was structured, forcing migration. The subsequent political environment made it even more untenable to remain in the country.

“The banning of foods like chickpeas and roti. If you were East Indian, living there, you couldn’t get voting [rights]. We all had banning of food. If you were Indian, you were screwed.” - Interview participant

The metaphor of the “door of no return” (Brand, 2001) is echoed in these harsh environmental shifts in which those who fled Guyana felt as though it was changed forever. Their connection to the nation was moored to a version of the country that no longer existed.

“This is not where I grew up [in Guyana]. The one place still the same is the cathedral, opposite where we lived.” - Interview participant

“Dad’s words to me were: ‘We had the best of times’... referring to how the world was getting complicated, looking back on those times, even through the war and disruption.” - Interview participant



(Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

Today, many in Toronto are adapting and transitioning in response to the changing environment. Participants are returning to Guyana or considering moving out of Toronto and into more rural areas of Canada where housing is more affordable and there is more space. Ways of accessing and growing food such as farming and gardens are becoming considerations to combat the rising cost of living. Environments of acceptance and opportunity are also top of mind with participants today. In these times of increased prejudice and individualist thinking (RCMP, 2025), people are weighing options and looking for safe and fertile areas to settle.

“In Toronto we were getting by but here [in Guyana] we are well off.” - Interview participant

“Bartica is the last stop before the actual rainforest [in Guyana]. We’ve looked at spaces that some of our friends have which are last stop before just an expanse of crown land going north [in Canada]. It’s not the land itself. It’s just: is it safe for us to raise a kid in this environment where she’s the only non-white kid?”

- Interview participant

One of biggest concern on a natural environmental level is the risk of flooding for Guyana. In a time of rapid development there are concerns from some participants that more frequent extreme weather events could flood major parts of the country and throw the newfound stability into question. Ninety percent of the Guyanese population currently live in coastal areas that are 1-1.5 meters below the mean high tide levels. Other effects of climate change in the country, including increased temperatures, rising sea levels, flooding, and drought, are threatening the agricultural economy and food security (UNDP, 2026).

“Sites that are selected for housing are still the ones that were abandoned sugar plantations. Those areas are still exposed to flooding, they’re pretty low. They’re still exposed to flooding.” - Interview participant

“Go on Google and say, which cities most likely to be flooded in the next century? Georgetown is one of the top 10.” - Interview participant



(Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

Lived Experience: Internal Forces that Attenuate the Realization of Home

For many participants, the foundations they inherited, and their early experiences of family organization, security, social cohesion, and resilience serve as a powerful internal force that shapes the realization of each component of home. These foundations were often forged in moments of rupture, where survival and safety overshadowed all other considerations.

Foundation as a Force

For those who left Guyana amid political violence and instability, the baseline of security and stability became a singular, non-negotiable threshold. Until that threshold was secured, other components of home (*belonging, opportunity, dignity, cultural continuity*) remained secondary or deferred. As one participant recalled,

“With all the racial problems and civil unrest, riots and bombings that broke out in the early 1960s, [my parents] were anxious and seeking a place of safety for their two young children.”

Another described the loss of a familiar order:

“The rather calm colonial Guyana was rapidly disappearing, even though the colonialism had negatives attached to it too. At least there was a sense of order.”

These foundational experiences shape how later decisions are made. A foundation characterized by flight and emergency can make people more willing to accept overcrowding, overwork, or isolation in order to maintain a sense of safety, even when those conditions erode *dignity and care* or *belonging and identity*. The same foundation can also drive strong expectations for access and opportunity for children-education, homeownership, and professional advancement. Because the original migration is remembered as a bargain struck for the next generation.

Foundations laid in rich, relational environments also influence how the *family, cultural continuity and memory* components are realized. Growing up surrounded by kin, neighbours, and shared rituals creates an internal standard of what *real* community feels like. When current conditions fall short of that remembered intimacy, participants may experience a persistent sense of absence, even when objectively safer or more economically secure. This can lead to ongoing comparisons and a feeling that home is never fully realized, because the foundational reference point is both powerful and impossible to replicate.

Interpretation as a Force

If foundation sets the baseline, interpretation determines how people read their circumstances against that baseline and how they decide which components of home are “good enough” or still missing. Participants’ interpretations of risk, belonging, opportunity, and care were often shaped by the contrast between what they were promised, what they endured, and what transpired.

Across generations, security and stability were interpreted differently. For earlier migrants, stability was interpreted as being safe away from violence and economic collapse. This could have made them more accepting of precarious work or cramped housing if it still felt safer than what they had previously known. For their children, who did not experience that rupture directly, the same conditions were experienced as chronic insecurity, undermining rather than reinforcing a sense of home. A stable but emotionally strained household, or a safe neighbourhood with little community, may technically meet the security component but still felt like an *incomplete home*.

Interpretation also shaped belonging and identity. Participants described navigating racialization and cultural differences in Canada while trying to preserve a reasoned sense of self. One participant reflected on their father's experience:

"Having to navigate all of those things without anyone really understanding the mental impacts of immigrating... being a black person in the city at that time... all the different things he was navigating and then being expected to be a man, but that definition is completely different here [in Canada] than it was there [in Guyana]." - Interview participant

Here, belonging was not simply about whether others accepted you, but how you interpreted conflicting expectations about identity and role. The same environment could have been interpreted either as an opportunity for reinvention or as a site for constant recognition, with very different effects on the realization of belonging.

Similarly, *access and opportunity* were rarely interpreted as an even playing field. Participants distinguished between opportunity that may be theoretically present and opportunity that is truly accessible, filtered through credential recognition, discrimination, social networks, and time.

"The idea of safety is both like, there's an asterisk around that, right? Because I have experienced tremendous harm here as a citizen. But at the same time, I kind of know that harm can be amplified elsewhere. So, it's quote unquote "safer" here for me because at least I'm a citizen." – Interview participant

Opportunities that required continual self-justification or navigating opaque systems felt more like tests of endurance than pathways to home. When participants interpreted systems as indifferent or extractive, they downscaled aspirations or redirected energy into family and community, shoring up other components of home but leaving opportunity under-realized.

Interpretation also impacted *dignity and care*. Older participants may have interpreted seeking external help (for example, mental health) as exposing weakness or inviting stigma, which could limit their willingness to access needed services even when available. Younger participants increasingly interpreted care as something that could be shared with professional systems..

"A lot of persons in the country need that kind of help... they need counselling, they need treatment. So, I believe that in the more populated regions of the country [in Guyana], they need to have centres established." - Interview participant

When institutions and infrastructure are perceived as supportive and accessible by citizens, they enhance the capacity for home building. Conversely, when they are perceived as hostile, slow, or judgmental, they can hinder it



(Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

Aspiration as a Force

Where the foundation and interpretation laid the groundwork, aspiration pulls people toward particular futures and trade-offs. Aspirations about life's ideal state, what must be secured, what can be sacrificed, and what must never be lost, serve as a constant internal force. This force shapes the extent to which each component of home is pursued or differentiated.

For the first generation, aspirations were often deferred to future generations. The dream of children who would be better off, more educated, more secure. That meant accepting personal constraint so that *security and stability* and *access and opportunity* could be prioritized. Many participants described parents who worked multiple jobs, postponed their own ambitions, or accepted difficult living conditions so that something more solid could be built. In this context, the aspiration to provide becomes an internal force that can over-invest in certain components (for example, financial security, housing) even when others like *dignity and care*, and *belonging and identity* are strained.

For subsequent generations, aspirations increased. Stability was still valued, but there was a stronger aspiration toward well-being, autonomy, and finding balance. Participants described wanting to avoid replicating the pressures and silences their parents lived with, particularly around mental health and emotional life. This led to difficult internal negotiations: stepping back from traditional markers like individual homeownership or certain career paths may have felt like betraying the original aspiration, even when it was an honest response to current conditions. Aspirations toward a more holistic life could thus both deepen and attenuate the realization of home. Deepening it through more sustainable forms of care and community, reducing it where they clashed with inherited expectations or structural constraints.

"My mom's priority was really very much like 'I want you to get a better education so that you can get a better job and you don't have to work as hard as I do.' Whereas my priority is also education for my child, but I think it's more an education that is based on her being able to survive and heal." – Interview participant

Aspirations around *family, cultural continuity, and memory* also exerted a strong shaping force. Participants expressed a desire to preserve what truly mattered, such as stories, rituals, and language, while acknowledging that the social structures that supported these practices have undergone significant changes. One participant observed,

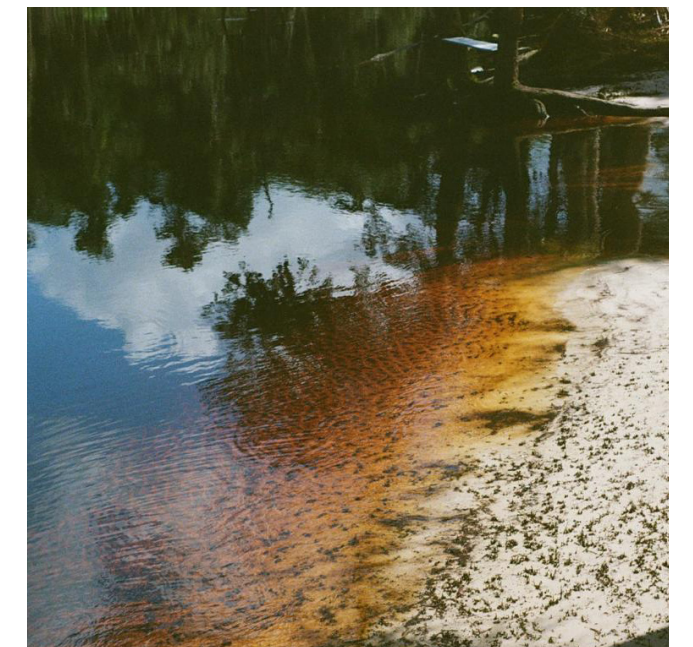
"Communities [in Canada] are losing their social skills. People don't talk to people anymore... You don't see that here now." – Interview participant

Yet another emphasized the commitment to past on a sense of rootedness:

"I grew up within a strong community and culture. I didn't realize the experience was unique compared to my peers who were siloed." - Interview participant

The desire to share culture and community could inspire the deliberate establishment of new spaces, such as community groups, associations, WhatsApp groups, and intergenerational homes. These spaces preserve a sense of belonging, identity, family or memory. At the same time, when those aspirations clashed with limited time, distance, or disinterest from younger family members, they evoked feelings of loss and partial failure, creating a sense that home is only ever partially realized in the next generation.

Across all the components of home, these combined forces (internal and external) modulate how home is realized. They can reinforce supports, helping individuals and households extract meaning and stability even from constrained contexts, or they can amplify external pressures, turning gaps in housing, care, or opportunity into deeper crises of belonging and purpose.



(Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

Attenuation in the Realization of Home Across Generations

Figure 11: Attenuation Over Time (Guyana)

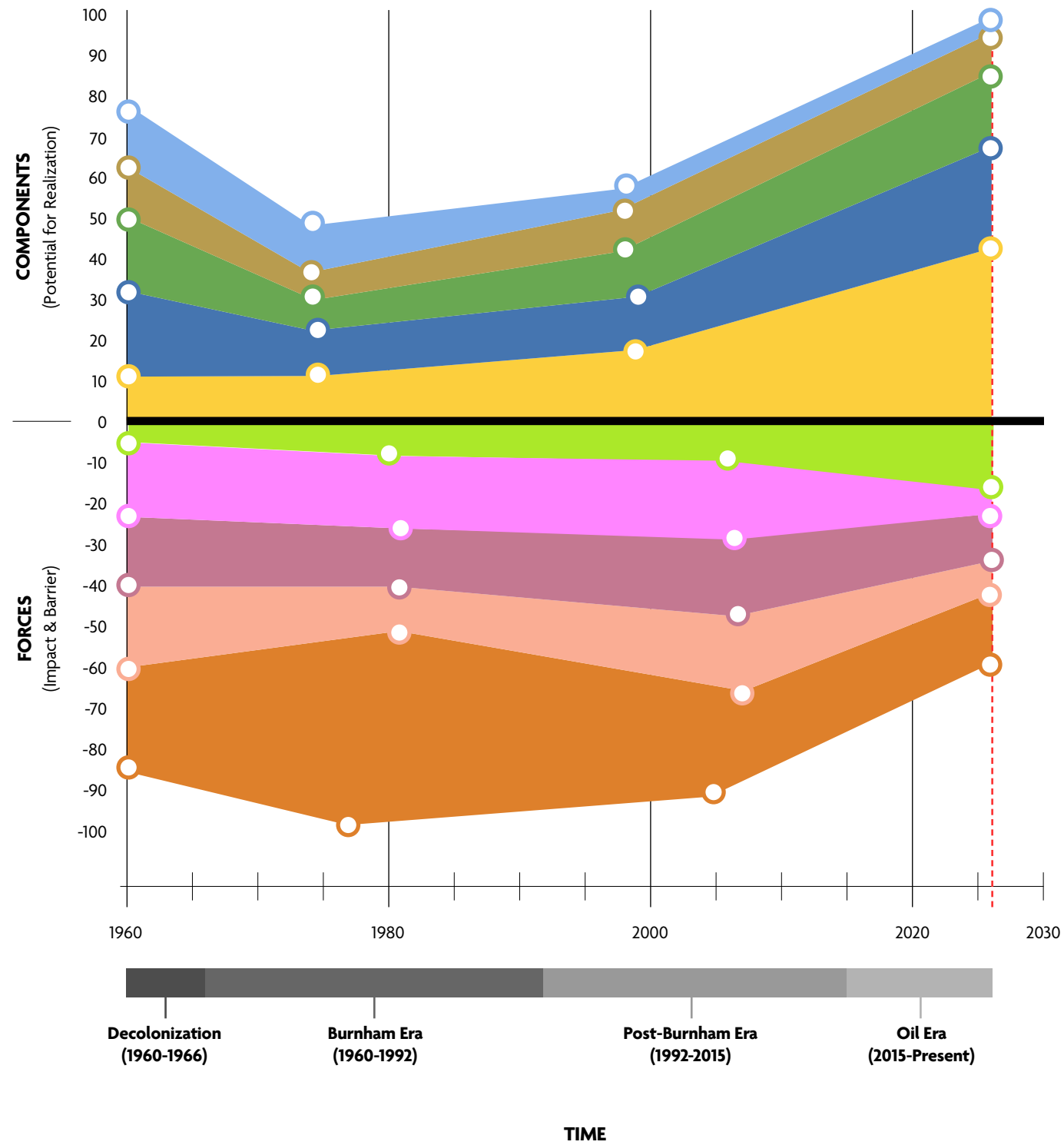
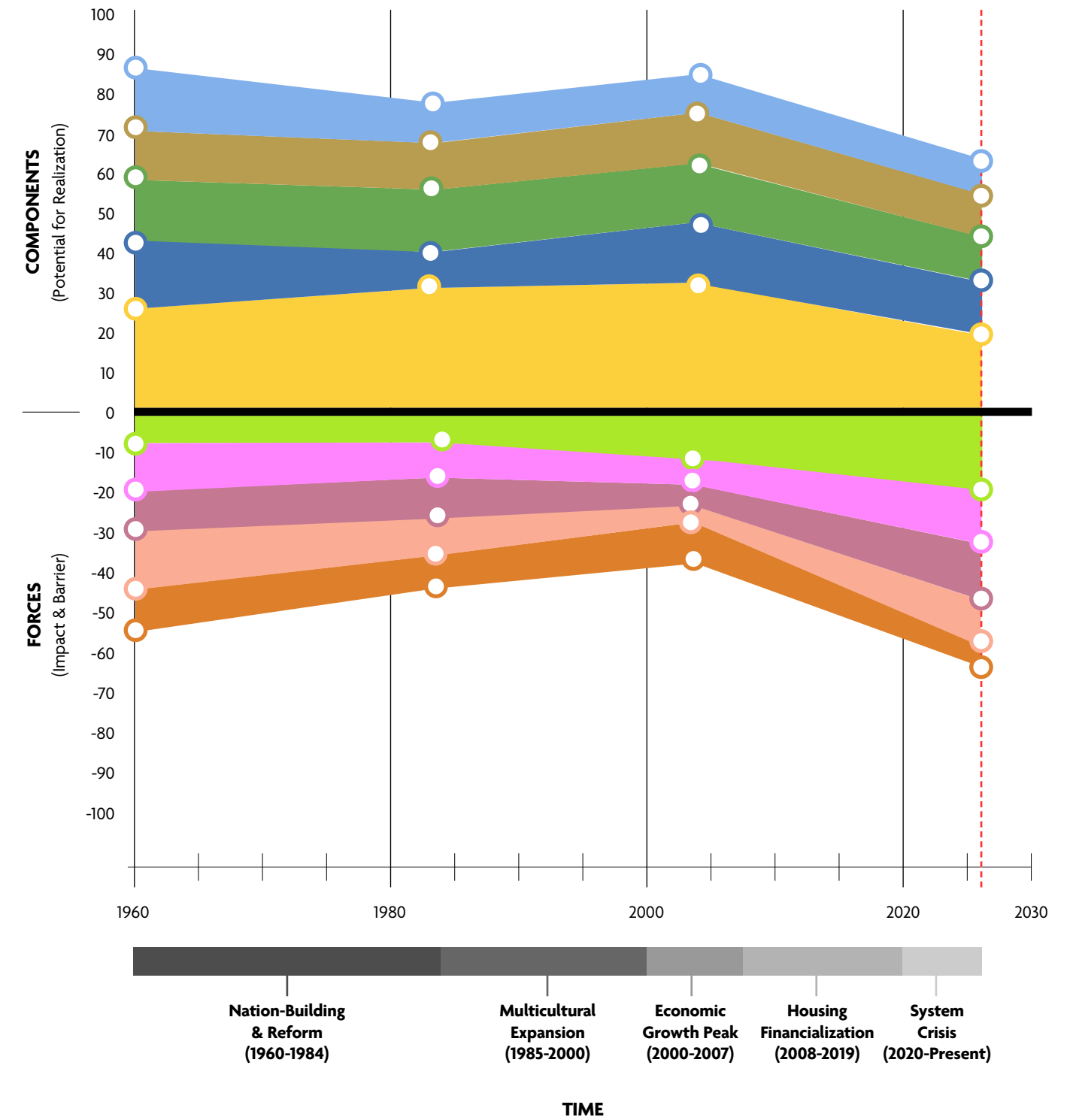


Figure 12: Attenuation Over Time (Canada)



- Legend:**
- Security & Stability
 - Belonging & Identity
 - Access & Opportunity
 - Dignity & Care
 - Family, Cultural Continuity, & Memory
 - Socio-Political
 - Natural
 - Foundation
 - Interpretation
 - Aspiration

- Legend:**
- Security & Stability
 - Belonging & Identity
 - Access & Opportunity
 - Dignity & Care
 - Family, Cultural Continuity, & Memory
 - Socio-Political
 - Natural
 - Foundation
 - Interpretation
 - Aspiration

To further understand how these dynamics shift over time and across contexts, the following figures map the changing potential for realizing the components of home in Guyana and Canada, alongside the forces that shape these conditions. Together, they provide a comparative view of how structural conditions have evolved and how these changes influence what can be realized in practice.

Figure 10 illustrates how the potential for realizing the components of home has evolved across key historical eras in Guyana, alongside the structural forces shaping these conditions over time. The chart highlights a pronounced period of constraint during the Burnham era, where socio-political and economic pressures significantly limited the realization of security, opportunity, and stability. While conditions begin to recover in the post-Burnham period, it is not until the oil era that a more substantial increase in potential is observed across components. However, this shift occurs alongside persistent structural barriers, indicating that while opportunities have expanded, their distribution and accessibility remain uneven. Overall, the figure shows how home in Guyana has been shaped by cycles of instability, partial recovery, and emerging but uneven potential.

Figure 11 presents the changing potential for realizing the components of home in Canada across major socio-economic and policy eras, in relation to the forces that enable or constrain these conditions. Canada begins from a position of relatively high potential across most components, particularly during periods of nation-building and economic growth. Over time, however, the chart reveals a gradual erosion in areas such as security, affordability, and access to opportunity, particularly during the housing financialization and system crisis eras. At the same time, structural barriers intensify, reflecting growing pressures related to housing costs, infrastructure strain, and shifting economic conditions. The figure illustrates how, despite having historically strong foundations, the realization of home is becoming increasingly constrained, signaling a shift from stability toward emerging precarity.

Taken together, these figures illustrate how the conditions shaping the realization of home shift over time and across contexts. While Guyana reflects a trajectory of prolonged constraint followed by uneven expansion, Canada reveals a gradual erosion of previously stable conditions. Despite these differences, both contexts point to the interrelationship between the potential for realizing

home and the forces that shape its accessibility. In this way, the figures make visible a broader pattern in which the realization of home is increasingly conditional, shaped not only by what is available, but by what can be accessed and sustained in practice.

Building on these patterns, the findings extend beyond individual components to reveal broader dynamics shaping how home is experienced. Across the participants' experiences common patterns emerged in how they (and their families) navigated uncertainty, trade-offs and shifting expectations. These dynamics are captured through a set of cross-cutting themes.

Across participants, the realization of home was not defined by any single component, but by the ability to bring multiple dimensions into alignment. Security, belonging, opportunity, care, and continuity are not pursued independently. Instead, they are continuously negotiated against one another, shaped by structural conditions, lived experience, environment, forces, and evolving expectations.

For first-generation participants, realization was often partial and conditional. Security and stability could be achieved, but frequently at the expense of belonging, identity, and personal aspiration. Home was realized as a foundation rather than a fulfillment, creating the conditions for future generations rather than fully meeting their own needs. For participants who migrated earlier (1960s-1980s), this foundation enabled an expanded set of possibilities. Participants were able to pursue not only stability, but also well-being, identity, and quality of life. However, this pursuit was not linear. Structural constraints, particularly housing affordability and shifting labour conditions, have limited the ability to fully realize these aspirations. As a result, realization remains uneven, shaped by access to resources, knowledge, and support systems.

Across both Guyana and Canada, realization was shaped by the relationship between individual agency and external conditions. Where systems (kinship, healthcare, financial, and employment) were accessible and supportive, participants aligned multiple components of home more efficiently. Where systems were restrictive or misaligned with lived experience, realization became fragmented, requiring trade-offs between stability, belonging, and opportunity.



A horse used in construction by local trades people, stands amongst modern vehicles and new construction. A representation of adaptability and transition. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

Participants demonstrated a high degree of adaptability in navigating these constraints. Strategies such as intergenerational living, reliance on social networks, and the redefinition of success reflect efforts to reconcile what is desired with what is possible. Realization is not a fixed outcome, but an ongoing process of adjustment and negotiation. Ultimately, the potential for realization is shaped by the degree to which individuals can bridge aspiration and constraint. Home is not fully realized when one component is achieved, but when a balance can be sustained across multiple components over time. Where this balance cannot be achieved, the realization of home becomes strained.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Across components, generations, and geographies, several cross-cutting themes emerge that reshape how home is understood, pursued, and realized. These key themes reflect broader shifts in how individuals navigate uncertainty, structure their lives, and evaluate what home can offer under changing conditions.

The Erosion of Certainty

Participants described a shift from a time when home could be understood as stable and predictable, to one where it must be continuously negotiated. For earlier generations, home was anchored in the expectation that stability could be achieved through effort, planning, and time. For later generations, this predictability has weakened.

Housing instability, economic volatility, and shifting social conditions have introduced a level of uncertainty that makes long-term planning more difficult. As a result, home is no longer assumed to be secure, but something that must be actively maintained and re-evaluated over time.

Home as a System, Not a Place

Home is increasingly experienced not as a single, bounded location, but as the interaction of multiple interconnected systems, including housing, care, employment, belonging and access to services. Participants described how no one place can fully satisfy all dimensions of home at once. Instead, home is constructed across relationships, institutions, and environments that must work together to support stability and well-being. Housing alone does not create home but operates as one component within a broader system that is shaped by both structural conditions and lived experience. As a result, the realization of home depends less on securing a single place and more on the ability to navigate, connect, and sustain these systems over time.

The Normalization of Trade-Offs

Across all components, participants demonstrated an awareness that achieving one aspect of home often requires sacrificing another. Stability may come at the expense of belonging, opportunity may require mobility, and independence may reduce access to care.

These trade-offs are not exceptional, but expected. Participants described decision-making as a continuous process of weighing competing priorities, rather than pursuing an ideal or complete version of home. No single place or condition is able to satisfy all dimensions simultaneously.

Core Tensions Shaping Home

Across participant experiences, the realization of home is not limited by a single constraint, but by a set of tensions that emerge when core components of home come into conflict. These tensions are not easily resolved. Instead, they require ongoing negotiation, shaping how individuals prioritize, delay, or reconfigure different aspects of home across time and place.

Stability vs. Mobility

A central tension exists between the desire for stability and the need for mobility. Migration itself reflects this tension, as individuals leave one place to secure stability in another. While movement enables access to opportunity, it often disrupts continuity, belonging, and long-term rootedness.

For many participants, stability is achieved through mobility, but never without cost. The pursuit of a better future requires leaving behind existing forms of home, creating a cycle in which stability is always contingent on movement.

Belonging vs. Opportunity

Participants frequently navigated a tension between feeling connected and accessing opportunity. Environments that offered economic mobility or institutional support did not always foster belonging, while spaces of strong identity and connection did not always provide access to opportunity.

This tension reflects a broader misalignment between social and economic systems, where individuals are often required to choose between where they feel at home and where they can build a viable future.

Independence vs. Care

Shifts toward independence, particularly through economic advancement and single-family living, have introduced tension with traditional systems of care. While independence is often associated with progress and success, it can weaken intergenerational support structures that historically provided care and stability. At the same time, reliance on family-based care can limit access to formal services. Participants navigate this tension by balancing autonomy with the need for relational support.

Aspiration vs. Constraint

A persistent tension exists between what individuals aspire to and what is structurally possible. Participants described aspirations shaped by both inherited expectations and evolving value systems, including desires for stability, well-being, and opportunity. However, these aspirations are often constrained by external forces such as housing affordability, labour market barriers, and institutional limitations. As a result, home is frequently realized in partial or adapted forms, rather than as a complete fulfillment of these aspirations.

Continuity vs. Change

Participant described the tension between maintaining cultural continuity and experiencing its gradual fragmentation over time. While traditions, memory, and shared practices were actively preserved through family structures, gatherings, and everyday rituals, these systems were often dependent on specific individuals, proximity and sustained collected effort.

As families become more geographically dispersed and generational roles shifted, the structures that supported continuity become more difficult to maintain. Participants described how the loss of central figures (for example, the matriarchal anchor),

changes in living arrangements, and increasing individual pressures led to a weakening of shared practices and collective identity. This tension reveals that continuity requires ongoing coordination across people, place, and time. When these conditions cannot be maintained, cultural continuity does not disappear entirely, but becomes fragmented, uneven, and more difficult to spread and share across generations.



(Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

What This Means for the Realization of Home

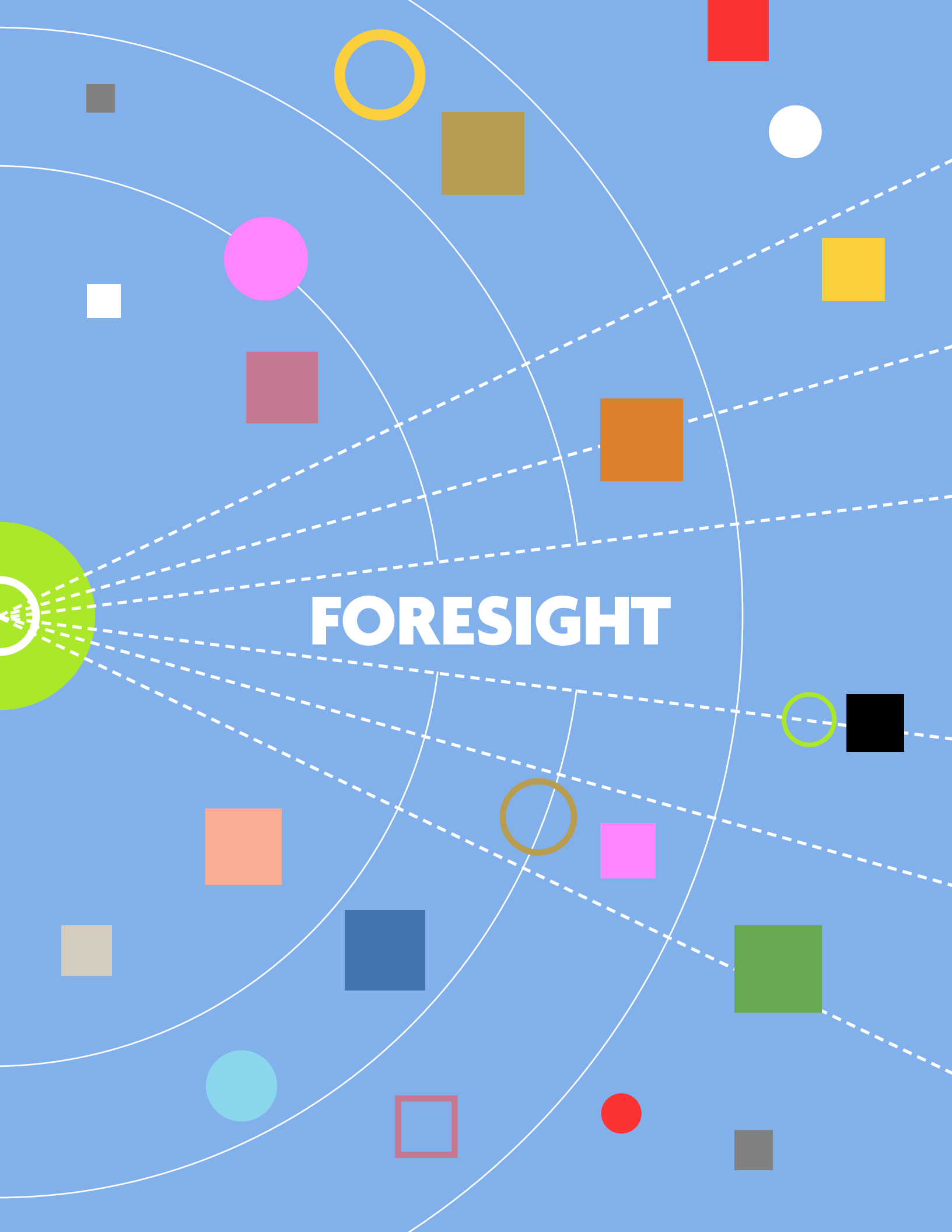
“The opportunity is still there, but it might not be where you want it to be.” - Interview participant

Thus far, within this study, we have mapped a difficult terrain which outlines a history fraught with violence that drove migration, the erosion of Canada’s foundational promise, Guyana’s cycles of political and economic collapse, and the toll that displacement takes across generations. These accounts are honest and necessary to frame the current moment. In times of polycrisis it is easy to feel defeated and, as the adaptive cycle shows us, it is in moments of constraint and rigidity when resilience is at its lowest (Holling & Gunderson, 2002).

The fracturing of traditional ways of realizing home is not only a story of loss. It is also an opportunity, one that the people in our study are already navigating with ingenuity, pragmatism, and deep relational intelligence. As Homer-Dixon suggests, “the door out

of catastrophe must be in our minds, and the key to that door must be hope” (Homer-Dixon, 2020). Reframing the components of home through an iterative lens requires a different relationship to hope and realization. Not as a belief that things will improve, but as a capacity to engage with change as it unfolds. In conditions where systems are under strain and outcomes remain uncertain, hope becomes a form of agency. It allows both individuals and institutions to respond, adapt, and reconfigure, rather than remain fixed within models, frameworks, and strategies that no longer hold.

Within this research, realization is constructed through action rather than assumed through outcome. It is tied to the ability to identify possible pathways forward, to remain engaged in decision-making, and to continue navigating conditions that are evolving or unresolved. In this sense, realization is not a fixed end state, but as an ongoing process shaped through adaptation, negotiation, and changing expectations.



Building the Future of Home

We have articulated the fundamental components of realizing home for members of the Guyanese diaspora and outlined the major pillars within the current value propositions of Guyana and Canada. Our research maps cycles of collapse, reorganization, growth, and conservation to trace these two nations' trajectories and understand how the realization of home is being navigated today. Building on this foundation we now look ahead to explore what the future of home might become.

When the current value propositions of Canada and Guyana are assessed against the five components of home outlined in this research, clear gaps in coverage become evident across both contexts (see *Tables 3 and 4* on page 83).

At face value, the current propositions disproportionately prioritize access and opportunity. There is a pledge of prosperity and growth engrained into them which overshadows other fundamental components such as dignity and care, or family, cultural continuity and memory. The current propositions approach value from a monetary asset-based perspective. A good life or viable home is qualified by the accumulation of wealth and assets as the means of growth or development.

Our conversations and research revealed that wealth accumulation and asset investment was hugely important for the first generation of Guyanese immigrants coming into Canada. Their focus was on rebuilding home and community for future generations. Subsequent generations of Guyanese-Canadians have adapted their priorities and expectations to align with an environment that is operating under restricted potential. A good quality of life, well-being, and community have become the investments that hold the most worth now that homeownership continues to grow increasingly out of reach.

Conversely, Guyana is in what appears to be a fertile environment of opportunity and growth, the likes of which they have never experienced as an independent country. The residents we spoke to are conflicted. While poverty remains a significant issue in the country, the prospect of achieving wealth and development, like what is commonly found in western countries, is enticing. The exploitation of resources is considerable, but so are the profits. Guyanese residents feel it is their time to prosper, and repatriates are returning home to prospect on newly formed opportunity. Guyana's value proposition has been re-envisioned more recently because of the shift in government leadership and the discovery of vast oil caches. In an episode of the 2024 BBC talk show, *HARDtalk*, President Ali reprimanded the host for the hypocrisy he saw from England as they criticized the environmental impacts of Guyana's oil and gas extraction.

"You and your system are in the pockets of those who destroyed the environment through the industrial revolution and you're now lecturing us?"
- Irfann Ali, President of Guyana

This exchange demonstrates a widely held sentiment with our participants that the country has entered a moment of long-awaited opportunity and it is "their turn". There is a growing emphasis on access and economic development, as priorities shift in response to new conditions of growth and possibility. These shifts mirror the contrasting positions illustrated in the adaptive cycle, revealing how each nation's relationship to value shapes the evolving realization of home.

To see the comprehensive foresight exploration and analysis of each nation, see *Supplement D: Four Visions of the Future* in the *Appendix*.

Table 3: Canada's Value Proposition Against the Components of Home

	COMPONENTS OF HOME				
	Security & Stability	Belonging & Identity	Access & Opportunity	Dignity & Care	Family, Cultural Continuity, & Memory
Multiculturalism and Cultural Preservation		X			X
Equitable Immigration and Meritocracy		X	X	X	
Safety, Stability, and Lawfulness	X				
Universal Social Services and Quality of Life	X		X		
Economic Opportunity and Social Mobility			X		
Human Rights and Protection	X				

Table 4: Guyana's Value Proposition Against the Components of Home

	COMPONENTS OF HOME				
	Security & Stability	Belonging & Identity	Access & Opportunity	Dignity & Care	Family, Cultural Continuity, & Memory
Economic Prosperity and National Transformation			X		
Infrastructure Development and Connectivity	X		X		
Housing and Home Ownership for All	X	X	X		
Free Education and Skills Development		X	X	X	
Health Modernization	X			X	
Wealth Distribution and Social Protection	X		X		

In weighting these value propositions against the components of home, some absolutes and non-negotiables become clear that are fundamental for making new and viable offerings in both Guyana and Canada.

- **Restore and build pathways:** Re-establish and strengthen functional, connected, and accessible infrastructure across key sectors, including healthcare, housing, community engagement, culture, employment, and both digital and physical systems, to support more integrated and equitable access to opportunity.
- **Disseminate institutional knowledge:** Ensure that citizens are equipped with clear, accessible, and widely distributed information about available services and supports, enabling more equitable navigation of systems and informed decision-making.
- **Define new ways of creating community:** As conditions shift, it is essential to invest in civic assets, spaces, and services that strengthen social connection and support culture and tradition. In Toronto, housing scarcity and cultural displacement shape these needs, while in Georgetown, young professionals are moving out of intergenerational homes into single-family dwellings. Across both contexts, community, culture, and kinship networks remain critical to fostering belonging and enabling the realization of home.
- **Value and actively validate skills, credentials and foreign assets:** Both nations are experiencing critical shortages in skilled labour within healthcare, education, and other essential services. Expedited training, revised certification protocols, and international skills trade partnerships will help to fill the gap and fortify essential services.
- **Broaden the lens of investment:** Break the cycle of treating housing as a tangible asset investment or land banking. Create awareness of alternate forms of investment that include regenerative economies and collective ownership for enhanced collective wealth.
- **Leave no one behind:** Ensure that progress and prosperity touches everyone in the nation. Those in need must be supported alongside capital investment. Economic growth and well-being must be equally weighted.

To achieve this new positioning and introduce more relevant offerings, these nations should refresh their value propositions by exploring the opportunities available that can be leveraged to usher in a new phase of home.

Canada's traditional promise can be summarized as: **A society grounded in peace, order, and good government, where collective well-being, social stability, and reliable public institutions create the conditions for people from many cultures to build, and scale, secure lives** (Ignatieff, 2019).

Canada's emerging promise is no longer one of guaranteed stability, but stability that must be actively negotiated and sustained under increasing constraint. While the ideals of peace, order, and good government remain, they are increasingly experienced through strained systems, rising costs, and uneven access.

This new promise could be interpreted as: **Fortifying Canada's foundation of peace, order, and good government through community building, and acceptance. Canada continues to strive for safety, belonging, and future-building for all who call the nation home.**

Under the leadership in President Ali, we can frame the value proposition of Guyana as: **Harnessing new oil wealth and longstanding natural abundance to deliver modern infrastructure, jobs, and services, while committing to inclusive growth, regional leadership, and the transformation of resource revenues into broad-based opportunity for Guyana and its diaspora** (Aljazeera, 2025).

A future-focused Guyanese promise would address concerns around unbridled development and the embrace of foreign investment. A new proposition could centralize the people in the message more than the transformation through oil wealth: **Realizing unmet potential and developing the nation for the advancement of the people. Shared prosperity and support for all citizens. Worldclass infrastructure that is positioning Guyana as a hub of the future within South America.**

Levers of Opportunity & Change

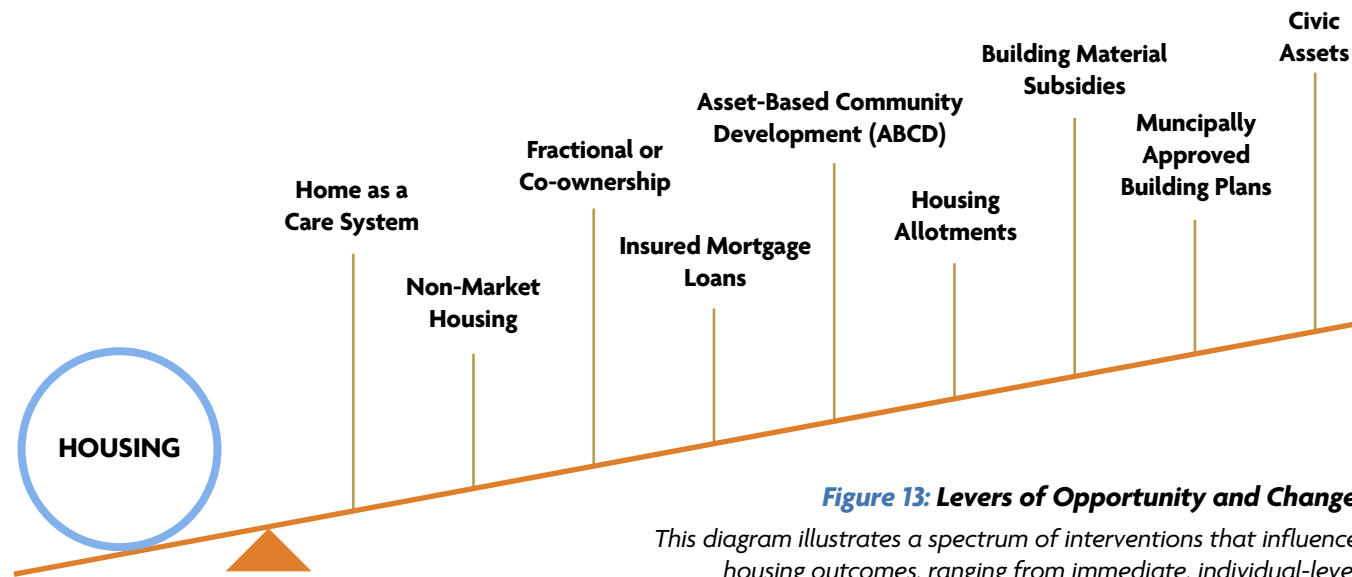


Figure 13: Levers of Opportunity and Change

This diagram illustrates a spectrum of interventions that influence housing outcomes, ranging from immediate, individual-level supports to broader systemic and policy-driven mechanisms.

As indicated in the horizon scan, there are numerous initiatives and organizations operating today that act as indicators of how the future of home might look. These present-day examples can serve as the building blocks for a foresight strategy that will guide people towards a more sustainable and relevant approach to the development of home.

These levers can be seen as tools in the toolbox upon which potential futures may be designed. We are only exploring a few in a multitude of potential levers that could influence the course of the future and inform how people will choose their home in the years to come. The levers we are exploring here illustrate that change and innovation is happening around us every day. They also validate the process of the adaptive cycle in which the reorganization phase is comprised of salvaged components taken from the collapse phase. Innovation and growth emerge from repurposing and adapting.

Some of the examples below have been effective and in practice for generations, while others are in their infancy. They all serve as devices that offer glimpses into a potential future. These present-day examples enable us to envision how we might organize and iterate to achieve an optimal state of home.

Home as a Care System

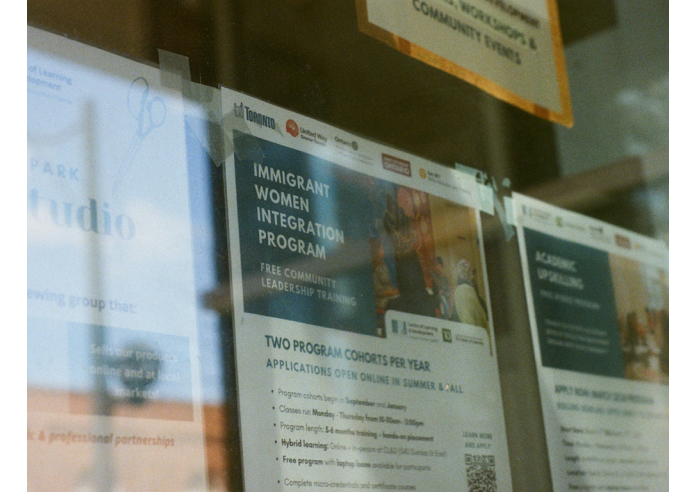
Infrastructure is a combination of complex and interconnected systems. Fortifying one system, can elevate strain off another. As previously described in our horizon scan, creating or maintaining housing for at-risk populations such as the unhoused and the elderly is proven to create cost savings and reduce emergency medicine touchpoints for these demographics. Investing in affordable and accessible housing has positive effects and can aid in repairing adjacent systems in crisis.

Non-Market Housing

Non-market housing (social housing, co-ops, community land trust, and supportive housing) plays a critical role in maintaining housing stock for those unable to afford current market rates, while providing long-term, stable, and affordable housing for populations underserved by the private market. In the 1970s non-market housing encompassed twenty-five percent of the housing stock in Canada. Today, that number has depleted to six percent (Burda & Chapple, 2024).



Regent Park today is now integrated into Toronto's streets, creating a connected, amenity-rich community. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).



A community bulletin board advertising supports for Immigrant women. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

The elements of the non-market system that hold the greatest potential as levers of opportunity are:

- **Mixed Tenure:** Properties that have a mix of subsidized rent, market rent and ownership models. This range of housing options supports diverse community compositions and protects against homogeneity or affordability barriers. Mixed tenure also promotes community and family living within the same housing development, where members of a network are at different economic thresholds. This model of housing supports the notion of “the village” and keeps communities together.
- **Housing as an eco-system:** As demonstrated in the Regent Park Revitalization, modern social housing developments are taking into consideration more than just affordable housing units. Regent Park was rebuilt as a full-on neighbourhood with space integrated for arts and culture, recreation, and community. The housing towers weren't retrofitted into an existing neighbourhood, a neighbourhood was built around the housing towers. This approach shows awareness of the “vertical village” (Gortari, 2018). Thousands of people are living in apartments and condos within a concentrated area. If development of the surrounding area does not consider the cultural and demographic makeup of the those who live in the buildings, there will be a disconnect between the housing and the community that develops on the streets below. Regent Park boasts a diverse array of retail and community-focused amenities that foster a sense of belonging and serves as a vibrant hub for business, social interaction, and cultural enrichment (Cohen, 2024).

- **People-First Governance & Development:** The Daniels Corporation and Toronto Community Housing (steering the Regent Park Revitalization) also inverted the traditional development approach by involving the community and tenants in the stages of development. The developers worked from a set of resident-created “principles of revitalization,” including a guaranteed right-of-return for tenants who had to vacate because of the revitalization. They were allowed to return at similar rents and units were held for them to have first right of refusal.

The old Regent Park was designed in a courtyard style which cut it off from the street and ended up being a flawed design, it alienated the tenants from the outside community and created issues for security and emergency access. The community demanded the new development be reconnected to the street grid, they also requested a commitment to income and tenure diversity as core design goals. Residents helped define priorities for community services, cultural and recreation spaces, and social inclusion. These principles acted as the north star for planning and phasing decisions, rather than being considerations after the financial model was set. In practice, this meant co-governance structures, continuous engagement, and on-the-ground presence from both the public landlord and development partners. A model of building cities with communities, not for them (Cohen, 2024).

- **Community Land Trusts:** This model is important because it protects property and affordable rental units within areas where accessibility has become scarce. Properties within the portfolio are managed by the trust and are therefore not exposed to political shifts or governmental budget cuts that might prompt the sale of assets. Land trusts keep the properties functioning and available for their intended use, affordable and accessible housing. The houses within a land trust portfolio are not asset-investments, they are homes, and they will remain so because there is no intention from the trusts to liquidate or profit off the properties (PNLT, 2026).

Fractional or Co-Ownership

This approach enables homeownership through shared or fractional purchase, allowing friends, families, or other individuals to split the cost of a property. It can also involve private investment organizations, as outlined in *Supplement C: Horizon Scan*.

- **Private investment:** This model blends private capital with personal homeownership. Investors may contribute to the down payment and act as a guarantor or co-signer, receiving a proportional share of profits when the property is sold. While this expands access to ownership, it carries risks if buyers are overleveraged or unable to sustain mortgage payments. When structured responsibly, it provides an alternative pathway to homeownership while maintaining housing as both a place to live and an investment asset.
- **Co-ownership:** Co-owning a home is on the rise and is a direct response to affordability and cost of living. Twenty percent of home owners in Ontario that were born in the 1990s, co-own their homes with their parents (Kahlid et al., 2024). The additional benefits of this arrangement are that it creates embedded support systems and creates strong bonds. Co-ownership and intergenerational living is what Guyanese families have been doing for centuries, and it is becoming more popular within Canada. This is the manifestation of “the village” which supports family, belonging, cultural continuity and community.

Insured Mortgage Loans

This system enables individuals to purchase homes with minimal down payments by utilizing mortgage default insurance. This insurance safeguards the mortgage lender in case the borrower defaults on their payments. In Canada, the primary provider of this insurance is CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation). CMHC mandates insurance on “high-ratio” mortgages, where the down payment can be as low as five percent for eligible buyers. The borrower pays a one-time premium, which is added to the mortgage. In return, the lender receives a government-backed guarantee, allowing them to offer mortgages at reasonable rates to households who would otherwise not be able to afford homeownership. This process could be implemented in Guyana, thereby increasing access to housing for the lower-income population (CMHC, 2018).

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

An approach to community change that starts from people’s strengths. This is development based on skills, relationships, culture, local organizations, and physical places rather than from their needs or deficits. It treats residents as “citizens at the centre” (Hardy, 2019) and collaborators or partners, instead of clients of a housing service. ABCD focuses on connecting five key asset types: individuals, associations, institutions, place, and the connections between them. This method is important because it shifts housing development from just delivering units to activating the social fabric surrounding a home. Helping neighbours organize, share care, create informal supports, and shape local spaces in ways that reflect their cultures and aspirations. This makes homes more resilient without requiring financial input or disruptive infrastructure improvements. ABCD unlocks underused capacities that are already present in communities (Keam, 2020).

Housing Allotments

Guyana’s housing allotment scheme uses public land to allocate subsidized house lots to predominantly low- or moderate-income households. The individual assigned the lot is then responsible for constructing a home on it at their own expense. The program effectively pairs affordable land with access to low-interest mortgages, transforming non-owners into



Housing allotment under developed outside of Georgetown, Guyana. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

first-time homeowners. Within Canada, particularly in regions surrounding Toronto and Vancouver, a similar subsidized land for personal development approach could be adapted by utilizing public or land-trust sites. This shift in policy would move from solely subsidizing finished units to empowering communities to gradually develop their own culturally and care-oriented homes, while simultaneously preserving long-term land value gains for the public. For individuals whose primary objective is securing affordable land, with location or proximity to urban areas as a secondary consideration, this innovative approach presents a new way to expand access to housing opportunities.

Building Material Subsidies

In Guyana the Ministry of Housing has issued vouchers for first-time home builders to buy subsidized steel and cement for the use in the construction of their homes. This initiative is allowing faster and more affordable development of the land allotments being issued. It is also a way injecting money into the economy (Mohw, 2023a). By providing seed subsidies they are increasing the amount of development projects being undertaken which provides greater sales of goods and services. Toronto could utilize a similar scheme for incentivising multi-apartment conversions of single-family homes.

The McConnell Aquatic Centre in Regent Park, Toronto. An example of one of Toronto’s civic assets that serve the community. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

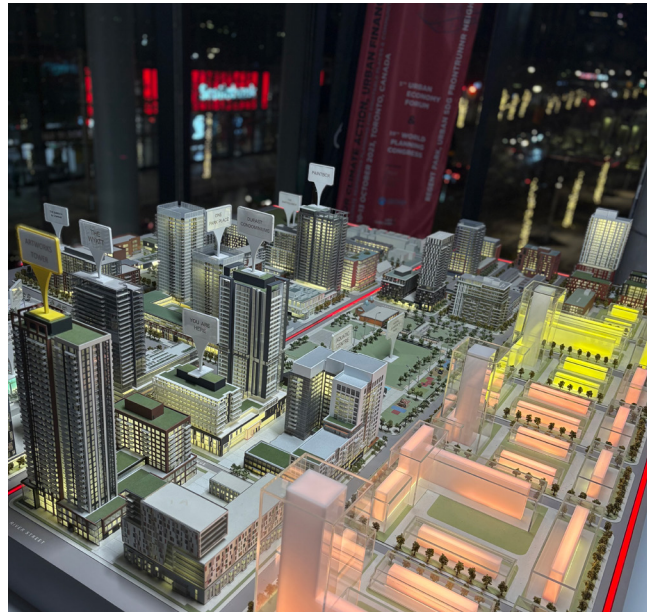
Municipally Approved Building Plans

Under Mayor Olivia Chow, Toronto has introduced free, pre-approved building plans for laneway and garden suites that already meet Ontario Building Code requirements, eliminating the need for many homeowners to hire architects or planners. Using these designs significantly cuts design costs and shortens permit review. These measures lift barriers such as time, cost, and complexity to create more accessible options for adding housing stock into Toronto (City of Toronto, 2025b). This is significant because it demonstrates the municipal government working to make the development of alternative housing structures more accessible to the public. Laneway houses and garden suites could be used for housing families to maintain or develop a communal living scenario.

Civic Assets

Civic assets include parks, libraries, schools, transit, community centres, clinics, faith spaces, cultural venues, as well as the streets and utilities that connect them. These assets are instrumental in creating belonging and supporting social infrastructure. Civic assets benefit all citizens, but they are particularly valuable for families, newcomers to Canada, people with lower incomes, and those experiencing instability in their housing or personal lives (Evergreen, 2017). These assets are areas to gather, spaces to learn and play, opportunities to access new experiences, services that offer support, and safe spaces to be yourself. A well-developed infrastructure of civic assets signifies a world-class city and serves as a catalyst for fostering a sense of belonging, care, community, cultural continuity, and access.





A model of the Regent Park Revitalization on display by The Daniels Corporation. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

Designing for the Future

We are in a time of volatility. Interconnected forces are continually shifting and restricting our potential for realizing our aspirations of home. The tapestry of polycrisis makes it challenging to confidently predict what tomorrow has in store. That is why we must look at the future as a collection of dimensions where numerous futures exist in the realm of possibility (James, 1908/1977). “A world where many worlds fit” is a guiding principle of the Zapatistas, an Indigenous-led movement in southern Mexico, and reflects a vision of the world where multiple ways of living, knowing, and organizing society can coexist without one dominant system (Unrau, 2024).

For us to imagine and design communities that foster belonging and acceptance we need to understand the multitudes that exist within them. The term “pluriverse”, coined by philosopher William James, refers to a reality that is complex, unfinished, and composed of many interconnected and sometimes contradictory elements. This pluriversality is central to developing societies and spaces where all feel a sense of home. The rejection of the belief that a single heuristic should be dominant or ruling over others makes room for diverse ways of knowing. This approach expands knowledge and understanding (Escobar, 2018).

Home, when understood through the components and forces that shape its realization, is not a static condition. It exists in a constant state of dynamic equilibrium that must be actively navigated and sustained. As a result, strategic drivers shaping the future of home must remain adaptable and responsive across a range of possible outcomes. Rather than advancing a single hypothesis of what lies ahead, the focus should be on strengthening the components of home in ways that endure across multiple futures and resonate across generations of the Guyanese diaspora, including those who continue to reside in the country.

Nation building and construction of home is complex and nuanced. It is not our intention to, nor are we naïve enough to assume that we could, offer a strategic framework which unlocks all the solutions to a meaningful home and a flourishing community. What we do aim to offer in this project are mechanisms and initiatives that we feel should be considerations in the process of creating spaces and defining home. Whether you are a policy maker, someone looking to settle in a new place, a housing developer, a student, or an educator, these frames of reference can support informed decision making. Societies embracing and executing these principals are likely to be viable and desirable for people to gravitate towards and make home within.

Through our research and the shared stories of our participants, the following principals have surfaced as central building blocks for the future development of home and resilient community:

- De-Commodify Land and Expand Non-Market Housing
- Build Relational Infrastructure
- Reframe Investment
- Assess Total Profit
- Prioritize Care
- Build Systems with the People, Not for the People
- Share Wealth
- Preserve and Protect Culture, Heritage, Family, and Community

Here are some ways that these principals could be used to implement initiatives and critical paths towards building and realizing home.

De-Commodify Land and Expand Non-Market Housing

Break the cycle of treating housing as a financial asset. Create cities and systems that allocate non-market housing as a generator of social, community and cultural capital. Understand that monetary profit is only one element of a flourishing ecosystem and in order to reach optimal homeostasis we need to invest in a richer ecosystem of capital. Making security of place attainable without requiring ownership as the only path.

How this could be implemented in the future:

Multi-Tenure Social Housing Developments

Continue to build social housing developments that incorporate mixed types of ownership and inhabitancy including non-market rental units, market rate rental units, and units for purchase. Ensure that all new developments hold non-market rate rental opportunities within them and build with the outlook of multi-faceted integration that includes a mix of economic, social, and cultural elements.

Expand Community Land Trusts

Create a government bureau that provides support, services, and awareness for the establishment and maintenance of land trusts. Develop seamless pathways and incentives for citizens or corporations interested in donating property, investing in property purchases, or developing land. Promote community land trusts as a widely recognized tax benefit and viable option for estate planning.

Diaspora Land Trust

With remittances representing approximately \$550 million USD in Guyana today, it is clear that money from the diaspora is integral to the economy and well-being of Guyana (T. R. Blackman, 2025). Guyana also has a history for racialized inequality and government corruption. The development of a Diaspora Land Trust would allow members of the Guyanese diaspora to invest money into housing and land that would be placed in a trust and used expressly for social and affordable housing for the people of Guyana. The instatement of such a trust would protect the diaspora's investment and the land which they have collectively acquired through the trust. This would ensure that the land was secure against government interference, fluctuating markets, inflation and affordability issues. Instead of simply sending money home, members of the diaspora could be placing money into a trust which fortifies the affordable housing landscape and supports a larger portion of the population.

Affordable Housing Incentives for Landlords and Developers

Continue to incentivise the proliferation of affordable and under market rental access. By offering tax rebates or rent top-up programs, the government could increase the stock of affordable housing and realize economic efficiencies through the process. Toronto has introduced the Property Tax and Utility Relief Program which offers property tax rebates for affordable housing in Toronto (Cheng & Lantz, 2024). This program motivates landlords to offer affordable rents through tax subsidy and creates pathways for landlords to support the affordable rental market and recoup some lost earning on the back end in the form of tax rebates.

If the city introduced a rental top up program, they may be able to reduce levels of homelessness and increase affordable housing through incentivizing more landlords and developers to offer under-market, affordable rent through a matching program. The city would pay a top up amount to balance the lower rent paid by the tenant based on fair market rents in the city. There are an estimated 200,000 investor-owned condominiums on the rental market in the Toronto and approximately 350,000 purpose built rental units (BILD et al., 2023; Mclean, 2024). This represents a rental housing stock of 550,000 units. If we allocated twenty percent of these units as a target for affordable housing stock, the amount would be 111,000 units (Mclean, 2024). If the Toronto municipal government subsidized the monthly rent and paid the landlords monthly to offset the market rental price, this could create more affordable housing in the city. If a rate of \$350 per month was used as the offset subsidy for landlords the total budget to run this initiative would be \$466.2 million CAD annually. Currently, Toronto Spends \$785 million CAD annually on battling homelessness and supporting the unhoused (Tanner & Daham, 2024). In 2026 Toronto's budget for the emergency paramedic service was \$451.3 million CAD (Chawla, 2025) and the provincial healthcare budget this year hovered close to \$400 billion (Bethlenfalvy, 2026). Our research indicates that access to affordable housing reduces the strain on the emergency healthcare system and inherently decreases the amount of unhoused. It's probable that implementing rent top-ups for landlords to provide under-market rentals could be an economical solution to address the affordable housing shortage. Additionally, it could alleviate pressure on the emergency healthcare system and reduce homelessness.

Build Relational Infrastructure

As we have identified, home is more than the roof over your head or your family network. Belonging, access, identity, and dignity are key components and deciding factors for realizing home. That is why designing communities and systems that consider the needs of the people within it are integral. Public services and spaces for congregation, learning, and sharing are assets that bring immense value to society and enrich lives. Newcomers often rely on these services and amenities for making connection, learning about their new surroundings and experiencing culture. Relational infrastructure connects people to their communities and expands understanding. Cities full of public spaces, cultural events, accessible services, and infrastructure that connects it all together are environments that breed togetherness and belonging.

How this could be implemented in the future:

Vertical Village

With space in dense urban settings becoming an increasing issue, the development of neighbourhoods and communities needs to adapt. Traditionally, a neighbourhood or community is developed across city blocks, but as more large housing towers are erected, it becomes harder to meet the needs of all the people within the small surface area of the storefronts on street level.



A high-rise housing community, or a “vertical village.” Housing structures can foster and grow community and deliver worth through development that considers the population that lives within it as its own “village” or community within a neighbourhood. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

The construction of neighbourhoods now needs to be considered within the design of each housing tower (Gortari, 2018), essentially creating a village or community environment within each structure. Each building has its own distinct make up of inhabitants with needs and interests. Creating amenities, services, and “third spaces” within these structures allows for the creation of a distinct community comprised of components that meet the needs of their specific “village”.

Things like cafes, recreational facilities, and event spaces are common within many developments today but future design and development could amplify opportunity and access for residents through creating a more diverse offering of amenities and services that will make an impact on the well-being and feeling of home. Vertical village living could also be enriched by childcare facilities, medical clinic for residents, a tool rental library for shared equipment, and a knowledge-sharing centre for resident-led learning. Additionally, a legal and government services liaison that acts as counsel for residents could be beneficial.

These vertical villages can go even further and offer opportunity and access for residents to advance their earning potential and have access to tools and facilities that could support them in realizing small business and personal aspirations. Catering kitchens, audio/visual studios for podcasts and video production, office space and access to computers. These are the types of amenities that could give people (specifically newcomers) opportunity, autonomy, and dignity needed to achieve success and meet their potential. For many, growth and meeting potential is hindered by a lack of knowledge or access. By providing support and amenities within the structures in which people live, we can create more resilient communities.

Empathetic Amenities, Civic Assets, and Third Spaces

A flourishing home and community are supported through the broader ecosystem of spaces, services, and infrastructure that surround it. There are three interconnected concepts help describe this ecosystem and how it can be designed to sustain belonging: empathetic amenities, civic assets, and third spaces. Together, they describe the conditions that transform a neighbourhood from addresses into a community with a lived, dynamic identity.

- **Empathetic Amenities:** These are facilities and services within a community that address the needs of the residents who comprise it. Offerings that are aligned with the composition of the community and create



The Milky Way Community Garden in Parkdale, Toronto. This garden helps to public create space for gardening, community, and food cultivation. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).



a better quality of life for the residents. Empathetic amenities require design considerations and an understanding of who makes up a community. An example of this is when the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT) purchased an undeveloped lot in Parkdale and secured it as a community garden. PNLTL observed that Parkdale was home to a large Tibetan population, many of whom lived below the poverty line and inhabited non-market housing in the area. Their Tibetan culture connected them to the soil, and many had relied on growing and eating their own crops before migrating to Toronto. A semi-formal community garden had been started by this Tibetan community in Toronto, but its existence was not secure. PNLTL purchased the land as part of its trust and preserved it as a gardening space for the community as a way of honouring the cultural traditions of these people and creating amenities within the community that resonated with the people who lived there (PNLTL, 2018). Understanding the community and interacting with residents will reveal what services and amenities will enrich a neighbourhood.

- **Civic Assets:** There are shared, publicly oriented places, services, and systems that enhance daily life and foster a sense of community. These include parks, libraries, schools, transit, community centers, healthcare clinics, cultural venues, faith spaces, recreation facilities, and

the streets and utilities that connect them. They extend beyond private homes and expand the network of access for people. They externalize care, gathering, learning, and play into shared spaces, alleviating the burden on families to provide everything within their homes. Civic assets provide spaces where people from diverse backgrounds interact, children feel valued, elders remain connected, and culture is practiced and passed down. Having an extended network of civic assets allows for connection to community and culture to remain even if housing is displaced.

- **Third Spaces:** These spaces serve as gathering places outside of the home (the first space) and work (the second space) and include cafes, art galleries, barbershops, parks, libraries, community centers, markets, and places of worship (Quizon Colquitt, 2023). Third spaces are crucial for developing homes because they often serve as the sites where communities are formed. These spaces foster connections among neighbors, host cultural gatherings, offer new experiences, and instill a sense of security and belonging. To ensure a robust society, third spaces must remain accessible and affordable. Integrating third spaces into housing policy and infrastructure design is essential for creating a home that is a felt experience rather than just a physical address.

Assess Total Profit

Total profit is a way of measuring success and prosperity by looking at capital as being comprised of five elements. This looks beyond purely monetary gains to understand the impact and profit of decisions based on tangible factors. This is important because conventional profit accounting can show a gain while destroying natural, human, or social capital. A new housing development might be financially profitable but the way in which it is executed could increase climate risk, burn out workers, or fracture communities. A total profit lens forces governments, investors, and housing providers to design for net-positive outcomes across all five capitals. By assessing choices and gains through a more holistic lens we can create homes and neighbourhoods that generate more life, connection, and resilience than they consume.

How this could be implemented in the future:

Utilize the “Five-Capitals Model” to Assess Total Profit:

- **Natural:** These include environments, ecosystems, and climate. Will this positively or negatively impact the natural world?
- **Human:** This takes into consideration the impact it will have on the health and well-being of the people involved and surrounding the decision. It also takes into consideration how this can benefit or impede people's skills, education, access, and growth.
- **Social:** Examines the social impact and how this might disrupt relationships, dignity, and respect of cultures and communities.
- **Manufactured:** Explores the benefits as they pertain to infrastructure and building. Will this create new structures and/or improve existing infrastructure?
- **Financial:** The most common indicator of profit, how much money will we make? (Poritt, 2005)

Mandated Total Profit Framework:

If all new developments were required to be audited through a government mandated “total profit” framework based on the five-Capitals model which factored in the Five-Capitals Model, then we would see more full spectrum growth for the future. By mandating a value equation that includes systems of care, cultural preservation, inclusivity, family continuity, Infrastructure, and environment we are building cities that are more inclusive and rounded with benefits that support the many over the few.

Reframe Investment

The ambition to grow wealth through strategic investing is a common one. One of the major components of realizing home is finding a place with opportunity for growth and the creation of a better life for the next generation. Canada and many nations across the world are experiencing housing stock shortages and market inflation due to the fact that, for generations, property has been treated as an investment asset that has been cultivated by those with the means (CHRC, 2026). These properties have been held in portfolios by private funds and families who accumulate wealth through rental profits and grow their personal gains at the expense of affordable and equitable housing. It is time to create a new way of looking at investment and offer alternate ways for people to invest in secure assets without impacting the affordability or supply of housing.

How this could be implemented in the future:

Small Business Investment Fund

To steer investing away from property the government could create a business investment fund where people can invest money into a small business loan portfolio that pays out dividends based off the interest from the loans. These funds would create more access to capital for small businesses while building a profitable investment opportunity.

Remittance Bonds That Empower Living Wage or Subsidy in Guyana

If Guyana created a bond system for the diaspora it could fund a living wage program that is fueled by these bonds. Members of the diaspora can purchase bonds, and they will accumulate interest that pays out returns every 6 months. A 10-year diaspora bond could have interest rates similar to the rates currently in Canada. These bonds could help subsidize the cost of issuing a living wage in Guyana for those considered to be in the low-income bracket. Through the diaspora bond, Guyana could support their citizens and help them to realize economic stability. This initiative would also create a stable and profitable investment stream.

Fractional Ownership Investment Funds

Instead of a single investor putting their money into one property at a time, a new fractional ownership investment fund could be developed where it connects investors with people who want to buy a home but need assistance. Currently companies like Ourboro become co-owners of a property and help to fund the down payment through private investor funds, often associated with corporate investment (Berkow, 2025). At the moment, there's no convenient way for ordinary investors to invest in fractional ownership through a fund accessible via their bank, akin to bonds, mutual funds, or exchange-traded funds. Fractional ownership funds could provide an accessible investment option for everyone. Investors could grow their wealth similarly to purchasing a property as an asset, but instead of removing it from the market, it would actually support the purchase of a home for someone in need. Both parties benefit, and both parties reap returns. Investors would see returns through their fund much like they would with a mutual fund and would never have to deal with the actual properties.

Prioritize Care

The future of home, development and infrastructure needs to centralize care as a major focus. Right now, we are on the precipice of the largest transitions into elder care Canada has ever experienced. By 2030 the country will experience “peak aging” as the last of the baby boom generation reaches 65 years of age. This means that there will be a flood of elderly people requiring care and assistance (Raman, 2025). This increase in care requirement, coupled with a current healthcare labour shortage means that the future must prioritize care and create strategies for rising to the occasion. There are many systems of care that are unrecognized or unvalidated which we need to explicitly support and build around in order to bolster the system.

How this could be implemented in the future:

Purpose-Built Developments

Construct housing that accommodates care scenarios enabling defined multigenerational living with dignity and autonomy for all residents. New developments should design housing with attached in-law suites, healthcare practitioners, childcare, and education centres on site. Approach the design of home as a place for care and prevention so we can alleviate strain on hospitals and emergency care departments.

Continue to Build Pathways for Alternate Housing

Lift permitting and cost barriers to getting more alternate housing constructed in areas experiencing housing shortages, laneway homes, garden houses, in-law suites and co-ownership agreements are all great ways to create more housing and make it easy and dignified to age in place near or with family.

Prioritize Mental Health Infrastructure

Investing in mental health and wellness will have a positive knock-on effect across multiple systems. Guyana should put focus on mental health infrastructure and invest in developing programs and supports for their citizens.

Embedding Access into the Fabric of Community

Amenities themselves become points of orientation, guidance, and exchange, where knowledge is shared, pathways are clarified, and support is encountered through trusted, familiar environments. In this model, access is not a separate layer or afterthought, but an integrated function of how communities are designed and experienced, enabling services to be not only present, but meaningfully reachable and aligned with the lived realities of those they are intended to serve.

- **Treat civic spaces as access infrastructure, not just destinations:** Reposition everyday places like libraries, community centres, housing environments, and clinics as multi-functional entry points where information, referrals, and support intersect, making services more visible and navigable.
- **Design for proximity and everyday touchpoints:** Embed access into the spaces people already move through (i.e., schools, transit nodes, cultural hubs, etc.) so support is encountered naturally through daily routines rather than requiring active search.
- **Shift from information delivery to guided navigation:** Move beyond static information toward relational, context-based support through community connectors and embedded roles that help individuals interpret options and navigate pathways relevant to them.
- **Coordinate across systems at the community level:** Align services across sectors at a neighbourhood scale through shared pathways and referral systems, enabling more connected and responsive local ecosystems rather than siloed offerings.
- **Design amenities as signals, not just services:** Design amenities to act as visible cues of available supports and belonging, allowing people to recognize opportunities through their environment without needing to actively search for them.

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Build Systems with the People, Not for Them

Prescribed development and infrastructure building is not meeting the needs of all demographics of citizens within Canada or Guyana. Policies and initiatives need to be built and designed with the people at the centre. The top-down approach needs to be inverted, making the people and the users the entry point that dictates the strategy and decisions for development and change. Additionally, the coordination and deployment of the following is instrumental to centering citizen optimally within these complex systems. While these many of these initiatives already exist, we believe they need to be more widely adopted and mandated.

How this could be implemented in the future:

People-First Governance for Housing Development

For new housing schemes and developments there should be a resident planning committee established from the commencement of the project. This committee would have input, voting power and authority over layout, amenities, and phasing, instead of a purely top-down ministry or developer design approach.

Community Needs Mapping Before Land Allocation

Before allocating house lots, conduct rapid community needs mapping to identify oversights in services and supports such as eldercare gaps, childcare needs, transport patterns, and desired third spaces. This will ensure that any new developments or revitalization is done with intention and understanding of what the community needs to thrive.

Holistic Neighbourhood Standards

Make “holistic neighbourhood development” a policy requirement. All development and revitalization must meet a minimum benchmark based on standards set by the community. Setting realistic expectations and needs fosters intentional and beneficial developments that enhance cities and communities. Civic assets like community centres, market spaces, green spaces, basic health and education access, small business opportunities, and community-enriching third spaces (cafes, gardens, recreation centers) should be designed with sustainability in mind.

Curated Local Enterprise Corridors

One of the biggest shifts between generations within the diaspora was access to opportunity. The access to employment and growth through the workforce has changed in Canada. Younger generations can no longer rely on finding meaningful employment directly out of school. Many are now creating revenue and employment through entrepreneurship and small business development.

In Guyana, there is an outcry for specialized skilled labour but for those who do now have the skills and experience in those sectors they are struggling to make a living. We need

to develop and evolve neighbourhoods so that they include government, municipal or business association subsidized spaces for small businesses to incubate and develop. If we reserve and subsidize space for small, local businesses within each neighbourhood and new housing developments, communities can foster and create growth for residents.

Pop-up spaces for short-term leases, workshops equipped with shared tools and retail space for selling independent goods could empower individuals to take significant strides towards realizing their potential, fostering business growth, and contributing to the prosperity of themselves, their families, and the surrounding community. Incentives should be provided to enterprises that cater to everyday needs and establish safe social hubs, rather than solely focusing on large-scale or speculative commercial developments.

Credential Recognition Programs

Canada and Guyana are facing skilled labour shortages in numerous sectors within their countries. A global credential recognition program could be developed that standardizes training so that it is recognized across many nations. This program would create an expedited pipeline for healthcare practitioners, skilled trades people, and other professions where current credential certifications are disconnected, resulting in invalidation of skills and barriers to employment. By creating a global credential recognition partnership, nations can begin to create more employment assurance for immigrants to the country and create sound employment options in other nations for citizens looking to emigrate.

Share Wealth

In both nations, financial support and investment is not always benefitting those who need it most, leading to crises across various systems. A strategy for redistributing and ethically allocating funds is urgently needed.

How this could be implemented in the future:

Universal Basic Income (UBI)

Providing a basic living income to everyone earning below a certain income threshold can address a wide range of issues. UBI allows people to pursue education, entrepreneurship and grow their potential (Peters, 2026). It allows families to stay together and not be displaced due to affordability issue. Parents are able to spend more time with their children and reduce childcare costs that would otherwise be necessary to keep up with the rising costs of daily life. It allows the elderly to retire with a feeling of security and stability, and it empowers citizens to pursue paths that match their aspirations, not just pay the bills. In Canada and Guyana a predictable, unconditional income would signify care and promote belonging within the policy framework. It would show that the government is committed to supporting every citizen and willing to invest in their well-being. In Guyana, UBI would help ensure that oil wealth and rapid growth translate into everyday security for ordinary people, not just higher incomes for those in the oil and professional classes, making it possible for low-income families to remain rather than being priced out or pushed to emigrate. In both contexts, UBI underpins the future of home by freeing people to invest time and energy into relationships, care, culture, and community.

Registered Savings Plans with Matched Government Funds

Canada has some savings plans that include government subsidy. These plans grow wealth for children's post-secondary education and help to support Canadians with disabilities. The money that the government contributes to the plans is relational to the amount the plan holder contributes (Government of Canada, 2025c). These types of matching campaigns share government funds for priority needs in the interest of the citizens such as education savings plans and disability savings plans. Guyana could distribute more of their oil wealth through plans such as this and could also include a plan for retirement savings with matched contributions. Canada does not currently have a retirement savings plan with government matched contributions but there is a plan where employers can contribute to a deferred profit-sharing plan for their employees (Hallward, 2026). If Guyana adopted these types

of savings plans and matched contributions for its citizens, it would go a long way in building trust and demonstrating earnest profit distribution within the country.

Preserve and Protect Culture, Heritage, Family, and Community

Honouring, protecting, and evolving culture, heritage, and family can be achieved through a combination of the above principles. Preserving these valuable components of life requires intentional design and thoughtful systems of care. By incorporating these tenets into our community and infrastructure development, we can create a more enriched environment where family, culture, heritage, and community are strengthened.

Building and revitalizing our communities with these methods as tools allows us to establish pathways and eliminate barriers for alternative and affordable housing options, such as laneways, gardens, and social housing developments. These developments enable families to stay together and support intergenerational care systems by allowing elders to age in place.

How this could be implemented in the future:

Integrating civic assets that facilitate congregation, cultural celebrations, knowledge sharing, artistic expression, and community growth preserves tradition and culture while raising awareness and disseminating knowledge to future generations. These spaces foster cultural exchange and learning, creating an environment of tolerance and interconnectedness.

Care touchpoints for the elderly and young that are seamlessly integrated into the housing ecosystem and support family access contribute to stability and belonging. Diaspora investment strategies that protect land and provide resources for families in other countries strengthen the diaspora bond and unite our nations.

Establishing a right to return policy within immigration policies simplifies the travel of landed immigrants and permanent residents to their country of origin. Designing neighborhoods with a diverse range of services, infrastructure, businesses, and housing options enriches communities, creating support, opportunities, and cultural diversity. These elements work together harmoniously, creating a flourishing society where people feel a sense of belonging and choose to remain.



Okuda San Miguel's "Equilibrium" is a 23-storey mural on Toronto's Parkside Student Residence that uses vibrant geometric forms and rainbow colour to celebrate diversity, unity, knowledge, and nature in the city's skyline. (Artist Credit: Okuda San Miguel 2018).

This Proposed Future

The levers explored here are not speculative proposals. They are proposed iterations or innovations upon proven tools with track records, and in many cases, they are already operating in the margins of the current system waiting to be scaled. What they share is a common logic: that home functions best when it is treated as a care system rather than a commodity, and when its design holds community cohesion and long-term stability as central goals rather than afterthoughts. The phase within the adaptive cycle that both Canada (reorganization) and Guyana (Conservation) are entering does not arrive with a blueprint, it arrives with possibility. These levers represent the salvageable and adaptable components from which a more equitable future of home can be deliberately built.

The future of home is not defined by a single model, pathway, or outcome, but by the ability to continuously adapt and respond to shifting outcomes. The phases within the adaptive cycle that both Canada (reorganization) and Guyana (conservation) are entering does not arrive with a clear blueprint, it arrives with possibility. What emerges across these examples is a shared logic: that home is most resilient when it is supported by interconnected systems of care, community, and access, rather than treated solely as a financial asset. The levers explored here demonstrate that the building blocks for this future already exist, embedded within both longstanding practices and emerging innovations. When these approaches are applied in alignment with the components of home, they offer a pathway toward more inclusive, sustainable, and meaningful realizations of home across diverse contexts and generations.

CONCLUSION



Toronto continues to develop and expand with aspirations of meeting the needs of its residents. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).



Demerara Harbour Bridge is a testament to modern engineering and connectivity for Guyana but it also functions as a bridge into the future of Guyana's potential and transformation. (Photo credit: Correia-Damude, 2026).

This research began with an exploration of a set of intertwined challenges, but under the conditions of global polycrisis, it reveals a deeper shift in the relationship between place and possibility. The long-standing promises attached to places are no longer stable or uniformly realized. In Canada, stability, opportunity, and institutional support, once experienced as reliable foundations, are increasingly uneven and uncertain. At the same time, Guyana is undergoing rapid transformation that is reshaping both perception and potential, reframing how the nation is understood by citizens and diaspora alike. Taken together, these trajectories signal not simply change within each place, but a broader reconfiguration of home is pursued, evaluated, and ultimately realized across contexts.

In asking how migration, disruption, resilience, and shifting values are transforming the meaning of home for Guyanese diasporic communities across the Greater Toronto Area and Guyana, this research finds that home is no longer a fixed destination, but a dynamic and negotiated condition. It is shaped through the continuous evaluation of place-based value propositions and the trade-offs required to access them. Decisions about opportunity, belonging, and community are increasingly made across borders, informed not only by present conditions but by perceived futures, relational ties, and the capacity to navigate uncertainty.

This research demonstrates that the realization of home is shaped through the continuous interaction between the core components of home, the forces that act upon them, and the conditions that enable or constrain their fulfillment and balance. Security and stability, belonging and identity, access and opportunity, dignity and care, and family, cultural continuity, and memory do not operate independently, but are experienced as a collective system that must be balanced over time. External pressures such as housing affordability, economic volatility, and institutional strain, alongside internal factors such as values, expectations, risk tolerance, attenuate the degree to which these components can be realized. In this way, home exists in a state of dynamic equilibrium, requiring ongoing negotiation and recalibration as conditions shift across contexts and generations.

The implication of this is significant. If home is not a static condition but a condition that must be continuously maintained, then efforts to support it cannot rely on singular interventions or fixed models. Instead, they must focus on strengthening the underlying components of home in ways that are adaptable across a wide range of potential futures. This reframes home as a system challenge, one that requires coordinated approaches across housing, care, economic opportunity, and community infrastructure. It also shifts the focus from predicting where stability will exist, to designing for the capacity to navigate instability itself. Ensuring that individuals and communities are better equipped to sustain home under evolving conditions.

What This Work Advances

Reframing Home as a Value Proposition and System

This research reframes home as a multi-dimensional value proposition and dynamic system of relationships, rather than a fixed, static, private asset. It offers an original outlook on what encapsulates home. The five components of home (*security and stability, belonging and identity, access and opportunity, dignity and care, and family, cultural continuity and memory*) show how people evaluate places through a layered assessment that brings together material conditions with emotional, social, and cultural life.

Understanding the Value Proposition of Home

By extending the value proposition concept from business strategy into the lived experience of home, this research offers a structured way of understanding why certain places feel livable, and why others no longer do, even when they remain materially prosperous. This contributes to understandings of placemaking, migration and home by making visible the trade-offs and tensions that individuals navigate across time and across borders.

Rethinking Affordability Through the Meaning of Home

The stories of participants illustrate that affordability is not only a question of cost, but of what a home enables. The ability to sustain familial ties, practice culture, and imagine viable futures in each place. By juxtaposing Toronto's strained housing and service systems with Guyana's rapidly evolving housing programs and land allocation schemes, the research underscores that debates about affordability must grapple with both structural constraints and emergent opportunities in different contexts.

Expanding the Definition of Infrastructure

The work advances thinking on infrastructure innovation by foregrounding civic assets, empathetic amenities, and third spaces as core to the future of home. The analysis demonstrates that infrastructure is not only physical (e.g. plumbing and roads), but also about the social, cultural, and spiritual infrastructures that hold communities together. Accessible public services and empathetic amenities show how targeted investments in civic assets can externalize care and belonging beyond the household.

Infrastructure as an Adaptive System

The foresight work developed through this research positions infrastructure as a living system that must adapt throughout its inevitable and natural adaptive cycle of growth, conservation, collapse, and reorganization. Framed in this way, infrastructure becomes a platform for resilience rather than a static backdrop, enabling planners, designers, and policymakers to engage with change as ongoing condition rather than a disruption to be managed.

Understanding Diaspora Identity in Times of Polycrisis

Finally, the study advances understanding of diaspora identity by examining how it is actively shaped under conditions of polycrisis. Through tracing multigenerational migration pathways within Guyanese families, the research reveals how home is continually reworked across contexts historically associated with arrival and departure, both now undergoing distinct forms of transition. Rather than being anchored to a single place or moment in time, diasporic belonging is constructed through ongoing negotiation across geographies, generations, and shifting conditions of possibility.

Building on concepts of transmigration, the value proposition and insights from adaptive cycle analysis, the research demonstrates that diasporic identity is not simply maintained but continuously reconfigured in response to changing environments. Participants navigate complex decisions related to risk, opportunity, obligation, and care, drawing on their communities and networks that span borders. In doing so, the diaspora emerges both as a passive subject of structural change, but as an active agent shaping how home is understood, pursued, and sustained in an uncertain world.

Emerging Directions

While this project has mapped key dynamics shaping the future of home for Guyanese and Guyanese-Canadian communities, it also identifies areas for further research.

1. Extending and Sharing the Work

There was an immense amount of research and analysis that went into this study. Many of the frameworks, areas of inquiry and conceptual explorations have either been included in the appendices or omitted. We intend to develop these supplementary components and continue to share work related to this topic that showcases these additional components. Significant time and effort went into developing futures frameworks such as scenarios of the future and the cone of plausibility. Elements which could be presented and expanded upon as their own work.

2. Expanding the Comparative Lens

A key direction is to deepen and extend the comparative lens beyond Canada and Guyana. Future studies could examine how the value proposition of home is negotiated across other diasporic pairings. This would support the testing and refinement of the five components framework and the value proposition lens in new settings, helping to distinguish which patterns are specific to the Guyanese/Canadian experience and which are more widely shared.

Extending this research beyond the diasporic lens would provide additional depth. Examining how home is realized among long-standing Canadian-born lineages would offer a useful point of comparison, helping to clarify which dynamics are shaped by migration and which reflect broader structural conditions.

3. Strengthening the Evidence Base

Exploring quantitative and mixed-methods approaches that build on the qualitative findings would also be a beneficial addition to this research. The components of home and the tensions identified between them could be tested and strengthened through quantitative surveys, participatory mapping, or longitudinal studies that track how perceptions of home, risk, and opportunity shift over time. Linking these perceptions to indicators such as housing tenure, income, service access, or mobility patterns could generate evidence that informs policy and program design at municipal, provincial, and national levels.

4. Examining Place-Based Infrastructure Innovation

A third direction is to pursue place-specific case studies of infrastructure innovation. This research points to emerging initiatives in Guyana, including housing and land-allocation programs, as well as community-driven efforts in Toronto, such as land trusts and community hubs. Future research could examine how these interventions are designed, and who they serve, where they succeed or fall short, and how they might be adapted or replicated. Attention could be given to the design and governance of civic assets, empathetic amenities, and third spaces as critical infrastructure for resilient communities.

5. Advancing Co-Design and Participatory Futures

A final direction is to advance co-design and participatory futures work with members of the Guyanese and Guyanese-Canadian diaspora and beyond. Building on the foresight principles developed in this project, co-design workshops could bring together residents, community leaders, service providers, and policymakers across Toronto, Guyana, and other diasporic nodes. Using foresight methods such as scenario building, timelines, and back-casting, these sessions could explore plausible futures for home under different economic, environmental, and political conditions.

These processes could translate the five components of home into design prompts, inviting participants to imagine and prototype new forms of housing, community infrastructure, and support systems aligned with their lived realities and aspirations. Documenting these processes would extend the insights of this research while beginning to operationalize them, shifting the work from describing how people navigate the future of home to actively shaping it alongside the communities most affected.



The former Regent Park development now sits vacant behind the revitalized Regent Park of today. Overlaid is the Home Realization Framework icon, a systems-based geometric model representing the interconnected forces, value propositions, and core components that shape the realization of home. The image reflects a shift from viewing housing as a static form to understanding home as a dynamic, relational condition that must be continuously negotiated, supported, and reimagined across contexts. (Photo credit: Corriea-Damude, 2026).

“Today is not like any other time, behind me come your children pressing on. They need more slates to write their destinies, to draw the shore line and the river bend...”
 – Martin Carter

Reimagining What Comes Next

Home is the daily practice of making belonging possible. Migration, disruption, resilience, and shifting values are merely currents that push and pull our ability to realize an optimal state of this belonging. It is not a static state to be acquired, but a relationship. A journey. One that is made and remade across generations, interrupted by migration, loss, and systemic failure, and yet persistently rebuilt through kinship, culture, and care.

External and internal forces such as structural barriers, unaffordable markets, inaccessible services, and the erosion of community infrastructure have prevented many people from fully realizing their dream of home. Home has effectively split into two branches: home as an emotional and relational practice, and home as an asset, a commodity that grows wealth and material security. Participants across generations described learning to embrace one and release the expectation of the other. They did not do so freely. They did so because the systems around them were in flux and they were faced with a balancing act. An attempt to attain homeostasis across the multiple components that embody home. New design thinking and systems-level interventions can allow for the reunification of these two pathways but only if we honestly reflect on how they were severed in the first place.

In Toronto, the diaspora is quietly and intentionally turning away from the western model of home-as-ownership and recreating the “village” dynamic of their ancestral homeland. The communal care, the proximity, the intergenerational interdependence that participants remembered from Granny’s kitchen table. In Guyana, the opposite risk looms. Rapid oil-driven development is building prosperity at speed, chasing a modern western ideal of progress, while risking the very belonging it promises. Guyana faces the possibility of building houses without community, of replacing one kind of rootlessness with another.

A central insight of this report is that home is not determined by financial capacity alone. It is shaped through the continuous interaction of multiple dimensions that individuals and families evaluate and negotiate across a lifetime. It is a practice of care sustained across generations, embedded in culture, held together by relationships, and made possible by the civic and social infrastructure that surrounds it. When that infrastructure fails, people don’t stop needing home. They simply carry more of the weight themselves, often invisibly, often at great personal cost.

The core problem, then, is not a housing shortage. It is a systemic failure to invest in the full ecosystem of home: care, culture, civic life, and connection. Addressing it requires a fundamental shift in orientation. To de-commodify is to insist that security

of place is a right, not a reward. To build relationally is to design for connection, not just occupation. To reframe investment and measure total profit means holding governments, developers, and institutions accountable not only for their creations but also for their destruction. This involves measuring returns in natural capital, social capital, human capital, and cultural capital, rather than just financial ones. To prioritize care is to recognize that the most important work in any society is the work that holds people together, and to invest and design for it accordingly.

These are not abstract ideals. The eight principles that emerge from this research (*De-Commodify, Build Relationally, Reframe Investment, Assess Total Profit, Prioritize Care, Build With Not For, Share Wealth, and Preserve and Protect*) are operational commitments. They have precedent. Fogo Island, Regent Park, and PNLT to name a few. Each demonstrate that when communities are centred rather than consulted, when belonging is treated as infrastructure rather than sentiment, transformation is possible.

The lesson the Guyanese diaspora offers is not a nostalgic one. It is a design-led one. Communities already know what they need. Home has never been waiting to be invented. It has always been here, carried forward by the people who refused to stop making it. The future of home will not be delivered by any single policy or developer. It will be built through diligent engagement, participation, advocacy, and resilience, which embodies adaptive capacity, persistence, and transformability.

The Zapatistas called it “a world where many worlds fit”. The grannies and those we spoke to manifested it by creating spaces where,

“No one should ever be made to feel like they don’t belong in her [Granny’s] house, even an uninvited neighbourhood child.”

We believe this world is buildable. This research is our small contribution towards the process of realizing it.

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Appendix

The following supplemental documents provide extended analysis, frameworks, and foresight explorations that support the findings of this research. These materials expand on key methodologies and insights referenced throughout the report.

All of the supplemental documents listed below will be made available through OCAD University's Open Repository.

Supplement A: Value Proposition Canvases for Canada and Guyana

This supplement presents a comparative value proposition analysis of Canada and Guyana using an adapted *Value Proposition Canvas* framework. It examines the perceived benefits, promises, and trade-offs associated with each nation, highlighting where value propositions are realized, strained, or misaligned with lived experience.

Supplement B: Causal Layered Analysis

This supplement applies Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) to Canada and Guyana to unpack the deeper structural, cultural, and symbolic forces shaping each nation's identity and conditions of home. It explores insights across four layers (*litany, systemic, worldview, and myth/metaphor*) to reveal underlying tensions and narratives influencing present realities.

Supplement C: Horizon Scan

This supplement presents a comprehensive horizon scan examining the structural forces shaping housing, migration, and belonging across Canada, Guyana, and global contexts. Using a STEEPV (*Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political, and Values*) framework, it analyzes key drivers, signals, and emerging trends to identify how broader system conditions are influencing the evolving meaning and realization of home.

Supplement D: Four Visions of the Future

This supplement presents scenario-based narratives exploring how the meaning and realization of home may evolve across Canada and Guyana under polycrisis. Using four lenses (*growth, discipline, collapse, and transformation*) it weaves micro-scenarios grounded in key environmental, social, economic, and political drivers to illustrate divergent yet plausible trajectories. These futures are positioned within a *Cone of Plausibility*, spanning probable to wildcard outcomes, and showing how elements may coexist or emerge over time. Rather than predicting a single outcome, it serves as a strategic tool to examine how decisions, values, and systems interventions shape housing, belonging, and community across futures.