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Two-Eyed Seeing to Support Indigenous Education

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Abstract

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its 94 'calls to action' to address the atrocities of residential schools while providing guidance to support reconciliation. Education was identified as one area where reform is necessary. Within the Nikosis Public School Division (NPSD, a pseudonym), Indigenous students experience significantly lower academic results than non-Indigenous peers. The colonized approach to education founded heavily on Eurocentric ideology lacks cultural connections that relate to Indigenous students. This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) will focus on Buffalo Elementary (a pseudonym) and look to support stronger cultural connections as a method to provide a more welcoming and engaging environment. This idea is based on the premise that if students feel more welcome and accepted, there is a greater opportunity to thrive academically. This OIP will look to increase Indigenous Knowledges and culture within the school, so it is valued alongside the Westernized perspective. A critical social justice lens will be used as a framework given its foundations in supporting marginalized and oppressed populations to work toward more equitable solutions. I will draw from authentic, and culturally responsive leadership approaches to strengthen relationships between the school and the Indigenous community as this relationship will be critical. The OIP intends to eradicate the achievement gap at Buffalo Elementary that currently exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, with the goal of implementing successful practices into other schools in the division.

Keywords: Indigenous, culture, education, Knowledges, public school, social justice, culturally responsive leadership, authentic leadership

Executive Summary

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) addresses the academic achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students within Buffalo Elementary (a pseudonym). Castagno and Brayboy (2008) noted that when there is a cultural gap between the practices at home and school, there is almost always an academic gap. To address this gap, the OIP is looking to create a more welcoming environment through supporting more significant integration of Indigenous Knowledges and culture to align with Indigenous beliefs.

The colonized approach to education is not welcoming for Indigenous students or aligned with Indigenous Knowledges (Battiste, 2002; Battiste, 2013; Madden et al., 2013). When Indigenous students feel culturally accepted and safe, they can better focus on education (Gunn et al., 2011). Dupris and Abrams (2017) found that when there is a greater emphasis placed on Indigenous Knowledges, Indigenous students had greater academic achievement. If we want to engage Indigenous students better, there needs to be a change from the current model.

A critical social justice lens was selected as it focuses on working with marginalized populations to provide a more equitable society (Theoharis, 2016). To do this, there needs to be the formation of relationships and a greater understanding of the community (Riehl, 2000). To better facilitate this process a culturally responsive and authentic leadership approaches were selected. Culturally responsive leadership supports cultural inclusion (Johnson, 2014) while focusing on social justice and equity (Khalifa et al., 2016; Lopez, 2015; Santamaria, 2014). The authentic leadership approach is rooted in relationships, transparency, and trust (George, 2003; Northouse, 2018), which is vital given the importance of collaboration with the Indigenous community.

Finding a method that effectively allows for greater incorporation of Indigenous Knowledges into the current education system was not simple. The two-eyed seeing approach as explained by Albert Marshall, a Mi'kmaq Elder, provided such an opportunity (Iwama et al., 2009). Two-eyed seeing takes the strengths of Western Knowledges and blends them with the strengths of Indigenous Knowledges to create a greater breadth of understanding. Engaging such a model requires the collaboration of Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members to support the process. Authentic and culturally responsive leadership approaches will help build these relationships to support this model. For this approach to work, there will need to be ongoing cultural learning through professional development opportunities and collaboration with the local Indigenous community.

The school context model as explained by Bascia (2014), identifies four components that have been shown to influence student learning positively. Toulouse (2016) took this model and applied it to research relating to Indigenous students. The four components of classroom features, teacher communities, schools and climate, and external environments are critical in supporting Indigenous student learning. Using this model, the school could work with Indigenous community members to identify practices that better align with Indigenous teachings. While Toulouse (2016) does provide specific examples, having the local Indigenous context is essential. With the school and Indigenous community working together, they could start to dismantle dominant perspectives and replace them with ones that are more engaging to Indigenous students.

Applying the school context model in association with a two-eyed seeing approach, will require various models and tools to be used to ensure implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and an effective communication strategy. The change path model

(Cawsey et al., 2016) was used as a guide for implementation. Nadler and Tushman's congruence model (1980) was used to guide a critical organizational analysis. The four-phase communication plan from Cawsey et al. (2016) will be used to relay the messaging effectively. The plan, do, study, act (PDSA) model, in association with updated academic assessments, will provide information on progress and how the process needs to adapt to be more effective.

The concluding section of the OIP provides three potential next steps and future considerations. The first suggestion discusses the idea of extending the two-eyed seeing approach to incorporate other marginalized groups. This approach could be taken up by any group to engage its members better. The second suggestion is to prepare a change resource outlining all the successes and challenges experienced throughout this change process. This resource would allow future schools to have a foundation in which to start their change process. The final suggestion is the need to address greater Indigenous representation in all levels of education. Indigenous educators are underrepresented at all levels of the education system. If we are hoping to break down systemic barriers for Indigenous students, we need to have a stronger voice to support the change.

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gotten to this point. Finally, I would like to dedicate this OIP to my son Levi who is the driving

force behind this project. Your incredible energy inspires me to create a change that provides all

Indigenous students with an education that values and celebrates Indigenous culture.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction and Problem

Education for the 21st century continues to evolve to support the ever-changing needs of students and society. Promoting a program of studies that provides the necessary resources for all students to achieve personal growth and success is challenging to say the least. While every attempt is made to support all students, there continue to be educational gaps for Indigenous students. In 2012, the Assembly of First Nations noted that Indigenous students in Canada graduate at a rate of nearly 40 percent less than that of the national average (Assembly of First Nations, 2012). These results are nothing short of unsettling and identify an area of concern that needs to be addressed within the education system.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) provided 94 calls to action to help inform and guide Canadians toward reconciliation by addressing the atrocities of the past. The residual effects of colonization and the residential school system have created intergenerational trauma that has large scale ramifications for the survivors of the system and many of today's learners (Bombay et al., 2011; Bombay et al., 2014; TRC, 2012). These calls to action have identified education as one area where reform is necessary to move forward. This organization improvement plan (OIP) will focus on Buffalo Elementary (a pseudonym), which is a part of the Nikosis Public School Division (NPSD, a pseudonym). Buffalo was selected as the school's name as the buffalo represents respect and balance in the Seven Sacred Teachings. This OIP works to give greater respect to Indigenous Knowledges while creating a more balanced approach to education where multiple perspectives are valued. The term Nikosis was selected as the school division's name as it is the Cree word for my son, who is the inspiration for this project.

Organizational Context

The Nikosis Public School Division is a publicly funded system located in an urban centre in Alberta, Canada. NPSD offers programming from early learning through grade twelve to over 6000 students in close to 20 schools. The division has seen incredible growth over the past three years, with students increasing over 15% in that time (NPSD Three-year Educational Plan, 2020). The growth in NPSD is incredibly high as it reflects the younger demographic of people living in the area. With an average age of 33 (Statistics Canada, 2016), the community possesses a substantial portion of young families with school-aged children.

NPSD offers various programming to target the community's needs and interests including faith-based education, apprenticeship training, sports academies, outreach, and second language immersion programming. The division works hard to provide various educational opportunities for students to pursue personal interests and achieve educational goals. Although there are various language courses throughout the division, there are currently no classes devoted to Indigenous languages.

NPSD is in an area with strong ties to the oil and gas sector with a sizeable portion of employment being tied directly to this industry. Economic stability within the region fluctuates alongside the price of oil resulting in tumultuous times. Many of the positions within the oil and gas field are quite lucrative bringing in a diverse population of individuals from around the world. The city is a melting pot of diversity and multiculturalism. The area has a robust Indigenous population and is the traditional grounds of the Cree, Métis, Dene, and Dane-zaa (Beaver). Indigenous culture and traditions are both prominent and celebrated in the schools and community. However, many of these celebrations are sporadic and not fully ingrained in the school's day-to-day operations.

Buffalo Elementary, which is the focus of this plan, is an elementary school located in the downtown core. The school provides programming for students from early learning (as young as age 3) to grade six. The population of students is culturally and ethnically diverse with more than half of the students living in high-density housing. Even though the population within the area is incredibly diverse, most of the educators in NPSD and Buffalo Elementary are White and of European descent. Most teachers have arrived from various parts of Canada because of the availability of teaching opportunities in the region. Indigenous educators are one of the least represented populations within the school and division with very few positions being held. Presently there are no Indigenous educators at Buffalo Elementary. The lack of local Indigenous teachers prevents the adequate representation of the local communities in which we serve. There are First Nations, Métis, and Inuit liaisons within each school whose roles are to support the development of Indigenous education as outlined by Alberta Education (2020a). Most of these positions are held by non-Indigenous individuals who often lack the depth of knowledge of Indigenous culture to support the role properly. NPSD has recently hired some additional cultural navigators to support students and school liaisons in their roles, but their time is spread thinly across the division.

NPSD follows a traditional hierarchical model of education like most school divisions in Alberta. The division is overseen by a board of elected trustees that represent the local population. The board has one employee, the superintendent, who oversees all day-to-day operations. Below the superintendent are a host of assistant and associate superintendents, directors, and coordinators who support all the K-12 schools in NPSD. Principals lead the schools with a level of autonomy with added support from divisional staff. Teachers with the support of educational assistants and other educational professionals, work together to provide

the actual frontline instruction to the students. Although change can be implemented at the school level with minimal oversight from the division, large scale reform within the division would still require approval from senior administration and potentially the board. Since there are administrative procedures that are specific to the education of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students, it would be expected that initiatives to support this population would be met with acceptance at the senior level. The procedures provide direction to the schools regarding Indigenous education with much responsibility at the school level being placed on the principal. These procedures address the importance of celebrating Indigenous culture, supporting academics, and engaging and providing a voice to the Indigenous community regarding their education (NPSD, 2020).

Alberta Education is the provincial regulatory body that ensures all provincially funded schools are welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe (Alberta Education, 2020f). It oversees the operation of provincially funded school authorities while ensuring they are adhering to the Education Act, which is the legislation directing school authorities and principals (Alberta Education, 2020a). Regarding Indigenous education, Alberta Education has pushed to close the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students (Alberta Education, 2020c). They have developed policies and procedures regarding additional supports, building strong relationships with Indigenous communities, and embedding Indigenous history, culture, and beliefs into the curriculum. The professional practice standards for all teachers, jurisdictional leaders, and superintendents have competencies relating to supporting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and the integration of Indigenous Knowledges (Alberta Education 2020e). There is a clear mandate from the provincial education authority that Indigenous education is of high

priority and that additional steps need to be taken as policy alone does not seem to be successfully closing the gap.

Vision, Mission, Values, and Goals

Organizations must have guiding documents to clearly define their purpose, and direction. These documents provide an ideal state that organizational members can follow as a vision for what is trying to be achieved. These goals are usually laid out in the organization's vision, mission, values, and goals. NPSD Three-Year Educational Plan (2019) states that its vision is to inspire and engage students to promote a passion for life-long learning. Their mission seeks to provide opportunities for all students to achieve personal excellence. In Alberta, the Accountability Pillar results are used to provide schools and divisions with a report on how their schools are performing. The report assesses 16 different measures including parental involvement, citizenship, workplace preparation and academics. The 2019 results for NPSD demonstrated excellent results overall for the division (Alberta Education, 2019).

The Accountability Pillar results also provide each school with a detailed report identifying information that is more specific to their location. Academic results are further separated into subject specific courses to help identify areas of concern. As the success of Indigenous students is a focus for Alberta Education, academic results are separated to specifically identify this population. At Buffalo Elementary, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students are achieving lower than the general population in every subject area for both the acceptable standard, and standard of excellence (Table 1). Similar results are also seen throughout NPSD demonstrating that this gap is not a localized issue and continues to be an area of concern.

Table 1

Percentage of Grade 6 Students at Buffalo Elementary Meeting Standards for Provincial

Achievement Tests (PAT)

		Three-Year Average	
Course	Measure	General Population	Indigenous Students
English Language Arts 6	Acceptable Standard	73.0%	56.3%
	Standard of Excellence	3.5%	0.0%
Mathematics 6	Acceptable Standard	40.0%	12.5%
	Standard of Excellence	1.2%	0.0%
Science 6	Acceptable Standard	54.2%	37.5%
	Standard of Excellence	7.0%	0.0%
Social Studies 6	Acceptable Standard	47.1%	25.0%
	Standard of Excellence	2.4%	0.0%

Note. Acceptable standard is defined by achieving over 50% on the provincial achievement test. Standard of excellence is defined by achieving over 80% on the provincial achievement test. Reprinted from "Accountability Pillar Results Report for Nikosis Public School Division" by Alberta Education. [Citation withheld for anonymization reasons] (2019).

Utilizing the information disclosed in the Accountability Pillar results, the Nikosis Public School Division has set out four main goals to move the division forward. It strives to provide high-quality learning opportunities, achieve excellence in learning outcomes, improve First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students' outcomes, and be a responsive and responsible school division (NPSD website, 2020a). Having the goal of improving First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students' outcomes demonstrates that NPSD has identified this as an area of concern, given

consistently lower results on the Accountability Pillar Survey. When we include the policies and administrative procedures developed specifically for Indigenous students (NPSD, 2020a), we can see that addressing this gap is essential. The next steps require a greater emphasis on identifying why this gap is continuing to happen and what changes can be implemented to affect change.

Leadership Position and Lens Statement

Framing a philosophical approach to educational leadership requires individuals to identify the foundational beliefs that guide their leadership practice. As a leader, one of my core beliefs is to ensure that students should be given the resources and support they need to excel regardless of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, culture, or ethnicity. I am working to address marginalizing conditions as part of my leadership vision for change which aligns with critical social justice theory (Theoharis, 2016). Riehl (2000) acknowledged that to support our diverse populations, school leaders need to better understand diversity, promote inclusive practices, and continue to build relationships with the community. Critical social justice theory plays an integral part in building a more just society as it empowers individuals and creates a sense of understanding to address social injustices (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010). Building strong relationships allows us to understand each other's differences, which only strengthens who we are as a society. As public educators, it is our responsibility and duty to provide an equitable education for all students while supporting diversity. Critical social justice theory is one approach that closely aligns with my leadership and pedagogical beliefs. This will be the lens through which this OIP will be written.

Ryan and Rottmann (2007) identified that societal institutions are not inherently equal in that they are created by social structures that disadvantage specific populations compared to others. Oppressive systems and structures become embedded into widespread practice resulting

in a dominant perspective that fails to represent various groups within society in favour of the dominant majority (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010). For Indigenous students, we only need to look to the residential school system that operated until the mid 1990s. Indigenous students were forced into a system that stripped them of their language, culture, and beliefs while pushing dominant Eurocentric ideologies. Only after the report released by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) did we fully understand the extent of abuse suffered by Indigenous students. Residential schools operated for over a hundred years with little resistance or acknowledgement from the dominant majority. The TRC report (2015) was the catalyst to providing a voice to a population that has been silenced for far too long. Ryan and Rottmann (2007) recognized that inequitable practices may not always be visible or easy to identify, but recognizing an issue is as important as the distribution of resources needed to address it. As a leader, I want to address privilege and dominant practice to provide a better education for all aligning with critical social justice theory (Ryan & Rottmann, 2007).

Many of the fundamental tenets of critical social justice theory, as expressed by Freeman & Vasconcelos (2010), closely align with my personal beliefs and the goal of this OIP. The belief that society can be improved through education and intervention, the importance of diverse perspectives, the need for inquiry, an understanding of the local context, and the constant disruption of practices to identify oppressive structures are all relevant to address this PoP. If the goal is to address practices that have consistently hindered specific populations, we need to alter our ways in favour of greater understanding. Frick et al. (2019) noted that school leaders need to reach out to the community through focus groups and committees to support parents and guardians as activists for organizational change. In addition, they continue to explain the importance of using equity audits as they allow for a more human response to the stories of

others (Frick et al., 2019). If we want to move toward more equitable practices, we need to build relationships that value multiple perspectives and better reflect the society we serve.

Identifying practices that continue to stifle and create barriers to certain populations is necessary to provide a more equitable education. This is not always easy when you are a member of the dominant population. School leaders must identify their own power and privilege and begin to break down discriminatory practices (Ewing, 2001). Buffalo Elementary has an extremely diverse student body with a high proportion of new Canadians. Although this OIP is looking to support the needs of Indigenous students, the student body serves as a frequent reminder that the colonized approach to education may not be serving a sizeable portion of the students. As the principal and leader responsible for education within the school, I must acknowledge I am looking at the situation from the lens of the dominant majority. I must identify my own power and privilege and encourage others to do the same. This is necessary as we work to understand how current practices discriminate or marginalize Indigenous students.

Identifying a need for change does not necessarily mean an individual can affect change. Cawsey et al. (2016) describe that an individual's power in an organization is related to their position within the organization, their character and reputation, and their ability to influence people and information. The more proficient a person is in each category increases their overall influence. Cawsey et al. (2016) note several types of individual power including positional, network, knowledge, and personality. Within NPSD, I hold an elevated level of positional, network and personality power. I have excellent working relationships with my peers as well as my superiors. Having been in the school division for only a few years limits my knowledge of the organization. However, through my education and experience in other school divisions, I

have great breadth in my academic knowledge. Adhering to Cawsey et al. (2016) definition of power, I would hold profound influence and a high ability to influence change.

As the principal of Buffalo Elementary, I have the power, influence, and decision-making abilities to affect all changes within the school. Principals can make decisions regarding programming, allocation of resources, and school-wide direction. The principal also has positional power to influence teachers and staff toward a school-wide vision for change. The strong relationships and trust between my staff and I will help support the change (Kars & Inandi, 2018). I also have access to all key stakeholders, including division employees, parents, community members, and students. My positional power allows me access to the people and resources needed to gain greater support and traction to push an agenda for change.

Looking through a critical social justice lens requires a certain level of caution given I am working with a population in which I am not a member. Freeman and Vasconcelos (2010) noted to achieve the desired outcome, there needs to be an understanding of the specific social context of the affected group. This will be difficult given I am not Indigenous. Working to understand Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and culture will require strong working relationships with the local Indigenous community. Freire (2002) notes that there must be strong levels of trust and the requirement to learn together involving a certain level of risk and humility. Gaining a greater understanding of Indigenous Knowledge and culture is important to me personally and professionally, and I am willing to put myself in a position of vulnerability to make a difference.

As a non-Indigenous person looking to impact a positive change for Indigenous students and families, I must ensure the changes echo their voices and not my own. Khalifa et al. (2016) explained the importance of culturally responsive leadership (CRL) to promote inclusivity while valuing Indigenous culture. They explained CRL as an anti-oppressive leadership style that

supports the marginalized. I need to make sure I do not continue to exacerbate the power imbalance which has led us to our current position. To ensure this does not happen, I will use a constructivist approach which allows the individuals who have lived the experiences to express themselves while drawing from the historical and cultural contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The constructivist approach allows various viewpoints, supports participant awareness, and helps to strengthen the relationships with communities (Mertens, 2019). Battiste (2002) noted that Indigenous Knowledge does not align with Eurocentric practices, and because of this limits how much can be understood from a Eurocentric point of view. To best understand the oppressive practices, I need to work with the Indigenous community to construct and understand the current reality. Freeman and Vasconcelos (2010) note it is utterly impossible to understand what forms of oppressive practices are present without allowing the individuals affected to identify them.

The constructivist approach has been frequently used by non-Indigenous researchers while working with Indigenous communities as it lends well to a decolonizing approach (Braun et al., 2013; Kilian et al., 2019; Stewart, 2009; Thurston et al., 2014). A constructivist approach provides a framework for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to work together. It aligns well with Indigenous epistemologies as it echoes the importance of relationships, community, and the importance of spoken word common to Indigenous culture (Kovach, 2009). Given the importance of the Indigenous perspective in addressing this OIP, and the fact that the author is not Indigenous, further solidifies the need to construct an understanding together. I must not try and address the issue from the dominant Eurocentric perspective.

The educational experiences of Indigenous students are not something that I can fully understand as a non-Indigenous individual. I can work with students, parents, and community leaders to develop strong working relationships while identifying practices that hinder learning. I

can support change by utilizing my positional power in the school division, and the power afforded to me as a member of the dominant majority. Given a lack of Indigenous representation at the higher levels of leadership within the NPSD, I hope to work as an ally with Indigenous populations and help to amplify their voice to promote an agenda for change. Having a better understanding of the current situation will aide in working toward solutions.

Leadership Problem of Practice

The neoliberal approach to education has created a system of accountability that relies heavily on standardized tests to assess achievement (Apple, 2017; Green, 2016). Within Alberta, the use of standardized testing has been developed for grades six, nine, and twelve, and are used to assess not only the achievement of the students but also the individual schools and divisions. Miller (2018) noted that many large-scale assessments are plagued by colonial practices and can be discriminatory toward Indigenous students. They express the need for more culturally appropriate measures to provide a more accurate assessment. While a large-scale provincial assessment reform is necessary, it is beyond the reach of this OIP.

The Nikosis Public School Division uses provincial assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses, and employs this information when deciding the direction of the division moving forward. The Annual Education Results Report (NPSD, 2019) shows that NPSD mirrors provincial averages on most variables assessed. There are minor discrepancies from year to year, which is to be expected given fluctuations with students. However, further analysis shows an unsettling trend. Indigenous students achieve significantly lower on all academic variables reported compared to their non-Indigenous peers (NPSD, 2019). Reviewing NPSD three-year educational plans back to 2012 has shown this has been an issue for quite some time (NPSD, 2020a). Similar results are seen at Buffalo Elementary (Table 1), with Indigenous students'

underperforming the general population on all academic provincial assessments (NPSD, 2019). The academic gap is universal across NPSD and demonstrates a serious area of concern.

Castagno and Brayboy (2008) noted that when there is a cultural gap between home and school, there is almost always an academic gap as well. They explain that "different learning styles and cultural practices result in incongruity between teaching and learning" (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008, p.953). To better engage Indigenous students, various perspectives need to be integrated into our teaching, the curriculum, and our educational practices to better address the various learning styles (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Indigenous epistemologies do not align with mainstream epistemologies, as Indigenous epistemologies place a greater emphasis on a holistic approach to understanding (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). In addition to conflicting epistemologies, Indigenous students frequently reported high levels of personal and systemic racism and discrimination which make schools unwelcoming (Battiste, 2013; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Madden et al., 2013). This problem of practice (PoP) will look to address the academic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students at Buffalo Elementary by providing greater integration of Indigenous Knowledges and culture into the school environment. The approach will use critical social justice theory to identify necessary changes and provide a more culturally relevant school environment that better engages Indigenous students. There is an educational debt owed to Indigenous students that requires altering of teaching practices to better support the needs of Indigenous students. To understand the present, we must first understand the past.

Framing the Problem of Practice

The history of the Indigenous people of Canada is littered with discriminatory practices that have served to create great obstacles for their people. The following section will explain how

the past educational practices are impacting our current Indigenous students, leading to educational inequity. The historical context will help frame what is happening with Indigenous education today.

Beginning with the first European settlers to Canada, the assumption of Indigenous people as inferior and in need of guidance was common (Indigenous Foundations, 2020). In the early 1880s the federal government of Canada set up the residential school system to steer Indigenous individuals away from their own culture, languages and beliefs and assimilate them more into the Eurocentric dominated Canadian culture. Children were removed from their homes and forced into residential schools. It was believed that these schools would prepare them to be better Canadians. With the inception of the Indian Act in 1920, it became illegal for Indigenous students to attend anywhere but a residential school for their education. It is estimated that approximately 150 000 individuals have gone through the residential school system with more than half still being alive today (Truth and Reconciliation of Canada, 2012).

Unbelievably, residential schools in Canada continued to operate until 1996, when the doors were finally closed. In addition to being taken from their families and forced to forget their culture, the residential schools were very traumatic for the attendees. Abuse was prevalent within the schools with many individuals experiencing sexual abuse, physical abuse, or both. The abuse was so great that it has been found to create what has been referred to as intergenerational trauma. This trauma has resulted in negative impacts for not only the survivors of the residential school system but also subsequent generations (Bombay et al., 2013; Bougie & Senecal, 2010; O'Neill, 2018). Bombay et al. (2013) noted the compounding nature of impacts when numerous members of the same family had attended the residential school system. The colonized approach to education based on Eurocentric knowledge has oppressed and fail Indigenous students

(Battiste, 2002). Looking at the problem with a critical social justice lens, it is evident that the system needs change. There is an obvious need for educational reform to engage Indigenous students better and provide a more equitable education.

Political Implications

The residential school system was a government endorsed program that destroyed Indigenous culture while forcing assimilation to the dominant culture. Only after individuals dared to speak out about the negative experiences, together with class action lawsuits, did the government begin to take notice. In response, the federal government created the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People which looked at the impacts of the residential school system. A continued push by residential school survivors resulted in the Government of Canada developing the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) in 2006. This agreement committed funding to support survivors and the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The goal of the TRC was to provide all Canadians with a historical record of the residential school survivors. It was an avenue to express the experiences of survivors while demonstrating the impacts that were suffered by the attendees, families, and communities. The TRC sought to enlighten the public on the atrocities of the residential school system while hoping to develop stronger relationships that were built upon mutual understanding and respect (TRC, 2012)

The TRC had a mandate to focus on the historical component and how to move toward reconciliation. One significant step forward was in 2008 when then Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, issued a formal apology on behalf of the Canadian people for the residential school program and its impacts on Indigenous culture, language, and heritage. In 2015, the TRC came out with its 94 calls to action which focused on the next steps to support reconciliation.

Education was identified as one of the fundamental components that needed to be changed to work toward reconciliation. For over 150 years, it was the educational system in Canada that has crippled the Indigenous population. If we are hoping to correct our past mistakes, it will be education that will help guide us forward.

As a result of the TRC calls to action, there have been increased efforts toward reconciliation. Alberta Education has taken numerous steps to integrate Indigenous history, culture, and perspectives into the kindergarten through grade 12 curriculum (Alberta Education, 2020c). They have developed Indigenous studies courses focusing on language and cultural programming, as well as committing to increased resources and training to build competency. Teachers also have access to various resources such as Guiding Voices, Walking Together, and Empowering the Spirit which all support Indigenous education (Alberta Education, 2020c). The professional standards for teachers, leaders, and superintendents have also been updated to ensure knowledge of Indigenous history and culture is a priority (Alberta Education, 2020e).

Societal/Economic Costs

As a result of colonial history, it is essential to be aware of some of the more shared challenges Indigenous students may face. Indigenous students frequently deal with food insecurity, lack of parental and peer support, lower educational levels of parents, and the effects of the intergenerational trauma caused by their parents' attendance in residential schools (Bougie & Senecal, 2010; Thiessen, 2009). These factors would not affect all individuals but understanding that there is a higher incidence within Indigenous populations provides potential factors to look for when developing educational programming. It is important to note that many of these personal factors are outside the control of the school but are critical to acknowledge and understand when developing a plan that meets the needs of these students. These factors

demonstrate some of the societal inequities experienced by Indigenous students which further supports the use of a social justice approach. Implementing such initiatives as breakfast/lunch programming, peer or teacher tutoring groups, and providing access to school counselling would be some strategies to help address these concerns. Meeting the primary needs of students is a priority to ensure they are in a position to learn.

Chronic absenteeism is highly correlated with lower academic achievement, higher drop-out rates, more frequent grade retention, increased health risk behaviours, and lower socioemotional development (Gottfried, 2014). Fowler and McDermott (2020) found that students who experience socioeconomic disadvantages, mental health concerns, or are a member of a culturally marginalized group, are at an increased risk for chronic absenteeism. Knowing Indigenous students fit within this category being members of a marginalized group, it is important to maintain up to date attendance records as to prevent students from falling into this chronic absentee category. There are additional challenges when it comes to attendance of Indigenous students. Some Indigenous families still have a high level of distrust when it comes to schools as they see them as dangerous places given the close relationship with child welfare (Mine & Wotherspoon, 2020). The ability of child welfare to intervene within a school without the need of parental permission does still resonate with individuals who lived through residential schools. We must work with Indigenous families to overcome these barriers by strengthening relationships and building trust.

Failing to provide Indigenous students with the tools to succeed academically may have potential long term societal and economic costs. Hankivsky (2008) looked at the costs associated with individuals who failed to complete high school and found that individuals who dropped out of school required greater resources related to healthcare, social assistance, crime, employment,

and education. Even though the focus of this OIP is an elementary school, the progressive nature of education would infer that we want students to be successful early in their education career, as this is when the foundation is laid for future learning.

Division and School Concerns

Explaining the broader context provides the foundation for how we arrived at the current situation. The colonized approach to education that has been thrust upon Indigenous students has provided them with an education that is not welcoming or aligned with Indigenous Knowledges (Battiste, 2013; Madden et al., 2013). Battiste (2002) has mentioned that the Eurocentric system has frozen Indigenous people in time and made Indigenous Knowledges all but invisible. Critical components of Indigenous Knowledges such as language and the interconnectedness to the earth have lost their place in the school (Toulouse, 2016). The lack of cohesion with traditional ways does provide its challenges, but as Battiste (2002) notes, Indigenous students will have to be prepared to live in an environment quite different from their parents. The system within NPSD needs to look at what is being delivered and what we can do to provide opportunities to draw from the strengths of each perspective which has been coined "two-eyed seeing" by Albert Marshall, a Mi'kmaq Elder (Iwama et al., 2009).

It is important to look at the current system to understand what can be done to create a positive change. Dupris and Abrams (2017) found that when there was a greater emphasis placed on the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges with test construction, curriculum development, and teacher education, there was greater achievement with Indigenous students. Given that most educators of Buffalo Elementary are of White European descent, there is a cultural and knowledge gap relating to Indigenous education. Educators need further professional development and continue to analyse oppressive practice fraught with dominant ideology. By

improving cultural connections for Indigenous students and stressing the importance of Indigenous Knowledges, we can provide students with opportunities that more closely align with their cultural backgrounds. It does not address assessment concerns but does provide a strategy that may garner positive impacts.

To move forward, we must reflect and identify components of the system that are not working for Indigenous students. Using a critical social justice lens to look at practices will help to identify inequalities. Through a constructivist approach, collaboration and engagement with Indigenous communities will allow their experiences to be shared as members of the oppressed population. Their stories will help to identify how dominant ideologies continue to oppress and marginalize Indigenous students, and how we can work to eliminate them. To do this, we will need to identify guiding questions to understand the factors that are contributing to the problem.

Guiding Questions

Provincial education results have demonstrated there are areas of concern regarding the education of Indigenous students. It is essential to understand that test scores only tell a small fraction of what is happening within the schools. Working to address these issues requires educators to understand the situations complexity without immediately jumping to deficit thinking. Davis and Museus (2019) identify deficit thinking as when historically oppressed populations are held responsible for the challenges that they must overcome. This further perpetuates the blaming culture which is not conducive to progress. For this OIP, three main guiding questions will be examined:

1. To what extent is the academic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students a product of flawed and discriminatory assessment practices?

2. Which learning environments within the school provide an atmosphere that respects and welcomes Indigenous students, so they have the greatest opportunities for success?

3. How do educators provide a more culturally relevant education even though they are non-Indigenous? Which knowledge gaps are present with educators that need to be addressed to serve this population better?

The following section will look at each guiding question to better understand why these questions need to be addressed if we are hoping to serve Indigenous students better.

Assessment Practices

Identifying an educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students within Buffalo Elementary is based on the division's use of standardized provincial assessments and school-based numeracy and literacy data (NPSD, 2019; Buffalo Elementary, 2020). Miller (2018) identified that standardized tests are discriminatory toward Indigenous students and that more culturally appropriate measures should be used. Given that these assessments may be culturally biased toward Indigenous students, the extent of the gap may not be as clear as initially defined. Flawed or discriminatory assessments practices may be providing less than accurate achievement results. While these measures are less than ideal, these are the current measures in which the school, division, and province base academic achievement. Large scale assessment reform to reflect minority populations better is an area that needs further investigation. However, for this OIP it is beyond my scope and influence given that it requires changes at the highest levels of provincial education. I will look to identify alternative forms of assessments that may be better suited to assess achievement for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. School level assessments are easier to change but we will need to continue to work to address the large-scale provincial style assessments that dominate the system. Changes at the school level may

initiate the discussions around better assessment practices at the higher levels of provincial education. The colonized system of education is fraught with discriminatory practices, but it is the system in which we currently operate.

Learning Environments

Students need to be provided with an opportunity to learn in an environment where they feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. Preston and Claypool (2013) noted that when Indigenous students felt safe, they found an increase in motivation to learn. Many of the current provincial education systems are based on a colonized model that is not overly welcoming to Indigenous students (Madden et al., 2013). Battiste (2013) has acknowledged that the colonized approach to education does not align with the traditional belief systems of most Indigenous cultures. Educators need to understand the learning environments because when Indigenous students feel safe and culturally accepted, they can better focus on their education (Gunn et al., 2011). Educators must provide a welcoming learning environment so all students feel accepted.

Leadership plays a critical role in developing a welcoming school culture as leaders set the vision for the school. Leaders who demonstrate cultural understanding and facilitate strong relationships with students and the community model the behaviours necessary to promote a more welcoming environment (Preston et al., 2017). Working with students, staff, parents, and the community, we can build a shared vision of the school to be more inviting. These interactions will help to build stronger relationships with all educational stakeholders. Relationships are a vital component to creating a welcoming environment. When there are positive relationships between teachers and students, there was a direct relation to academics (MacIver, 2012; Milne, 2017; Moon & Berger, 2016; Pratt & Dannyluck, 2017; Preston, 2016).

Education Delivery

To properly support Indigenous education within Buffalo Elementary there needs to be an analysis of the core competencies of the educators. Discussions of where there are gaps within their pedagogy must further be explored. One obvious challenge is that most educators across the division are not local and have immigrated to the community for employment. The need for teachers to have a solid understanding of local Indigenous culture while continuing to develop cultural competencies is well documented (Gunn et al., 2011; Kanu, 2005; Whitley et al., 2013). Understanding how the colonial system oppresses Indigenous students and identifying personal bias and privilege are all areas that need to be explored (MacIver, 2012; Pratt & Danyluk, 2017). Developing a complete picture of all the challenges will only aid in providing more effective solutions. In addition to understanding challenges, educators need to know how to incorporate Indigenous Knowledges.

The Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortium (2021) has developed "Weaving Ways" which is a resource for teachers looking to integrate Indigenous ways of knowing into the classroom. They provide a plethora of examples teachers can use based on four interconnected ideas of cultures of belonging, instructional design, pedagogy, and sharing through story. The document explains the need to make learning activities holistic, collaborative, and relational. One example encourages students to look at various media/resources and provide reflections on how it connects to who they are as an individual. This allows for different thoughts to be shared and gain a deeper understanding of various perspectives. Indigenous community members should be invited into the schools to share teachings, and allow the sharing of story through song, dance, or art. Even changing the layout of the class to a circle orientation promotes a more respectful and safer environment in Indigenous culture. These examples provide only a

few of the countless opportunities to better integrate Indigenous ways of knowing into the classroom. Although simple, these suggestions are noticeably different from the overly structured format associated with standardized testing. While standardized tests do seem to be norm for the near future, education delivery must start to look at other strategies to engage students and provide a more inclusive approach.

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Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

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This OIP looks at how we can better support Indigenous education at Buffalo Elementary to strengthen cultural understanding to target the academic attainment gap identified by standardized assessments. The school, divisional, and provincial goal of supporting Indigenous populations would require an equitable education that provides Indigenous students with the opportunities to experience similar academic achievements as non-Indigenous students. Alberta Education Results Report for both the school and division articulate this is not the case (Alberta Education, 2019). A social justice approach fits as it looks to identify where these inequities exist and how we can address them. The following section will look to provide the vision for change for Buffalo Elementary with implications for NPSD moving forward.

Current Situation

The Nikosis Public School Division provides various initiatives and resources to support Indigenous education across the division and Buffalo Elementary. There is a First Nation, Métis, and Inuit coordinator responsible for providing resources, and acting as a facilitator to connect schools to individuals who can support cultural understanding and Indigenous Knowledges. Each school also has an Indigenous liaison who works with the coordinator to disseminate these resources throughout the school. The role of the liaisons varies tremendously from school to school, depending on the individual's capacity. In most schools, the liaison position is an

assignment given in addition to the responsibilities of a teacher or administrator. Programming from school to school varies tremendously depending on the amount of time dedicated to the position. The division has recently hired two cultural navigators who work throughout the schools promoting Indigenous culture. Many of these opportunities work to acknowledge Indigenous culture but do little to truly integrate an Indigenous perspective. Cultural celebrations, traditional teachings, and addressing historical atrocities are significant steps but are only scratching the surface. Battiste (2002) noted that if we truly were to integrate Indigenous Knowledges into the curriculum, three processes must be adhered to:

    1. There must be a level of respect surrounding the protocol, preparation, and purpose of Indigenous Knowledges.

    2. There needs to be an understanding of the purpose and preparation needed to disseminate Indigenous Knowledges.

    3. There is a need for constitutional and ethical responsibilities for anyone working within Indigenous Knowledges.

Within Buffalo Elementary, the divisional First Nations, Métis and Inuit coordinator also serves as the Indigenous liaison as well. Having this individual in a joint role allows the school to be well informed of all divisional initiatives that are being implemented. Even with the coordinator of the division taking on the responsibility of the school liaison, the academic results for Indigenous students are still behind their non-Indigenous peers (Buffalo Elementary, 2020). Increased efforts need to be put into other facets of the school environment as the current efforts are not providing the desired results. The identification of cultural events is present, but the integration of Indigenous Knowledge is not.

One area where greater attention is needed requires understanding the components of the school environment. Buffalo Elementary follows the traditional Eurocentric model present at most schools which is failing Indigenous students. Toulouse (2016) utilizes the school context model to identify factors that are affecting the learning of Indigenous students and provides the following four key areas for which educators need to focus on promoting Indigenous learning:

- Classroom features (differentiation, linked to experiences, high expectations, management, and relationships)

- Teacher communities (professional development, collegial relationships, student learning)

- School Climate (safe, support inclusion, shared leadership, curriculum deconstruction)

- External Environment (community engagement, integration of school and community, focus on social change, connections to global citizenship)

If we are hoping to provide a more welcoming and culturally relevant environment for Indigenous students, we need to start integrating Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives into the very fabric of the school. Toulouse (2016) has provided a model that allows this to happen. The four areas provide a starting point for educators to focus on supporting Indigenous learning within a school context. To get to this point we need to understand what is driving the process.

Change Drivers

Improving the academic achievement of Indigenous students has been a focus of Alberta Education and NPSD for quite some time (Alberta Education, 2020; NPSD, 2020). Even with continued development of policy pertaining to supporting Indigenous education by Alberta Education and the division, a significant gap still exists. Milne (2017) found that policies did not always reflect reality in that often schools lack implementation of initiatives even when there is a

strong policy in place. She did note that regardless of policy, school-based initiatives positively impacted Indigenous students' education. For this reason, it could be inferred that additional policies regarding Indigenous education add to the level of bureaucracy without supplementing a positive change. To move towards the desired result, people will be the primary drivers of change. There is currently a power imbalance as the people making all the decisions are not representative of those we serve. From a social justice lens this is unacceptable and represents one of the drivers for change. To address concerns, we will need to relinquish control and come from a place of collaboration (Battiste, 2013).

Drawing from the four components of the school context model (Bascia, 2014), teachers will be a critical driver to change as they are directly involved in all facets of creating a positive environment for students. NPSD has historically dealt with higher levels of staff turnover given it is in a northern community. Recent years have seen vast improvements to staffing but it continues to be an area of concern. The transient nature of individuals creates a hurdle relating to consistency. This out migration makes it harder to build community and maintain any level of familiarity from one year to the next. In Buffalo Elementary, where the change is being targeted, two of the three administrators are new to the school. As change leaders it takes time to develop the relationships needed to gain support from the community. Trying to build solid relationships with a high staff turnover can create difficulties as new staff may lack continuity of past practices. Also, given that most teachers within the school are non-Indigenous and not from the local area, they lack the same experiences and perspectives as the students and community members they support. Regardless of teacher turnover, Alberta Education (2020e) is clear that it is our professional responsibility to promote Indigenous Education. Teachers must adhere to their professional responsibilities and take up this change process.

In addition to the need for a more stable staff to drive the change, open lines of communication between the school and the Indigenous community need to be developed. This communication will help to provide a greater understanding of some of the potential root causes. There are numerous partners within the Indigenous communities whose voice needs to be heard. First are the students themselves. Students need to be able to share their first-hand experiences and identify challenges and areas of concern. Getting various perspectives for students of all grades creates a more comprehensive picture of why this gap exists.

The next group of individuals who are critical change drivers are the parents of current students. They can speak to what they are seeing and provide additional information that many of the younger students may not be able to quantify. Many of these individuals would have gone through the public education system so they would have first-hand knowledge of past practices. Although these practices may not be present at Buffalo Elementary, they could identify systemic practices that may be creating barriers. The parents may help identify context not easily seen by the non-Indigenous educators within the system and bring light to practices that continue to oppress this population.

The last group of change drivers are the elders within the community. They are the voice of the past and have a strong influence in the community. The residential school system was a terrible atrocity that created great harm to Indigenous people. To rebuild the trust, it is important to get the support of Elders who hold profound influence in the community. Working collaboratively to provide a voice will strengthen trust and demonstrate a commitment to improving current practices for all students moving forward.

This vision for change seeks to provide Indigenous students with an equitable education comparable to non-Indigenous students. This vision is shared by the school, the division, Alberta

Education, and echoed by the TRC as a necessary step toward reconciliation (TRC, 2015). The goal requires changes to be made that demonstrate collaboration with Indigenous communities while valuing traditional beliefs and culture. It is the actions of key individuals which will provide traction to drive the OIP forward. Providing a medium for Indigenous students, parents, and community members to voice their concerns will initiate traction in the right direction. Educators need input from the Indigenous communities as we have proven that what we are doing is not working. Critical social justice theory will force individuals to evaluate the systemic practices of the present, to understand how they have created inequities (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010). These changes are necessary but is the organization ready for the change?

Organizational Change Readiness

Organizational change is a complex process that requires considerable time and effort to understand the many facets of an organization, and develop a comprehensive strategy to affect change. Immense preparation and planning are needed to ensure the organization is in a position of readiness where change can be initiated successfully. An identified need is the first step in organizational change but does not guarantee readiness. By demonstrating a gap and creating dissatisfaction with current practice, the organization and team members identify why a change is required. When team members understand the reason behind the need for change, it aids in creating a culture of change readiness (Cawsey et al., 2016).

If we are looking to assess an organization's change readiness status, it is important to define what readiness means. Armenakis et al. (1993) define readiness as,

> the cognitive precursor to the behaviours of either resistance to, or support for, a change. It is reflected in organizational members' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions regarding the

extent to which changes are needed and the organization's capacity to successfully make

those changes. (p.681)

Armenakis et al. (1993) noted that the primary strategy for creating organizational readiness is an

effective change message. The message must identify a gap between the present and future state,

and the individual and organizational ability to overcome the discrepancy (Armenakis et al.,

1993).

Cawsey et al. (2016) described organizational readiness as a multifaceted process that

depends on previous experiences, the culture of adaptability within the organization, and the

transparency, commitment, and confidence in leadership as held by its members. They continued

to add that readiness is also affected by organizational structure, information, resources, vision

alignment and the use of reward and measurement systems (Cawsey et al., 2016). Seeing the

number of variables that factor into an organization's readiness for change demonstrates the sheer

complexity that must be understood if hoping to affect change effectively.

A comprehensive organizational assessment is needed to understand fully where an

organization sits regarding change readiness. Utilizing such tools as the readiness-for-change

questionnaire (Cawsey et al., 2016) will provide an initial assessment, raise awareness, and

provide a basic understanding of organizational readiness (Cawsey et al., 2016). The

questionnaire provides a tangible score ranging from -10 up to +35, with a lower score

suggesting more work may need to be done to prepare the organization for change. Cawsey et al.

(2016) note that a score lower than 10 would imply that an organization is not ready, and it will

be difficult to implement change.

The questionnaire is broken into six sections and looks at the following dimensions: (a)

previous change experiences, (b) executive support, (c) credible leadership and change

champions, (d) openness to change, (e) rewards for change, and (f) measures for change and accountability. Each section has a series of yes or no questions and a value is assigned depending on responses. The points are tallied, and your readiness score is given. After going through the readiness-for-change questionnaire, Buffalo Elementary falls in the higher level of change readiness with a score of 24. The organization scored high on all dimensions except for the rewards for change. There is currently no rewards system for change set up a Buffalo elementary. This score is promising as it demonstrates an elevated level of change readiness but does infer continued efforts will be needed to ensure success.

The previous sections of the OIP have clearly articulated the gap in the academic achievement of Indigenous students and proposed a vision for change. It is now pertinent to develop proper messaging so the change agents know how to move the OIP forward. Proper messaging ensures the organization and team members know exactly what the vision is. It provides direction so that everyone can work collaboratively toward the same goal. The following section will look more specifically at the organizational readiness of Buffalo Elementary using the variables affecting readiness as identified by Cawsey et al. (2016) and Armenakis et al. (1993).

Minor changes in programming, demographics, and staffing are common from year to year as schools work to address the needs of the students within the building. It is important to note that changes within Buffalo Elementary are sometimes directed from the division and sometimes the school level. Changes made at the school level are more widely accepted as the stakeholders within the building have a better understanding of why the change is happening. When changes are directed from the top down, they are usually met with a certain level of resistance. Based on conversations with teachers throughout the school and division, a common

belief is that most division initiatives are not long-term, so there is a lack of buy-in. These past experiences do not bode well for organizational change readiness. As this change is beginning at the school level, and supported from higher levels, previous experience would infer greater acceptance. Include the importance of reconciliation and the TRC calls to action, and it is quite evident that the need to support Indigenous students and Indigenous education is a priority.

Cawsey et al. (2016) identified a second variable important to identifying organizational readiness which is the adaptability and flexibility of the organizational culture. In previous years Buffalo Elementary would have been considered very adaptable. The school serves a diverse population in an area with a high turnover of students. Many people new to the community initially land in Buffalo Elementary's catchment area, but often move to other areas of the community seeking out single family homes. This results in frequent migration of students within classes. The school also serves a high number of English language learners as well as providing special education programming. Within this complex school, teachers have become incredibly adaptable given the fluidity of the students and the constantly changing needs of the students we serve. As the adaptability of the staff is strong it will act to support change within the school. It is important to note that our school is working through the aftermath of a natural disaster, and the ongoing COVID pandemic. With the additional stress levels placed on our population, careful consideration must be taken to not overwhelm the staff.

As the principal and leader in the school, I am open and transparent about the importance placed on providing an equitable education for all students. I frequently reiterate that it is our professional duty as teachers to support Indigenous education as defined by Alberta Education (2020e). Cawsey et al. (2016) have identified the importance of increasing awareness and urgency as a method to support organizational readiness. I use my influence as the principal to

inform staff of challenges, provide professional development, review school and division-based assessments, and providing anecdotal observations from within Buffalo Elementary to provide a more comprehensive picture. Creating an elevated level of awareness of the present state will build support and recruit individuals who are passionate about implementing change.

The organizational readiness assessment of Buffalo Elementary shows that stakeholders are ready and willing to work toward addressing the PoP. An identified gap has been demonstrated as well as a vision for change. The vision and goals of the school, division, and provincial education authority demonstrate a commitment to addressing this problem (Alberta Education, 2020e; NPSD, 2020). The school leadership team has clearly articulated that Indigenous education is a focus for the school moving forward. The readiness assessment currently has all stakeholders on a unified vision for change. All the change readiness dimensions identified by Armenakis et al. (1993) and Cawsey et al. (2016) point to a high level of organizational readiness. If the organization and its stakeholders are in a high state of readiness, and addressing this concern has been a focus for many years, then why does the gap still exist?

The problem seems to not be in the willingness to change, but more so in understanding how to affect the change. The strategies and initiatives undertaken to this point have not had the desired results. This OIP aims to provide guidance based on the literature that can be used to address the problem of practice and lead to the desired state. There is no one path to success, but with a well-developed plan, an organization ready for change, and strong collaboration with all stakeholders, the components are all there to see steps in the right direction toward eradicating the present gap.

Chapter 2: Planning and Development

Chapter 1 has articulated the problem, provided an organizational context, and proposed a vision for change. Chapter 2 will look to utilize this organizational information to develop a suitable plan that aligns the various components needed to address the problem. A new model that integrates Toulouse's (2016) application of the school context model with the concept of two-eyed seeing is proposed. Culturally responsive and authentic leadership approaches are discussed as to how they can best support the application of the new model. Cawsey et al.'s (2016) change path model is explored as a framework to support implementation as it aligns with the leadership styles, lens and vision for change. Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model provides a comprehensive organizational analysis to assess the cohesiveness of the various elements that define Buffalo Elementary. The goal of this chapter is to provide an explanation as to how the leadership approaches, change model, and organizational analysis align to support the suggested solution. The chapter concludes with a section on leadership ethics which is incredibly important given the context of the OIP.

Leadership Approaches to Change

A leader's approach to change must align with the institutional practices and targeted goal to affect change within an organization. Great leaders can adapt to evolving situations while empowering individuals to work collaboratively toward a similar vision (Miller, 2001). Although leaders need to adapt to meet the school's needs, the field of educational leadership seems to be lagging in response to increased diversity and its implications on social justice and education (Theoharris, 2007). This problem of practice is looking to address the academic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, while moving toward a more equitable education for Indigenous students. The application of culturally responsive and authentic leadership

approaches will be discussed as they address two critical components of the OIP. First the need

to support cultural understanding and promote cultural inclusion within the school, and second,

the need for transparency and the building of relationships with the Indigenous community.

Cultural understanding and relational transparency are two vital components of the OIP moving

forward given the collaboration with a cultural group in which most change participants are not

members.

      Culturally responsive leadership (CRL) allows for an inclusive environment for

ethnically and culturally diverse individuals (Johnson, 2014). Culturally responsive leaders

focus on social justice, diversity, and equity as part of their practice and leadership (Lopez,

2015). Johnson (2014) explains that a culturally responsive leader ensures elevated expectations,

empowers individuals, integrates cultural and historical practices into the curriculum, and

develops a critical thinking culture that aids in identifying systemic inequities. These tenets align

closely with the critical social justice lens as the focal points needed to address the problem of

practice. As leaders, we work to set elevated expectations while striving to empower both

students and staff.

      In an earlier section of the OIP, it was explained that I was using a critical social justice

lens when addressing my PoP. Culturally responsive leadership has been frequently associated

with a critical social justice lens as it promotes inclusivity, requires the leader to be critically

self-aware and responsive, and most importantly, engages the community in celebrating culture.

(Khalifa et al., 2016; Lopez, 2015; Santamaria, 2014; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). Khalifa

et al. (2016) explains that a culturally responsive leader addresses hegemonic practices while

validating and accepting culture. As we work to decolonize education, the need to identify

discriminatory practices is essential. CRL is an anti-oppressive leadership style that supports marginalized populations like Indigenous students (Khalifa et al., 2016).

CRL aligns closely with the problem of practice being explored for this OIP, the individuals for whom this change is critically important, and the organization's goals, practices, and vision. A culturally responsive leader works to best support diverse populations within an educational context, which is the current reality within most public-school classes (Lopez, 2015). I want to model the CRL approach to be an exemplar of the change I am looking to implement. I want staff to see how they can make changes within their own classes and pedagogy to better support Indigenous students. By utilizing CRL, I can work with the Indigenous community to further my understanding of Indigenous culture. I want to create an environment that values and supports Indigenous traditions and ways of knowing into the fabric of the school. Providing an experience where Indigenous culture is valued and celebrated will support a more welcoming learning environment for Indigenous students (Gunn et al., 2011).

Modeling a CRL approach within Buffalo elementary will be paramount if I expect staff to engage in similar behaviours at the class level. Challenging current administrative practices using CRL will demonstrate my commitment to incorporate cultural diversity within the school and set an expectation of moving forward. To put CRL into action, I will need to implement the four main behaviours of culturally responsive leadership as described by Khalifa et al. (2016).

The first behaviour of critical self-awareness requires an individual to understand themselves, including their values and beliefs when working with marginalized populations (Khalifa et al., 2016). This will require immense personal reflection including addressing areas such as "race, culture, language, national identity, and other areas of difference" (Khalifa et al. 2016, p. 1281). As the leader, I could provide activities within staff meetings and school based

professional development to help to identify discriminatory practices, and initiate discussions around dominant perspectives. The goal will be to provide opportunities for staff to self-identify some of their practices that may be discriminatory whether intentional or not.

Khalifa et al. (2016) identifies the need for a culturally responsive curriculum and better teacher preparation as their second factor of CRL. They explain the need for greater professional development and the role of the principal to ensure teachers remain culturally responsive. Through school lead professional development, I need to look at some of the practices I carry out and look to challenge the structure to be more culturally responsive. Switching the format of traditional meetings to include practices such as sharing circles will encourage greater participation and be more culturally inclusive. I can also incorporate more Indigenous focused resources in school based professional development, and encourage the practice of critically analyzing resources to identify dominant perspectives. Having staff performing critical analysis on resources used during professional development will strengthen their ability to apply this practice within their classes.

The need for provide more inclusive school environments is the third behaviour needed to support culturally responsive leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016). Khalifa et al. (2016) explain that school leaders need to promote inclusivity. Working with the Indigenous community I can continue to encourage greater involvement with all aspects of the school. Having greater voice on school council, or increased participation in school celebrations or as guest speakers will help to promote a more inclusive environment. Working with staff to identify more diverse resources that better represent our population is also critical. Being a culturally responsive school leader means I will challenge practices to better engage the students we serve.

The final behavior of a culturally responsive school leader involves engaging students and parents in community contexts (Khalifa et al. 2016). This process involves working with the Indigenous community in culturally appropriate ways while having the ability to understand and address community issues (Khalifa et al., 2016). Having an Indigenous son has encouraged me to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Indigenous culture. While I have much to learn, it has provided me with some insight to support greater understanding. I have supported the creation of an Indigenous cultural room in the school which has been recognized as an important step (Khalifa et al., 2016). The room is multipurposed in that it provides a dedicated space for Indigenous students, an area to learn and support Indigenous culture, and a space to support inclusivity which all support a culturally responsive leadership approach.

Culturally responsive leadership allows educators to better connect with Indigenous students. The four behaviours as outlined by Khalifa et al. (2016) also align with areas to support student success as outlined by Bascia's (2014) school context model. While the headings are slightly different, the content and what needs to be achieved is the same. Having a leadership approach that meshes so closely with a potential solution will only aid to support the process.

As Indigenous students are the focus of this OIP, a culturally responsive leadership approach will be the primary leadership method. A second approach that will be utilized to support the change is authentic leadership. An authentic leadership approach more closely reflects my personal practices and will provide the transparency needed to strengthen relationships.

Working with Indigenous populations as a non-Indigenous educator and leader for change will require an elevated level of trust. The residential schools of the past have created a fracture between Indigenous people and the public education system. Authentic leadership acts

to strengthen relationships and build trust (Northouse, 2018). George (2003) presented a model of authentic leadership that stressed the importance of purpose, relationships, values, sensitivity and empathy, and the use of self-discipline to act on values. These characteristics echo my personal motives. I am internally driven and want to work with Indigenous students and the community to provide a system that better meets their needs. Indigenous students are not achieving at the same level as non-Indigenous students within Buffalo Elementary, and it is our responsibility as educators to address this gap. I am empathetic and have a personal stake in this topic as my son is Indigenous. Even when faced with obstacles, I will remain calm and push forward based upon my values. Northouse (2018) explains that when a leader remains calm it creates a sense of security for those involved with the change. Authentic leadership will be demonstrated through my words and actions as we work to strengthen relationships with the Indigenous community. Honest and transparent practices are necessary as we work to build greater trust.

While working to create a system that resonates better with Indigenous communities, we must invoke more culturally relevant practices that align with traditional Indigenous teachings. Northouse (2018) discussed how authentic leaders often share stories to building trust and strengthening relationships. Indigenous culture places a strong value on the importance of storytelling in the development of culture. Authentic leadership meshes well with traditional practices of Indigenous culture and integrates with the culturally relevant leadership approach.

Supporting the needs of students requires a leader who can be self-aware and connect with the populations in which they serve. Walumbwa et al. (2008) explained the components of authentic leadership as requiring a level of self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. They explain that self-awareness involves

understanding who you are including strengths and weaknesses, morals, and values. Internalized moral perspective focuses on the ability of the leader to use internal values to guide behaviours instead of allowing external pressures to dictate direction. Balanced processing requires gaining information and opinions both in support and contrary to your own and using an unbiased approach to make the most informed decision. Finally, relational transparency relates to open communication which allows other stakeholders to understand motives as well as the positive and negative aspects of the change leaders (Walumbwa et al., 2008). These components exemplify what I will need to do to support a population of which I am not a member. I will need to perform a self-evaluation and use internal values versus external pressures as drivers. I will need to work with Indigenous community members to challenge personal beliefs and make informed decisions. I will need to maintain relational transparency so that my motives for change are clear and create trust. Walumbwa et al.'s (2008) definition of an authentic leadership explains how this approach will provide a level of accountability and address personal biases while working through the OIP.

Northouse (2018) has noted authentic leadership has a strong moral and ethical dimension and is often influenced by critical life events. The adoption of my son, who is Indigenous, was a critical life event that has influenced my vision, passion, and need to affect change. I am coming from a place of good intention as the success of this population has a personal connection. There is a need for constant self-reflection and transparency to ensure the process is collaborative. The change needs to work in the best interests of Indigenous students while attempting to eliminate personal biases or prejudices. Drawing from authentic and culturally responsive leadership approaches allows me to be in the best position to impact this change ethically.

Framework for Leading the Change

Preparing an organization for a successful change requires a cohesive plan to identify how to approach the change. Everyone involved with the change will need to constantly evaluate and evolve to best meet the needs of the students (Cawsey et al., 2016). Many models that have been developed, but it is important to select one that best supports the goal of the organizational shift. The following section will look at three different frameworks for leading the change related to this organizational plan. The strengths and weaknesses of each model as it connects to the OIP will be reviewed to provide an understanding of which model best fits with the organization. Lewin's three-stage model for change, Kotter's eight-stage change model, and Cawsey et al. (2016) change path model will be investigated.

Lewin's model for change involves a three-stage process that is broken down into an unfreezing stage, a change stage, and a refreezing stage. Unfreezing refers to altering the organization's beliefs or practices to alter the current state (Cawsey et al., 2016). There must be a break in the system or an unfreezing which leads to the change. The second stage refers to the organization's actual change which results in new systems, structures, beliefs, and habits (Cawsey et al., 2016). This is the process where the organization has moved away from the present state into the desired state. Finally, the last stage involves solidifying or freezing the new organizational practices to form the desired state. The desired state becomes the new normal which is the goal of the organizational shift.

One of the most frequent criticisms noted about Lewin's model is that it is overly simple (Cawsey et al., 2016; Cummings et al., 2015; Galli, 2018). The simplicity of the model may be perceived as either positive or negative depending on the situation. A simplistic model would allow for easy adoption by stakeholders as the process would not get lost in the details of the

model. However, when looking to lead a complex organizational change, the simplistic nature does not provide a detailed enough process that can be followed (Levasseur, 2001). Many potential areas will need to be investigated from systemic practices, lack of cultural understanding, to the personal perspectives of the educators who will be facilitating the change. A simple unfreezing is too vague given what will need to happen. Cawsey et al. (2016) also identified the lack of importance placed on a vision for the desired state as an issue with Lewin's model. The importance of a clear vision cannot be understated as this provides direction for the organization moving forward. A clear vision helps guide those working for the change.

Although the simplistic nature of Lewin's model is appealing, it lacks the structure and guidance needed to support the OIP. Cultural understanding is a foundational piece involved with any potential solution. Having a cultural component significantly increases the complexity of the change process. The OIP will need to look at both the organization, and how cultural differences impact decisions moving forward. The lack of any reference to cultural understanding in Lewin's model creates a huge issue.

The final stage of Lewin's model discusses the idea of refreezing. It implies a permanent solution and return to equilibrium. A permanent solution is unrealistic given the goal of this OIP. Toulouse's (2016) discussion of the school context model to support Indigenous learning identifies four variables to support student achievement. Each of these variables involves continuous adaptations to meet the needs of the students. Having a rigid freezing process does not allow for this to happen. Weick and Quinn (1999) noted that Lewin's model is not well fitted for situations that require continuous change. For these reasons, although Lewin's model could be used, it lacks critical details and alignment with my theoretical approach, which is necessary to address the PoP effectively.

The second possibility that was contemplated for this OIP was Kotter's eight-stage model. Kotter's model is prescriptive and focuses on change at the organizational level (Cawsey et al., 2018). While Lewin's model lacks direction, Kotter's model provides a much more thorough approach. The eight stages include: (a) Establish urgency, (b) Create a coalition, (c) Develop vision and strategy, (d) Communicate the vision, (e) Empower stakeholders, (f) Generate short term wins, (g) Consolidate gains and produce more change, and (h) Anchor innovative approaches. This approach does provide greater direction to the change team over Lewin's; however, the linear nature and rigidity of Kotter's model does come with issues. First, the model requires an organization to follow the steps in order and prevents progress to the next step until the previous one is completed. Organizational change is a complex process and does not always follow a direct path (Cawsey et al., 2016). Change leaders will often have to adapt and evolve through the process but Kotter's model limits the change leader's ability to move between stages.

Galli (2018) notes that Kotter's model comes across as a top-down approach where employees are not part of creating the vision. Creating a culture where employees are consulted about change is imperative to its success (Morgan, 2003). This OIP requires strong connections and collaboration between the Indigenous community and the school. The change requires mutual respect as we work to promote a greater Indigenous voice in education. A top-down approach directed from the school or division, and not the Indigenous community, will repeat the past mistakes by making decisions without consultation. This would be a huge error. Looking at the problem through a critical social justice lens further solidifies the need to stay away from Kotter's model as it does not align with the theoretical perspective of the project. We do not want to follow a model that directs the process from the top-down, which will continue the dominant

perspective. There needs to be an approach that values multiple perspectives. Kotter's model also lacks flexibility and the ability to return to previous steps that have already been accomplished. Addressing the four components of the of the school context model (Bascia, 2014) will also be difficult as it will require frequent adaptations. As the school and Indigenous community work together to address the PoP, we will need to revisit approaches as we continue to learn together. Where Lewin's model is too general, Kotter's model is too specific.

Finding a change model that best aligns with the goal of the OIP, the theoretical lens, and the organizational practices, and the leadership styles is incredibly important if the change is going to be successful. Cawsey et al., (2016) change path model provides a framework that best meets these criteria. Cawsey et al. (2016) explain that their model combines both process and prescription. It is less directed than Kotter, but more thorough than Lewin. The four stages of awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization will be discussed as it applies to the organization.

The awakening stage requires identifying a need, a gap between present and future state, a vision for change, and the ability to disseminate the vision to the necessary team members (Cawsey et al., 2016). This stage identifies where Buffalo Elementary is currently positioned regarding the PoP. School-based and provincial assessments have demonstrated a significant academic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students (Alberta Education, 2019; Buffalo Elementary, 2019). The school, the division, and Alberta Education have all identified the importance of closing this educational gap as a priority moving forward (Alberta Education, 2020c; NPSD, 2019). The teacher, leader, and superintendent quality standards of Alberta, which are professional practice standards that govern educators, all have sections pertaining to the importance of applying foundational knowledge of Indigenous people (Alberta Education,

2020e). Calls to action (TRC, 2015) 62 through 65 identify speak directly to the changes needed to integrate Indigenous history and culture within the education system. Information is being pushed at the school, division, province, and even national level supporting action. The need, gap, and vision have all been clearly articulated, yet additional efforts need to be put into focusing these efforts on the staff of Buffalo Elementary.

Although the guiding documents and academic results are public, the urgency within the school is still lacking. If we are looking to cause an awakening, this will need to be addressed through increased awareness and understanding. By implementing the behaviours associated with a culturally responsive leadership approach (Khalifa et al. (2016), staff can start to better understand the challenges Indigenous students face every day. Using professional development activities to create self-awareness, increasing the diversity of resources, and starting to challenge instructional materials and curriculum will all act to better inform the staff. The change path model provides an excellent opportunity for me to model the culturally responsive leadership approach which will aid to support the awakening.

Mobilization requires identifying how the change will work with systems and structures, assessing power and cultural dynamics, building partnerships, communication, and leveraging resources to support the change (Cawsey et al., 2016). As the principal within the school, I can identify potential individuals to form working groups, access necessary resources, and am privileged to information regarding the systems and structures currently in place. Relationships will be critical, and an authentic leadership approach will help build trust and promote greater engagement (Bird, 2019; Maximo et al., 2019). The social justice lens will provide an opportunity for reflection, while creating awareness around dominant practice.

This mobilization stage of the change path model addresses some additional concerns that were not identified in the other models, but are critical to this OIP. First will be exploring how power and cultural dynamics impact the change. The culturally responsive leadership approach will aid in identifying some of the power inequities while providing a better understanding of the cultural dynamics (Khalifa et al., 2016). CRL also ensures staff are better equipped to address the needs of minoritized students through cultural responsiveness (Khalifa et al., 2016). Introducing the concept of two-eyed seeing could be used to provide context regarding various epistemologies, and how the system continues to be dominated by Western perspectives. Investigating how these practices carry over to the current structures and systems within the school and division will provide an opportunity to identify dominant practices. Using the components of the school context model (Bascia, 2014) could provide staff with areas to identify where current practices are discriminatory or failing the Indigenous population.

The mobilization stage of the change path model provides opportunities to identify power imbalances, cultural dynamics, and the importance of systems and structures. These variables are not found in the other two models discussed but are critical components of the OIP. Having these variables will only act to strengthen the planning stages by incorporating additional information imperative to the solution.

Acceleration is the support and empowerment of others to build momentum and achieve small victories in the transition to the larger goal (Cawsey et al., 2016). Employees will be more involved and have greater effect if they feel empowered (Mathieu et al., 2006). The acceleration phase allows the me to collaborate with the school staff and Indigenous community to create an implementation plan for integrating Indigenous culture and Indigenous Knowledges into school practice. Considerable time will be required working together to increase understanding and the

building of trust. School staff will need to reflect on their practices while being cognizant of individual differences and biases. The culturally responsive leadership approach will support greater understanding while providing a more welcoming and inclusive climate for students and community members (Khalifa et al., 2016). The authentic leadership approach provides the transparency needed for others to understand the reasoning behind why the change needs to exist. Once again, the leadership approaches support this step of this model to promote success.

The last step of institutionalization requires an assessment of progress, providing new measures to support the goal, and integrating new processes, structures, and systems (Cawsey et al., 2016). The institutionalization stage is where we hope to see an improvement in the academic achievement levels of Indigenous students as we start to decrease the academic gap. The social justice lens will require ongoing assessment of the process as the change moves alongside the populations with whom we are working. The culturally responsive and authentic leadership approaches will support institutionalization through open and honest interaction and providing an approach that helps to support greater cultural understanding.

Cawsey et al. (2016) change path model has been selected as the framework that most closely aligns with the needs of the OIP. Having a model with a strong cultural component is important. The change path model does specifically acknowledge the importance of cultural differences and power imbalances in the development of the change plan. The two leadership approaches selected will strengthen the relationships between the staff and the Indigenous community through transparency and cultural understanding. The change path model also meshes well with the critical social justice lens as there is the ability to evolve and adapt as greater understanding is reached. Of all models contemplated, Cawsey et al. (2016) change path model best positions itself to the lens, leadership styles and vision of the OIP.

Critical Organizational Analysis

The previous section identified frameworks for leading the change. An investigation into the organization must now be performed to identify what components need to be changed. Many frameworks have been developed, but for this OIP Nadler and Tushman's congruence model (1980) will be utilized (Figure 1). It is important to note that as a member of the dominant majority, my ignorance may hinder my ability to identify certain practices as colonized or discriminatory. Having an analysis performed by the Indigenous community will yield additional changes that may have been overlooked given my perspective. This reaffirms the need for Indigenous collaboration in every stage of the process.

Figure 1

Nadler and Tushman's Congruence Model (1980)
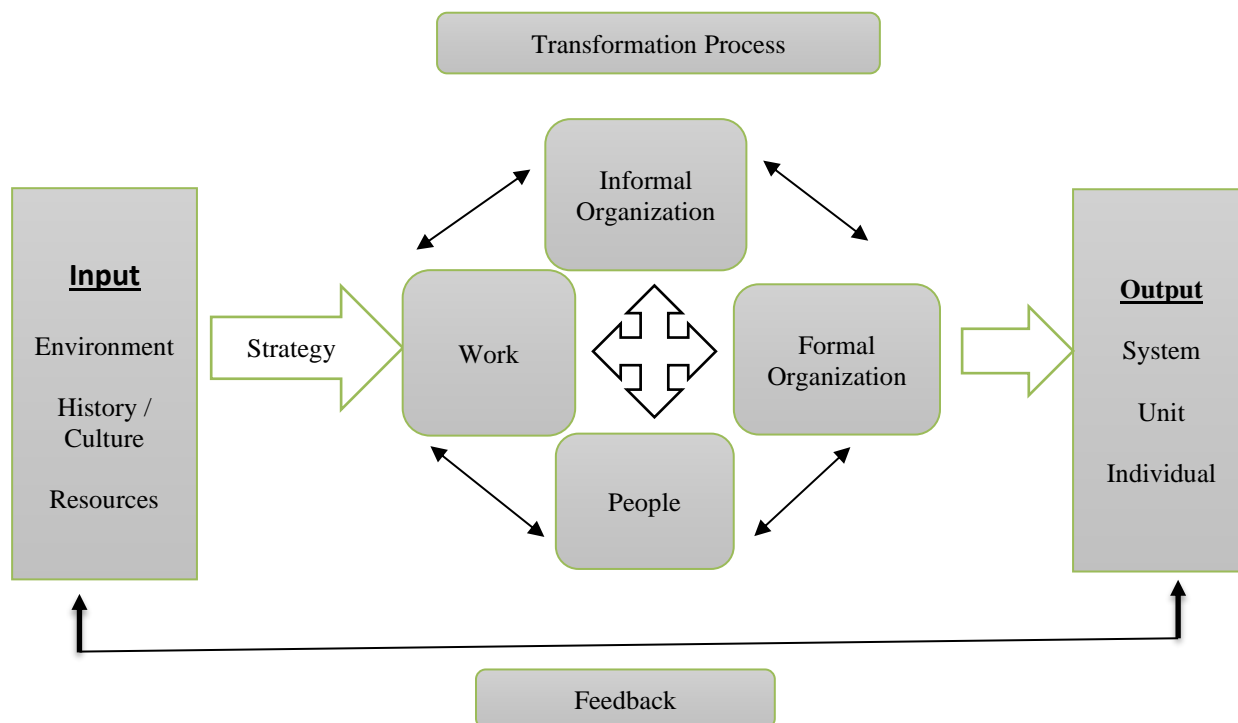
Nadler and Tushman's congruence model (1980) is based on an open system and an organizations interaction with its external environment. The model looks at the organizational elements including inputs, processes, and outputs. The model draws from four key organizational elements: (a) The work happening in the organization, (b) the people within the organization, (c) the formal organization including structures and systems, and (d) the informal organization or culture. This model helps to identify the gaps between the present and desired state of the organization (Cawsey et al., 2016). When the organizational elements operate cohesively and align with the inputs, there is a greater likelihood of success through organizational outputs (Cawsey et al., 2016; Nadler & Tushman, 1980).

Nadler and Tushman's model identifies the inputs as the organizations environment, resources, and history/culture. These inputs act to set the direction as to how the four foundational elements will operate. There is a push from all levels of government to adapt current practices and work toward reconciliation to improve Indigenous education. With the development of the TRC 94 calls to action in 2015, steps have been taken to better integrate Indigenous culture and traditions into the schools. Call to action 63 (TRC, 2015) explains the need for kindergarten to grade 12 curriculums within the school system including appropriate teacher training. Call to action 64 (TRC, 2015) mentions the addition of Indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices developed through collaboration with Indigenous Elders. In response to this document, Indigenous culture and Knowledges are now a mandatory part of Alberta's curriculum, and teacher and leader competencies (Alberta Education, 2020c; Alberta Education, 2020e). While progress has been made, implementation is still lagging.

The colonized approach to education common across Canada is still present within the school. Most of the books and resources used at Buffalo Elementary still echo a Eurocentric

voice. The environment does provide for the inclusion of Indigenous celebrations, but they are usually reserved for special occasions. To add additional strain, Alberta Education's (2020d) new funding model will result in decreased funding for public schools causing tighter budgets. Song et al. (2014) have identified that the educational gap of Indigenous students is frequently related to the availability of resources. Positive steps have been taken to include Indigenous Knowledges and culture within the school, but we are far from integration.

It is imperative to identify a strategy that aligns the inputs with the organizational elements to transform an organization. Staff need to see the issue as a crisis to awaken and mobilize (Cawsey et al., 2016). The transparency and openness of an authentic leadership approach build trust while providing the staff with the necessary communication to understand the change (George, 2003; Northouse, 2018). An authentic leader can validate reasons and provide a clear direction and vision to support the awakening. An accurate assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the organization will be needed in the development of a strategy. This will require an authentic evaluation of the capacity of the individuals and the organization. The collaboration with Indigenous community members will be necessary in identifying priorities. Collaboration and setting realistic expectations will only strengthen the congruence of variables leading to a higher likelihood of success (Cawsey et al., 2016).

Nadler and Tushman (1980) noted that any of the tasks necessary to complete the organization's strategy is considered work. This includes all duties assigned to individuals and reflects the historical and cultural practices of the organization. The work done by the teachers and educational assistants would be more front-line work where they will deal directly with the students. I would take a more culturally responsive leadership role helping to support the strategy. Although the administration would still have the day-to-day interaction with students,

their main roles would be to oversee the school's operation and provide guidance. Work will need to be performed by Indigenous community members to affect change as they act as the cultural experts. These individuals are not division employees but are a necessary component to ensure a culturally responsive approach. Through open and honest discussions, they can provide feedback on practices supporting the process versus those that are creating additional barriers.

As the principal, it will be my responsibility to assess the various components of the strategy to see how the formal structures and systems may hinder action from addressing the PoP. Various formal organizational issues within NPSD and Buffalo Elementary may require change if I am going to be able to address the PoP. First off, NPSD and Buffalo Elementary still operate based on a colonized model of education. Many researchers have expressed the need to push for a more decolonized approach if we are hoping to better address Indigenous learners (Battiste, 2013; Kovach, 2009; Munroe et al., 2013). NPSD follows a neoliberal approach to education which places a large emphasis on accountability through standardized tests (Apple, 2017; Green, 2016). Provincial and school-based achievement tests are the primary measure used to assess student's success and were the basis for this PoP. These test results continue to identify Indigenous achievement as a school and divisional concern. Further investigation needs to happen to see if it is in fact the measure that is creating the issue. Standardized tests are frequently found to be discriminatory and do not support an Indigenous view of learning (Miller, 2018). If the assessments used to measure academic achievement were better aligned for Indigenous worldviews, would the problem still exist? These are two issues relating to the formal organization of the school and the division that will need to be investigated further in understanding the problem.

The formal organization also requires the structuring of roles to support the work. I need to ensure there are adequate systems in place. Altering roles of staff to align with the new strategy will take manoeuvring. Additional roles dedicated to bringing Indigenous voices to the system will need to be created. For there to be change we must break the equilibrium of the current state. This requires there to be a clear direction of roles and responsibilities as well as defined divisions of duties. Buffalo Elementary has clearly defined roles for most of their positions, but careful consideration will need to be taken to assign new duties to the individuals who are best suited for the task.

The next organizational element that needs to be understood is the informal organization of the school. The informal organization includes informal relationships, the informal processes that exist, and the norms in which the organization operates (Cawsey et al., 2016). Within Buffalo Elementary, I lead the more formal organization of the school, but have an indirect influence when it comes to the informal organization. The informal processes will focus more on the interactions between staff and community members in building those trusted relationships. Additional events that provide more opportunities for interactions will be needed. The use of culturally responsive leadership practices will aid in supporting the formation of these relationships as my staff and I work to better understand what needs to change. Culturally responsive practices will provide a framework that brings the school and community together to address the problem (Khalifa et al., 2016).

People are the critical component to connecting all the processes. The staff of Buffalo Elementary are made of a continuum of experience, backgrounds, and abilities. Many of the staff have been at the school for many years, which brings both opportunities and challenges. Some of the opportunities include a higher level of knowledge of the student

demographic, more years of experience, stronger relationships with parents, and a historical

understanding of the practices of the school. We are also fortunate to have NPSD's Indigenous

coordinator working out of our school who can help disseminate knowledge relating to

Indigenous culture. This individual does have connections to the Indigenous community, so they

will be a great asset in developing relationships with our school community.

Within our staff, some challenges or gaps need to be addressed. There are no educators

within the building who identify as being of Indigenous descent. The Indigenous coordinator is

neither from the area nor identifies as Indigenous. No one can speak about the struggles of being

Indigenous within a public school as no one has this experience. There is a significant gap within

the staff around the connection to Indigenous culture. Having more educators in the school with

understanding of Indigenous Knowledges would support the PoP. This process would take some

time as these positions would need to be filled as positions become available. It is important to

note that while having more Indigenous teachers may help, Battiste (2002) noted that Indigenous

teachers often feel as unprepared as non-Indigenous teachers in building content into their

classrooms. For this reason, the support of local Elders and Knowledge Keepers is necessary as

these are the individuals who can speak to cultural connections.

Having a more experienced staff can be beneficial, but trying to break the equilibrium

that has been developed over the years may not be that easy. Many staff have become

accustomed to certain practices and school cultures which may be detrimental for Indigenous

learners. Identifying the capacity for change within each staff member will be important to help

assign them roles that best match their capabilities. It will also require teachers to reflect on

pedagogical beliefs developed over their careers that are rooted in the dominant Eurocentric

ideals. Creating a change in thinking in the way some of the more experienced teachers think

will be challenging. Regardless of the composition of the staff, to make the change happen, there needs to be careful consideration for each person's roles. Identifying the key individuals who can influence others to support change will be paramount.

Nadler and Tushman's congruence model (1980) articulates what needs to be addressed if we want to change our outputs. The current state of education in Buffalo Elementary follows the dominant Eurocentric perspective in both the inputs (environment, history/culture, and resources) and transformation processes (informal organization, work, people formal organization). If we are hoping to create a change to better support the academic achievement of Indigenous students, we must start to look at other perspectives. Buffalo Elementary is in a position that supports the goal of improving Indigenous student achievement. The external factors of environment, history and culture fully align with moving toward a change that better meets the needs of Indigenous students. There are initiatives at the provincial, divisional, and school levels that are all pushing for change. The formal and informal organization, the people, and their ability to do high-quality work are present. The challenge that exists is finding a strategy that aligns with the organization and addresses the academic gap. Until now this has not happened.

Identifying Possible Solutions

Identifying viable solutions to close the academic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students involves a comprehensive analysis of the organization, the stakeholders, the resources, the leader's ability to affect change, and the organization's readiness for change. The more congruent the approach with the organizational systems and structures, the greater the likelihood of success. Researchers have suggested various approaches to target the education gap from the process of decolonizing education (Battiste, 2013; Kovach, 2009; Munroe et al., 2013), increased professional development for educators to better understand Indigenous

students and culture (Preston, 2016; Preston et al., 201; Steeves et al., 2020; Whitney et al.,

2013), to school-level approaches that target more direct changes within the school (Bascia,

2014; Toulouse, 2016). While all these strategies have their strengths, it is important to look at

how these changes can be implemented and my influence to effectively facilitate the change.

Each of the three suggested solutions will be investigated for feasibility, and an approach will be

selected based on my ability to effect change and address the PoP.

Decolonization of Education

One of the most frequent criticisms of education for Indigenous students revolves around

the colonized approach to education typical in public schools across Canada. Researchers have

frequently called for the decolonization of education (Battiste, 2013; Kovach, 2009; Munroe et

al., 2013) as these approaches do not always align with Indigenous cultures' traditional values

and teachings. Hare and Pidgeon (2011) mentioned that Indigenous students felt like they did not

belong in school and that systematic and personal racism was ingrained in the Eurocentric

dominated system. Smith (2016) noted that to decolonize, we must acknowledge other

worldviews, focus on needs not deficits, seek out Elders and community members to access

Indigenous Knowledges, and listen to Indigenous perspectives to help break down colonized

practices. Indigenous culture emphasises a more holistic approach to learning which includes the

emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual components and their connection with the earth

(Lavallee, 2009). Having a system that focuses more on a holistic approach will better resonate

with Indigenous students therefore support their learning (Moon & Berger, 2016; Nguyen, 2013;

Preston, 2016).

Decolonizing education at the school level would be one strategy that could address the

academic gap that currently exists. Although provincial or system-wide decolonization may be

beyond my influence, changes within the school are possible. This would be a great first step in challenging some of the dominant practices at a much smaller scale. Stewart (2019) noted some simple changes that could support a decolonized approach to education include diversifying teaching materials, teaching outcomes that address power and social justice, involving students in the creation of content, and the development of assessments that allow for competencies to be expressed in diverse ways. These changes would require minimal resources and could be implemented with limited effort. The culturally responsive leadership approach would further support decolonization as I work to challenge colonized approaches at the administrative level.

Attempting a full decolonization of the education system would require large scale reform including changing system and provincial level decisions that are outside of the influence of the change driver. There would need to be a considerable amount of consultation with minority groups as well as an incredible amount of time and financial resources allocated to the project. Identifying dominant ideologies and the strategies to overcome them will take time. Following Cawsey et al.'s (2016) change path model I believe this process would stall in the mobilization phase as the change would be met with bureaucracy typical in large scale reform.

Evaluating the components within the school's control such as assessments and content delivery could easily be taken up. Actively involving the Indigenous community will also help identify school practices that could be altered to better support our students. For this reason, a large-scale decolonized approach to education will not be the primary directive of the OIP, but specific components of this approach will be considered to support the OIP as there is incredible potential in this strategy.

Professional Development

One of the greatest obstacles faced by Indigenous students is that many of the teachers who are providing the education are not familiar with Indigenous history and culture and require greater professional development (Preston, 2016; Preston et al., 201; Steeves et al., 2020; Whitney et al., 2013). To better support academic achievement, educators need to understand the population with whom they are working. Too often, teachers come from an approach of deficit thinking, whereas there needs to be a shift toward understanding Indigenous students (Pratt & Danyluk, 2017). Educators must also understand their biases and the power and privilege they are afforded given their roles and membership within the dominant majority (Oskineegish & Berger, 2013; Preston, 2016; Steeves, 2020). As teachers are educators, it is our responsibility to ensure we can provide a program that addresses the needs of the students. When we fail to meet the needs of our students, we are failing to meet our professional responsibilities (Alberta Education, 2020a, Alberta Education 2020e).

Professional development to increase understanding, knowledge, and appreciation of Indigenous culture is a key component to any solution (Gunn et al., 2011; Preston, 2016; Steeves, 2020; Whitley, 2013). NPSD is fortunate in the amount of time allocated for staff to receive professional development throughout the year. They follow a professional learning community model where staff are given an abundance of time to collaborate with their peers. The model follows the characteristics of an effective professional learning community which include a shared vision, responsible for student learning, reflective, collaboration focused on learning, and both individual and group learning being promoted (Vescio et al., 2008; Watson, 2014). There are 16 professional development days with 14 of those allocating time to professional learning communities. There is designated time for grade specific collaboration as

well as time for school lead collaboration. As the principal, it is my responsibility to lead the

school level sessions. Focusing the on Indigenous education would provide an excellent

opportunity for staff to really investigate current practices while working at building greater

competency. My role will be critical as highly functioning teams have noted they importance of

principal facilitation through the professional learning community process (Voelkel &

Chrispeels, 2017).

Professional development is vital in any approach moving forward (Preston, 2016;

Preston et al., 201; Steeves et al., 2020; Whitney et al., 2013). Financial constraints will limit the

ability to bring in individuals to support this process, but school-level professional development

through professional learning communities will continue regardless of this constraint. While

local Indigenous presenters will strengthen the authenticity of the opportunities, any time

devoted to Indigenous education will help to build capacity within the staff.

Professional development through the professional learning communities will no doubt

support a better understanding of the needs of Indigenous students, but it does lack engagement

with the Indigenous students, parents, and the community. Strong relationships have been

identified as a necessary component in improving the academic results of Indigenous students

(MacIver, 2012; Milne, 2017; Moon & Berger, 2016; Pratt & Dannyluck, 2017; Preston, 2016).

Smith (2016) noted that educators need to almost become part of the extend family with mutual

respect if we hope to move forward. An approach that only looks at professional development

fails to provide the opportunities for these meaningful relationships needed to address this PoP.

Once again, there are beneficial components of this approach, but on its own lack the breadth

needed to support mobilization as too many people are left out of the narrative. To provide the

best approach we much ensure everyone's voice can be heard.

School Context Model and Two-Eyed Seeing

The greatest promise in addressing the PoP is in applying a model that draws from various research sources to provide a more comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that aligns with the school's needs. Decolonizing a system that has been built over hundreds of years is incredibly complex and beyond the capacity of the OIP. Smaller strategies that have been identified within this approach will be used. Increased professional development will provide opportunities to support the OIP but does lack the critical relationship piece. This relationship piece is needed. The solution I have chosen uses components of the first two solutions and includes a strong relationship component. This approach works with aspects that are within my control and is tied to the literature relating to the academic achievement of Indigenous students.

The OIP is looking to address the academic gap within one school with hopes to use the knowledge obtained to affect future change within other schools in the division. As this is a school-level change, we must focus on school-level solutions. Bascia's (2014) school context model focuses on the four broad concepts of classroom features, teacher communities, schools and climate, and external environment to support the needs of all students. Toulouse (2016) applies the concepts of the model focusing specifically on the needs of Indigenous learners.

Beginning with classroom features, Toulouse (2016) explains the importance of connecting learning to students experiences while promoting differentiation and diversity. To support Indigenous learners, it has been frequently noted that there needs to be a greater connection of the curriculum to Indigenous culture (Hare & Pigeon, 2011; Kanu, 2002; Whitley, 2013). When students can connect the material to individual experiences and culture, they are more likely to succeed (Kanu, 2002; Preston & Claypool, 2013). Toulouse also noted the importance of setting high expectations for students and ensuring that classroom management

focuses on building community through relationships. When educators set high expectations for Indigenous students, there was a higher likelihood of achieving the expected results (Whitley, 2013). The importance of providing opportunities for positive relationships is also frequently mentioned whenever there is a discussion about working with Indigenous populations (Moon & Berger, 2016; Oskineegish & Berger, 2013; Steeves et al., 2020; Whitley, 2013). Each of these strategies requires limited resources on behalf of the school. There would need to be professional development about connecting content to the experiences of Indigenous students. Presently there are numerous documents and resources provided by Alberta Education to support Indigenous learning. Teachers would require the opportunity to review and implement such materials as Guiding Voices, Walking Together, Empowering the Spirit, and Stepping Stones (Alberta Education, 2020b). These resources provide a wealth of knowledge that is beneficial to the teacher. As I push to address the OIP, I can designate time during the school based professional development days for teachers to research, review, and collaborate on strategies to make our classrooms more culturally inclusive. The division's Indigenous coordinator and newly hired cultural navigator could provide additional support through their knowledge and experiences.

The second component Toulouse (2016) identifies to support Indigenous learning is the importance of teacher communities. Teachers' ability to collaborate to discuss curriculum and instructional practices, have access to professional development, identify opportunities for student development, and critically reflect on practices with colleagues is paramount (Bascia, 2014). The time dedicated to learning communities on school based professional development days will provide an optimal time for this to happen. The school context model provides us with a clear reference to the areas we need to focus to support Indigenous students. I can lead the

process and provide structure and guidance to staff. Implementing this approach would require minor changes to the current practices and little need for financial resources. Teachers can also use their convention time to collaborate with individuals outside of the division. NPSD teachers must attend a large-scale two-day teachers convention where sessions are selected based on personal or professional interests. There are always a plethora of sessions dedicated to Indigenous education which will continue to support competencies in this area.

Ensuring the school is a welcoming and inviting environment is incredibly important if we expect students to be successful (Gunn et al., 2011; Preston & Claypool, 2013; Whitley, 2013). School and climate are the third components that Toulouse (2016) discusses regarding supporting Indigenous learners. Indigenous students, like all students, need to have an environment where they feel safe, included, and have the opportunity for positive relationships so they can learn (Gunn et al., 2011; Moon & Berger, 2016; Steeves, 2020; Whitley, 2013). Bascia (2014) explains the importance of the school leader in setting a culture of inclusion and promoting higher standards for teachers. They explain that all aspects of the schools must be considered from classrooms, to extracurricular and everything in between. The school is more than just the class, and all components must be considered when promoting a welcoming environment. As the leader I will use authentic and culturally responsive leadership to demonstrate the behaviours necessary to be an example for my staff. By challenging the status quo and really evaluating why certain practices happen, I am creating a culture that promotes critical thinking regarding discriminatory practices.

Within the school environment, it is important to address all aspects of the system. It is essential to acknowledge that the current system within the school and division is based on a colonized model. The decolonization of the whole education system is ambitious and beyond the

scope of this OIP, but through the school context model, we can work to identify practices within each of the four components that are discriminatory or oppressive and work to address them at the school level first. Full systemic changes would require senior administration oversight but addressing issues at a school level can be done with a certain level of autonomy. The social justice lens taken up for this OIP lends well to this approach as it looks for such inequities. The culturally responsive leadership approach will be fundamental during this phase as there will need to be much work with Indigenous parents and community members. Khalifa et al. (2016) noted that a culturally responsive leadership approach allows a leader to engage students, families, and communities in a culturally appropriate way. As we look to build stronger relationships and gain greater understanding from Indigenous peoples, we need to be respectful. Making every attempt to better understand cultural differences through culturally responsive and authentic leadership will help form honest and transparent relationships.

The final component discussed by Toulouse (2016) in support of Indigenous learners relate to the external environment. This includes engagement with parents and community, providing opportunities to promote social change, the collaboration of school and community, and connections to global citizenship and the environment (Toulouse, 2016). This variable once again addresses the importance of relationships with Indigenous communities. Greater partnerships that allow the school and community to come together through various events and activities is important. There also needs to be a real push that allows students to see the importance of their schooling and how it could potentially impact the community in supporting social changes. This process allows for a holistic approach showing the interconnectedness of the school and community. It also promotes a social justice lens for not

only the leader but also the students and staff. Once again, this model requires minimal financial resources and a commitment of time to support and prioritize the direction of the change.

Toulouse's (2016) ability to connect the structure of the school context model to support Indigenous learners provides an overall picture of what teachers and administrators can do within a school to better support Indigenous students. Although Toulouse (2016) focused more on Indigenous learners, the principles are universal to all students. Prioritizing the school context model focusing specifically on Indigenous learners will act as the strategy to affect immediate change. From an organizational perspective the strategy will require little financial resources. The time needed is already allocated within the system in the professional learning days of the division. To really implement the model and use the framework to direct change, the largest commitment will come in prioritizing and organizing the professional learning at the school level to support the process. As I am passionate about the subject area, I do not see this as unreasonable given the potential to support positive change.

The school context model (Bascia, 2014) will act as the immediate model for change, but it is important to implement strategies that will continue to push the colonized approach to break down hegemonic practices while greater engaging Indigenous students. Battiste (2013) noted that if we hope to design a more meaningful system for Indigenous people, we must acknowledge cognitive imperialism and replace it with a system that places more value on Indigenous traditions and culture. They suggest a system that incorporates both the Western ideals combined with Indigenous Knowledges. An approach that utilizes the concept of two-eyed seeing provides validation to both perspectives.

Two-eyed seeing is a concept defined by Albert Marshall referring to a Mi'kmaw practice of blending two different knowledge systems to provide a more comprehensive view of

the world (Hatcher et al., 2009; Peltier, 2018). Smith (2016) notes that there are many ways of knowing and this approach allows for various perspectives to be considered. Hatcher et al. (2009) discuss the concept of knowledge as it pertains to Western and Indigenous views. They explain that Western perspectives see knowledge as a noun, and something that is passed from one individual to another. Indigenous cultures often see knowledge as a verb where teachers and learners construct together. This example helps to illustrate how varying epistemologies result in individuals seeing and understanding the world differently.

It is important to understand that two-eyed seeing is more than an application of Indigenous views to the Western perspective. It involves a full integration of both Indigenous and Westernized worldviews (Wright et al., 2019). Marshall et al. (2019) mention that the integration draws on the best of each perspective to better solve a complex problem. It is important that we can weave between the various knowledges as sometimes one perspective has greater application than the other (Bartlett et al., 2012)

Wright et al. (2009) acknowledge that to properly implement a two-eyed seeing approach, there are six components that must be considered: (a) authentic relationships, (b) reciprocal research, (c) relational accountability, (d) Indigenous involvement, (e) Indigenous methodology, and (f) Western researchers ability to defer to Indigenous leadership. The culturally responsive and authentic leadership approaches mesh well with this approach given the focus on honest relationships and cultural responsibility. The ability to connect and work with Indigenous communities as we construct knowledge will provide an opportunity to create greater understanding for all.

Integrating a two-eyed seeing approach cannot be done without collaboration with the Indigenous community. Wright et al. (2019) note that non-Indigenous individuals must ensure

they have at least one individual who is well versed in Indigenous knowledges and perspectives for it to work. They explain the need for strong collaboration, trust, and equitable relationships. Wright et al. continue to explain that the process should include Elders to allow for traditional teachings and ceremony. They acknowledge that Elders and community members often sit on advisory councils to oversee and ensure the process is respected. Patience is also incredibly important in the process as engaging and understanding multiple perspectives is time consuming (Wright et al., 2019). If we want to do the process properly it cannot be rushed.

Two-eyed seeing provides Indigenous students with a greater connection to their culture which supports learning (Hare & Pigeon, 2011; Kanu, 2002; Whitley, 2013). It identifies power inequities, promotes equality and collaboration, and has been identified as a method to support decolonization (Wright et al., 2009). As we work to challenge dominant practices, two-eyed seeing provides a method to integrate Indigenous Knowledges into the present system, as we work toward the ideal state. The following section will discuss how two-eyed seeing can be used in association with the school context model (Bascia, 2014) to provide a solution for change.

Integrating two-eyed seeing with the school context model (Bascia, 2014) provides a multifaceted approach to address the PoP. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of how these approaches can work together. The school context model (Bascia, 2014) has provided areas where educators can focus their attention to make immediate changes to support student learning. Toulouse (2016) lays out clear examples and strategies that can be applied to better engage Indigenous learners, today. Adding the two-eyed seeing approach creates a pathway to alter our current system toward one that is more inclusive and culturally responsive. To decolonize oppressive practices in the school, we need to integrate other perspectives. The two-eyed seeing approach provides an opportunity to better engage Indigenous communities into every aspect of

the school community. Collaborating to identify dominate or unwelcoming practices will help to

remove barriers and provide a more welcoming environment. Wright et al. (2019) note that the

application of two-eyed seeing will take considerable time. Integrating both the school context

model (Bascia, 2014) with two-eyed seeing provides a model that allows for both immediate and

long-term change.

Figure 2

Proposed Model to Integrate the School Context Model (Bascia, 2014) with Two-Eyed Seeing
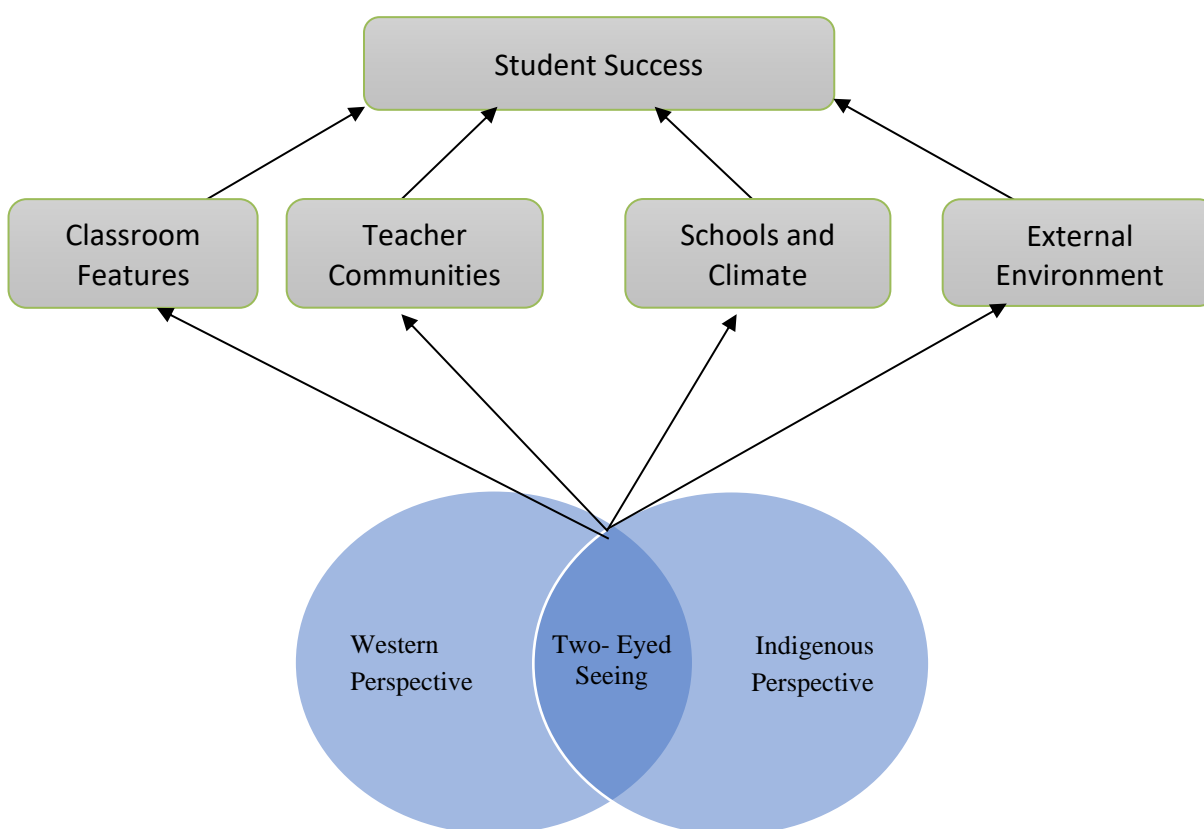
The colonized approach to education must change. Indigenous Knowledges and

perspectives need to have a more prominent voice. Figure 2 has proposed a model that will allow

Buffalo Elementary to change to better engage Indigenous learners and promote academic

success. The school will need to collaborate with Indigenous community members to improve

competencies within staff and support Indigenous education. It will require a shift in practice which will not be easy. By creating a solution that targets both short- and long-term goals, the organization can draw from the short-term successes, to fuel the passion for the long-term change.

Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change

Educational leaders are inundated daily with situations that require sound judgement based on strong ethical foundations. Ethical leaders are transparent in their use of power to influence others to promote equity considering such elements as integrity, respect for others, developing relationships, righteousness, and serving others (Sharma et al., 2018). To make ethical decisions, leaders must be morally literate, which Tuana (2014) has described as knowing what is right and having the moral courage to act. To do this, we must identify personal blind spots and ethical insensitivities so that we can make morally and ethically responsible decisions (Tuana, 2014).

This OIP is working to address the academic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students within a public school. The stakeholders involved with this PoP come from various cultural backgrounds. The staff of the school where the change is being implemented are made up of non-Indigenous individuals. The students, parents, and community members on which the OIP is focused are of Indigenous descent. Given the lack of Indigenous representation within the staff, increased caution is necessary as we are working with a population in which we are not members. We need to ensure we do not continue to oppress with the dominant narrative and allow Indigenous voices to be heard (Smith, 2000). Ethically working within an unfamiliar cultural population is challenging. Tuck and Yang (2012) have acknowledged the muddled approaches of many non-Indigenous individuals in the past when attempting to address the

impacts of colonization. Osmond- Johnson and Turner (2020) noted that although most individuals came from a place of good intentions, their attempts continue to mirror the historical colonial voice.

As a non-Indigenous principal, I am incredibly cautious as I do not want to repeat past mistakes. I have questioned my role in this process as I want to be respectful while maintaining a high ethical and moral standard. Osmond-Johnson and Turner (2020) found that because of the lack of Indigenous representation within the education system, non-Indigenous principals would need to take a larger role in implementing the TRC calls to action in support of change. They continued to explain that although principals should be taking an increased role, they should not be leading the change. Instead, principals must work with the Indigenous communities as an advocate and ally (Osmond-Johnson & Turner, 2020; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Battiste (2013) explained that regardless of a principal's cultural heritage, they could take up an Indigenist agenda in the spirit of reconciliation if they worked to support relationships with Indigenous communities, the land, and continued to be accountable to the people. Kovach (2005) also expressed the importance of maintaining a solid connection with the community to allow for reciprocity of ideas. Ethically working to address change for Indigenous students as a non-Indigenous individual is possible if there is an elevated level of collaboration with the community. The Indigenous voice needs to be heard and cannot be held in the shadows.

Collaborating closely with Indigenous communities will require a strong understanding of Indigenous culture. There needs to be an assurance that Indigenous people, practices, and culture are not exploited (Battiste, 2007). Osmond-Johnson (2020) explained that individuals need to work alongside Indigenous communities without pushing their own agenda. Providing opportunities for such things as an Indigenous student and/or parent groups, or an advisory

council made up of community members including Knowledge Keepers and Elders are all possibilities. Providing opportunities for collaboration and engagement will allow Indigenous members of all ages to have their voice and act as leaders for change. This should aid in preventing the exploitation as cautioned by Battiste (2007).

Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) developed the four R's of ethical research when working with Indigenous communities which include respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility. Adhering to these practices requires a leadership style that supports transparency and better understands the complexities of distinct cultural practices. The authentic and culturally responsive leadership approaches used throughout this OIP mesh well in supporting the four R's of ethical research with Indigenous communities. The authentic leadership approach supports relationships, builds trust, and values the importance of storytelling allowing for greater connection to Indigenous communities (George, 2003; Northouse, 2018). The culturally responsive leadership approach will support community collaboration through greater cultural understanding and create an environment where other perspectives are valued (Johnson 2014). Culturally responsive leadership is necessary as it provides the anti-oppressive style that is needed to ethically work with Indigenous communities as a non-Indigenous individual. (Khalifa et al., 2016).

The solution chosen to address the gap involved a two-step approach with Bascia's (2014) school context model as well as placing a greater emphasis on the Indigenous concept of two-eyed seeing. Both strategies require an increased push to decolonize some traditional education practices while creating a greater understanding of Indigenous culture. I am expecting a certain level of dissonance from non-Indigenous stakeholders as it will involve challenging practices of the dominant majority. I expect there to be little pushback from educators as

supporting Indigenous culture and education is a professional responsibility (Alberta Education, 2020e). However, Osmond-Johnson and Turner (2020) noted that individuals within the prairie provinces had the highest rates of disparaging views of Indigenous people and felt they did not deserve special treatment. To push the change there needs to be transparency so that non-Indigenous stakeholders understand there is no alternative agenda beyond supporting students. It is incredibly important for leadership to articulate the reason behind the change and the benefits. An authentic leadership approach provides this transparency while working to develop trust (Northouse, 2018). Trust is of utmost importance as when leaders make changes based on ethical foundations, employees are more likely to support the process and have increased participation (Sharif & Scandura, 2014).

There is a strong ethical and moral obligation associated with this PoP, given the historical context of the education of Indigenous students. By collaborating with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals, we can ethically forge a path forward that works to address the academic gap. There will be additional ethical concerns along the way which will require greater evaluation and reflection. These situations will act as learning opportunities where the staff and Indigenous community can come together to understand of various perspectives. We can use Employing such models Kirkness and Barnhardt's (1991) four R's model, or Stefkovich and Begley's (2007) rights, respect, and responsibility model, we can reflect on the reasons behind decisions to hold ourselves to a greater ethical standard. If there are open lines of communication and respect for all parties involved, we can work together to create an environment that better engages Indigenous students.

Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation and Communication

The previous two chapters have demonstrated a need for organizational change by identifying a consistent gap in the academic outcomes for Indigenous students compared to non-Indigenous students. An organizational overview was performed, and viable solutions were suggested as means to affect change. This chapter will describe how the proposed model blending two-eyed seeing with the school context will be implemented, evaluated, and communicated to all involved. Cawsey et al.'s (2016) change path model will guide the process while drawing on authentic and culturally responsive leadership. The chapter concludes with future considerations and next steps.

Change Implementation Plan

The vision for Indigenous education within Buffalo Elementary revolves around creating an environment where there is a greater integration of Indigenous Knowledges and culture to provide a more welcoming environment for Indigenous students. Many traditional strategies to support student learning, such as reading interventions, are universal to all students and will continue. Research surrounding the academic achievement of Indigenous students frequently acknowledges the need to provide greater cultural connections to the curriculum (Hare & Pigeon, 2011; Kanu, 2002; Whitley, 2013) and a more welcoming environment (Gunn et al., 2011; Preston & Claypool, 2013; Whitley, 2013) to improve academics. For these reasons, the focus of this implementation plan is to create an environment that is more welcoming to Indigenous students by integrating traditional Indigenous Knowledges to make education more culturally relevant to support academic achievement.

The documents used to identify an academic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students for this plan include provincial achievement scores, literacy and numeracy data, and school-based assessments (Alberta Education, 2019; NPSD, 2020). These documents

demonstrate that an academic gap does exist. However, it is important to note that success in education may not always have the same definition. Toulouse (2016) note that what is important for Indigenous communities was the opportunity for individuals to develop their talents in a respectful environment. Individuals need to contribute to society while being balanced emotionally, spiritually, physically, and intellectually. They explain the importance of identity, connection to the land, and the importance of language (Toulouse, 2016). Indigenous education is the development of the whole individual. It is important to acknowledge that the current assessment methods do not necessarily align with Indigenous perspectives; however, it is the system in which public school students are evaluated. The steps being taken in this OIP will support both the academic achievement as defined by the system, and the whole student as identified by Toulouse (2016). Buffalo Elementary does use various assessment strategies for school-level assessment. Unfortunately, standardized tests still play a key role in student evaluation within the division and province. Redefining school academic success is one area where greater emphasis needs to be placed at the division and provincial levels.

The colonized neoliberal approach to education that is dominant within most public schools is present in NPSD. For there to be a more accepting approach, we need to start challenging the perspectives set out by the dominant majority. As this is no easy feat, this project looks to strengthen the Indigenous perspective while still allowing for the Westernized perspective. As coined by Mi'kmaq elder Albert Marshall, the term two-eyed seeing allows for the best of both worlds. Two-eyed seeing allows individuals to see the world with the strengths of an Indigenous perspective while also using the strengths of a Westernized perspective (Bartlett et al., 2012). This process provides a more holistic and diverse approach that supports the diversity of learning for all individuals.

The application of a two-eyed seeing requires educators to have the support of an individual who is knowledgeable with Indigenous Knowledges and culture (Wright et al., 2019). Given the lack of Indigenous staff members in Buffalo Elementary, collaboration with the Indigenous community is paramount. Without representation from both perspectives the approach will lack the context needed to support the two-eyed seeing approach. Wright et al. (2019) explain the need for developing authentic relationships, involvement of Elders and Knowledge Keepers to promote traditional teaching and ceremonies, and the engagement of the Indigenous community in the process to be effective. While collaboration and learning from the Indigenous community will be one faucet, additional professional development by the school and division will also be necessary. Without active participation from Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers, it will be impossible to implement the two-eyed seeing approach as it needs both perspectives.

In addition to the two-eyed seeing approach, the school context model as described by Bascia (2014), will be used as a guide to identifying areas needing modifications to develop a more welcoming environment for Indigenous students. Bascia (2014) identified classroom features, teacher communities, schools and climate, and the external environment as key factors leading to improved student achievement. Toulouse (2016) used Bascia's approach but connected the concepts to Indigenous learners. Using this framework, the school and community can start looking at each of the variables and work to identify how the dominate perspectives create hurdles while developing new practices that will better relate to Indigenous learners. Having individuals who can speak from personal experience will be incredibly valuable as they have lived these experiences. To do this, there needs to be a detailed plan of action as to how this implementation will work. Cawsey et al. (2016) change path model will be used as the guide for

implementing the two-eyed seeing approach in association with the school context model (Figure 2).

Change Path Model

Awakening

The first step in the change path model (Cawsey et al., 2016) requires an awakening by strategic partners. People will be the greatest resource and challenge as we work to create a change. The partners who will need to be fully engaged and passionate about supporting the change are the Indigenous community members and the educators within the school division. These groups play distinct roles in the process but need to come together to provide a unified plan for change if we are to effectively implement the two-eyed seeing approach (Wright et al., 2019).

Some steps regarding the awakening have been discussed in previous sections, including certain events that have and will continue to support the awakening process. The 94 calls to action identified by the TRC (2015) have provided a national narrative identifying the need to engage Indigenous people in reconciliation. For educators, provincial level changes including a greater focus put into the development of Indigenous education resources (Alberta Education, 2020b), as well as instituting professional practice standards related to Indigenous education, have been implemented for all levels of educators from the teacher through to superintendent (Alberta Education, 2020e). These competencies continue to stress the importance of educators integrating Indigenous culture and history into public education. At the division level, there has been a push from senior administration focusing on greater accountability placed on the academic results of Indigenous students. The reporting of academic results specific to this population reaffirm the importance placed on the issue by the division. NPSD has also recently hired additional cultural navigators to provide support to both the students and educators. These

individuals go into all schools and provide lessons, support teachers, and work to improve

Indigenous education, which does aid in the awakening process. Continued efforts from the

school leadership will need to continue to build on this through frequently targeted approaches

with professional development and school-based initiatives. All these changes together

demonstrate the commitment to improving Indigenous education while acting to support the

awakening. While this is a great start, we still have a way to go.

To support awakening in the staff, I plan to use the school-based time allocated for

professional learning communities to focus on Indigenous education. Applying foundational

knowledge of Indigenous people is one of the professional standards all teachers must be able to

demonstrate to be licensed in the province. Understanding the historical context, providing

appropriate learning opportunities, and supporting academics are all components identified

(Alberta Education 2020e). As the standard so closely aligns with the topic of the OIP, it makes

for easy acceptance as the topic for our professional learning communities.

Focusing on Indigenous education will provide an opportunity for staff to investigate

achievement results to gain a better understand of the current gap. Time will be given to review

historical trends and look for additional resources that may be beneficial in supporting

Indigenous students. As a culturally responsive leader, I will provide opportunities that will

challenge staff to reflect on their beliefs and values toward Indigenous culture. During this time,

I would also introduce the idea of two-eyed seeing so staff would be familiar with the concept. I

will provide resources that are more culturally responsive and encourage staff to be critical of

current practices. Having the ability to collaborate with staff regarding Indigenous education will

only act to create greater understanding and further support the awakening.

Many of the Indigenous community members may already be aware of the achievement

gap experienced by Indigenous students. Providing various provincial, divisional, and school-

level data will demonstrate the need for change. However, given that I am non-Indigenous, a level of caution needs to be exercised. The goal of the OIP is to engage the Indigenous community to create a positive change for students. Quoting data that may come across as unfavourable may create more distance. Cawsey et al. (2016) noted that we could increase awareness and participation by creating a common goal. For this to happen, there needs to be an opportunity to develop relationships and sit with influential Indigenous community members such as respected Elders or local representatives. This could be supported through existing relationships already present at the school as well as the social and professional networks of the cultural navigators. Through these interactions, the vision of two-eyed seeing and the importance of an Indigenous perspective could be presented as a vision for change. These meetings could provide further support and connections into the community, which will aid in developing a working committee to act as cultural experts for the project. Having a shared goal will encourage collaboration while engaging the Indigenous community in the process which is necessary (Battiste & Henderson, 2009; Smith 2016). Without a strong working partnership between the school and the Indigenous community the project cannot progress. The Indigenous voice needs to be present to the same oppressive practices that I am working to address (Smith, 2000)

This initial step of forming a committee of Indigenous community members may prove to be the most challenging but is foundational to the process. The Indigenous committee may consist of community members, respected Elders and Knowledge Keepers, parents and guardians, or any Indigenous community members who have a passion for educational change. All the local First Nations, Métis, and Inuit groups would be encouraged to have a voice on the committee. Once a core group of Indigenous community members who will engage in the process are solidified, consultation will be needed to identify Indigenous practices that could be implemented to create a more positive learning environment. Wright et al. (2019) noted that

authentic relationships need to be formed with the Indigenous community as these relationships are valued and a crucial step to adhering to ethical guidelines with Indigenous communities. The authentic and culturally responsive leadership approaches that I will take up, will facilitate the development of these connections. Taking the time to ensure a thorough understanding of the proper process will be important. Ensuring all meetings begin with local land acknowledgements, following Elder protocols, allowing opportunities to smudge, and using traditional practices such as a talking stick can be a first step in demonstrating that the school has taken steps to integrate Indigenous teachings into the school setting.

The current world pandemic has created a significant hurdle in facilitating relationships, given the limited opportunities for in-person gatherings. To support this process, collaboration with the division's cultural navigator will be needed to help promote connections between the community and the school. Initial consultations may need to utilize online platforms such as Zoom, Google Meets, or Microsoft Teams when in-person meetings are not possible. Given the various hurdles associated with online platforms, there may be some struggles to get sufficient community participation. Hurdles such as access to technology or recruiting participants are not as easy to overcome in an online format. Drawing on present partnerships throughout the division will be beneficial as there are already working relationships with Indigenous community members. Additional effort will be needed to form stronger relationships with Buffalo Elementary, which the cultural navigators could support.

Mobilization

Mobilization requires the change leader to make sense of how the change will work within the organization, assess the power and cultural dynamics, communicate the change organization-wide, and leverage relationships, skills, and knowledge to support the change (Cawsey et al., 2016). School based professional learning communities will provide staff the

ability to fully investigate the model for change (Figure2). Having already exposed staff to two-eyed seeing during the awakening will aid in understanding the proposed model. Toulouse (2016) has identified areas for change to support Indigenous students in each of the four headings of classroom features, teacher communities, school and climate, and external environment. Factors such as linking learning to students' lives, time for professional development for educators, strengthening interpersonal relationships, deconstructing curriculum, and the importance of community engagement are all noted. A complete list can be found in the appendix.

The staff will be broken into four heterogenous grade groupings each representing one of the four factors. The groups are heterogenous to support greater representation throughout the school. Each group will be responsible to investigate current practices within the school that either support or create barriers for each of the factors. Representatives from each group will be asked to share their findings with the working committee. The members of the working committee will collaborate with staff to provide suggestions and ensure changes are culturally supportive. When changes have been approved by all parties involved, time will be given during the professional development days to prepare the resources necessary for implementation.

Power dynamics will play a significant role in this stage. As groups work to understand varying perspectives, honesty will be critical (Wright et al., 2019). Wright et al. (2019) explain the importance of openness to change, participating in self-reflection, and analyzing personal beliefs and values as we work to understand commonalities and differences. The authentic leadership approach in which transparency is foundational will align well with this approach. The staff and I will have to reflect on personal beliefs while acknowledging power and privilege. I can work with staff to identify areas rooted in the dominant ideology, and how we can look at modifying these approaches to make them more welcoming and accepting. If we hope to have an

authentic two-eyed seeing approach, both perspectives need to be valued. For this to happen, the Westernized perspective may have to take a back seat to allow the Indigenous perspective to be heard.

Acceleration

The acceleration phase requires empowering others, the developing new knowledge, increasing momentum, and celebrating successes (Cawsey et al., 2016). The collaboration with the local Indigenous community will aid in increasing educator competency regarding Indigenous Knowledges. Scheduled meetings, additional professional development, exposure to cultural ceremonies and practices, and strengthening the lines of communication will provide a relationship that supports cultural growth. Providing opportunities for new Indigenous community members to join the committee or provide suggestions will continue to forge strong relationships between school and community, which is one of the factors of the school context model (Bascia, 2014). Arranging success assemblies or displays that provide opportunities for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to share what they have learned will continue to build momentum and propel the initiative forward.

Institutionalization

The final stage of Cawsey et al.'s (2016) change path model is institutionalization, where the changes have become ingrained in the very fabric of the school. Using the school context model (Bascia, 2014) and the two-eyed seeing approach to create a more welcoming environment for Indigenous students will not happen overnight. The steps laid out in the change path model provide a plan of action for the OIP and addressing the PoP. The process will require many incremental changes that will take time. Institutionalization will require frequent evaluation and adaptation to create a permanent change that values both the Westernized and

Indigenous perspectives. While complete institutionalized change is the goal, it is understood that the period to accomplish this will be considerable.

Supports and Resources

The largest and most crucial resource for the success of this change plan is the Indigenous community members who will form the working committee. Without these individuals, we do not have first-hand experiences and cultural knowledge that is foundational to the process. Timelines surrounding the development of this group will be suggested, but it is important to note that the process cannot move forward without this group. The success or failure of this OIP will hinge on the ability to have strong collaboration with the local Indigenous community. Their experiences will help identify hegemonic practices that may go unnoticed given the lack of Indigenous representation within the school. Their knowledge will also help provide support as to how we can implement changes to engage Indigenous students. Indigenous voice needs to be the driver for change to not continue with colonized perspectives (Battiste, 2013; Battiste & Henderson, 2009; Smith 2016).

The support of the division's cultural navigators will be necessary for helping to build the working committee and develop school-level supports and solutions. As these individuals are employees of NPSD, they will be strong resources as we move through this process.

The change proposed for this OIP requires a nominal financial commitment which is one of the project's strengths. Progress will not be hindered by the inability to obtain necessary financial resources. Inviting Elders and Knowledge Keepers to participate in the process will require adhering to the local protocols outlined in an NPSD procedure (NPSD, 2020b). This process requires an offering of tobacco and an honorarium for their participation and sharing of knowledge. The greatest costs will be the time required by the working group and the educators. There will be a cost associated with teacher salaries during professional development and

consultation as it will take place during regular working hours. This project directly aligns with the division's directives on Indigenous education, so this should not create issues. External costs to the school or division should be minimal, with some potential technology requirements if meetings are forced to be virtual.

Short-, Medium and Long-Term Goals

The organizational change process will be a series of steps, both forward and backward, to achieve the vision. Developing various incremental goals to set as benchmarks helps provide markers as to where we are in the process. Given the complexity of the project and the dependence of a working group made up of external community members, specific timelines will be challenging to determine. Much of the process will be determined based on the successful completion of the preceding steps. Table 2 provides an overview of the various goals and the general order where they are hoping to be achieved.

Table 2

Overview of Short-, Medium- and Long-Term Goals

Short Term Goals	Medium Term Goals	Long Term Goals
Awakening	*Mobilization / Acceleration*	*Institutionalization*
- Develop an action plan and resources for the professional learning communities focus on Indigenous education (summer) -Engage Indigenous community members and strengthen relationships with the school. (immediately and ongoing) - Create awareness and develop a shared vision for change. (First 1-2 months) -Formation of a working committee of Indigenous parents, students, teachers, and community members to act as cultural experts. (First 1-3 months)	-Identify dominant practices within the school that create an unwelcoming environment for Indigenous students while providing more culturally appropriate solutions. (From the inception of working group onward) - Articulate the proposed vision and develop a school-wide action plan for implementation. (3-6 months pending formation of the working committee) - Continue to strengthen relationships while building a collaborative learning community. (This will be ongoing from inception) - Develop cultural capacity within staff through professional development with the community. (This will be ongoing from inception) - Empower stakeholders and build momentum through positive successes. (3-6 months)	- Implementation of the school context model (6 months -1 year) -Achieve a shift where two-eyed seeing and Indigenous perspectives are ingrained in the learning environment. (1-3 years) - Create a system that celebrates the traditions and cultures of the Indigenous people of Canada (1-3 years)

Limitations

This organizational change does not come without some limitations. The biggest and

most obvious limitation is the fact that I am not Indigenous. Although Osmond-Johnson and

Turner (2020) have noted that non-Indigenous educators are needed to push toward reconciliation because of the lack of Indigenous educators, extreme caution is needed as I cannot speak to the challenges faced by Indigenous students. I will push to provide a more engaging education for Indigenous students but remind myself not to interject my personal perspectives into the change (Battiste, 2013; Osmond-Johnson & Turner, 2020; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Facilitating opportunities for collaboration between Indigenous community members and educators will allow me to get first-hand knowledge of the practices necessary for change.

Another challenge is the potential difficulties associated with getting a working group of Indigenous community members willing and able to be a part of the change process. With the current pandemic social gatherings are limited which may create a hurdle to gaining adequate engagement. The use of the division's cultural navigator will be imperative to recruiting community members. In addition to getting enough individuals to participate, progress will be determined by the committee. Predetermined timelines will not be possible as the Indigenous voices are the drivers of the change.

The preceding section has provided an overview of the steps necessary to begin the implementation process. As with any organizational change, frequent hurdles will arise and will need to be addressed. Flexibility in the process will be needed and guided by frequent evaluation and assessments.

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

With a defined change implementation plan in place, a system for monitoring and evaluating progress is needed. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks are essential to identify progress, inform decision-making, support accountability, and guide program improvement (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). To effectively implement a monitoring and evaluation plan, it is important to clearly understand the differences between the two. Monitoring is an ongoing

process that tracks the progress of a plan, identifies what is produced, what is achieved, all while guiding to best support corrective action to the plan (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Evaluation is a periodic process that uses the data obtained through monitoring to inform judgement, formulate conclusions, and make recommendations for the next steps in the process (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). The two processes work in conjunction as monitoring informs evaluation, and the changes developed through evaluation will require ongoing monitoring.

Cawsey et al. (2016) change path model has been used as the framework for implementing organizational change. To ensure the effectiveness of the change plan, a system of tools is needed to measure and evaluate the change. The plan, do, study, act cycle (PDSA) is one model that can be applied to each stage of the change path model to provide an ongoing monitoring and evaluation system. Donnelly and Kirk (2015) provide an overview of the PDSA cycle while identifying some key concepts or questions that should be investigated at each stage. Taking each step of the change path model and applying this cycle will provide a structure that allows for assessment and the ability to identify alterations that are necessary for each stage to be successful. This evaluation of the change process must be ongoing, and data informed. To properly apply the PDSA cycle, we must understand each step.

The plan step has some key concepts that must be addressed. Donnelly and Kirk (2015) noted that the change leader needs to understand the problem, how you know it is a problem, data to inform the cause of the problem, and what you are trying to achieve. Looking back to the goals outlined in the implementation plan will provide a target for what is trying to be achieved. Tools and strategies will need to align with the outlined goals to inform if the goal is accomplished or if modifications must be made. The second stage of the PDSA model is the do stage. This is where the action has been implemented, and a measurement tool is used to assess what is happening. Donnelly and Kirk (2015) note the importance of measuring the changes over

time as well as any observations that may be unforeseen. From here, the study phase is where we evaluate all the various forms of data and see if the predicted outcome was achieved. All data must be compiled to accurately represent the process (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015). The final act stage requires the leader to understand what processes and modifications are needed to be changed or maintained to ensure the desired results are achieved (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015). The small incremental changes are more likely to be influential in the overall success of the change process (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015). These minor improvements help to demonstrate that positive change is happening and will help motivate and maintain momentum toward the greater goal. For this reason, this model was selected as it provides an ongoing monitoring and evaluation plan that allows for small and frequent adaptations to the process.

In addition to the PDSA model, additional considerations need to be given because there is a cultural component to this change process. Every attempt needs to be made to ensure cultural and ethical guidelines are adhered to when any decisions are being made. Using an authentic leadership approach, I will be as open and transparent as possible as we strengthen relationships with the Indigenous community. Culturally responsive leadership practices are being utilized as a strategy to maintain ethical and cultural considerations. Being non-Indigenous adds an additional layer because although I am coming from a place of good intentions, non-Indigenous leaders often inadvertently echo the colonized voice (Osmond-Johnson & Turner, 2020). To minimize this from happening, an additional step will be taken in the process. A review by the Indigenous community members involved in the process will be performed before changes are made.

Indigenous research frequently mentions the importance of following the 4R's of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility (Kirkness and Barnhardt, 1991; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2016) when working with Indigenous populations. Tessaro et al. (2018) note relationships as the fifth R which further supports the value of interpersonal connections. All steps of the change

process beginning at inception require the engagement of the Indigenous community. Strategies developed through this process will have to be vetted through the cultural experts to determine if the process is adhering to the 5 R's and ensuring ethical and cultural considerations are being met. Given that this may involve an extensive amount of time, NPSD's cultural navigator may need to act in this position if community volunteers cannot be secured. This step ensures that the monitoring and evaluation of the process aligns with the vision, and the cultural beliefs and experiences of the community.

The PoP is working to address the academic gap seen between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Achieving the larger goal requires a series of compounding smaller successes. The following section will provide tools and how they will be used in the measurement and evaluation process. While the list of tools may not be exhaustive given the continuous evolution of the project, it will provide a starting point in which additional measures can be added. For each goal within the change, the PDSA model will be applied to see how much progress is being made, and what needs to be modified to achieve success.

The goals of the awakening stage (Table 2) involve creating awareness and a shared vision, strengthening relationships with the Indigenous community, and creating an Indigenous working committee. Monitoring will need to take varying approaches given the differences in the populations involved in the process. The most obvious difference is the ease of access when targeting the educators. As this change will initially be focused on a single school, providing staff with a quick survey will provide an initial measure of where staff's thoughts are regarding the importance of the change. Seeking clarification as to the understanding of current academic results, the ties to professional responsibilities, as well as gaging personal perspectives regarding the level of importance in working for the change will provide a baseline as to where staff presently reside. For the staff of Buffalo Elementary, meetings are easily scheduled and will

allow for disseminating information needed to create awareness. Check-ins and follow up could be through face-to-face meetings or surveys to help understand where teachers are regarding creating awareness. Applying the PDSA cycle would provide feedback and an opportunity to assess the current state of awareness as to whether additional steps need to be taken.

Critical to the entire process is the development of an Indigenous working group to support the change. Ideally, the group would have members from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations encompassing parents, guardians, and community members. Having representation from all the groups from various roles within the community would be exemplary but may be unrealistic. Having a core group of at least three to five individuals willing to work together would be a great start to the process. We want to make sure numerous voices are being brought forward. Monitoring the level of engagement with each of the groups of Indigenous students, parents, guardians, and community will allow me to identify participation and representation. The number of interactions with school staff, attendance at meetings, or group members actively participating in school-based events could be used as potential ways to assess engagement in the process. Noticing a decrease in representation or attendance will be a red flag and require immediate attention. Using the PDSA cycle, the information obtained would need to be analyzed and modifications made to promote greater engagement. Feedback from current Indigenous members on how to engage other individuals will be beneficial as it will help identify flaws with current methods. Adequate representation is necessary, and the division's cultural navigator will be incredibly valuable in helping to facilitate the recruitment.

The mobilization phase of the change path model requires some key actions to push the process forward. Understanding organizational structures and systems, the various power and cultural dynamics, communicating and managing stakeholders, and leveraging resources to support the change are all aspects that need to be monitored to assess this stage in the process

(Cawsey et al., 2016). Beginning with structures and systems, it is important to understand that processes must be formalized to be sustainable (Cawsey et al., 2016). There will need to be a monitoring of what is being done to address how these variables are better supporting students. School-based and classroom-specific strategies will need to be provided in consultation with the local Indigenous communities so teachers can better create a culture of inclusiveness. The involvement of the Indigenous community is imperative in the planning stages as this is where past experiences are valuable. After the do phase where the strategies are implemented, the educators and the working group will need to come together to see successes and where changes need to be made. The planning and study phases will require intensive involvement with the Indigenous working group to ensure the changes adhere to the 5R's. Meetings between the educators and working groups held every other month will allow for rich discussions and provide the venue to work through the study portion of the PDSA.

Monitoring a shift in power and cultural dynamics is challenging to assess but is important given that no teachers identify as Indigenous within the current school. Frequent check-ins with educators, students, and Indigenous parents to see if there is a breakdown of the dominant practices and movement toward the two-eyed seeing approach will be necessary. Anecdotal feedback from community members will be used to see if changes demonstrating greater Indigenous presence are being observed within the school. This information will better tell if a change is happening and to what degree. Following the structure of the PDSA, the gathering of data will allow the me to work with teachers and the Indigenous community to continue to work to improve upon practices within the school.

To assess the changes to the acceleration phase, we need to have a clear understanding of what we are hoping to achieve by the stage's conclusion. Cawsey et al. (2016) acknowledge it is within this stage where traction is gained by empowering others to join the process while

managing the transitions and celebrating the minor successes leading to overall success. This would be the phase where more people will feel strongly about the movement and want to provide added support. Frequent and ongoing engagement is needed as without constant feedback and support, the process begins to fall back solely toward the educators. Monitoring community partnerships through surveys, interviews, and face-to-face meetings will allow me to understand how involved the Indigenous community feels in the process. An authentic leadership approach is paramount as it values relationships, transparency, and trust (Northouse, 2018). If Indigenous members are not feeling involved in the process, there needs to be a level of trust so they can express their concerns. Loss of engagement from the community partners could be devastating as the voice of the project is lost. Constantly promoting the importance of the change should increase involvement, and if not, steps need to be taken to find additional ways to engage the community.

The acceleration phase will need to allow opportunities for teachers to demonstrate some of their successes through collaboration. Utilizing professional development time to share successes and discuss strategies for continued improvement will only aid in supporting the process. Monitoring teacher engagement in these sessions will provide a sense of where they stand in the process. Frequent opportunities for check-ins through surveys or meetings will provide clarity as to where there are struggles or where additional steps need to be taken to continue to promote continuous growth. Implementing the measuring inclusion tool at the beginning of the change and throughout the year will provide a tangible score and identify which areas need greater focus. These areas could become part of the study section of the PDSA cycle where staff and the working group could collaborate on strategies to improve.

Measuring the institutionalization phase of the process will provide the greatest clarity as to whether the goals set out in the implementation plan were achieved. There are two components to this question that need to be looked at independently:

1. Was I able to follow my plan and integrate the school context model and the two-eyed seeing approach (Figure 2) at Buffalo Elementary?

2. Was I able to decrease or eliminate the academic gap between Indigenous and non-indigenous students?

Changes made to address the four components of the school context model as they pertain to Indigenous students at Buffalo elementary will need to be assessed. Identifying if there have been improvements to classroom features, teacher communities, schools and climate, and external environments may vary depending on perspectives. To assess teacher perceptions, we could look at the number of strategies implemented per component, the teacher's perception of effectiveness, and an overall rating for each component. This data could be compiled to provide a general overview of teacher's experiences. Similar questions could be asked to the students and parents through a survey to see if a significant difference was noticed. Areas that teachers, students, and parents/guardians mutually score as low will warrant further investigation and evaluation. Identifying changes in the systemic and individual educator practices to see if the concept of two-eyed seeing is frequently implemented in the school's day-to-day operations will also need to happen. Checking with teachers, students, and community members anecdotally and through surveys and interviews will provide an overview of where progress has been made, and where further changes are required. Ongoing assessment will be necessary as the institutionalization of these ideas will never cease. Continuous use of the PDSA cycle will allow for ongoing monitoring and evaluation as we work toward developing a system where two-eyed seeing is fully ingrained in the school's culture through its structure, systems, and processes.

The second area of interest relates to the original goal of the OIP. Have the recommended changes created any narrowing of the academic gap experienced by Indigenous students? Using the provincial achievement results in association with the school-level results, we can start to understand how successful the proposed change was. Ideally, the school will have seen an institutionalization of the two-eyed seeing approach and provided an environment where Indigenous students receive an education more fitting to their needs. Through this, we are hoping that we would see a narrowing of the academic gap. If the two-eyed seeing approach has been successfully implemented, yet results have not improved, then I will have to go back and revisit alternative suggestions for change. It would be important to consult the working group to see if they have felt that the process has been beneficial. While the goal of the OIP is to eliminate the academic gap, it has been mentioned that the goal of education may differ based on an Indigenous perspective (Toulouse, 2016). If the results have not improved, and the Indigenous community feels their students are receiving a better education, it would be hard not to see this as a success. If the two-eyed seeing approach has not been effectively implemented, and results have been improved, then I will need to look at what changes have been made to find causation for the change.

This organizational improvement plan provides a suggested solution for how Buffalo Elementary can work to address the academic gap observed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The suggestions set forth are based on scholarly research, but countless variables and interactions will impact the potential for success. Regardless of the proposed change, I will need to constantly assess all facets of the project through constant evaluation to identify successes and areas of needed change.

More detailed data will provide greater understanding of what is happening. This will allow for opportunities to adjust strategies and tactics to improve the likelihood of success. The

authentic and culturally responsive leadership approaches will continue to be pertinent given the importance of honesty, transparency, and culturally responsible practice. Adding the additional step of the Indigenous community members vetting interventions using the 5R's of Indigenous research will only further demonstrate cultural responsibility. We are working to create a more inclusive environment and trying to eliminate the dominant perspective that guides the current system of education. With comprehensive monitoring and evaluations, it is hoped that Indigenous voices will be loudly heard and be the driving force of change within the school.

Communication for Change

Organizational change requires the collaboration of all participants to work together toward a common goal. This process requires a comprehensive communication plan to inform the various groups and individuals of what needs to happen to facilitate the vision for change. Cawsey et al. (2016) explain that the goals of a communication plan are to impart the need for change within the organization, explain the impacts on individuals, communicate changes to processes, and inform people of progress. Having an effective communication plan is imperative as it will minimize rumours, support mobilization, and maintain the commitment and enthusiasm for change (Cawsey et al., 2016).

This communication plan will be engaging two distinct groups, which will require different approaches and considerations. The first group will be composed of educators in Buffalo Elementary who are responsible for the delivery of education. Educators would include teachers, educational assistants, administration, and any division consultants who work with students. The majority, if not all these individuals, do not identify as Indigenous. The culturally responsive leadership approach will be important to model and promote culturally responsive practices to the group. Marshall and Khalifa (2018) have found that culturally responsive leaders can strongly influence promoting culturally relevant practice. As the leader within the school,

and the main person responsible for communicating the vision, it will be important I model the behaviours I am expecting staff to follow. By demonstrating the importance of cultural understanding, it echoes the need for all staff to address personal gaps in cultural knowledge that may be present.

The second group of individuals that the communication plan will need to engage are the Indigenous students, parents, guardians, and community members, including Elders and Knowledge Keepers. It is important to note that engagement with the Indigenous community goes well beyond simple communication for this OIP. To be successful, it is imperative that the Indigenous community can collaborate with the school and provide guidance as to what needs to be changed, while acting as cultural experts to support the change. As the initial change driver for this OIP, I plan to use my power and position to amplify Indigenous voice while acting as an ally. The authentic and culturally responsive leadership approaches will be important to build trusting relationships and be respectful of cultural differences. Knowing cultural protocols will be imperative, especially during the initial meetings as not to offend anyone. The whole OIP is predicated on the importance of valuing Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives. Failing to take the time to fully understand cultural protocols could be devastating, given it demonstrates a lack of preparation and commitment to the process.

Cawsey et al. (2016) provided a four-phase communication plan involving the communications necessary at each phase. The phases included a prechange phase, need for change phase, midstream change phase, and a confirming change phase. Each phase is distinct and involves different methods depending on where you are in the process. Cawsey at al. (2016) explain each of the phases as follows:

1. Prechange phase - obtaining approval and communicating need.

2. Need for change phase - promoting enthusiasm and communicating urgency.

3. Midstream phase - breaking down change details and receiving feedback.

4. Confirming change phase - Celebrates successes and reinforces commitment to the change.

The four-phase communication plan as outlined by Cawsey et al. (2016) will act as a guide for developing a communication plan for this OIP. Each stage of communication will focus on how to best engage with the Indigenous community and the school-based educators. A logical first step would be to target the educators within the educational organization, given the ease in access to these individuals. However, a certain level of caution needs to be taken given the historical past associated with deciding what is in the best interest of the Indigenous people. This OIP is taking up a constructivist approach where Indigenous people are the ones driving the change. For this reason, initial communication strategies will focus on the Indigenous community to ascertain their support and guidance before progressing too far.

Prechange Phase / Need for Change Phase

Communication with the Indigenous community will need to be broken into small subgroups with different communication strategies for each. The students, parents, guardians, and community members will all have various levels of connection to the proposed change, therefore different strategies and tactics will need to be implemented. The prechange phase will require focusing communications on the influential parents and community members to gain initial support. Working closely with the division's cultural navigator, face-to-face meetings will be arranged to communicate the proposed vision. Face-to-face meetings will be the primary source of communication for these initial interactions as they have been found to be the most effective mode of communication (Klein, 1996; Richardson & Denton, 1996). The face-to-face meetings also allow an opportunity to build relationships and support the use of storytelling which aligns with Indigenous cultural traditions. These initial engagements will provide an

opportunity to gather additional information to best reach other community members in hopes of attracting more community support.

Gaining the attention of the Indigenous student population within Buffalo Elementary will require minimal effort, given there is direct access to these individuals through the school. Facilitating a focus group of Indigenous students to express opinions would open the dialogue as to where they would like to see changes. During this group, the proposed vision for change would be explained, including the idea of two-eyed seeing. Providing examples of how the two-eyed seeing approach could be implemented in various situations would help students understand the concept of drawing on both perspectives and not just from Western knowledge. Encouraging students to share their ideas with parents and guardians could begin discussions about the proposed vision. All steps taken with the initial communication strategies are geared at creating approval, urgency, and enthusiasm for the change which addresses the first two phases of the communication plan.

Although much of the documentation used to identify the academic gap is public, staff will still need to be provided opportunities to fully understand the current start of Indigenous education. Opportunities for communicating the current reality are frequent given the access to these individuals in school-based meetings and planning sessions. Initial meetings with all school staff will allow pertinent data to be presented to the employees responsible for delivering education. Collaborating with staff will allow open lines of communication where I can meet with the staff and hear their concerns. The authentic leadership approach supports this as it is based on transparency and strong connections (Northouse, 2019). Time will be allocated during professional development days to provide frequent and regular updates regarding the change process. If or when individual circumstances dictate the need for clarification, individualized meetings can be arranged to provide that consistent feedback.

Mainstream Phase

The information created in this third phase will be developed through the work of the Indigenous working group in association with the school staff. Regular meetings will be necessary for parents and community members to express their opinions for change and allow the sharing of ideas. These meetings will also allow the educators within the school to share what is happening and seek guidance around strategies that may support more cultural understanding.

Klein (1996) expresses the need for opinion leaders when developing a communication plan that influences employees toward a particular view. He noted that supervisors play a key role as employees look toward their superiors for guidance. When these individuals support the change, it creates a much stronger opinion of the change. As the principal, I will act as both an opinion leader and model for change. The culturally responsive leadership approach will once again be beneficial as the behaviours we are looking to implement will be modeled for employees. Klein (1996) expressed that the level of trust experienced between the staff and supervisor influences the value of the messages. The greater the trust, the more impactful the message. As an authentic leader trust is one of the key tenets that will aid in the communication process (Northouse, 2019). By building a school culture of honesty and transparency, the messages will garner more weight and authenticity. While in-person meetings are preferred, other communications such as virtual meetings, phone conversations, email, newsletters, social media, and online forms are all possibilities. The more frequent the message for change is promoted, the greater the chance of message retention (Cawsey et al., 2016; Klein, 2016).

The interactions between the school and Indigenous partners will be one communication path, but there will also need to be ongoing communication with the Indigenous community. Having a designated member involved in the process who can act as the communication person for the greater community will be beneficial. As much of the knowledge passed on through

Indigenous culture is through word of mouth, this will be the primary method for reaching out to the community. Having a communications person with connections to the community will aid in disseminating the information and updating what is happening. It is important that this person is influential and trusted as every attempt needs to be made to strengthen relationships. Misinformation could be damaging if falsehoods are not addressed. This position will require an additional time commitment, so the division's cultural navigator will be the initial person with optimism that it can be taken over by one of the community members involved in the change. In addition to this communication person, all information regarding the process will be released from the school through social media, monthly newsletters, and regular parent communications.

Confirming Change Phase

The final stage, referred to as the confirming change phase, requires celebrating successes and reinforcing the commitment to the initiative (Cawsey et al., 2016). The two-eyed seeing approach used in this change plan looks to value both the Indigenous and Western perspectives in the search for understanding. It encourages all individuals to be critical thinkers and seek to solve problems with a greater breadth of understanding. Two-eyed seeing provides Indigenous students with a greater connection to their traditional teaching. It supports non-Indigenous students by encouraging a deeper understanding beyond the ones traditionally taught in classrooms. To celebrate success, the school could arrange a schoolwide fair where students explain how the two-eyed seeing approach has been used to enhance understanding. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students would develop projects to demonstrate how this approach is universally beneficial. This information could also be shared during Indigenous Awareness week, cultural celebrations, and partnering with local Indigenous communities to incorporate presentations at various celebrations. Additional methods such as promoting the success on social media, in newsletters, and within all communications released from the school

will help to reiterate the approach's value. While the process will take time, any progress is a step in the right direction.

Potential Challenges

It is expected that there will be some level of reservation with various individuals or groups as the change is looking to challenge some of the traditional practices of educational delivery. Communication relating to the school and division goals will need to be provided to all individuals through the various communication channels utilized by the school. Supporting Indigenous education is a priority of the school, the division, and the provincial education authority (Alberta Education, 2020c; Nikosis School Division, 2020). Taking time to communicate the expectations and potential benefits to not only Indigenous students, but all students, will be essential. If there is a large-scale pushback, which is not expected, additional time may be needed to address concerns. This may require reverting to strategies implemented during the awakening of the change path model to clearly articulate the reason behind the change. Every attempt will be made to be transparent so that the necessary information is available.

There is potential for apprehension in the Indigenous community as I do not identify as Indigenous. However, it is my responsibility to take the necessary steps to provide the best education possible to all students. I will work to amplify the voice of Indigenous people who currently lack representation at some of the critical roles within the education system. Osmond-Johnson and Turner (2020) expressed the importance of non-Indigenous principals taking a larger role given the lack of Indigenous leaders within education systems. Battiste (2013) also explained that if a principal worked with the Indigenous community and maintained accountability, non-Indigenous individuals could work to support reconciliation. If there is a level of resistance from the Indigenous community, then the strategies used in the awakening

stages would be utilized with a focus on developing trust, strengthening relationships, and seeking to understand why the resistance exists.

Where additional communication may need to be focused is regarding non-Indigenous students and community members. People who are members of the dominant majority may feel that these changes somehow negatively affect their children's education. Providing detailed information through school-based engagement sessions, social media, and in-person meetings will be necessary to explain why this process is happening. Explaining how the two-eyed seeing approach can create greater breadth of understanding for all students will be the foundational message echoed to all individuals. As the diversity within the school is quite vast, limited resistance is expected as the voice of the dominant majority does not necessarily represent the school's population. Applying the two-eyed seeing approach better acknowledges the various perspectives and diversity of the individuals that attend the school.

Providing communications that celebrate school success to the public will be important, so everyone is aware of the positive changes happening within the school. Posting through social media, school-based documents such as monthly newsletters, and acknowledging progress through school and community celebrations will all be utilized. While the process will take time, any progress is a step in the right direction as we all work toward reconciliation.

Next Steps and Future Consideration

The goal of the OIP was to address the academic achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students by creating a learning environment that better engages Indigenous students. Working with educators and the local Indigenous community, a collaborative approach was suggested that used the concept of two-eyed seeing in association with Bascia's (2014) school context model to create a positive change for all students. By drawing from the strengths of Westernized Knowledge in combination with Indigenous Knowledge, we are providing

students with a greater perspective in the quest for understanding. The incorporation of the Indigenous perspective into education helps validate the importance of Indigenous Knowledges, breaks down the colonized voice that dominates education, and takes steps forward as we work toward reconciliation with Indigenous people.

Engaging Others

The implementation of the two-eyed seeing approach provided the first steps to better engage and acknowledge the importance of the Indigenous community. However, this is only the initial stages of change. A continued effort needs to ensure these relationships are further fostered so the Indigenous voice is strengthened within education. As an extension to this process, the school can look at how this process could be taken and applied to other oppressed or minority populations. The term two-eyed seeing initially applied to Western and Indigenous perspectives; however, the concept of valuing various perspectives and lived experiences is not limited to any specific groups. Given the diversity of students attending Buffalo Elementary, this process could be used as a method to better engage other populations. Valuing the opinions of the various minority groups will further aid in creating a more welcoming environment which is one of the goals of the school and division (NPSD, 2020).

Developing a Change Resource

Buffalo Elementary will act as the pilot school for this change. The information obtained through this process will be a foundation for future changes in other schools in the division. The process will be incredibly complex, so we must be diligent in acknowledging both the successes and challenges of the change process. Developing a resource that could be used as a reference for other schools working through the change would be incredibly beneficial. Highlighting key points and strategies that proved effective, while guiding how challenges were addressed, will only aid future schools in the process. This resource will allow schools to minimize time spent

identifying and addressing the challenges, so more effort can be put into promoting success. Each school will possess a plethora of its own challenges, but any information that could be used in the planning and implementation stages would be invaluable.

Greater Representation by Indigenous People

This OIP aimed to create a change in the way education is delivered to provide a more welcoming and accepting environment. In addition to school-level changes, providing opportunities for greater representation of Indigenous people in education is needed. Indigenous people are underrepresented at all levels within NPSD. Underrepresentation results in a silenced voice which is what we are trying to overcome. One suggestion would be to develop an Indigenous Advisory Committee who could act as the local Indigenous voice moving forward in matters pertaining to the delivery of education. They could provide guidance and ensure respectful and open relationships between the school division and the Indigenous community.

In addition to an advisory committee, the school division should actively seek out Indigenous teachers to provide a larger presence and voice. Indigenous individuals could also be encouraged to run for the school board to provide a voice at the highest levels of decision making. Although these positions are decided by an election, and therefore outside my influence, promoting the need for greater diversity within these roles is something that could be facilitated. Hiring Indigenous educators in the schools, developing a community advisory committee, and promoting the need for greater diversity at the board level will act to solidify a strong Indigenous voice.

Evaluation of Systemic Practices

Once a greater Indigenous voice is established, an evaluation should be performed to identify any discriminatory or oppressive systemic practices that need to be addressed. The school system was developed based on the practices of the dominant majority. While many of

the regulations governing education within the Nikosis Public School Division may not be overtly discriminatory, every attempt must be made to ensure that one is deemed oppressive are identified and changed. The Indigenous Advisory Committee, in collaboration with senior administration, could work to identify and change any policies that are stifling minority populations. Allowing an open discussion with Indigenous community members, we can start making systemic changes that better support the needs of all students.

Addressing the academic achievement gap experienced by Indigenous students is a multifaceted, complex process that has countless variables. Given that a gap has consistently been observed year after year clearly articulates that something needs to change. The most crucial step to the process is developing relationships and collaborating with all groups moving forward. Ensuring all voices are heard will provide an environment that better encompasses the needs of students who we are responsible for educating.

Conclusion

The plan set out in the OIP was devised based on a comprehensive literature review and an identified need for change. While this plan provides a series of recommendations and approaches, it is incredibly important to note that without the Indigenous community's support, guidance, and participation, this plan is not feasible. The proposed changes will need to be driven by the Indigenous community to prevent the historical colonized approach of deciding what is best for Indigenous people.

As the principal of Buffalo Elementary, I strive to provide opportunities for all students to maximize their potential and continue to push the boundaries of what is achievable. As an ally, I look to use my positional power to amplify the voice of the Indigenous people and create an approach that encourages greatness. As the father of an Indigenous child, I hope to create a change that will allow my son to experience the same opportunities I have been afforded as a

member of the dominant majority, without ever having to suffer additional hardships or

discrimination.

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Appendix

Factors Affecting Indigenous Students and their Learning (Toulouse, 2016)

Classroom Features	Teacher Communities	Schools and Climate	External Environment
- Diversity and differentiated learning are foundational - Learning is linked to students' lives and experiences - High expectations for all students coupled with differentiated assessment - Classroom management is focused on community building and relationships	- Professional development is ongoing where data is a critical feature - Time and resources are allotted for teachers to plan together - Relationships are collegial and students learning, as well as community, is a key underpinning - Teachers are valued for their work and commitment	- School safety for all is a priority - Interpersonal relationships are positive and evolving - Teaching and learning practices are evidence based - Organizational structures support vision of inclusion - Shared leadership is the reality between admin and staff - Deconstructing the hidden curriculum.	- Parental and community engagement plans honour difference - Culminating tasks for students are rooted in social change in the community - Community and school events are integrated, shared, and seamless - Global citizenship and environmental stewardship connections