

# **Alternative Agricultural Land Tenure Systems (ALTS) in Canada**

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# Outline

1. Canadian context / National Farmers Foundation
2. Brief portrait of ALTS in Canada
3. What have we learned from ALTS\* on the ground?
4. National third-sector model

\*Please note that farm and business names for the case studies in this presentation use pseudonyms to protect research participant confidentiality

# Why ALTS?

Building alternative agricultural land tenure systems (ALTS) for food systems transformation:

- **agroecological** practices
- **diverse and equitable** land access
- **community-based** decision-making and collective action



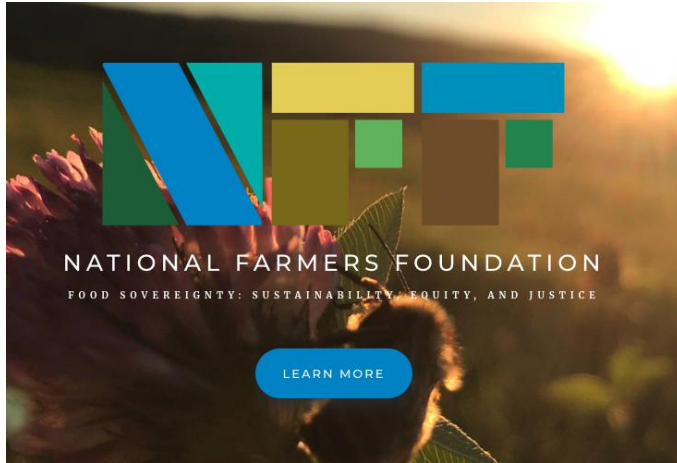
# Canada's Context

**Drivers:** demographics and farm succession;  
rising land values; farmland financialization

**Indigenous land justice:** title, governance,  
sovereignty and small 't' treaty relations

**Law and policy:** limited federal/provincial policy  
or legal frameworks for land redistribution

# National Farmers Foundation



- Farmer-led national charitable organization
- Patchwork of third-sector initiatives (farmland conservation)
- Is there a role for a national third-sector leader in Canada?

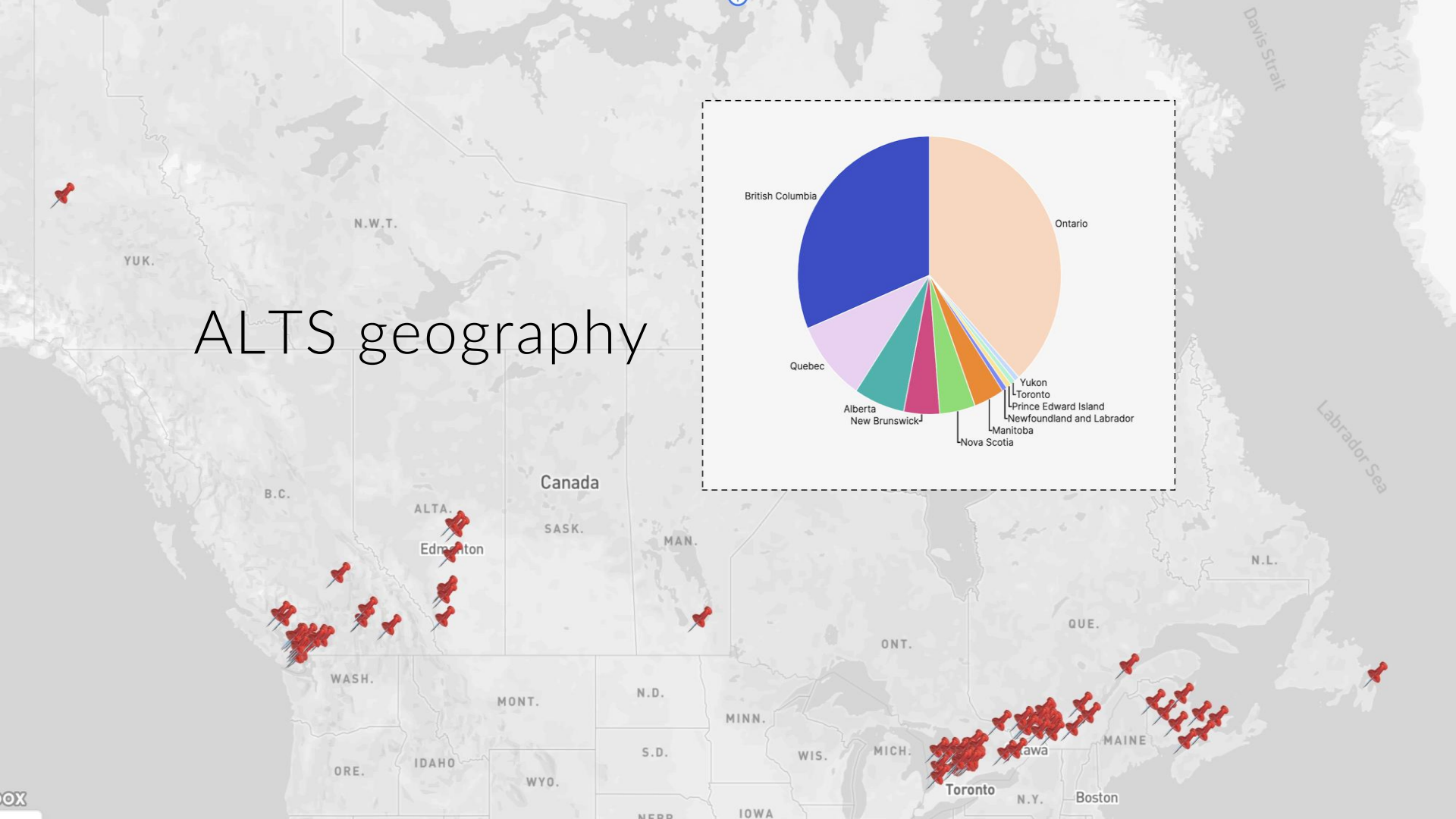
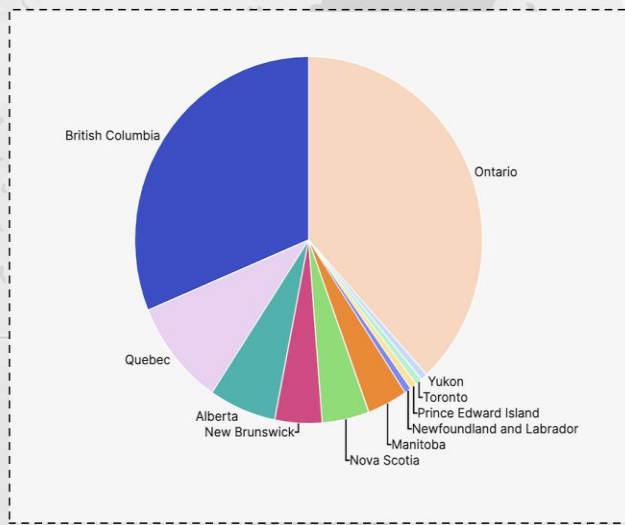
# Portrait of ALTS in Canada

Development of ALTS to date has been localized and heavily decentralized across the country.

We need a better picture of what's really happening on the ground:

- **national inventory of ALTS**
- **farmer-experiences and comparative research**

# ALTS geography



# Diverse models across the country...

**Regional trusts:** regional/provincial-scale entities from tradition of farmland conservation trusts

**Community trusts:** local entities designed to build leaseholder equity without speculative investment; community-based governance

**Social purpose trusts** (Québec): leverage formal trust structures (trustee/beneficiary) to enshrine social objectives

**Co-operatives:** horizontal member-based/democratic governance within well-defined statutory regimes

**Others** (employee ownership trusts; land condominium)

ALTS frequently employ "*mix and match*" design strategies: formal models appear less important than what works on the ground.

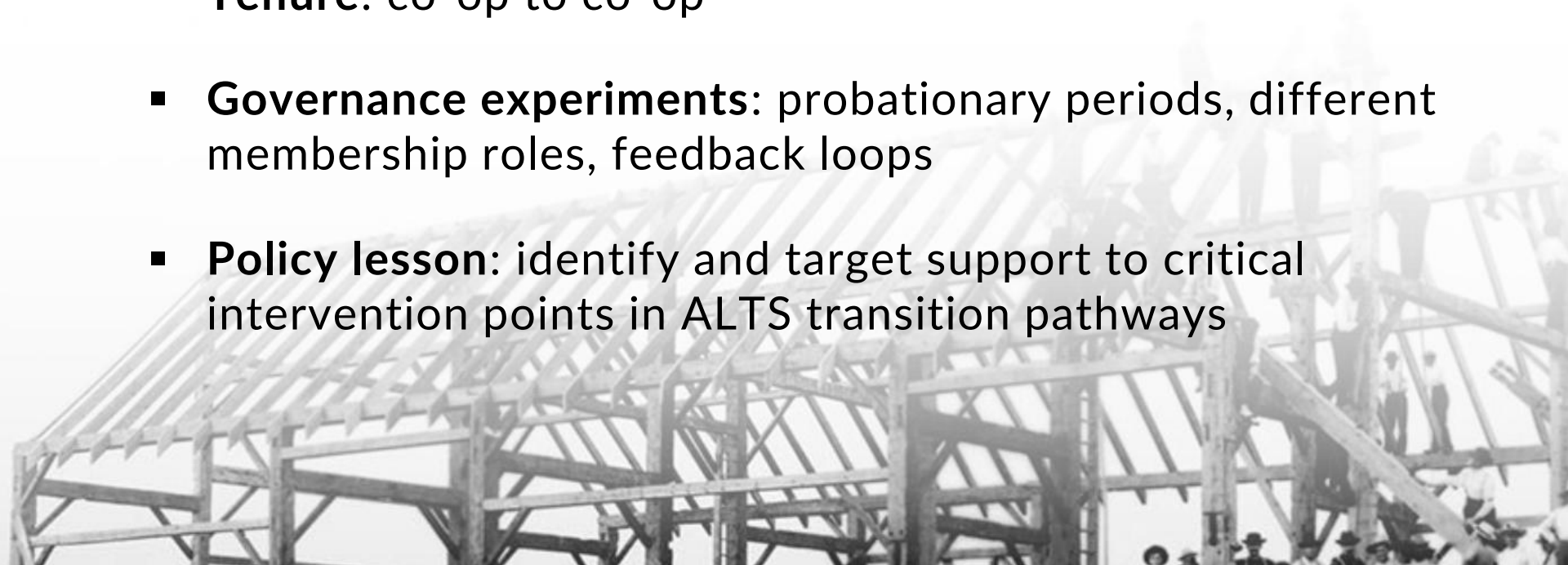


# What policy lessons are emerging from our “bottom-up” view on ALTS?

- ALTS as **transition pathways** (dynamic systems), not static tenure models: structure vs social learning; long time horizons
- Farmers want the means to **build shared equity** to sustain their livelihoods, keep land accessible, and realize community benefit
- Land access is also about **safe and inclusive** rural spaces
- Both short and long-term success of ALTS mean planning for the *next* transition

# Common Roots Farm: “who still knows how to organize a barn-raising”?

- Tenure: co-op to co-op
- Governance experiments: probationary periods, different membership roles, feedback loops
- Policy lesson: identify and target support to critical intervention points in ALTS transition pathways



# Heartland Community Homestead: housing from constraint to equity-enabler

- Tenure: public to co-op
- **Equity-building tools:** ground leases as flexible devices for benefit sharing
- **Policy lessons:** organizational housing policies/practices as high-impact interventions; legal barriers to ground-leasing; land use regulation for multiple housing units



# **Next Ag Collective: incubating access for BIPOC, queer and women-identifying farmers**

- **Tenure: co-op/non-profit hybrid**
- **Medium-term start-up leases: inclusive/reflective governance as essential to tenure security**
- **Policy lesson: “access” is about safe and inclusive rural spaces (as well as affordability)**



# New Generations Farm: planning for the next transition

- **Tenure:** land trust to private leasehold
- **Farmer reserve pool:** revolving fund managed by the land trust through re-mortgaging, earmarking capital improvements
- **Policy question:** how to balance the needs of incumbent and new-entrant farmers in future transitions?

# **Other legal, financial, social, cultural factors:**

- From multi-culturalism to legal pluralism
- Networks of professional expertise
- Credit, investment and insurance
- Charitable registration and charities regulation

# **NFF as a national third-sector model: between market and state?**

- **USA as comparator:** multi-level collaboration, competition with conservation sector; vulnerabilities to political change
- Mapping the field; identifying gaps; defining roles and finding communities of interest
- **Possible roles:** land trust; building local ALTS; extending networks of support; policy champion