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Building a Culture of Relevancy and Decolonization in a Community School

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Abstract

This Organizational Improvement Plan is based on a problem of practice at an inner-city school in a medium-sized Ontario city. There is an achievement/opportunity gap between minoritized students and those in the majority, that run along the Regular English/Specialized Program and Early French Immersion Program lines. Minoritized students are overrepresented in the former two programs. When viewed through a decolonizing lens, built on a framework of culturally relevant and responsive leadership, and informed by Indigenous theoretical frameworks it is a problem of social justice and equity. Using Shields conception of transformative leadership, the problem is examined through an asset-based approach where all cultures and stakeholders are respected and valued. Deszca et al.'s (2020) Change Path Model, informed by dialogic discourse in the form of Talking Circles with stakeholders is used to ensure that dominant narratives are challenged and minoritized voices are heard and centered. While it is recognized that the onus is on the school's administrative and teaching team to address the gap, students, parents, and the community have an important role to play in the success of the change plan. This OIP proposes solutions grounded in dialogic discourse, self-reflection, professional learning communities, and Land-based learning.

Keywords: decolonization, Land-based learning, culturally relevant and responsive leadership, Indigenous leadership, transformative leadership

Executive Summary

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) is written to address the disparate levels of school success and achievement attained by minoritized students and those in the majority at my community school. The guiding questions encompass the areas of the necessary teacher growth, educational leadership aimed at building trust and reciprocal relationships with all stakeholders, and the role the community can play in making our school more equitable and just.

I use a transformative leadership framework, based on the prolific works of internationally acclaimed scholar Carolyn Shields, supported by the extensive international work on Culturally Responsive School Leadership by Muhammad Khalifa, and the cutting-edge work of anti-racist, Canadian long-time scholar and activist George J. Sefa Dei, informed by Indigenous Knowledges shared by profound and diverse Indigenous scholars such as Shawn Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree), Jo Chrona (Ts'msyen), and Marlene Brant Castellano (Mohawk). As a learner-teacher-researcher (Tanaka, 2016), and vice principal, I have modest agency within the classes I teach and in the operation of the school, that sits within a colonial, neoliberal bureaucratic structure (Dei, 1995; Grimaldi, 2012; Shah et al., 2022).

Using a PESTLE analysis to gain insight into the context of my urban school, situated in a medium-sized Ontario city, I seek to understand the barriers to equitable opportunities for all students and find points of leverage that might be advantaged. Developing mutual understanding between minoritized students, families, and staff with those in the dominant group is at the heart of the work. Using dialogic discourse through the framework of Talking Circles, stakeholders will be given the opportunity to listen and learn from each other to better understand each other's respective worldviews. As is that not how all change comes about, by considering what is "known" in a different way?

Talking Circles (TCs), a practice informed by Indigenous Knowledge and used in Indigenous pedagogy and leadership, will be used throughout the plan not only to inform the vision, but also to communicate and execute the plan with the community, to improve teacher competencies by opening them to worldviews emanating from their students and families, to guide the administrative team in courses of action, for Knowledge mobilization, and to monitor and assess the plan. The use of TCs will be encouraged for staff and school council meetings, in classrooms and Land-based learning instruction, as well as during professional learning communities. By using TCs, the practice itself helps to challenge colonial ways of being, knowing, and doing.

Once a communally constructed vision is built and shared, Deszca et al.'s (2020) Change Path Model is used as a tool to lead the change process. The Change Path Model acts as a guide a second time during the implementation plan. Through planning in cycles of awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization (Deszca et al., 2020), a circular and spiraling approach to change will be facilitated. A combination of metrics, ranging from the highly formal and colonial standardized testing mandated in Ontario, to largely informal but authentic street data (Safir & Dugan, 2021) will be used to monitor the change plan and ensure that it remains relevant and responsive throughout the process.

Although many of my examples, and my research are Indigenous-centered, my goal is to present a multicentric (Dei and Adhami, 2022) approach to decolonizing my school. I acknowledge that the path towards Truth and Reconciliation in Canada has differing origins and objectives than the journey of other minoritized groups. However, in the education sector, there are lessons to be learned from Indigenous, Black, Asian, Muslim, and other marginalized often visible minorities, as well as those with often invisible differences, such as those who identify as

2SLGBTQ+, who have learning, mental health, and/or physical differences, who live in non-dominant family structures, who adhere to a non-dominant faith, and who live with food and/or housing insecurity. By reconnecting to the Land, and refusing to ‘other’ people and species, perhaps humanity will find a way forward that will meet the eight transformative tenets suggested by Shields (2018): deep and equitable change, reconstruction of Knowledge frameworks, redistribution of power, balance individual and collective good, equity and justice, global interconnectedness and interdependence, balancing critique and promise, and fortitude (p. vii). My hope is that this OIP can in some small way address these issues at the school level, and optimistically, others are doing similar work in their spheres of influence.

Acknowledgments

I gratefully acknowledge that I come to you from unceded, unsurrendered Algonquin/ Anishinaabe Territory, which means I am on stolen Land. As a settler educator, I have a responsibility to do Truth and Reconciliation work, to help students understand this Land—its story and the People and their story. Many of us have a diminished relationship with the Land where we live, with dire consequences for our spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental health and to the detriment of the planet. As a scholar practitioner, I believe that restoring relationships with the Land and forging a new relationship with Indigenous People, and Knowledge, will have positive short-term and long-terms effects. This is the growing body of Knowledge to which I am striving to contribute. In addition to acknowledging the Algonquin People and the Land on which I currently live, I acknowledge the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and the Huron-Wendat, caretakers of the Land where I grew up in Kingston, Ontario, and the Narragansett People of my birthplace, the ancestral Land on which Providence, Rhode Island is located, and all the Indigenous People of Turtle Island, in the four directions and beyond. Miigwech.

Pour Jacques et nos enfants, avec mon amour le plus profond, toute ma tendresse et mon respect. Ces trois dernières années ont été difficiles pour nous tous. Mais nous regardons en avant, adieu les vieux « mononcles », tout change pour le mieux. Merci.

For the best classmates a person could ask for (including one from my first foray into graduate school in the 80s—Sharlene Frank), for my parents (in absentia), for my dedicated professors, especially Dr. Beate Planche, my colleagues, and my district school board for lifting me up and sharing this journey. 'I can't promise to tell you the truth; I can only tell you what I know’ (as cited in Castellano, 2000). Ancora imparo. Thank you.

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Acronyms

2SLGBTQ+	Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning and additional sexual orientations and gender identities
CPC	Culturally Proficiency Continuum
CPM	Change Path Model
CRR	Culturally Relevant and Responsive
CRRP	Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy
CRRW	Culturally Relevant and Responsive Work
CRSL	Culturally Responsive School Leadership
EQAO	Education Quality and Accountability Office
EFI	Early French Immersion (Program)
IL	Indigenous Leadership
LBL	Land-based learning
OCT	Ontario College of Teachers
OLF	Ontario Leadership Framework
OME	Ontario Ministry of Education
OPC	Ontario Principals' Council
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PSB	Pseudo School Board (a pseudonym)
P/VP	Principal/Vice Principal
SMHO	School Mental Health Ontario
TL	Transformative Leadership
USC	Urban Centre School (a pseudonym)

VP	Vice Principal

Definitions

Ally: A person not identified as belonging to a particular group but who associates and/or cooperates with the group in a supportive way (Mitchell & Bishop, 2020).

Colonization: Characteristics associated with being a colony or a place invaded and settled by others not indigenous to the area. It is the cultural, political, social, and economic domination of place by a foreign power often for the purpose of exploitation and resource extraction (Reconciliation Education, 2023).

Critical Consciousness: Skills used to recognize, scrutinize, and find solutions to world problems that emanate from social inequalities (Freire, 2000, Ladson-Billings, 2009; West-Burns, 2020).

Culture: Comprised of both visible and hidden elements, it is a collective way of knowing and being, for a group of people (Kenny & Fraser, 2012; OME, 2013; Raskin et al, 2021).

Cultural Competence: The ability to appreciate and affirm one's own culture, while developing fluency in one or more additional cultures (Ladson-Billings, 2009, Lindsey et al., 2003).

Cultural Relevance and Responsiveness: Understanding and acting upon individual behaviours, beliefs, and characteristics that make each of us unique (Singhal & Gulati, 2020).

Decolonization: The act of severing ties with the colonizing country through reimagining the political, economic, social, technological, legal, environmental, and educational structure (Archibald et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2019), to change unequal power relations (Eizadirad et al., 2023) and decentre Eurocentric pedagogy (Rodway et al., 2023). It is aimed at working against precepts that dehumanize and eliminate non-Europeans (Weems, 2016) and is not meant to negate the category of multiple colonialisms as outlined by Da Costa and Da Costa (2019).

Dominant Group: Those who identify, or are identified as part of the majority, predominantly white, heterosexual, male or female students from middle class, often Christian, families (Khalifa, 2018; Shields, 2018).

Equity: As opposed to equality, where everyone is given the same thing and/or treated the same, equity is giving people what they need; not because the individual is lacking but rather because society is lacking (West-Burns, 2020).

Eurocentric: Referring to European centered epistemologies, ontologies, methodologies, and theories; primarily derived from white, formally educated men. The term Western is synonymously used.

Indigenous: Primarily referring to the First Nations of Turtle Island, but sometimes included are Métis, Inuit and African-centered People, epistemologies, ontologies, methodologies, and theories where there is overlap, such as with the centering of the Land.

Indigenous Knowledge: Thought emanating from ways of being, knowing, and doing that are relational and connected to the Land (McGregor et al., 2018). Knowledge is acquired by listening and observing, is connected to all aspects of self—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual—and can be gained through stories, dreams, observing, doing (Huaman & Martin, 2020). Defined by relationships with ideas, others, including the Land, that are alive and changing (Wilson, 2008; Wilson et al., 2019), it is accessible to all researchers if there is relational accountability, and it is holistic (Huaman & Martin, 2020).

Kinship Worldview: The stance that all life forms are related from trees to mollusks, four-leggeds to flyers, humans to water, and that as living creatures we are interdependent and have a responsibility to each other (Absolon, 2011; Kimmerer, 2003; Topa & Narvaez, 2022).

Knowledge of Diverse Learners: Counter to deficit thinking, knowledge of diverse learners puts the onus of understanding the dominant culture and ways of knowing on the teacher rather than the student. It considers the role of language in challenging instead of reinforcing inequities thereby fixing the system rather than the student (Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011; Rahman at al., 2010).

Land-based Learning: The study of all forms of life and Land, Water, Sky, and their historical and present relationships (Camasso & Jagannathan, 2018a, 2018b; Topa & Narvaez, 2022).

Minoritized: Students who identify, or are identified, as not being part of the dominant group. Often identified by race—typically Black, Indigenous—my use of the word encompasses a broader cultural definition and includes students with visible and invisible disabilities, who live in non-dominant family structures, practice non-dominant faiths, are multilingual learners, those whose families struggle with food and/or housing security, and those who are gender fluid and/or 2SLGBTQ+ (PSB, 2020b; Shields, 2018). One and/or an intersection of these markers exclude them from being categorized as part of the dominant group.

Multilingual Learner: Students whose first language and/or language of the home is not English, the working language of my district school board.

Professional Learning Community: a group of educators on a learning journey aimed at school improvement, teacher efficacy, and improved student learning (Harris et al., 2017).

Talking Circle: An oral tradition, also known as a Sharing Circle, a safe space where individuals—as equals—can share personal stories, wonderings, and reflections for mutual understanding (Archibald, 2008; McGregor et al., 2018).

Transdisciplinary: A holistic approach to a given subject that transcends traditional boundaries between disciplines (Drake, 2021; Wilson, 2021).

Truth and Reconciliation: The act of understanding the truth behind how things have come to be and forging a new relationship by redistributing power, through Relevance, Respect, Responsibility, and Reciprocity (the Four Rs); between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and all life forms (Bioneers, n.d.; Katz, 2018; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

Western: See Eurocentric.

Worldview: One’s window to the world encompassing the value system, approach to problems, and fundamental beliefs and assumptions (Absolon, 2011; Styres, 2017; Tanaka, 2016).

Chapter 1—Problem Posing

This chapter of the Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) is to describe the “what” of my chosen complex organizational problem (Western University, 2022). I am pondering how to meet the diverse needs of all the students at my urban centre school (UCS, a pseudonym), how the organization can be more equitable and just, and if a more culturally relevant and responsive (CRR) approach can assist teachers in developing the skills and sensitivity required. I will first situate myself and my organization. Some terms, such as Knowledge and Land are capitalized out of respect, to recognize their importance, and to acknowledge them as sentient beings.

Positionality and Lens Statement

In keeping with Algonquin/Anishinaabe protocols, the Knowledge Keepers of the Land where I am a guest, I now introduce myself, so the reader has some context to my lived experience and the sources of the Knowledge I humbly attempt to share. In socializing, working, and learning with and from Indigenous people, I have come to see the importance of introductions, both to self-locate and to make connections that might otherwise remain hidden. Self-introductions speak to our relationality (Chrona, 2022) and contextualize our stories.

I am a learner-teacher-researcher (Tanaka, 2016), a cisgender, American born Canadian woman of mixed European descent. I acknowledge that I am a person of privilege born to parents with post graduate education and am the parent of three children similarly fortunate. At the same time, I recognize that a formal university education represents just one form of Knowledge and that epistemologies in Western academia are Eurocentric and emerged in colonial conditions (Archibald et al, 2019; Kenny & Fraser, 2012; Kovach, 2009).

In exploring decolonizing frameworks, I have been drawn to Indigenist research paradigms which Dr. Shawn Wilson explains are accessible to all researchers if there is relational accountability (Wilson, 2008; Wilson et al., 2019) and to anti-oppressive paradigms (Dei & Jajj, 2018; Este et al., 2018) which are similarly accessible. While my theoretical stance most often aligns with critical theory in challenging power structures, and in analyzing educational inequities (Dei et al., 2000), there is also overlap with postmodernism in that I believe that there is no objective truth (Dei et al., 2000; Nath, 2014, Sanford et al., 2013). Many of these same tenets are also found in, if not emanate from, Indigenous Knowledge. Castellano (2000) reminds us that we cannot speak "the truth", but rather only what we know. The concept of ethical space addresses the theoretical chasm between Indigenous and Western epistemologies, seeking a mutually respectful elevation of both ways of being, knowing, and doing (Blackstock, 2011; Brant, 2017; Ermine, 2007). This transdisciplinary, transcultural space is forefront in my mind as I engage in this Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP).

An Indigenous worldview was not one into which I was born nor experience through family, ceremony, or everyday life. However, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches to pedagogy, leadership, and change speak to my heart, spirit, intellect, and offer effective decolonization tools (Archibald et al., 2019; Kovach, 2009; Smith et al., 2019). I will argue that Indigenous theoretical frameworks, written by Indigenous scholars and informed by Indigenous Knowledges, are not only appropriate for non-Indigenous scholars but are an essential component of educational equity work in Canada.

Further, to decolonize our minds and assume a position of "allyship" (Mitchell & Bishop, 2020), it is important to listen to a wide variety of voices and use a theoretical framework that recognizes the "intersectionality" (Este et al., 2018) reality experienced by many of our students. It is my assertion that while Truth and Reconciliation work is a separate path and of fundamental importance to the transformational change needed in our educational system, there is cross-over between truth and reconciliatory work and culturally relevant and responsive work (CRRW). By using both Western and non-Western research frameworks to examine and build a more socially just organization, by reimagining knowing and learning rather than pathologizing or othering non-Western Knowledge systems, we keep all our students at the centre of our work (Dei et al., 2000; Safir & Dugan, 2021) and open a path for transformative leadership (Bass, 1990; Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). A transformative leadership (TL) framework will guide my growth as a leader and help me understand how to help others to grow.

While critical theory focuses on challenging power structures, rooted in Marxist tradition, Critical Race Theory (CRT) focuses on the relationship between race and power (Critical Race Training in Education, 2023). CRT was an intellectual movement originating in legal scholarship (Brown & Jackson, 2021; Taylor et al., 2023). Black scholars, Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings and Dr. Geneva Gay are generally credited with introducing the field of education to the concept of CRT, more specifically culturally relevant pedagogy, and culturally responsive pedagogy respectively (Mensah, 2021). Building on their work the terms and concepts of culturally relevant and responsive curriculum evolved as a response to address educational inequities (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). Shields (2018) describes ‘the culture of power’ at play.

The organization I am seeking to improve with this plan is my urban elementary school of just under 400 students. I am a teaching vice principal (VP) and have been serving the school for the past six years and the community for twelve. This is my 14th year as a teaching VP, preceded by more than a decade as a teacher. My official title is vice principal, I add the word teaching to emphasize its centrality to my role. Although I am recognized, paid, and categorized as a VP, for half of the instructional day I teach. My professional association is the Ontario Principals’ Council. I am not entitled to be part of a teaching federation/union although I am a licensed member of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). I am further accountable to the Ontario Education Act—that sets the responsibilities and duties of the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME), school boards, administrators, teachers, and students. I am also responsible for working within the parameters of the 2013 Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF).

It has been a very deliberate choice on my part to remain a teaching VP and not to apply for a "promotion" to the position of principal, counter to prevailing expectations (Rintoul & Bishop, 2019). I readily accept that "A vice-principal shall perform such duties as are assigned to the vice-principal by the principal" (Government of Ontario, 2021, 298.12). Although a principal has more responsibilities, pay, and power to oversee the school, in my district it also involves giving up classroom teaching. That is not a sacrifice I am willing to make, even if it limits the scope of my agency and means my power is somewhat attributable to the principal I am currently serving (Rintoul & Bishop, 2019). My principal is a change champion, and although we may have differing views of the "how", we usually agree on the "what", which is to create a more equitable and just environment for all our students.

According to the Education Act of Ontario, "the purpose of education is to provide students with the opportunity to realize their potential and develop into highly skilled, knowledgeable, caring citizens who contribute to their society" (Government of Ontario, 2021, 01.1). An Indigenous way to express the purpose of education is to help children understand their unique gifts (Kirkness, 2012; Young Leon, 2012). The vision of the Pseudo School Board (PSB, a pseudonym) is to educate our students for success by inspiring them to be socially responsible, to develop a sense of well-being, and to encourage a love of learning (PSB, 2020a). My teacher responsibilities are to teach students "diligently and faithfully" that I have been assigned by my principal, and "plan and organize the learning activities of the class with due regard for the individual differences and needs of the pupils" (Government of Ontario, 2021, 264.1a).

As a VP, in addition to doing the above and supporting my colleagues to do so, I am responsible for managerial and administrative tasks, including instructional leadership. These duties also include staffing the school (replacing absent employees, assisting with hiring of new staff, entering hours for casual employees), attending/co-leading staff and school council meetings, assisting with student support and discipline, liaising with families and the community, reporting, ordering food for the breakfast program, timetabling, supervision schedules, conducting teacher performance appraisals, and other duties as assigned by the principal.

My personal and professional value systems have drawn me to a transformative leadership paradigm with the goal of contributing to a socially just organization that gives all students equitable access to favourable outcomes (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022; Shields, 2010; Shields, 2018; Shields & Hesbol, 2020) and further does so by changing social relationships (van Oord, 2013). Culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) adds a layer of action and one of affirmation to minoritized populations (Khalifa et al, 2016a). Both approaches converge to stress the importance of being a successful individual, as well as a contributor to the community (Shields & Hesbol, 2020; Smith et al., 2019; Tanaka, 2016).

Organizational Context

The Ontario educational system is a large organization with over seventy school boards, serving more than two million students. In the 2020/21 school year I was one of nearly 6,000 elementary school administrators and close to 89,000 teachers in the province. My school board serves over 75,000 students, has over 8,000 staff, and mine is one of over 100 elementary schools. The annual operating budget of my school board is just over one billion dollars. The

PSB is led by a senior team: a director of education, who reports to a 12-member board of trustees, an associate director, 10 superintendents, a human rights and equity advisor, and an executive officer of corporate services. My agency does not extend to this level of leadership. From my vantage point, the leadership context at this level is primarily neoliberal, heavily influenced by conservatism (Dei, 1995; Grimaldi, 2012; Shah et al., 2022), but is demonstrating a willingness to loosen the hegemonic constraints under which it operates and make the organization more just and equitable.

UCS has 17 kindergarten-to-grade-six classes (four to 12 years-olds) and offers two main programs, the Regular English, and the Early French Immersion (EFI) Program, and has one primary semi-integrated specialized class for students with developmental disabilities. We have just under 25 full-time equivalent teachers, and 10 early childhood educators or educational assistants. The school offers an extended day program, before and after school hours, necessitating the need for additional staff. We have custodians, early learning assistants, breakfast, and lunch monitors, for a total staff of fifty. The principal is a full-time administrator, and I am a half-time administrator and half-time teacher.

A school was established at the current location over 100 years ago. A new building was opened in the mid-1990s and in 2014 the EFI Program was introduced at the school. Minoritized students, i.e., those not identified as part of the dominant culture, are overrepresented in the English and Specialized Programs and underrepresented in the EFI Program. This not only puts these students at a disadvantage in terms of their educational trajectory but results in lower levels of academic achievement throughout their school career (Denley, 2019; Lindsay, 2023). For example, in 2020/21 at my school, 72% of students in the regular grade three program met or exceeded the provincial standard in reading, as measured by the standardized test mandated by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). In both writing and math, it was 64%. Those in the EFI Program scored 97%, 95% and 97% respectively. The inequity problem with two ‘separate but equal’ paths where one consistently fares better, often referred to as streaming, is sadly not unique to my school but is a district organizational problem (PSB, 2021). Indeed, in Canada, regional programs such as EFI are thought to “…exacerbate academic inequity and are associated with separating students by social class” (Lindsay, 2023, p. 1) owing to minoritized families lacking the “educational currency” needed to make informed choices for their children. This gap in academic performance “… helps to ensure that the lives of disadvantaged children devolve into the lives of disadvantaged adults” (Camasso & Jagannathan, 2018a, p. 265).

In using the term minoritized, I refer to students who do not identify, and/or are not identified, as part of the majority or dominant group, i.e., predominantly white, heterosexual, male or female students from middle class, often Christian, families (Khalifa, 2018). I use this categorization to help understand the social, cultural, political, and economic factors impacting minoritized students in levels of educational achievement, suspension data, and other markers of success or failure as currently measured by our educational system. Dei et al. (2000), identify “push out” factors in Ontario schools that affect minority youth such as low teacher expectations, curricular and assessment practices, and relationships between the school and the community—factors we will examine more closely. While minoritized students are often identified by race, typically Black or Indigenous, my use of the word encompasses a broader cultural definition and includes all non-white students, as well as those with visible and invisible disabilities, who adhere to non-Christian faiths, whose families struggle with food and/or housing security, multilingual learners, and those students who are gender fluid and/or 2SLGBTQ+ (Khalifa, 2018; PSB, 2021). One and/or an intersection of these markers exclude them from being categorized as part of the dominant group (Este et al, 2018; Safir & Dugan, 2021).

In 2021, the PSB shared results of a 2011 student survey acknowledging gaps in student achievement and staff representation. Targeting minoritized groups, the key finding was that despite working to eliminate them, oppressive and discriminatory practices pervade the organization (PSB, 2020a). One question was whether as an elementary school student the respondent had experienced discrimination, prejudice, or being stereotyped at school based on: appearance, clothing, disability, ethnic background, family income, family structure, first language, gender identity, grades or achievement level, Indigenous background, race, religion or faith, sexual orientation, or for other reasons (PSB, 2020b). In all categories, two to 18 percent of students responded affirmatively. The intentional sharing of this data with all educators during a recent professional development day speaks to the PSB's commitment to change and aligns with my own vision to challenge the power structures that perpetuate these inequities. Some of the dedicated educators at my school were taken aback to see this data, but in my mind, 18 percent was grossly under representative and speaks to the insidiousness of the oppression.

Policy and Political Context

Bureaucracies tend to rely heavily on policies that promote the existing social order (Capper, 2019), policies that are steeped in historical narratives and contexts, often derived from misconceptions and racism (Este et al, 2018; Manuel & Derrickson, 2015; Raskin et al., 2021). The Canadian educational system has been charged with perpetuating inequalities among students rather than fixing them (Dei et al., 2000; Manuel & Derrickson, 2015; Ngo, 2018), despite Freire's (2000) call to educators to transform education from a tool of oppression to a tool of empowerment. While the OME has mandated educators to respect diversity, promote inclusion, and eliminate barriers (OME, 2020-23), policy is not reflected in practice. This gap impacts how inequities happen at UCS, as evidenced in walk-throughs and student achievement.

Social Context

My school community was originally blue-collar, comprised of railway and mill workers. It was affordable, offering subsidized housing and shelters, serving a diverse population. In 1994 a new school was built. With city expansion and the introduction of EFI the school and neighbourhood became more desirable. There is a sense that UCS evolved to be less inclusive and more exclusive as the population began to change, "push out" factors began to emerge. The school, formerly well known for its English Program, support of multilingual learners, and long-standing traditions such as multicultural potlucks and alumni events, were forsaken for a larger EFI program, and school events such as lawn bowling more intent on fundraising than building an inclusion. Notably, some of the earlier community-building events had traces of dominant discourse and saviourism (Chrona, 2022; Da Costa, 2022; Hart, 2021) or deficit thinking (Shields, 2010) by staff; what the PSB refers to as deficit and saviour mentalities (PSB, 2022a).

Cultural Context

A school's culture is palpable, if difficult to pinpoint (Lindsey et al., 2003). Prior to the arrival of the principal three years ago, there were several educators on staff with more than 20 years at UCS. There was a large 'corporate memory', camaraderie amongst staff and with the community, with perhaps some boundaries being blurred. Soon after the principal arrived, the COVID19 pandemic hit and, as in many schools around the world, the organization changed. A conflux of factors including but not limited to, the pandemic, the collection of identity-based and suspension data (PSB, 2020b), the public murder of George Floyd, the discovery of over 1900 unmarked graves associated with Residential Schools, brought under a very glaring and critical light some of the monstrous injustices and inequities that have permeated the Western world and educational system since the advent of colonialism. These occurrences have trickled down into staffroom conversations and educators have expressed a heightened sense of awareness of our respective roles in challenging or perpetuating inequities in our schools.

Under the leadership of the new principal, paired with the retirement and/or movement of some of the long-time staff, the culture of UCS has begun to change. Deep-rooted practices are being questioned, physical clutter is being cleared, and the conditions are becoming conducive to TL. As educational inequities and their root causes are being more widely understood, educators are more critical of their own educational experiences and open to learning about diverse ways of knowing, doing, and being (Joseph & Joseph, 2019; Styres, 2017) and/or increasing their awareness of what is sometimes called *Knowledge of diverse learners* (Paugh & Dudley-Marling, 2011; Rahman at al., 2010). Educators at my school are expressing more readiness to approach teaching and learning in a different way. For example, their resource requests are now more focused on inclusive and individualized materials, rather that the 'novel sets' that were requested in years past indicative of students having choice in their reading, rather than one novel being chosen for the class regardless of interests or ability. While there are glimmers of moving in the right direction, much more needs to be done to level the playing field.

Leadership Problem of Practice

UCS is not serving all students equally well. Minoritized students have higher rates of absenteeism and are more often brought forward by teachers to student success meetings having been identified with academic and/or behavioural concerns. Minoritized students are underrepresented in the EFI Program which has traditionally been a path to a more academic stream in secondary school, more often leading to post-secondary education. Minoritized students appear more disengaged from learning and less likely to participate in extracurricular activities and are more often bused to school. Owing to living further from the school, combined perhaps with a lack of trust, or English language ability families of minoritized students are less involved at UCS which can be perceived by staff as a lack of interest in their child's education. The families of students in the English program are underrepresented on school council. There is a lack of representation of minoritized groups on staff. The educators are well intentioned, but the school-based data suggests that there remains an achievement gap. Some scholars refer to this as an opportunity gap (Khalifa, 2018; Mayor & Suarez, 2019), a difference that will be explored subsequently. My problem of practice (PoP) is concerned with how a leader can assist teachers in addressing the achievement/opportunity gap and in developing stronger skills which meet the diverse needs of all students, particularly minoritized students in our school.

The PSB (2022a) is struggling with how to make more equitable conditions for minoritized students. While acknowledging inequities is commendable and de-streaming programs to open academic pathways are positive steps, these measures do not address the root causes of the social injustices reproduced in the education system. The curriculum and structure of the system are grounded in colonialism. In 1992, Nora Allingham, former director of the Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity Team of the OME made a landmark speech that challenged thinking around what curriculum is (Dei et al., 2000; OPC, 2012). Building on her thoughts, we must understand that curriculum is so much more than what is taught and for how many minutes. It includes how the school day and year are structured, what adorns the walls, teaching materials, what we wear, the music played, the food served, content of announcements and newsletters, the order of subjects on the report card, bullying policies, displayed student work, how garbage is disposed of, the school logo, and how Knowledge is evaluated (Dei et al., 2000; OPC, 2012).

Subject minutes are dictated by the MOE, but teachers have latitude in setting high expectations, assessment practices, and curricular content delivery, including presenting materials by and about diverse cultures. Leaders can influence what is valued and prioritized in the school.

Framing the Problem of Practice

As a teacher and educational leader, I have an ethical and legal responsibility to ensure all students are treated and taught in ways that meet their needs and offers equitable access to success in school and beyond (Hōhepa, 2013; OLF, 2013; Safir & Dugan, 2021; Starratt, 2014). My personal and professional values and ethics compel me to advocate for minoritized students who are being marginalized and to create a new social order (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). This responsibility extends to developing an intercultural understanding among minoritized students and the majority. Such is the recommendation of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (2015) between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, staff, parents, and the broader community (Battiste, 2013; Hill, 2022, Shields, 2018) by building healthy, reciprocal relationships (Shields, 2018; Tranter et al., 2018; Wilson, 2008) that contribute to a sense of belonging (Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2003; Katz, 2018). Arguably, these are desirable goals for all students—Indigenous, other minoritized students, and those who identify with the majority.

USC serves a population where 30% of students identify as multilingual learners and/or students with special needs, a small percentage self-identify as Indigenous, and there is a wide range of household incomes, with some families dependent on social assistance. Leadership behaviours and actions that help leverage and build a culture of relevancy, and decolonize curricular delivery and assessment, are urgently needed to support our minoritized students (Dei et al., 2000; Safir & Dugan, 2021). We need to problematize the teaching, not the learning, the educators, not the students. The expectation is that this will support minoritized students, and those in the dominant group to be concurrently educated in diverse worldviews. Further, there needs to be parental and community involvement in the change process to support students inside and outside the walls of the school (Starratt, 2014; Steinhauer, 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Tuana, 2014). The needed changes cannot be determined or implemented by one person, but rather requires a team (McChrystal et al., 2015) of anti-oppressive educators as change agents (Ngo, 2018), working collaboratively (Khalifa et al., 2019, Shields, 2010).

PESTLE Analysis

The acronym PESTLE is a framework used to determine factors affecting an organization and stand for political, economic, social, technological, legal, and ecological or ethical or environmental (Deszca et al., 2020; Hopkin, 2013). Here it is used as a tool to help understand some of the macro, meso, and micro pressures that impact educators in their daily work, specifically how these factors may influence the closing of the achievement/opportunity gap between minoritized students and those in the majority.

Political Factors. At the macro level, in Ontario, the MOE oversees publicly funded education, the exception being federally funded on-reserve schools. It mandates curriculum and outlines policies affecting all educators and students (OCT, 2017). At the meso level, the district school boards further refine expectations (People for Education, n.d.). Both the MOE and the PSB are heavily colonized institutions owing to their neoliberal roots (Apple, 2017; Battiste, 2013; Dei et al., 2000). The hiring practices in this context manifest in my school as a staff that are not reflective of the student body, and resource allocation that is skewed to serve mainstream prerogatives, such as participation in Eurocentric sports and success in standardized tests.

At the meso level, a further complication is the traditional style of leadership entrenched in the PSB with a predisposition for top down, transactional and adaptive management styles, as well as the barriers to access to leadership positions. An educator must first navigate the system to become an Ontario licensed teacher, teach for five years, finish two specialists or relevant master's degree, complete the two-part principals' qualification program, then apply for an administrative position in the board—where an interview is conducted with a panel of those already dubbed leaders. These barriers prove insurmountable for many marginalized groups, leaving positions of leadership inaccessible. Now in the position myself, the influence I can yield is somewhat attributable to the proclivity of my principal. However, I can build relationships with staff, students, parents, and the community. Through learning, teaching, mentoring, and coaching I can leverage these relationships to build trust to influence and effect change. In my teaching role, I have considerable agency, to have reciprocal relationships with the same stakeholders, to model ethical and social justice practices, and to steer us towards TL.

Economic Factors. At the macro level, in Canada, public education is funded by the province, except for on reserves which are under the jurisdiction of the federal government—the latter for historical, assimilative reasons. There are many, often conflicting, pressures to conform and perform when dependent on government funding. In the current climate of conservatism, the purpose of education is to maintain the existing social order (Gutek, 2013; Plazek, 2012). Public education funding, then that stabilizes society through common experiences and shared values—of the mainstream—is prioritized. Reductionist measures of success, such as EQAO, are an integral component of the funding formulae. At the micro level, my school community is culturally and economically diverse. While some of our families occasionally require financial assistance from the school for food security, glasses, etc., other families can donate both time and money. Daily instructional practices that, for example, normalize two-income households, reference cottages, vacations, etc., subtly work to exclude the minoritized group.

At the meso level, inequities are further maintained through the ability of various school councils to raise additional funds for their local school, enabling schools in affluent neighbourhoods to purchase more for their student body. At UCS there is a significant gap between the financial situation of our wealthier families and that of our poorer families, tending to be more favourable to the families of students in the EFI program. Similarly, EQAO results and representation of parents on school council tends to run along socio-economic lines, again putting families in the EFI program at an advantage. Our council is financially strong and very supportive, but with overrepresentation of EFI parents on council, the wants of the majority are often prioritized over the needs of the minority, despite the best of intentions.

Social Factors. At the macro level, social factors influencing the organization are a complex entanglement of prevailing epistemologies and ontologies. Inequalities rooted in species, race, gender, sexual identity, ability, and economics are tied to inequitable student outcomes which are deeply connected to the othering of non-Europeans, nonhumans, and the Land (Absolon, 2019; Camasso & Jagannathan, 2018a; Dei et al., 2000). Educators and leaders raised in the mainstream worldview rely heavily on what they know, which emanates from what they have been taught. In addition to having to redress personal and professional ways of being, knowing, and doing, we must take the risk of making mistakes doing CRRW to break the hegemonic cycle. Compounding this problem is teachers not getting time within the day to collaborate, so any collective work done is to be on their own time. A lack of professional dialogue makes it difficult for educators to recognize when marginalized student behaviours are a form of resistance to subordination (Battiste, 2013; Dei et al., 2000).

Technological Factors. Technological factors influencing CRRW at the macro level are double edged. Globally, teaching and learning have become unextractable from technology, a phenomenon directly attributable to industrialization and colonialism (Schulz, 2017). Minoritized Knowledge systems, Indigenous Knowledge sharing for example, are highly relational and contextual (Archibald, 2008; McGregor et al., 2018; Wilson, 2008). Technology can serve to remove relationships and context from Knowledge acquisition.

At the meso level, technology has also enabled easy access to OME curricular and policy documents. In the considerations for program planning (2020) section of the OME website, teachers are directed to practice the discipline within the parameters of human rights. Tying the premise back to the purpose of education as defined by the *Education Act*, teachers must help their students achieve personal success and contribute to the community. Access to these two human rights must be given "… to students who have traditionally not benefited from the promise of public education" (OME, 2020-23). In the section following, teachers are charged with embracing CRRP, "…which recognizes that all students learn in ways that are connected to background, language, family structure, and social or cultural identity" (OME, 2020-23). Through technology, all this information is easily found by educators, parents, and students, and adds a layer of public accountability. Again apparent, however, is a disconnection between these readily available policies and teaching practices in the classrooms of my school, as evidenced in student work and the minimal participation of marginalized families in school events.

Legal Factors. At the macro level, legal factors affecting the organization are broad. Educators have a legal responsibility to keep children safe and report to the authorities when they feel that a child is unsafe (Government of Canada, 2021; OCT, n.d.; Government of Ontario, 2021). However, our current educational system evolved in eras of rampant racism (Este, 2018; Raskin et al., 2021). Mainstream ideologies around child rearing continue to prevail and minoritized children are overrepresented in the child welfare system (Ontario Ministry of

Children, Community, and Social Services, 2021), at least in part owing to those with the power to judge the parenting skills of minoritized groups— the educators—being part of the dominant group. Variables such as these continue to impede the building of positive reciprocal relationships between educators and minoritized families, the school/family connection has been well documented in importance to a student's success (Safir, 2017; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Tranter et al., 2018). At the micro level, building trust between minoritized families and educators at my school has been an ongoing priority, but there is much more work to do.

Between the international 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the national 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, the provincial 2022 Right to Read Public Inquiry, and the local PSB's 2020 Human Rights Equity Roadmap, there are compelling micro, meso, and macro pressures to act on CRRW yet there are still large gaps in achievement and opportunity between minoritized students and those in the dominant group. At my school, with so many competing directives, it is sometimes challenging to prioritize CRRW, despite strong legislation and positive intentions. Teacher competencies in CRRW seem to fall short, as seen during informal walkthroughs, student work (e.g., dominant discourse focus), and informal teacher data input during school-based professional development.

Environmental Factors. The most complicated of all categories for the purpose of this PESTLE analysis is the ecological/ethical/environmental one, focusing here on the ecological factors. At a macro ecological level, the Anthropocene needs to be globally, collectively, and urgently addressed for our very survival (Frid, 2020; Schulz, 2017). Underlying the dire situation of the planet is the most divisive macro factor in CRRW, the antithetical stance on the human/nonhuman divide which contributes to my problem of practice in that daily teaching practices do not recognize our utter dependence on Earth and other life forms—also known as relationship denial (Donald, 2022). Whereas non-Eurocentric Knowledge systems interrelate to the Land (Dei, 2018; Kovach, 2009; Styres, 2017; Wilson, 2008), colonial Knowledge systems view Land as a non-being without agency, something to be bought, sold, and exploited for profit.

At a meso level, Anthropogenic worries trickle through all aspects of the organization, arguably impacting most the children whose future is at risk. According to the Government of Canada (2022), factors that make Canadians most vulnerable to climate change include culture, racism, poverty, and colonialism. This and other vulnerabilities have manifested as mental health issues and the necessity for healthy teacher/student relationships, which is now often supplanting academic concerns in prevailing educational literature (Safir et al., 2021; Tranter et al., 2018; Wilson et al., 2019). As CRRP and Indigenous theory has always maintained, relationships come first (Battiste, 2013; Joseph & Joseph, 2019; Lindsey & Lindsey, 2014; Styres, 2017).

Accordingly, two years ago, at my school a core group of educators including the principal, several teachers, and I, formed a book club focused on *The Third Path* by Tranter et al. (2018). Resource acquisition was supported by the PSB. The book outlines a relationship-based approach to teaching and learning focused on building the connection between teachers and students; and addressing barriers such as trauma and food insecurity. There are eight tenets with separate booklets for each and we met as a group after school eight times during the year. It felt like we were getting to better understand some of our students of wonder. We discussed each section with the whole staff at monthly staff meetings. It looked hopeful that momentum would build. However, other priorities crept into staff meetings and the concept is seldom discussed.

Macro, meso, and micro factors affect the organization at both the school and classroom level. Societal norms permeate daily classroom and school interactions between educator and student, leaders, and the community. All variables from the building design to the structure of the school year to the siloing of subjects being taught, are neoliberal and oppressive (Dei, 1995; Grimaldi, 2012). The educational problems we currently face are by-products of colonialism, and the solutions require onto-epistemologies originating outside its realm. Teachers and leaders tend to default to what they know. Jean-Marie et al. (2009), contend that the role of 21st century educational leaders will be pivotal in the creation of a new social order by dismantling the system that has perpetuated the achievement/opportunity gap. One way to activate practices that redistribute colonial power and privilege is by building competencies in CRR pedagogy and leadership—engaging students, teachers, and the community (Khalifa, 2018, West-Burns, 2023).

Guiding Questions

Critical race and anti-racist theorists (Dei et al., 2000; Shah, 2022; Taylor et al., 2023) Indigenous scholars (Battiste, 2013; Kenny & Fraser, 2012; Styres, 2017) and educational leaders supportive of ethical, social justice leadership (Branson & Gross, 2014; Grimaldi, 2012) agree that the achievement/opportunity gap needs to be addressed in a way that supports the cultural identity of the learner. An individual’s positionality is socially constructed with real political, economic, social, legal, and environmental consequences. An ethically and socially just practice is the cornerstone of an educator’s role (Starratt, 2014; Tuana, 2014). If we can agree that the achievement/opportunity gap is problematic, and that a lack of CRR teaching practices is central to the problem, then there are three main questions that emerge.

Guiding Question #1: Teacher Growth

What specific areas of teacher growth are needed to address the inequities between minoritized students and the dominant group? In this era of public apologies, and the social movements behind them (e.g., Idle No More, Land Back, Black Lives Matter, #MeToo), public awareness has grown around inequities and injustices, resulting in a demand for accountability.

As is often the case with societal changes, public education has a pivotal role to play. We need to understand the skills and Knowledge teachers require to reach all students in an inclusive, just way so they have access to the same sense of belonging, educational opportunities, and outcomes, and have their individual identities supported through daily interactions.

Guiding Question #2: Building Trust

How can an educational leader build trust and leverage relationships with, and between, all stakeholders to create a culture for inclusive, sustainable, and actionable change? Educational leaders need to tap into this era of raised consciousness, so CRRW is reflected in the classroom and the school (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 2011). We need to make the hidden curriculum visible and collaborate to challenge the premises on which barriers rest. We must imagine what a CRR school would look like and determine how together we can build our cultural capacity to get there.

Guiding Question #3: Community Involvement

What role can the community play, both parents and Knowledge Keepers, in helping educators, leaders, and students bridge Knowledge systems so that all students will have their culture reflected and valued in the school? One of the drivers of the need for change at my school is the ethical concern about the lack of engagement by minoritized students and their families. As a team of educators, it is our responsibility to help minoritized students and families carry the load of the oppressive system and at the same time enlighten ourselves. At home, minoritized students have the cultural support and strength of their respective families, but at school it is primarily their teacher who helps to navigate the cultural code of the dominant group—the teacher/student relationship the system interrupts every school year by putting the student with a new teacher. We need to involve our families and our community (Shields, 2018) by opening our doors and ourselves to *Knowledge of diverse learners* and making our school a welcoming environment with a learner stance (Lopez & Kalaba, 2022; Singhal & Gulati, 2020).

Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

As a teaching VP, and a scholar practitioner, I am in a potentially impactful place to diminish this achievement/opportunity gap. I work closely with stakeholders. My vision for change is to augment the cultural capacity of my school, by including students, educators, support staff, parents, and the greater community—to create what McChrystal et al. (2015) refer to as a team of teams. This vision aligns with TL (Shields, 2018), CRSL (Khalifa, 2018), and Indigenous leadership (IL) theories (Kovach, 2009). It entails opening spaces for influencing, possibly changing, each other's respective worldviews. CRRW is more than pedagogical, it is epistemological and ontological (Battiste, 2013; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Wilson, 2008). Informal conversations are one way of challenging cultural assumptions. By using collaborative discourse, I can use my agency to help change the conversation around topics such as cultural celebrations.

For example, various factors converged in mid-November, to lead staff, students, and families at UCS to think about the coming month with a scheduled break from school. One day, in four different contexts within the school, a Christmas celebration was referenced—by a teacher, by a parent at school council, in the council's social media, and by a self-identified Muslim educator. I found the references unsettling because they perpetuate the valuing of a Christian holiday to the subjugation of all other festivals of light that occur around the same time of year, a form of cultural blindness (Hatcher, 2012; Lindsey et al., 2003). Further, in my school's kindergarten program, inclusive, play- and inquiry-based learning often seems to focus superficially on cultural celebrations rather than on deeper diverse and more substantive ways of knowing (Dei et al., 2000; OME, 2016) that kindergarten students are capable of understanding.

In each instance, I talked about inclusiveness, and reminded educators and parents that a variety of worldviews and associated celebrations need to be reflected in our school.

School calendars are based on Christian holidays and an age-grading approach to school emanating from colonization and urbanization. These epistemological “givens” on which our school operates reflect deep-rooted assumptions about what counts as Knowledge (Capper, 2019). This no longer reflects the social or cultural realities of contemporary schools (Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO) et al., 2023; Fischel, 2006, Khalifa, 2018). Such factors, that we are conditioned not to question or even see, permeate daily school life. They are threads of the blanket of oppression that shrouds us in colonial narratives and continues to maintain power structures (Capper, 2019; Shields, 2018). Changing the school calendar is not within my agency, but perhaps helping to question it is. I envision wider conversations and using tools at the school that challenge assumptions about how time is measured (e.g., a lunar versus a solar calendar, acknowledging moon cycles in agendas) and valued (e.g., a welcome rather than late slip, deadlines that are mindful of cultural commitments like fasting). These micro moves will help develop critical consciousness in unison with developing cultural competencies (Ladson-Billings, 2009) for both teachers and students.

At the organizational level, the desired state is one where students see themselves reflected by teachers and teachers by students, with intentional deliberations about the power imbalance between teachers and students, as well as the larger imbalance created by the dominant discourse (Dei et al., 2000; Khalifa, 2018). What I mean by this is both parties have a learner stance and are open to each other’s respective worldviews, theory of Knowledge, and cultural teachings—a reciprocal constructivist framework. While the onus is on the teacher to understand the Knowledge and needs of each student (Jean-Marie et al., 2009), the constructivist approach also encourages dialogue between students couched in a safe, equitable, and trusting space that the teacher has helped to create, to build their Knowledge collaboratively.

Further to the reciprocal relationships between teachers and students, I envision them between the P/VP and teachers, teachers and parents, and all other permutations of relationships among stakeholders. The challenges would entail helping teachers and students understand their respective roles to both lead and follow, teach, and learn (Freire, 2000). For leaders, this is what Capper (2019) refers to as epistemological self-consciousness. Like educational leaders, parents need to understand the school context and environment beyond the school, between the school and community, and UCS and other schools (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Community engagement (Shields, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015) would ideally be visible daily and involve a wider representation of the students' families than we are currently experiencing at UCS.

In my vision of the organization, teachers would collaborate regularly. Some teams would be grade specific, e.g., the kindergarten teachers. Others would blend the EFI, English, and specialized programs to enhance understanding of each other. For example, on a particularly busy day recently, an EFI teacher offered to help so I asked her to support a class in the English program. She later thanked me for the brief but insightful experience which helped me realize how important it is to get into each other's classrooms. The P/VP would participate in learning teams as research has demonstrated that having principals as co-learners impacts positively on teachers (OLF, 2013; OME, 2014). Beyond the cooperation of the teaching staff, facilitating such meetings would involve a financial commitment on the part of the school to free teachers from instruction to meet with each other (OptimistMinds, 2022). Haapaniemi et al., 2021 contend that there is a relationship between teacher collaboration and an integrative or transdisciplinary approach to teaching, which would also move us along the path to CRRP.

At the school level, physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally, I envision there would be an immediate sense of welcomeness upon entering the yard and the school. To address Allingham's concept of curriculum (Dei et al., 2000; OPC, 2012), artwork adorning the outside of the building would be diverse and inclusive. The displayed student work, as well as informative and community bulletin boards would speak to diversity and inclusion. There may be a financial cost to revamping the physical space, but some of it would require just a change in approach based on *Knowledge of diverse learners*. A further beacon of diversity would be the breakfast program which would offer a variety of foods beyond cereal and cheese, such as canjeero and ka'ak. Similarly, intramural sports and physical activities would include non-Eurocentric options such as wushu, intertribal dance, ampe, and/or yoga.

Amiskwaciwiyiniwak scholar Dwayne Donald (2022) proposes changing the curricular approach by unlearning colonialism and renewing kinship relations. He points out that current curricular practices that promote a relationship denial between human and other forms of life, as well as intercultural denial, is part of the "Western code" that contributes to the achievement gap that this problem of practice is intending to address. Khalifa et al (2016b), refer to the problem as the racialized achievement (opportunity) gap, which I believe is an informative turn of phrase, but I use it to include other intersections of identity such as gender and socio-economic status that are also at play in the curriculum. Unlike current practices centering on rote learning, engagement, or compliance, CRRW focuses on cognition development (West-Burns, 2023).

Blended groupings of students across programs for certain pursuits, in various subject areas, might naturally evolve from teacher collaboration. For example, if math were scheduled to be taught at the same time, then students from different programs could be blended for instruction. Secondary schools at the PSB have de-streamed math classes in this way by combining academic and applied math programs, to make it more equitable (PSB, 2021) and the same principle would apply in the elementary grades. Aligning instructional times for math in all programs would make it possible to mix students and afford further opportunities to share differing worldviews by students and teachers, while helping to break down the “separate but inequal” barriers posed by the EFI, English, and specialized programs.

Further, at the classroom level, high teacher expectations for all students, inclusive curriculum, and resources (such as dual-language and culturally authentic books), and community engagement (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015) would ideally be visible daily. Guest speaking in classrooms would involve a wider representation of students’ families. Teachers would be encouraged to navigate social and communication barriers to create strong relationships with the parents of every child to demystify contemporary classroom practices and build student and teacher Knowledge of a variety of ways of being, knowing, and doing.

Shields & Hesbol (2020) describe TL as critical and unequivocally focused on social justice, inclusion, high standards, and equity. They, like Theoharis (2007), van Oord (2013) and Khalifa (2018), see interconnections between TL, the theory of Knowledge, and CRRW. Transformative leadership requires a shared vision, a team of teams—in my organization built and executed by students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community—for the common purpose of improving achievement opportunities for all students. The goal is to create a school environment where all students have their respective identities valued, feel a sense of belonging, and are held to high expectations (LaSalle et al., 2020; PSB, 2015, Shields, 2018).

Chapter 2—Planning and Development

This chapter of the OIP is to engage with the "why" of the PoP, which is concerned with how leaders can assist teachers to address the achievement/opportunity gap and develop stronger cultural and pedagogical skills which meet the diverse needs of all students. A TL approach (Shields, 2018; Shields & Hesbol, 2020; van Oord, 2013) supported by a CRSL framework (Khalifa, 2018; Khalifa et al. 2016a), with underpinnings of Critical Race Theory (Brown & Jackson, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2009), and IL theories (Battiste & Henderson, 2009; Kenny & Fraser, 2012; Wilson et al., 2019) will be argued. The approach to organizational change, the Change Path Model (CPM), a change management framework originally by Cawsey et al. (2016) and furthered by Deszca et al. (2020) offers guidance to inform a change process that has a relationship with my organizational context and my professional agency to improve opportunities for underserved students. Deszca et al. (2020) provide a "readiness-for-change questionnaire" (R-F-CQ, p. 113), which combined with the Cultural Proficiency Continuum (CPC) of Lindsey et al. (2003, p. 85) will be used to explore the organization's change readiness.

At this point I will make space to discuss word choice. I have primarily used the word "minoritized" rather than marginalized or underserved as I feel there is less connotation in that the number of students in that category is smaller as opposed to the larger majority (Shields, 2018). I have used the term "parent" but include any adult in a caregiving role for children at my school, so will use the term caregiver to acknowledge the parenting role of grandparents, foster parents, for example. I have used the term "achievement gap/opportunity gap", but now that I hope what I am referring to is clear, I am removing the word "achievement". School improvement literature has offered the notion that achievement gap is a loaded term which may serve to perpetuate the phenomenon (Mayor & Suarez, 2019; Quinn, 2020, 2022). As I trust is becoming obvious, the gap is one of opportunity rather than achievement as success is measured by compliance with standards determined by and for members of the dominant group.

Leadership Approach to Change

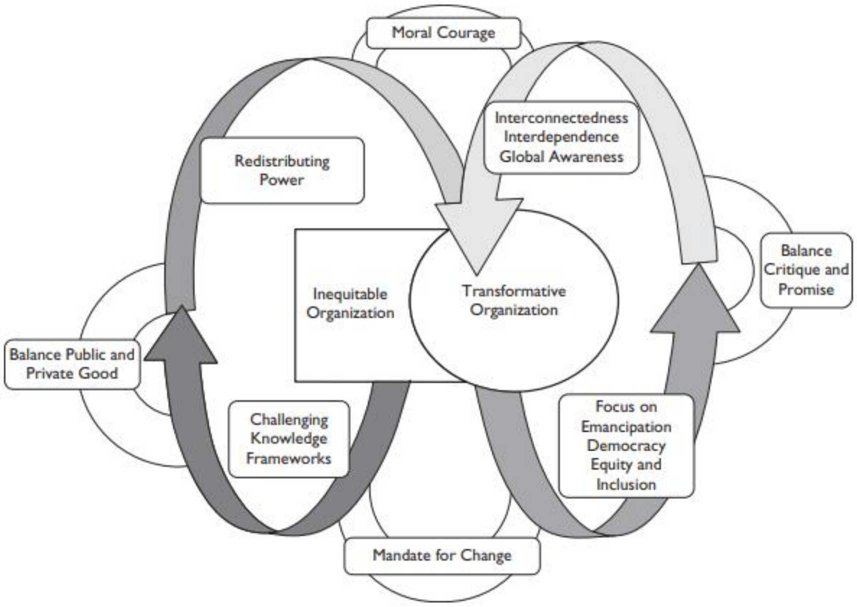
To address the complexity of opening others to consider differing worldviews, to raise their critical consciousness, a leadership model is needed to dismantle the colonial structure of the school. There is a natural connection between TL, CRSL, and IL theories when focused on fixing the structural ideologies operating within the school that oppress minoritized students rather than 'fixing' the students (Gorski, 2019). The approach will, no doubt, cause some cognitive dissonance (West-Burns, 2023) and necessitate some hard conversations (Abrams, 2009; Shields, 2018) amongst stakeholders. The conversations and actions will need to focus on outcomes and on everyday interactions and experiences that keep students in the margins. West-Burns (2020) discusses "habits that harm", our go-to lessons, such as the static electricity experiment with balloons and hair which marginalizes Black students and those in hijabs. Within my agency, by using a TL approach, which is equitable, inclusive, socially just, and adaptive (Shields, 2018), we can create a safe space to discuss the harm such practices cause.

The concept of TL is attributed to the 1978 work of J. M. Burns (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022). Burns found the divide between leadership and followership in the prevailing literature at that time highly problematic (Burns, 1978). He had a more holistic view of leadership and followership, one in which the power dynamic and interrelationship between the two was explored within the context of the real world rather than just in academia (Burns, 1978). Whereas the transactional leadership approach, typical of the era, defined the relationship between leader and follower as a series of exchanges, transforming leadership "… is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (Burns, 1978, p. ix-x). Bernard Bass extended the work, contributing that this form of leadership involves a delicate balance of elevating the interests of individual employees while concurrently encouraging individual employees to engage with the good of the organization (Bass, 1990, 1998, 1999).

Shields outlined seven (2010, p. 562), later eight (2018, p. 20), interdependent tenets of TL: the goal to effect deep, equitable change; the destruction and rebuilding of Knowledge frameworks that maintain inequities and injustices; a redistribution of power; an emphasis on both individual achievement and public good; a focus on emancipation, democracy, equity and justice; a balancing of critique with promise; the call to exhibit moral courage and activism; and an emphasis on interdependence, interconnectedness and global awareness (Figure 1). TL aligns with the goals of my PoP to both change the respective worldviews of stakeholders—first and foremost teachers, and improve the organization for all students, especially those in the minority.

Figure 1

Model of Transformative Leadership Theory


Moral Courage
Interconnectedness
Interdependence
Global Awareness
Redistributing Power
Balance Critique and Promise
Inequitable Organization
Transformative Organization
Balance Public and Private Good
Challenging Knowledge Frameworks
Focus on Emancipation Democracy Equity and Inclusion
Mandate for Change

Note. This model illustrates Shields "dynamic, interconnected, and interdependent nature" of the TL tenets she proposes. From "Transformative Leadership in Education" by C.M. Shields, 2018, p. 21. "Resources mentioned in this book can be downloaded, printed, used to copy/paste text, and/or manipulated to suit your individualized use" (xi). Copyright Taylor & Francis, 2018.

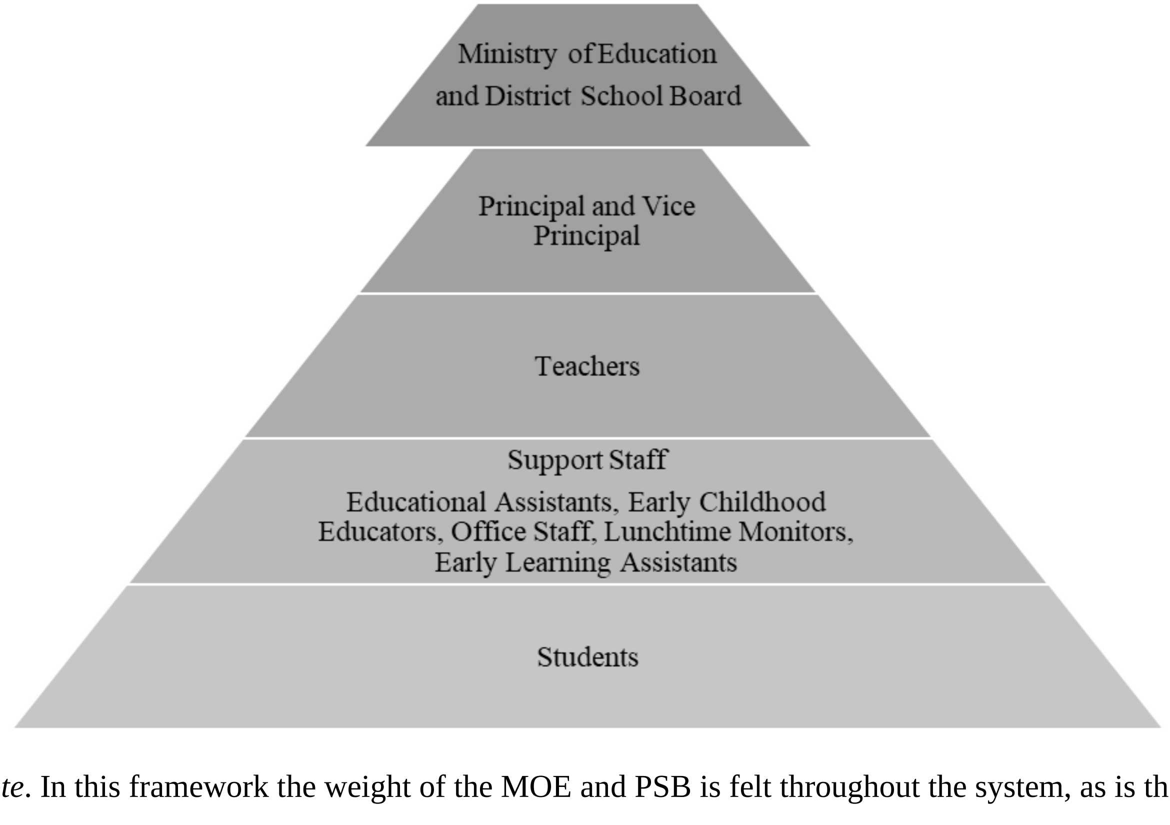
Approaches to leadership, like TL, involve "soft power" focusing on building trust, asset-based relationships, self-reflection, and attraction, rather than coercion (Archuleta, 2012; Banwo et al, 2021). TL is ideal for my PoP as a tool to reimagine social reality to be more ethical, critical, and educative (van Oord, 2013). TL offers a lens by which to increase a leader's awareness of implicit and explicit forms of oppression (Jean-Marie et al., 2009), thus a practitioner needs to develop both a personal and professional critical consciousness. TL is aimed at strengthening and honouring individuals, while also empowering them to contribute to their community (Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Balancing individualism and collectivism, both rights and responsibilities, is also central to IL (Archibald, 2020; Davidson & Davidson, 2018; Kovach, 2009) and CRSL (Khalifa, 2018) theories.

A TL framework relates to the PoP to address the opportunity gap in that it focuses on equity, social justice, excellence, and inclusion (Shield & Hesbol, 2020). At the administrator/ teacher level, it affords room for a reciprocal relationship between leader and teacher. Similarly, at the teacher/student level, it encourages a sharing of power and the development of critical self-awareness (Khalifa et al, 2016b). "Educational leadership is working to create spaces in different learning sites for multiple ontologies and epistemologies to thrive and coexist" (Dei & Adhami, 2022, p. 787). TL requires helping teachers to learn from and with the community (Shields, 2018). As a teaching VP, I have the capacity to engage with both CRR and transformative teaching and leadership practices daily.

A CRSL approach relates to the PoP, to close the opportunity gap, by challenging the traditional leadership structure (Khalifa, 2018) embedded in both the PSB and my school, as illustrated in Figure 2. Khalifa contends that research on how school leaders are to assist teachers in meeting the needs of diverse students is lacking, at least partly owing to the current reliance on traditional conceptualizations of leadership. Traditional teachership practices have yielded vast power over deciding what counts as Knowledge, frameworks for learning, how success is measured, that is compliance rather than engagement (Juliani, 2023), and which families are deemed supportive as opposed to disruptive or uncaring (Khalifa, 2018).

Figure 2

Current Leadership Structure at UCS


Ministry of Education
and District School Board
Principal and Vice
Principal
Teachers
Support Staff
Educational Assistants, Early Childhood
Educators, Office Staff, Lunchtime Monitors,
Early Learning Assistants
Students

Note. In this framework the weight of the MOE and PSB is felt throughout the system, as is the oppressive weight of each layer of leadership on those below.

In prevailing literature, TL theorists and CRSL theorists nod to each other (Khalifa et al, 2016b; Leithwood et al., 2017; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). The 2016 CRSL framework proposed by Khalifa et al. (Appendix A) has areas of overlap with the OLF (2013), the latter to which I am accountable as a person in a formal educational leadership position. Both frameworks charge leaders to foster collaboration among teachers, between teachers and students, as well as teachers and the community, by sharing an inclusive vision, and having high expectations for students. Hattie's research (2017) indicates that teacher expectations of achievement and collective efficacy are by far the two largest predictors of student success.

Where TL approaches and the OLF diverge is more subtle but highly problematic. While CRSL (Khalifa, 2016b) and TL (Shields, 2018) are clear about tenets such as resisting deficit images of students and families, the OLF is thought to impede social justice leadership (Kowalchuk, 2017). To some, a central fault of the OLF is the lack of importance placed on critical self-reflection. Reflexivity, as it is often referred to as in Indigenous theory (Graveline, 1998; Kovach, 2009) is regarding oneself in relation to others in a holistic way. Without critical self-reflection, critical consciousness, leadership cannot be transformative (Khalifa et al., 2016a).

Framework for Leading the Change Process

Changing an organization is a complex undertaking, especially within my agency as a teaching VP. If we can agree that change drivers, as Whelan-Berry & Somerville (2010) suggest, are undertakings and/or actions that make organizational change possible, then both internal and external change drivers need to be considered in the context of UCS. My PoP has three main change drivers—a colonial perspective embedded in much of what and how we teach (for an illustrative example, see Appendix B), the divergent path of minoritized students, and an inability to meet the diverse needs of all students on the part of the staff. I believe I can address these change drivers at my school, within my agency, with the support of my principal. The change management framework offered by Deszca et al. (2020) will be discussed.

Change Path Model

The CPM as conceptualized by Deszca et al. (2020) offers a process to address this PoP while being flexible enough to integrate TL, CRSL, and IL approaches. The four steps of the CPM are awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization. Gélinas-Proulx & Shields (2022) contend that Canadian educational leaders need to critically examine their personal and professional values and Knowledge—how they come to know—to effectively action changes that are equitable and socially just. While the larger organization, the school board, has communicated a desire to make schools more equitable, the challenge at the school level is to determine the local context and choose a course of action suitable to the circumstances of the community. The CPM will serve to guide the long-term cultural change necessary.

Awakening. The awakening phase of the CPM requires leaders to do a critical organizational analysis. The internal and external drivers that have maintained the opportunity gap between the majority and minoritized students will be examined. Achievement data and what Safir and Dugan (2021) refer to as street data will be required to get a holistic (Katz, 2018; Safir & Dugan, 2021) perspective. This may include tracking student absenteeism and office visits, for example, to "seek root causes rather than quick fixes" (Safir & Dugan, 2021, p. 69). Deszca et al., 2020 state "managers need *data* from all significant parts of their organization and stakeholders to understand the dynamics internal to their institutions" (p. 52).

In keeping with TL, CRR, and IL theories, it is critical to inform all stakeholders of the inequities faced by many of our minoritized students through multiple, reciprocal communication channels, e.g., town halls and data sharing. We must tap into their Knowledge (Chrona, 2022;

Khalifa, 2018; Weems, 2016) or there is a high risk of reproducing more colonial, hegemonic, changes and/or facing significant resistance. For changes to be meaningful, we must dig into the sources of inequities at school by seeking the voices of those experiencing the marginalization.

Central to this stage will be awakening the white-majority teachers at UCS, especially the change agents, to our respective ‘invisible knapsacks’ (McIntosh, 1989, 2019). Relevant today, McIntosh (1989) made scholars aware of the unseen privileges we carry with us in our everyday interactions. More importantly, we are taught not to see our privilege. We have not learned to see racism as putting us at an advantage, but rather only how white privilege disadvantages. That is, while much of our oppressiveness is unconscious and not what we have been taught to consider as ‘racist’ (e.g., using racial slurs or stereotypes) we are oppressors even if we do not see ourselves that way, and we have a responsibility to stop perpetuating privilege (Shields, 2018) by learning and teaching the value of what Dei and Adhami (2022) refer to as multicentricity.

The awakening phase will be critical in providing a foundation for the proposed solutions and open communication with strict, anti-hate protocols (PSB, 2023b) will need to be introduced, practiced, and eventually institutionalized. Our respective worldviews are never set, rather they are constantly tested and adjusted, what Hatcher (2012) refers to as perspective transformation. To be able to grow and change as a school community, we need to deeply listen (Safir & Dugan, 2021), and understand, and respond to each others’ views to arrive at a shared vision. Ample and varied opportunities to hear each others’ perspectives about the opportunity gaps and what can be done to close them will be critical to the success of the plan.

Mobilization. The next phase of the change process is mobilization. Once the community-informed vision is established and shared, actions are needed. In this phase, ideas are shared as to how to address the opportunity gap. One form this might take is collaborative discourse, or dialogic dialogue (O'Connor & Michaels, 2007; Shields, 2004), or Talking Circles (TCs). Dialogue builds relationships and community (Freire, 1970; Shields, 2018). It also mitigates 'the 'danger of a single story' (Adichie, 2009). Communication tools will continue to be critical and responsive, understanding that stakeholders will not all have reached the same level of understanding in the change process, what Deszca et al. (2020) refer to as lag.

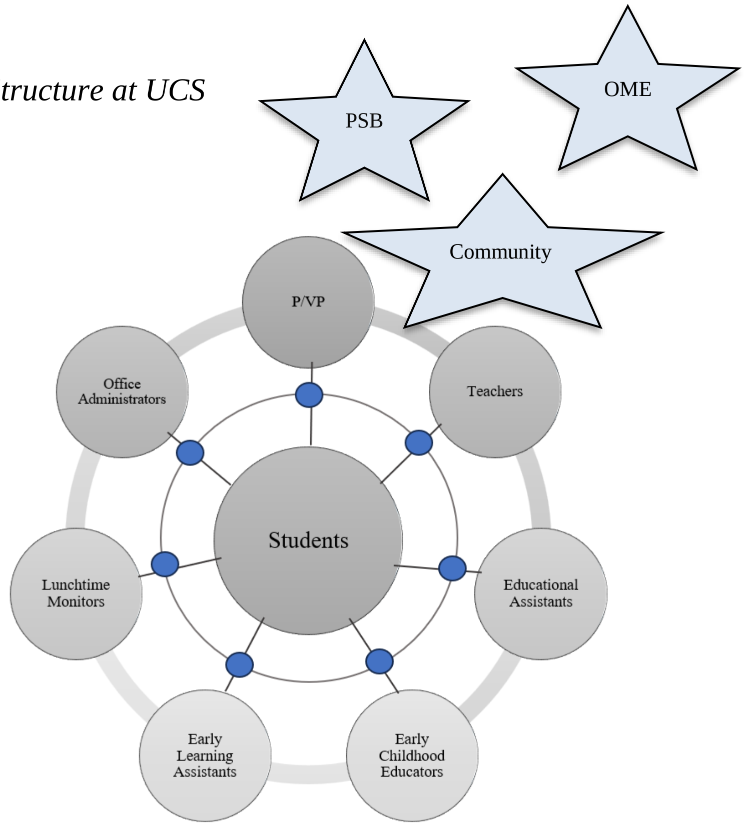
With an emerging understanding of each other and by building healthy relationships, further action will be taken. For example, data capturing student voice would help determine where energy needs to be focused (LaSalle et al., 2020). Deszca et al., 2020, refer to cultural mapping tools. The importance of collecting data from the students directly should not be underestimated (LaSalle et al, 2020; Teitel et al., 2021), and one method would be heat-mapping. Migliaccio et al. (2017) mapped bullying by asking students to mark an "x" on a map of the school where they had experienced bullying and an "o" where they knew other students had. By adapting the question to my PoP, giving students a map of UCS to indicate where they feel included or excluded, data could be gathered on a heat-map. This data would help staff better understand hotspots of cultural safety and vulnerability. By anonymously sharing where students feel included and where they do not, stakeholders may be sensitized to challenges faced by minoritized students. Insights such as feeling included in the classroom and excluded in the school yard, for example, would help determine where to focus efforts.

Acceleration. Deszca et al. (2020) warn us that the acceleration stage involves a tricky dance of trying to change the organization while at the same time operating it. TCs would continue to be important as they engage and empower stakeholders, integrating them fully into the change process, as well as motivating them to act. By discussing a range of topics from multiple perspectives, mutual understanding increases, and helps to build momentum to action change; what Wilson (2008) refers to as relationality, tying to one of Shields' eight tenets—the destruction and rebuilding of Knowledge frameworks that maintain inequities and injustices.

In the acceleration phase, actions and communications will be circular (Figure 3) rather than linear (Figure 2). Everyone working with students and the organization will need to be involved. As stakeholders grow their Knowledge, needs will continue to be met in responsive ways and resistance will be addressed (LaSalle et al., 2020). In addition to celebrating "small wins" during this phase, Deszca et al. (2020) refer to key communication principles, based on the 1996 work of Klein. In summary, key messages will need to be repeated (15 to 20 times) using a variety of modalities, and the change leaders will continue to have a critical role in mobilizing the change, relying on trusting relationships with change agents (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 353), while meeting expectations of the OME and PSB.

Figure 3

Desired Leadership Structure at UCS


PSB
OME
Community
P/VP
Office Administrators
Teachers
Students
Lunchtime Monitors
Educational Assistants
Early Learning Assistants
Early Childhood Educators

Institutionalization. At the institutionalization phase, the desired state of the organization should be visible. Monitoring and measuring will be key and at UCS, we will need tools to measure whether the underlying racism barring CRR—structural, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized—is being addressed. That is, have we succeeded in stakeholders learning to consider worldviews that allow them to see each other, and nature, in a different way.

Khalifa (2018) offers iterative checklists to measure change implementation over a three-year period, warning that a school will never be completely culturally responsive. Metrics such as student absenteeism and trips to the office (LaSalle et al., 2020) will be collected and analyzed throughout the change process, using a three-year cycle to see if the desired changes are being institutionalized. Continued engagement of community Knowledge Keepers would be indicative of the desired change as they support learning from a variety of worldviews and decolonial Knowledge systems.

The four phases of the CPM allow for meeting our staff where they are on the readiness continuum, from change agents to change resistors, there is a place for everyone to move towards equity. Despite the challenges to measure the success of institutionalized changes, there are pockets of readiness in the organization that could be leveraged and that would embrace these first and second order changes. A team of change agents could be identified and moved.

Organizational Change Readiness

The status quo has a strong momentum. Seeing the opportunity gap is an important step, but an action plan is needed to change classroom practices as well as the organizational infrastructure. I will use the readiness-for-change questionnaire (R-F-CQ) by Deszca et al. (2020) to get an informal rating which will be applied to the CPC developed by Lindsey et al. (2003). Bolman and Deal (2017) define a frame as a mental model based on certain ideas and assumptions that help individuals see more clearly. We each bring our own frames to understand the organization, and none are singularly sufficient to understand it fully. They suggest actioning change and leadership as art and that "the art of reframing uses knowledge and intuition to read the flow and to find sensible and effective ways to channel the incoming tide" (p. 399). The R-F-CQ assesses six readiness dimensions, previous change experiences, executive support, credible leadership and change champions, openness to change, rewards for change, and measures for change and accountability (Deszca et al., 2020, pp. 113-115).

The CPC as first outlined in Lindsey et al. (2003) has six points on the cultural scale: destructiveness, incapacity, blindness, pre-competence, competence, and proficiency (Table 1). Recognizing that each of the responses to the questionnaire regarding my organization's readiness for change will likely have a scatterplot representation across the continuum, I will highlight some of the more relevant intersections of the two models to understand my organization's readiness to address the opportunity gap.

Table 1

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum Chart

Cultural Destructiveness	Cultural Incapacity	Cultural Blindness	Cultural Pre-competence	Cultural Competence	Cultural Proficiency
Social reproduction	Stereotyping	Equality, not equity	Recognize limitations of own skills	Accept and respect difference	Capacity to learn and teach about diverse groups
Discrimination	Superiority of dominant group	Dominant culture is universal	Display discomfort	Continued self-assessment	Holds culture in high esteem
No institutional support	Community of compliance	Minority groups culturally deficient	Unwillingness to confront dominant group	Model appropriate behaviours	Continue to learn, conduct research about new cultural approaches
See difference, eliminate it	See difference, make it wrong	See difference, ignore it	See difference, respond badly	See difference, understand it makes a difference	See difference, respond supportively

Note. Adapted from R. B. Lindsey et al., 2003 Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders, pp. 97-100. Copyright 2003 by Randall B. Lindsey, Kikanza Nuri Robins, and Raymond D. Terrell, Corwin Press, Inc.

Previous Change Experiences

In this section of the questionnaire the focus is on experience, mood, and momentum as determined through five questions. Some of the significant changes the organization has experienced are a new building (1994), full-day kindergarten (2014), and the EFI program (2014). The school celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2015 and according to newspaper articles and attending staff there was a wealth of alumni and community members at the celebration. The organization, clearly steeped in tradition, was also at a turning point in introducing some major changes. In my informal assessment, UCS measured neutrally in this section of readiness.

Although the organization has not experienced any significant failures with change attempts, the general mood is neither upbeat nor negative. One notable factor contributing to this is what Santamaría (2021) refers to as the shared trauma of the COVID pandemic, which disproportionately impacted minoritized students. Santamaría contends that applied critical leadership is the way to create a more socially just organization. Previous changes the organization faced would have been conducted within a more traditional leadership framework (Figure 2). While the organization is not exactly ‘resting on its laurels’ to borrow the term from Deszca et al. (2020), there has perhaps not until now been enough raw, visible inequity to mobilize change. The staff would fall within cultural blindness and competence on the CPC continuum in terms of past experiences and current practices.

Executive Support. This section of the R-F-CQ examines the role of senior management in change readiness as determined by four questions. When referring to the organization, my focus is at the school level. To analyze executive support, I will broaden it to the superintendent level. My superintendent is an anti-racist champion and culturally proficient. He has been crystal clear in his words and actions that the most important aspect of our leadership work is a triangulation of cultural proficiency, equity, and social justice. All training and book resources that we have received since his appointment have been singularly focused on this work. He had all VPs conduct equity walks in schools in socioeconomically challenged communities. He has brought a focus to the district on student achievement through equity and encourages P/VP teams to share the equity work they do through a monthly newsletter, which serves to both share ideas and increase accountability (PSB, 2023a). Clearly, my organization correlated very positively to change in this section of the R-F-CQ owing largely to the support and direction of our superintendent. Although he has minimal direct influence at the school level, he has a considerable amount of influence over the principal and me and we, too, are seeking to embed this work in our daily practice.

Credible Leadership and Change Champions

This section of the R-F-CQ floats between senior leaders and middle managers as determined by six questions. I considered the relationships between the superintendent, the principal, me, and teacher leaders within the school. This section of the questionnaire speaks to trust and credibility, as well as attraction and retention of change champions. Further it speaks of the appropriateness and need for the proposed change.

My organization rated as receptive to change in this section. I feel that there is trust between the principal and me, as well as between us and the superintendent. Further, from my perspective there is a trusting relationship between the administrative team and the teachers, as well as other staff in the organization. Inherent in my plan is a consultative process with all stakeholders. This will help to identify and cultivate a small group of change agents at the early stages of the change planning process, with the potential to build a team in both strength and numbers until the change permeates the organization. In this section, individuals in the organization would mostly fall between cultural blindness and competency on the CPC, based on instructional walkthroughs, school-based surveys of staff, and professional development.

Openness to Change

This is the section in need of the most attention at UCS and has the most questions—fourteen. The questions interrogate the school’s practices around self-monitoring, treatment of conflict, communication, and resources. It was soon clear that as a team, we do not engage in critical self-reflection very well nor do we have sufficient mechanisms in place to monitor our collective efficacy. While the principal and I have open-door practices, communication tends to be top down, common in leadership theory and practice as the viewpoint is often from that of the leader (Carlyon & Branson, 2018). Data collection primarily happens at the district and ministry levels—identity-based data and standardized testing data respectively. However, we have access to school-based data that may help elucidate the problem, i.e., daily attendance records, discipline and achievement data, and participation in extra-curriculars, all of which we could make more transparent. We could also be more diligent about collecting “soft” data during walk-throughs such as observations and anecdotes (Deszca et al., 2020; Safir & Dugan, 2021).

External drivers exerting force and/or support from the top down include the MOE, OCT, OPC, and superintendents (Figure 2). From “below” the principal and I feel pressure and/or empowerment from staff and their respective federations/unions, caregivers, students, and the community. Our teachers feel the weight and/or buffering effects of the P/VP. Most of the responsibility for student learning falls on teachers, with all other members of the organization positioned (in theory) to support them. Exposing some of the school-based data that illustrates the opportunity gap, and our cultural pre-competence rating on the CPC, might be motivators for teachers to change their practices. At the same time, the principal and I would need to be intentional about ensuring that the communication flow is multidirectional (Figure 3).

Superficially, the current structural frame (Figure 2) does not support the organization's readiness for addressing the opportunity gap through dialogic discourse as I propose. However, as the principal and I are well versed in TL, IL, and CRSL theories, there is an opportunity to create some second, perhaps even third, order change by getting those on lower levels of the pyramid to "manage more participatively" (Burke, 2018, p. 134). That is, through reimagining the leadership structure as circular (Figure 3) rather than pyramidic (Figure 2), by involving all who work directly with students in collaborative discourse, and meeting these change agents and recipients where they are on the CPC, there is the potential to change deep issues including vision and school culture (Deszca et al., 2020; Schein, 2004).

Rewards for Change

This section of the R-F-CQ has three questions about the potential reward for success and censure for failure to attempt change. Underlying the questions is the idea that employees have no rights beyond being paid which is not only unjust, but imprudent (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The assumptions underpinning this section are that the change agents need to feel safe enough to take a risk and that the changes to the organization can be mutually beneficial—to the individual and to the organization. Workers expect the organization to have them do work that is valuable and self-expressive (Bolman & Deal, 2017). At the school level, like at the classroom level, individual educators need an environment where they can grow (Bolman & Deal, 2017). This section of organizational readiness is one where much work at UCS will need to be focused.

For example, in the case of staffing and programming, the issue of streaming will need to be addressed to create more achievement opportunities for minoritized students, who are represented disproportionately in the English program. The way the EFI and English programs are structured, each class requires French and English teachers in varying amounts. In the spring, the staffing process begins as negotiated between the teaching federations and the school board. Part of this process is that teachers fill in a form for the following year aimed at "a balanced and satisfying workload" (OME, 2011, p. 15), indicating their preferred grade and program, based on their qualifications, experience, and goals. Only one of the 25 teachers at UCS requested to work in the English program and one in the specialized class. In my experience, this is not atypical.

There may be many reasons why teachers resist working in the English program in the best of times, but the combined impacts of the COVID pandemic, a rise in student dysregulation and mental health issues (ADFO et al., 2023) have made staffing these positions even more challenging. In 2023, an estimated "18 to 22 percent of students in Ontario meet the criteria for a mental health illness or concern" (School Mental Health Ontario, 2023a). As administrators we want the strongest teachers teaching students with the most challenges/highest needs, which are indisputably in the English program, but the reaction can be that they are given the most difficult job for being the best at their job. Similarly, the least effective teachers are often placed in the classes with the fewest needs. Through repeated discourse as outlined in the *Framework for Leading the Change Process* section, the goal would be to change the perception about serving our marginalized students and at the same time increasing the capacity of our less effective teachers. A potential reward for being better at CRRW would be students who are more engaged, attend more consistently, and achieve more (Khalifa, 2018; LaSalle et al., 2020; Lindsey et al., 2003, Raskin, et al., 2021). Everyone would be rewarded, especially the minoritized students.

Measures for Change and Accountability

This section of the R-F-CQ has four questions and covers measuring the change. Scarcity of resources and divergent interests are potential causes of conflict. Collecting school-based data such as office visits will highlight the difference between what UCS is doing and what it claims to be doing. For example, despite professing inclusion, we see some staff send dysregulated students to the office to be “fixed”. It is a demanding part of a teacher’s job to try to co-regulate with a dysregulated student while concurrently teaching the rest of the class. Yet, some teachers are embracing the building of strong relationships with their students, and this greatly diminishes the need to send them away from the group to be able to reset. Relying on someone outside the classroom to help manage a student’s behaviour is not only disempowering for the teacher but could be interpreted as cultural blindness (Table 1), making the presumption that the dominant culture is universally applicable and superior (Lindsey et al., 2003). A further pattern of teacher thought that needs to be disrupted is the growth mindset phenomenon. Assuming students just need “grit” to overcome hurdles and succeed at school is part of the dominant discourse, falling between the cultural destructiveness and incapacity end of the scale (Table 1). Either the impact of a student’s lived reality is ignored, or it is seen, but judged as wrong (Lindsey et al., 2003).

Deszca et al. (2020) indicate that the range of scores in the rating scale is -25 to +50. My informal rating of UCS’s readiness for change was 30 (Table 2), which would indicate that my school is ready for change. While some educators at USC are clearly ready to embrace a more socially just organization, and move along the CPC, others may be resistant. All educators would be invited to participate in possible solutions. Ayres (2023) advises preparing teachers for big change involves making clear the necessity of the change, explaining the problems with the status quo, and offering “choice, voice, and buy-in” (p. 4), thereby empowering them.

Table 2

Summary of Organizational Change Readiness at UCS

	R-F-CQ Range	R-F-CQ Score at UCS	CPC Continuum
Previous Change Experiences	-8 to +4	0	Cultural blindness to competency
Executive Support	-3 to +7	6	Cultural proficiency
Credible Leadership and Change Champions	0 to +11	8	Cultural blindness to competency
Openness to Change	-9 to +22	14	Cultural incapacity to pre-competency
Rewards for Change	-5 to +2	0	Cultural incapacity to pre-competency
Measures for Change and Accountability	0 to +4	2	Cultural incapacity to pre-competency
Total	(-25 to +50)	30	

Strategies and Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

What is culture and why is it important in a child's learning journey? Why do teachers need to be good at transmitting it? Notoriously difficult to define, Raskin et al. (2021) state "culture is the collective tradition and way of life of a group of people" (p. 153) and add that while some culture is visible, e.g., food, celebrations, clothing, language; much is hidden, e.g., body language, notions of politeness, concepts of equality and integrity (p. 156)—similar to the hidden curriculum suggested by Allingham (Dei et al., 2000; OPC, 2012). The enormity of a minoritized student's task is that they must master their home culture and school culture to experience success (Shields, 2018). In exploring ways to integrate decolonial Knowledge systems into everyday teaching practices—challenging colonial Knowledge systems while still meeting curriculum expectations—four possible solutions will be put forth. The solutions will need to involve meaningful action rather than performative tasks that are inclusive of each student's culture to help them navigate both of their worlds. In the case of Indigenous students, Mi’kmaq Elder Albert Marshall brought forward the concept of “two-eyed seeing”, learning to see the strengths of Indigenous culture from one eye and non-Indigenous from the other for the betterment of all people and the planet (Hatcher et al., 2009; Marshall & Zimanyi, 2023). This concept is potentially empowering for all minoritized students.

Possible Solution #1: Dialogic Discourse

Deszca et al. (2020) tell us that change leaders need to pursue diverse viewpoints when investigating the need for change and that change will not be mobilized without engaging others through purposeful two-way communication. Traditionally, a transactional or charismatic leader would be central to the work and power base (Burke, 2018). Contemporary leadership requires a team to mobilize effective and sustainable change (Deszca et al., 2020, Graveline, 1998; McChrystal et al., 2015) and an understanding of both internal and external stakeholders’ perspectives (Deszca et al., 2020). Within my agency, facilitating collaborative discourse with and between students, staff, caregivers, and the community would help us see the gap between the current and desired state of the school. Discourse involving minoritized students and their families is essential (Freire, 1970; Shields, 2018). One form of collaborative discourse, or dialogic dialogue (O’Connor & Michaels, 2007; Shields, 2004), is Talking Circles (TCs).

By using TCs, Indigenous Knowledge is utilized and the method itself helps to challenge colonial ways of thinking. TCs are best guided by an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper. Circle protocols are straightforward: speak from your heart, listen with an open mind, one speaker at a time, the speaker holds a special object, and the others listen respectfully as the object makes repeated passes around the Circle (Graveline, 1998; Styres, 2017). TCs at my school would be open to all stakeholders to promote open, honest dialogue. It is both a method of communication and a tool for mobilization as individuals in both the dominant and minoritized groups build community to solve a shared problem.

Métis scholar F. J. Graveline states Circle Works are central to changing the narrative and “transforming Eurocentric consciousness” (Graveline, 1998). She contends that the Circle process is community building and an inclusive form of pedagogy. When stakeholders can listen and learn from each other, and share their own understanding, an authentic space for getting at the heart of the opportunity gap is opened. In keeping with TL, decolonization involves a redistribution of power and engaging in dialogic discourse is empowering for those traditionally marginalized and enlightening for the dominant group. It requires “two-eared listening”, with our ears and our emotions (Moore et al., 2023). Potentially, educators would augment their CRR competencies by participating in Circles (Kovach, 2009; Styres, 2017; Tanaka, 2016). Similarly for leaders, Circle work encourages the development of reciprocal relationships rather than having minoritized families conform to prevailing ways of being, knowing, and doing (Banwo et al., 2021) and it would challenge the traditional leadership practices at UCS (Figures 2 and 3).

Hatcher (2012) affirms that TCs are safe spaces that build community and shared understanding. Shah et al. (2022) refers to narration as a method of generating new insights and building counter-narratives to engage in the anti-racist, CRR reforms necessary to gap closing. Indigenous theory calls narratives lived experiences—a way to rescript the dominant narrative (Wesley-Esquimaux, 2010). Eizadirad et al. (2023) advocate for creating such spaces of healing where a student’s lived experience and curriculum intertwine, and students will have the opportunity to share how they are socially and emotionally impacted by educational barriers.

The strengths of this solution are that there is little to no cost involved if the discourse occurs during instructional time and/or mandatory staff meetings. Attracting minoritized caregivers to join the conversation would be more challenging. Offering food and transportation if the discourse was outside of school hours might incentivize attendance, make it more sociable, and be of minimal cost. The MOE offers an annual parent reach out grant of $500 for such undertakings. A further strength of dialogic discourse is that by sharing goals and collaboratively choosing a course of action, resistance to change can be reduced (Deszca et al., 2020). A final strength is that dialogic discourse serves to dismantle colonial power structures by redistributing power amongst stakeholders.

A potential weakness of this solution is putting additional stress on minoritized families who may not be able to participate owing to financial, time, and transportation barriers. There is also a potential for inefficiency, by Western standards, as much time would be required. Having focus groups might help mitigate some of these factors, for example, having separate groups for teachers, students, caregivers, and the community—all of which the P/VP would attend, with a few members from each group meeting together as a focus group to share ideas and actions. Ultimately, teachers would have to unpack the information gleaned to translate into better teaching practices. Release time would most likely need to be provided.

Possible Solution #2: Self-Reflection

Educator and leader self-reflection is central to the change process and the approach needs to be asset-based (Amzat & Valdez, 2017; Banwo et al., 2021, Deszca, 2020; Freire, 2000; Khalifa et al, 2016a). Styres (2019) states that critical self-refection is necessary "… to gain a better understanding of each other and the ways power, privilege, and colonial relations continue to inform our ways of knowing and being in the world" (p. 26). Absolon (2011), concurring with Alfred's 2005 work, adds that critical reflections open a pathway for freedom without replicating or empowering colonialism and Eurocentric hegemony (p. 99). Critical self-reflection, then, becomes a tool for decolonization and builds a bridge between Knowledge systems. However, teachers would need subject matter on which to reflect that would push them to consider ideas outside of their comfort zone. The financial cost attached to this solution would be release time, and would require a time commitment and training, to learn to critically self-reflect effectively.

There are several existing tools freely available to assist with critical self-reflection. The OPC (2012) created an activity intended to help P/VPs reflect critically as to whether they are leading an equitable school. School Mental Health Ontario (2023b) created a *Cultural Humility Self-Reflection Tool for School Staff* which is appropriate for all staff. Potawatomi-Lenapé scholar Dion (2010) cites the physical space in schools as an important place to reflect Indigenous presence, opportune for building artistic school/community connections. Replicating and/or adapting her walk-through audit would offer stakeholders the chance to critically reflect on who is represented on the school walls and if they see themselves represented.

The strength of this solution is everyone has an entry point, it encourages lifelong learning, and it helps to redress power imbalances (School Mental Health Ontario, 2023b). The weakness is that self-reflection is often a learned skill and training would need to be offered to all participants. This would require time and the cost of hiring a professional to lead the training.

Possible Solution #3: Professional Learning Communities

Social reconstructionism, as defined by Edmunds et al (2015), is “a philosophy of education that maintains that teachers and schools ought to be change agents in creating a new and more equitable order”. A strategy to help staff be more CRR would be the enhancement of a learning environment for the professionals involved. Hallam et al. (2015) claim PLCs improve student achievement and teacher collaboration, especially when a principal is involved. Further, building on the 1999 work of Hargreaves, van Oord says PLCs transform schools “… from knowledge-delivering into knowledge-creating organizations" (p. 424). Trust is cited as key to building successful PLCs (Hallam et al, 2015), to improve student achievement (OME, 2007b). Chrona (2022) suggests shifting from "learning about" (a Western, scientific method approach to learning) to "learning from" (an inclusive, decolonial) pedagogical approach. That is, teachers and students alike would benefit from learning from community members directly as authentic cultural representatives, who could be invited both to join a PLC and to speak in classrooms.

One example of a PLC is a culturally relevant math beading project whereby a member of the PSBs Indigenous team, a Knowledge Keeper, and a university math professor partner with a teacher in their classroom (Beatty & Clyne, 2020). This project was proposed to, and accepted by, UCS. Another example of a PLC model currently hosted by the PSBs Indigenous team is a "tea and talk". Educators join virtually in a conversation—hosted by the Indigenous facilitator. Educators can ask questions or just listen with a cup of tea in hand. It is loosely based on a virtual TC and is a space where teachers at my school could go to increase their Knowledge about Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being. As teacher capacity increases, we could develop a platform of our own, which the P/VP could facilitate. It could be expanded to include a variety of CRR topics with the guidance and participation of diverse community members.

As an educational leader, it will be essential for me to build trust with students, teachers, and the community, and they with each other, as they are asked to question their cultural identity based on their respective worldviews—to unlearn colonialism (Donald, 2022). We will seek to build a team of teams to decolonize, while at the same time continuing to serve the organization. It will involve validating a Western worldview, while concurrently increasing awareness of the violence it reproduces in dictating how to be a successful student (Donald, 2022). To strengthen teacher trust amongst students and caregivers, PLCs are essential (OME, 2010).

Clark (2020) contends that there are four stages of psychological safety necessary to taking the path to inclusion and innovation. Innovation, he states is complicated, “it requires creative abrasion and constructive dissent—processes that rely on high *intellectual* friction and low *social* friction” (p. xi). It is the leader’s task to balance these two frictions to create change. The four stages of safety are inclusion, learner, contributor, and challenger safety (p. 6). As a leader and a participant in PLCs, I would be responsible for creating a “psychologically safe environment” (Hatcher, 2012) for USC to evolve into a more equitable organization.

A strength of PLCs is the wealth of research-based evidence that supports their effectiveness (ADFO et al., 2023; Katz & Dack, 2013; OME, 2010), especially if there is P/VP participation (Hallam et al., 2015). However, as Sharratt and Planche (2018, p. 1) warn, there is a “symphony of skills” required by the leader to effectively lead teachers. As a result, the P/VP would need to be well versed in these skills. In keeping with my strong belief in choice, teachers would be invited to participate in a PLC and the result would likely be a small group of teacher leaders/change champions at the onset, but the goal would be to build capacity and interest.

A weakness of PLCs is that though attractive to those already intent on changing their practice they may not be to those resistant to change. PLCs involve a time commitment by staff who already feel overburdened, and a financial cost to the school for release time, as well as finding replacement staff in an era of shortages. Seeing the importance of such work, the three Ontario principal councils recently asked the MOE to consider embedding professional learning into the school week (ADFO et al., 2023), but that is not the current reality. In the event of a highly committed team of teachers, there would be the possibility of application for an Ontario Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) grant (Campbell et al., 2017). Having been involved with a successful TLLP grant at a former school, I have witnessed how the process and practice serves to elevate the involved teachers, create excitement over the project, and tasks the team of teachers with the responsibility of sharing their learning with other teachers and schools.

The opportunity gap we are attempting to address at UCS is the academic and cultural opportunity gap, which is intricately intertwined with community-based factors, many of which are socio-economic (Mayor & Suarez, 2019). Community involvement in the solution is critical, but addressing the root community-based causes may not only be daunting but beyond the scope of a P/VP's role. Khalifa (2018) argues that school leaders need to be community leaders by actively addressing the community issues impacting inequities. I do not see readiness for that extent of commitment on the part of the principal nor I, in the current climate, nor would it be supported by the PSB or OPC. Shields (2018) contends transformative leaders should have a holistic understanding of the students' lives inside and outside of school. This aligns better with the situation at UCS, and we do our best to broaden our understanding of our students' lived realities, especially minoritized students. A study by the People for Education found that more than half the Ontario principals surveyed post-pandemic in 2021-22 felt their stress level was not manageable (Hopson & Hodgson-Bautista, 2023), so focusing our lens on the school rather than the broader community is necessary for the preservation of our mental and physical health.

Possible Solution #4: Land-based Learning (LBL)

Many scholars speaking from and/or for minoritized groups espouse the centrality of Land-based learning in decolonization and equity work (Dei, 2000; Dei & Adhami, 2022; Duhn et al., 2017; Engel-Di Mauro & Carroll, 2014; Jacobs & Narvaez, 2022; Kovach, 2009; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017; Styres, 2019). A Canadian university, St. Francis Xavier, recently (2023) posted a teaching position in the faculty of education for "Science/Land-based Education"—an indicator that LBL is gaining significance in the education of future teachers. Understanding that urban school yards are nature-filled, and that a connectedness to nature is a basic human need (Anderson et al., 2017; Wilson, 2022) blends multiple Knowledge systems (Dei et al., 2000; Dei & Adhami, 2022; Starratt. 2014, Tuck et al, 2014). Further, the Land was central to the process of colonization—with Land loss/theft people were forced to sell their labour for survival (Garcia, 2020)—reconnecting to the Land is a giant step towards decolonization (Milstein, 2008).

LBL speaks to all three of my guiding questions. To address the question of teacher growth, building capacity in LBL—encompassing the Earth, Water, and Sky—has the potential to augment equity, social and environmental justice, and improved student wellness (Duhn, et al., 2017; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017; OME, 2009; Penashue, 2019). LBL responds to question two in that if offers the potential for building trusting relationships (Manuel & Derrickson, 2015). The principal and I, both having strong backgrounds in LBL, could co-teach the subject, thereby building trust and capacity with teachers and students. Addressing question three, involving community partners in sharing Knowledge about the Land from diverse perspectives would help to decolonize the school and create a more equitable environment (Dei et al., 2000; Dei & Adhami, 2022; Wilson et al., 2019), one where all Knowledges are respected and valued (Huanman & Martin, 2020; Manuel & Derrickson, 2015), and would be supportive of teachers by placing some of the responsibility for sharing this Knowledge on the community (Tanaka, 2016). In keeping with TL, to understand our interconnectedness to the global community (Shields, 2018), LBL offers profound possibilities (see example in Appendix C).

Whether referred to as “the primary foundation of all our teachings” (Styres, 2019, p. 26), “kin” (Jacobs & Narvaez, 2022; Sinclair, 2017), “a sacred gift from the creator” (Reconciliation Education, 2023), the shaper of culture and identity (Alberta Education, 2023), or biophilia (Wilson, 2022), Land and LBL give students the potential to navigate both home and school cultures. In a recent lecture, Dr. Shawn Wilson (2021) stated that we are in a relationship with Knowledge, that Knowledge occurs in a living context, and is produced in relationships with the Land and the community. In the West, Knowledge has been disconnected and decontextualized from the Land (Dei & Adhami, 2022). To decolonize we must understand that both Land and Knowledge are alive and have agency. Wilson suggests that if we think of both as sovereign people that we are in a relationship with, then we will have a clearer understanding of reciprocity and the fact that we are accountable to these relationships (Wilson, 2021). Although TL does not name LBL directly, Shields (2018) does contend that students need to learn about the natural world and stewardship, that "…the whole universe is our schoolhouse" (p. 102), and that students need to understand the profound human impact on the environment.

My organization sits in an urban setting. Dei (1995) found that LBL, encompassing Knowledge of the social and natural world, to be inclusive while official school curricula is disempowering to minoritized students. Further, Dei contends that like Indigenous culture African culture teaches "… the values of human co-existence with nature, group unity, mutuality, collective work and responsibility … as more important than the individual self-interest" (p. 10). Together they provide a more complete theoretical foundation and make curriculum, collaboration, and self-reflection more accessible to minoritized students. Djonko-Moore et al. (2018) found that LBL supported both CRR and eco-justice pedagogy, the latter of which builds connections between the natural environment and cultural norms. Hatcher (2012) calls for a dismantling of the anthropocentric hierarchy and contends "Mother Earth is calling for bridge-building between Western and Indigenous worldviews" (p. 346), citing LBL as elemental.

There is evidence that LBL contributes to student academic achievement and wellness (Camasso & Jagannathan, 2018a; Louv, 2005; Wilson, 2022; Young et al., 2016) and of the four possible solutions it offers the most potential to close the opportunity gap. “Research has shown that environmental education not only increases student’s environmental literacy but also contributes to higher academic achievement for all students” (OME, 2009, p. 5). Applying LBL to closing the opportunity gap—enriching the three Western Rs of education (reading, writing, arithmetic) with the four Indigenous Rs (respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility, a term coined by Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991) will entail respecting worldviews that consider the Land as a living being with agency; understanding that learning from and about the Land is relevant to all lives (Dei, 1995; Duhn, et al., 2017; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017; Root, 2010); reciprocity with the Land means giving as well as receiving (Kimmerer, 2013); and responsibility for the Land means thinking about (seven) past and future generations.

However, despite the growing and persuasive body of literature supporting LBL as a viable solution to many of the challenges my school and our educational system currently faces, there remains the need to build teacher capacity. Therefore, a hybrid approach would be suitable. It would incorporate the positive attributes of the first three solutions offered and give them a venue for action. While dialogic discourse and self-reflection would be woven throughout the change process, inclusive of all stakeholders, the onus for change would be on teachers.

Hybrid Solution

PLCs led by a variety of experts in LBL would help us to build teacher capacity. To be effective, PLCs would have to focus on both behavioural and psychological changes (LaSalle et al., 2020). Having a team of teams to lead LBL at UCS would offer opportunities for intracultural, intergenerational, and interspecies teaching and learning. Helping educators understand that one not need to leave the city to learn about the Land is an important first step. The most viable solution is one where the change agents would have choice over the content and timing of their participation. There are currently five teachers (three kindergarten, one primary, and one junior) who have indicated interest in participating, as representatives of the first phase of building teacher capacity. My vision is based on a model I have had success with in the past. These teachers would select from a range of topics and timeslots; exercising what Ayres (2023, p. 5) referred to as "choice, voice, and buy-in". These topics would be Land-based teachings including foundational lessons around natural and built, Circle protocols, think spots, and field journals. Further topics would best be inquiry-based, emanating from student interests, such as moon teachings, reciprocity with trees, waste management, shadows/shade, etc.

The representative teachers would participate with their class and the teachings would be led by partners—at least one of whom would be the P/VP and the other would be a Knowledge Keeper from a minoritized group. Lessons would be modelled in situ with the class. In the absence of community volunteers to lead the work, the school may have to find it within the budget to pay Knowledge Keepers—with an honorarium or other token of reciprocity. These sessions would be followed by PLCs giving teachers the chance for professional dialogue with colleagues in a safe and supportive, yet critical space. There would be a cost associated with release time which USC would be able to prioritize. Our school's annual operating budget is approximately 30,000 dollars, supplemented by student generated funds of about 10,000 dollars and supported by school council funding of between 20,000 and 30,000 dollars per year.

Approaching LBL and change in this way is an authentic, organic approach to dismantling colonialism and narrowing the opportunity gap owing to what Dei et al. (2000) refer to as a lack of colonial and imperial imposition. Indigenous (they use the term more broadly to include original inhabitants of all places) Knowledges, emanating from the Land, recognize multiple and collective origins of Knowledge and thus redistributes power. It creates an "ethical space” of engagement (Blackstock, 2011, p. 72; Ermine, 2007, p. 193) where people with disparate worldviews can meet, be heard, respected, and honoured. It is transdisciplinary and transcultural and as such, easily incorporated into any subject area rather than being an “add on”. Through modelling and practice, leader, teacher, and student cultural competencies would grow. With time and commitment to a shared vision, trusting relationships between stakeholders would develop, as would a kinship worldview (Topa & Narvaez, 2022). Minoritized community partners would feel, and truly be, valued and included.

To decolonize an organization, such as a community school, there are several aspects of, and several players within, the organization that need to be changed concurrently. Non reductionist binaries such as right/wrong, truth/lie, boy/girl, black/white, and human/nonhuman need to be challenged and replaced by more holistic ideologies to address this complex problem. Rather than right or wrong we must understand that there are multiple perspectives on any given “fact”, that there is no objective truth, gender is a spectrum, every individual is an intersection of multiple identities, and in many cultures sentience is attributed to things considered objects in the West such as rocks, water, and Land (Dei et al., 200, Topa & Narvaez, 2022, Wilson, 2021). To measure the success of the proposed changes, it will be critical to use a variety of communication strategies and data points that monitor the change of all stakeholders, at multiple times throughout the change process, using diverse tools.

Chapter 3—Implementation, Communication, and Evaluation

This chapter of the OIP encompasses the "how" of the POP. That is, how to develop, implement, monitor, and communicate a plan for the organizational change process to close the opportunity gap at my school by assisting teachers in developing stronger cultural and pedagogical skills to meet the diverse needs of all students. While dismantling the French Immersion/English/Specialized Program divide is well beyond my agency, a way to challenge the disparities streaming perpetuates can be addressed. In response to questions around workload and de-streaming in secondary schools, Ontario Educators (OntEd) stated "what de-streamed classes require is simply good teaching using Universal Design for Learning, Differentiated Instruction, and Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy. This applies to every class in every grade, not just newly de-streamed classes" (OntEd, 2023, p. 9). My hybrid solution of PLCs led by experts in LBL is, therefore, in alignment with the larger organizational structure.

The goal of this study is to narrow the opportunity gap for all minoritized students—Indigenous, Black, Asian, Muslim and other marginalized often visible minorities, as well as those with often invisible differences, such as those who identify as 2SLGBTQ+, who have learning, mental health, and/or physical differences, who live in non-dominant family structures, who adhere to a non-dominant faith, and who live with food and/or housing insecurity. Having said that, I recognize that generalizations made about the colonialisms that negatively impact daily life and educational opportunities is of negligible use, have the potential to cause further harm, and may be beyond the scope of this paper, but based on my research I strongly believe that there are changes that can be made at the school level that will empower minoritized students and enlighten those in the majority. My examples often refer to those who identify as Indigenous, as this is where my previous research has been focused and the minoritized group with whom I feel the strongest connection in my personal, academic, and professional life. My intention is not to speak for anyone other than myself, bearing in mind that the teacher diversity gap is significant with racial minorities representing 26% of the population, but only 9% of the 117,905 Ontario elementary school teachers (Turner, 2014).

Change Implementation Plan

My organization is accountable to the PSB and OME (Figure 2). Both have ample policies to support the implementation of CRRW. CRR, including Indigenous, teachings are frequently embedded in traditional curricular documents. The infusion of the three Rs (reading, writing, arithmetic) with the Indigenous four Rs (respect, relevance, reciprocity, responsibility) is being encouraged. A few of the relevant provincial policies are: the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework (OME, 2007a), Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow (OME, 2009), Environmental Education: Scope and Sequence of Expectations (OME, 2017), and Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future (Working Group on Environmental Education, 2007) that envisions "students will understand our fundamental connections to each other and to the world around us through our relationship to food, water, energy, air, and land, and our interaction with all living things" (p. 4).

However, availability of these documents has not resulted in teacher implementation, the problem goes much deeper, and is mired in a sea of Eurocentrism (Dei et al., 2000; Eizadirad, 2019). With the neoliberal emphasis on quantitative data (Apple, 2018; Portelli & Eizadirad, 2018; Sanford et al., 2013), where the three Rs are measured annually, little value and time is afforded to teach in a CRR way. Similarly, anti-racism directives, particularly regarding anti-Black racism in the Ontario school system have had little success at effecting change despite public awareness of the problems associated with Black racism. The status quo, normalizing the dominant Eurocentric narrative in such an insidious and pervasive way, prevents us from seeing how power is achieved and maintained, and how dominant prerogatives are favoured over minoritized ones (Dei & Adhami, 2022; McIntosh, 2019; Portelli & Eizadirad, 2018). In the case of under representation of minoritized students in the academic stream, "de-streaming requires teachers to de-stream their minds and assumptions as well" (OntEd, 2023, p. 6).

Implementing voluntary PLCs that teach LBL offers a way to do this, while at the same time improving student learning and wellness in all areas (Absolon, 2019; Helbert, 2021; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). My urban, school has proportionately one of the smallest school yards in the board, and a large part of the yard is covered by artificial grass, which makes access to LBL a challenge, but not impossible because even in the most urban areas, nature is abundant. Our schoolyard has a dedicated outdoor learning space, a pocket forest, and indoors we grow food hydroponically. All too often, however, these endeavors are simply replicating (colonial) classroom teaching, rather than building connections with minoritized groups and the Land.

There is tension, therefore, that needs to be addressed between the perceived contractions of curricular demands (colonial math and language versus LBL), leadership structures (traditional top down versus desired circular approach), the paradoxical understanding of urban/Land areas, and operating within the system while at the same time attempting to change it (Deszca et al, 2020). The proposed hybrid solution of having PLCs led by LBL experts will help to address these tensions by illustrating the benefits of making these changes for all stakeholders. The proposed solutions of dialogic discourse in the form of TCs and self-reflection also come into play. While this OIP is focused primarily on year one of implementation, changes will be introduced, measured, and monitored over a three-year period until the more difficult stage of institutionalization has been achieved.

The 15 metrics that will be discussed in the Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation section to follow will help to illustrate how the change implementation plan is spiralling and circular, as opposed to sequential and linear. For the plan itself to be CRR, there will need to be frequent measurements and monitoring of formal and ‘street’ data throughout the three-year process, as well as stakeholder input to promote buy-in (Ayres, 2023; Deszca et al., 2020). “Street data help us reveal what’s getting in the way of student or adult learning, illuminate where the learner is in a holistic set of goals, and determine what might come next” (Safir & Dugan, 2021). Prior to implementation, it will be important to collect baseline data to have a clear and timely understanding of the aspects of the organization needing change. As more staff participate and before the completion of the three-year plan, a plan for subsequent years will need to be made for the changes to continue to be relevant, responsive, and institutionalized.

The Change Path

The chosen change management framework, the CPM (Deszca et al., 2020), will be used to action the plan through the four steps of awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization over the three years. The path must be relevant and responsive, spiraling and circular, to gain traction and become an established norm of the organization. The first year, it is anticipated that there will be a small group of voluntary change agents on the teaching staff participating. As previously stated, choice is a pedagogical tool to “ensure teacher buy-in for big changes” (Ayres, 2023) and will be used to form the group of five teachers (three kindergarten, one primary, and one junior) who have indicated interest. In the second and third years of implementation, with a focus on capacity building, it is anticipated that the plan will gain traction and more teachers will be invited to participate.

Awakening. The stakeholders involved in year one will be primarily the five teachers and administrative team, with input from others. While the bulk of the work will have to be done by this core group, all stakeholders will hold the important roles of providing information, feedback, and cheerleading. Stakeholders will be given the opportunity to participate, because participation at the awakening stage has "… the potential to increase the level of understanding of what the organization is attempting to do, heighten legitimacy of the targets, and increase commitment to them" (Deszca et al, 2020, p. 378). Establishing transparency will be a key goal of the change initiators and we will encourage others to participate as the work unfolds.

The awakening stage encompasses identifying the need for change (opportunity gap), articulating the difference between the current and desired state (CRRW, LBL), creating a vision (student equity), and sharing the vision (multiple channels of communication) (Deszca et al., 2020). Lavis et al., 2003, conclude that there are five questions that need to be addressed when an organization is transferring research Knowledge to decision makers: what Knowledge research should be transferred, to whom, by whom, how, and what will be the effect (p. 244).

In this plan, the Knowledge research that will be shared is data around the opportunity gap. While the focus will be on sharing this information with teachers, all stakeholders will be given access to this data by the P/VP. How this will be done is through the weekly school newsletter, 'curriculum as conversation' (Shields, 2018), and ongoing dialogic discourse. The latter of which is a good process that "…will reduce resistance through communication, as communication provides opportunities for input and feedback while building trust and support" (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 378). Transferring Knowledge this way allows all stakeholders to be heard and offers an opportunity for the minoritized students and their families to share their experiential Knowledge of the opportunity gap with teachers (Dei & Jajj, 2018). All who choose to participate will build relationships with each other and will be instrumental in building momentum with other stakeholders in future years.

In the awakening stage, change initiators (P/VP) would collect and share data about the community/caregiver classroom visits as tracked through signing-in, a P/VP conducted physical space walk-through audit, and student participation in extra-curriculars. Through their PLCs, the change agents (teachers choosing to embark on the journey) would do the Cultural Humility and Self-Reflection tool (School Mental Health Ontario, 2023b, SMHO), a Survey of Privilege and Entitlement (Lindsey et al., 2003), a physical space audit, and dialogic discourse with students, caregivers, and community members through TCs offered periodically throughout the year. The core five would be given the LBL questionnaire (Appendix D) at the beginning of the year prior to implementation and at the end of year one. Measuring the individual and collective connection to nature would be indicative of the success of the changes (Salazar et al., 2020).

The core group of teachers would have five half-days of release time each, once every two months, for the development of a PLC. While other aspects of the plan thus far would not be financial, the approximate cost of the release time would be $100 per half day per teacher for a total of $2500 that would have to come out of the school operating budget of $30,000. An appeal would be made to the superintendent (change champion) to help support this cost. The P/VP would do the R-F-C Questionnaire (Deszca et al., 2020) together at the beginning of the year, as well as analyze the teacher preference forms at the end of the year.

Mobilization. The mobilization stage of the plan is about leverage, power, and communication (Deszca et al., 2020). It would go into effect around the middle of year one. Stakeholders who are not yet change agents will be inundated with the topic of cultural representation equity to begin the process of mind decolonization. Building trusting, reciprocal relationships amongst stakeholders will be a key goal of the change initiators and agents.

Having listened and spoken with the change recipients (stakeholders), the change initiators (P/VP) and agents (teachers) will begin to act. The P/VP will co-teach LBL with the change agents and their students, building on and informing the learning this core group are doing in the PLCs. The LBL teachings will be tied to the appropriate traditional curricular areas to help teachers understand it is not an ‘add on’, but rather a decolonizing way to address any subject matter. Students will learn about the connectedness of all living things, a concept in Indigenous theory referred to as “all our relations” (Talaga, 2018; Topa & Narvaez, 2022). Caregivers and community members with Knowledge of LBL would also be invited to share teachings. Events, such as this, directly related to the implementation plan would be a regular feature in the weekly newsletter shared electronically by the school, which would help to keep the change goals communicated with students and families.

Effectivology scholar, Itamar Shatz (n.d.), writes of the four stages of learning, a hierarchy of competence, that learners go through: unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence, and unconscious competence. In mobilizing teachers’ Knowledge of CRR, the first stage of the hierarchy is helping them understand that they, perhaps unconsciously, are part of a system that colonizes both the Land and people through ideologies that “extend the project of imperialism, and white supremacy” (Griffith, 2018). By hearing from minoritized students and families directly, through LBL and PLCs, the change agents would move along to the conscious incompetence stage of the continuum meaning that by having gained insight into what they do not know, and making mistakes, awareness will be gained to make their practice more CRRW. In the next stage, teachers will become more proficient in CRR through building reciprocal relationships, professional reading, and dialogue. In the final stage, the new skills are mastered and well-integrated into planning, unconscious competence, which would be the goal by the end of year three.

Acceleration. This stage of the change management process is about engaging and empowering the change agents, building momentum, and celebrating small milestones along the way (Deszca et al., 2020). The onus would be on the P/VP to do much of the work. Data points would be reviewed throughout the year by the administrative team, and would include student attendance, trips to the office for discipline, community and caregiver instructional visits, student participation in extracurricular activities, participation in TCs, a physical space walk-through audit, and academic achievement data such as reading level and mathematical literacy. What Deszca et al., 2020, refer to as “small wins” would be shared and celebrated with all staff.

While the change agents would focus their efforts on their PLC work, change initiators would be responsive to the demonstrated learning and Knowledge gaps of this group. Through listening, professional dialogue, and observation, the change initiators will have to anticipate the necessary next steps to accelerate the change. This may involve a more directed approach to teacher learning such as providing the core group with specific readings or coaching. Alternatively, backing off may be indicated so the collaborating teachers can direct their own learning, what Campbell et al. (2017) refer to as teacher-led professional collaboration and systemic capacity building.

Institutionalization. In this final stage of the first spiral of change, institutionalization, the change plan will need to continue to be monitored, and progress measured, to ensure movement towards the desired state is occurring. Change initiators and agents being responsive to stakeholders will continue to be a priority. Reciprocal communication and relationships should be well established at this point in the process, fostering what Shields (2018) calls empathetic understanding. Trust will have grown by the end of these three years and the change should be measurable across most areas. The expectation would be that institutionalization of a LBL approach would be visible though daily instruction, evaluation, and assessment.

Curricular Connections. In addition to being rooted in precolonial ontologies and epistemologies, LBL has natural connections to all aspects of twenty-first century pedagogy (Papp, 2020; Toulouse, 2011), as well as the (colonial) Ontario curriculum. Reframing colonialism, which has been complicit in the construction of 'othering' (Naylor et al., 2017), will require using curriculum as a conduit to decolonize our daily work—changing the system while working within it. There are a multitude of scholarly works about decolonizing subjects such as ecology (Judson & Datura, 2022), geography (Naylor et al., 2017, Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017), health (Redvers et al., 2021), history (Davidson & Davidson, 2018; Gray Smith, 2017; Katz, 2018), mathematics (Beatty & Clyne, 2020), psychology (Ciofalo et al., 2021), science (Brandt et al., 2013; Carrington, 2022, Kimmerer, 2013; OME, 2022), physical education (Judson & Datura, 2022); social studies (Topa & Narvaez, 2022; Wente, 2021) and language (Germain & Germain, n.d.; OME, 2023; Styres, 2017).

The Ontario language curriculum, for example, is a natural place to embed LBL teachings as both are immersed in all prescribed subject areas. The 2023 Ontario Language Curriculum mandates seven "transferable" skills in the literacy connections and applications section: critical thinking and problem solving; innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship; self-directed learning; collaboration; communication; global citizenship and sustainability; and digital literacy—all of which connect to the Land and LBL. An online educational resource produced by the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board in collaboration with the Onaman Collection (n.d.) created a comprehensive website tying Ontario curricula with Indigenous Knowledge systems, particularly those connecting us to the Land. One of the key contributors to the teachings on the website is shared by Ojibwe environmentalist and musician, Isaac Murdoch who lives off the grid in a community of his making, and he contends that language is central to his community. Traditional ways of knowing are shared through stories, relationships, and connected to the Land (Archibald, 2008; Topa & Narvaez, 2022, Wilson, et al., 2019).

Owing to the strong interrelationship between language and culture (Hammond, 2015), Land-based teachings offer enhanced understanding for multilingual learners. In 2019, I attended a workshop led by Germain & Germain (n.d.), Mi’gmaq educators located in Listuguj who teach young students to “…speak, think and be Mi'gmaq” through immersing them in the language on, and of, the land”. Masterson (2018) contends that although culture and language are intimately connected, learning a language does not guarantee learning a culture. Germain & Germain mesh cultural and language learning through Land-based teaching, Land-based stories being resplendent with culture, language, and social consciousness (Graveline, 1998).

Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and the Change Process

Multiple aspects of communication of the plan will be reliant upon trusting relationships between administration and teachers, teachers and students, caregivers, and school staff, as well as the school and the community. Building trusting relationships between caregivers and school staff, for example, will be complicated and require persistence and good will. Owing to many factors, such as caregivers having had poor educational experiences themselves, trust will need to be earned. Microaggressions, experienced societally as well as at school, have impeded positive, reciprocal communications with the Black, Indigenous, Asian, 2SLGBTQ+, differently abled, socioeconomically challenged families, and multilingual learners.

To give additional context, in working with Indigenous families, for example, the first step towards Truth and Reconciliation is acknowledging the Truth and understanding the colonial impact on historical and contemporary realities. Protective legislation did nothing to prevent the rampant sexual, physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental abuse of Indigenous children, in fact the Indian Act condoned almost any assimilative actions aimed at ridding children of their Indigeneity and there is intergenerational trauma as a result that persists today (Archibald et al., 2019; Battiste, 2013; Joseph, 2019). Mainstream ideologies around child rearing continue to prevail and Indigenous children are overrepresented in the child welfare system. Variables such as these continue to impede the building of positive relationships between educators and Indigenous families, the school/family connection has been well documented in importance to a student's success (Safir, 2017; Tranter et al., 2018).

Canada's colonial history has had negative and long-lasting impacts on other minoritized communities as well through the prioritization of profit and white prerogatives (Kovach, 2009; Manuel & Derrickson, 2015). Building trust between minoritized families and staff at my school to close the gap will be an ongoing priority, as is mandated by the OME (2022b). Similarly, staff will need to be made aware of the physical, psychological, social, and financial damages done and their lasting impacts, on minoritized families for us to "unsettle" or decolonialize Canada (Manuel & Derrickson, 2015; Wente, 2021). While some settlers have improved situations in moving to Canada, success is measured by adherence to the dominant culture.

Communication will need to be multimodal and multilingual; written communication in a plethora of languages, and face-to-face communication with the aid of translators and/or multicultural liaison officers. To keep momentum building, solicit input, and share progress, the weekly electronic communication shared by the principal would feature a section about the progress of the change plan and photos of students work centred on LBL. This feature would also have a student-written, dual-language component, alternating home languages of families. The entire document would be translated on occasion with the help of families, the community, and/or the Continuing Education Department. This weekly communication would also be available in a printed format for families without access to online communication. Ways to imbed videos of the work in regular communications would also be explored in year two.

Oral communication will need to be grounded in a philosophy of talking with, rather than talking to or at. This will be true of one-to-one communications, as well as small or large group gatherings. While the P/VP will continue to be responsible for the administration of the school, and teachers for the teaching of the students, the plan for communication, monitoring, and evaluation of the change plan will need to be holistic and heavily involve students, caregivers, and the community in the execution of the plan. Repeated invitations to openly communicate with all stakeholders may help to stave off derailment of the change, lesson learned from the current case with PRIDE initiatives. This will be made clearer in the following sections.

Knowledge Mobilization

Knowledge mobilization, or Knowledge transfer as Lavis et al. (2003) call it, is a strategic framework used to help change initiators share information with stakeholders. Without careful consideration of this concept all may be for naught in the change process as the stakeholders will not share ‘the vision’. Lavis et al. (2003) contend that to transfer Knowledge to stakeholders, five questions should be addressed: what the message is, who the target audience is, who the messenger is, what the process is and how will it be communicated, and how will the Knowledge transfer be evaluated (p. 222). Incorporating these strategies, I will layer it with a more recent and relevant framework to this OIP.

British and Canadian scholars Wakeford and Anderson, respectively, founders of People's Knowledge, contend that there are three main Knowledge mobilization strategies: a transmedia approach, using layers, and building bridges (Anderson, 2019). Transmedia implies storytelling supported by video and other forms of non-text media to reach a wider audience. While this strategy would include the weekly communications shared by the office, featuring student work, photos, and later videos, TCs would be a central form of reciprocal communication used to support this OIP. Layering refers to tailoring communication to meet the needs of the audience so that the information would be shared in several ways, from formal research to fact sheets to less formal communication. Examples of this would be the publicly accessible EQAO data, Board data, and the ensuing dialogic discourse, that is, not all communication of the plan would be formally written. Shields (2018) maintains that as a microcosm of greater society, schools need to be places where students can explore societal volatilities, rooted in cultural differences, in the safety of the school. Students need to have conflict resolution modelled for them. Face-to-face dialogic discourse in the form of TCs would be one such form of modelling used regularly at UCS throughout the change process. Anderson's third strategy, building bridges, is the recognition that epistemological differences can be approached holistically and in a decolonizing way. At USC, this would include the school climate survey, as well as community Knowledge Keepers sharing teachings in classrooms. (See Appendix F for a summary of the Knowledge mobilization plan.)

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

Measurement and control systems are valuable tools to change leaders, providing a venue to clarify the desired outcomes, and to assess and monitor progress and accountability (Deszca et al, 2020). Communication with change agents will be reinforced through the adage of what is measured matters. It is important to have multiple sources of data from all stakeholders in the three-year Knowledge mobilization plan. Some metrics would be used once, while others would be used repeatedly throughout the change process. The OME (2013), jointly with the Ontario Human Rights Commission states that CRRP is comprised of three dimensions: institutional, personal, and instructional. Monitoring and measuring will have to consider all three dimensions.

Tools and Measures Overview

Before embarking on the change process, it will be critical to the success of the plan to gather and analyze baseline data. “Yes, data can be used to control, marginalize, and stigmatize people, but it can also be used to shed light on areas of systemic inequity that need to be changed” (Chrona, 2022, p. 96). The OME requires accountability at the school level using achievement-based data for grade three and six students (annually, EQAO) and through a school climate survey (biennially). Schools have access to this data and can ‘drill down’ to see patterns and draw inferences. This process was used to help inform my PoP. PSB district data was also useful in highlighting the disparities in achievement and suspensions between minoritized students and those in the majority. This data would continue to be collected, measured, and monitored throughout the three years, by the change leaders and change agents. However, Safir & Dugan (2021) contend “… street data, no traditional metrics, will help us transform our school cultures into antiracist spaces of deep, meaningful learning” (xiii).

While many metrics have been used for analysis (see Appendix E), it is helpful to categorize them as having a direct or indirect impact on student engagement and success, and those that are directly related to the growing skill level of teachers. Table 3 offers an overview by category. While each of these metrics would come into play at some point during the three years of the first cycle of implementation, I will focus on those that will be used during the first year.

R-F-C Questionnaire and OPC Reflection Activity. The readiness-for-change questionnaire (R-F-CQ) by Deszca et al. (2020), completed by the administrative team, will give us an informal rating of UCS on the Cultural Proficiency Continuum. Similarly, the OPC Reflection Activity will be done by the P/VP once prior to implementation of the change plan. While these tools give us insights, they are self-reported measures and will not be shared. The R-F-CQ will be done in the middle of each of the three years and the OPC Reflection activity prior to implementation as baseline data. This information will be used as a guide to know where some of the change initiators' energy will need to be directed.

Tools and Measures Year 1

Student Discipline. A decrease in student discipline would speak to a positive direct impact on both students and teachers. There is a high correlation between student discipline, both being sent to the office and suspension, and being a minoritized student (Dei et al., 2000; Fallon et al., 2022, LaSalle et al., 2020). School discipline further corresponds to "… an increased risk of academic failure, criminalization, and incarceration in adulthood" (Fallon et al., 2022). Whatever the reason for seeking intervention from the P/VP (trip to the office, call to the classroom, student elopement), whether it be cultural bias on the part of the teacher or dysregulation on the part of the student, there is one goal—for that behaviour not to occur again. Unfortunately, sometimes, the goal is revenge (Whitaker, 2020), deficit rather than asset-based thinking. The focus should be on creating a better future, not lamenting the past for both student and teacher. By tracking and sharing with teachers office intervention data and the patterns that emerge, teachers would have increased insight into the big picture at UCS and perhaps be open to addressing some underlying assumptions. A potential weakness would be 'discipline' issues going unreported, rather than occurring less frequently, and this would have to be monitored.

There is also a responsibility on the part of the P/VP to get students re-engaged in learning. In recent anti-hate protocol training provided to all P/VPs at the PSB, we were given three guiding principles and five steps to follow when responding to bias, hate, and/or discrimination at school, which have some relevance to office interventions. The principles are listening, believing, and acting. The steps are interrupting the situation; considering whether a school-based or organizational response is needed; gathering, preserving, and sharing information; collaborating, determining response, and reporting back; preventing recurrence and addressing systemic discrimination (PSB, 2023b). Reporting back will be a change in practice at UCS. Previously guided by confidentiality, there is growing concern from the PSB that when all parties are not notified of the follow up, there is a perception that 'nobody did anything'. It will involve a large time commitment on the part of the P/VP and a shift in priorities but be valuable because it builds transparency and trust. This data will be collected at the end of the year prior to implementation, and at the middle and end of the year throughout the three-year period.

Community Involvement. Increased community involvement in the school and classrooms would have an anticipated immediate impact on students and on teacher skills. Involving members of minoritized communities in directly teaching students would address what Shields (2018) refers to as 'overcoming marginalization', owing to deficit thinking being eliminated though the introduction of new Knowledge frameworks. To measure family and community involvement during the instructional day, sign-in data could be collected and analyzed. Currently, visitors sign-in on paper in the office when working with students during class time. By adjusting this practice slightly, for example, having visitors sign in online to capture which class/teacher they are working with, for what purpose, and whether they are a caregiver or part of the community, we would be able to track whether the changes have had the desired effect and participation has increased. Capturing data similarly during school events would be informative. This data would be collected at the end of the year prior to the implementation of the change plan, and at the beginning, middle, and end of each of the three years during implementation. That way, if increasing school/caregiver and school/community relationships are not being augmented, steps can be taken to focus further effort in this area.

Student Attendance. Student attendance patterns would offer a point of correlation to student achievement data (Quin, 2017). The office administrator and the P/VP would access attendance data at regular intervals. When patterns emerge, students and their caregivers could be asked if there are any barriers to regular attendance that school staff could help alleviate. It would be interesting to note if there is any one program or class in which absences were high and explore reasons as to why that might be. Teachers would be invited to participate in these conversations. While monitored throughout the year, this data will be formally viewed at the end of the year prior to implementation and at the middle and end of the year during implementation.

Talking Circles (Dialogic/collaborative discourse). Over the three years, the P/VP team would commit to having one or both of us attend all the organized TCs and record anecdotal data. TCs would be established as a regular component of the mandatory (for most staff) monthly staff meetings. The five change agents would also be encouraged to use a TC format at each of their PLC meetings. School Council would be encouraged to use a TC format as well. LBL would also be conducting in a TC format. A Knowledge Keeper would be invited to each of these TCs. This would require a commitment to reach out to these communities and the offer of financial compensation to build reciprocity. An offer of one hundred dollar would be reasonable for a one-hour visit, so setting aside $5000 per year would be the goal. The school budget, the superintendent, and School Council would all be asked to support this initiative.

Professional Learning Community (PLC). In year one, the P/VP will be focused on making a welcoming and safe environment for the change agents. It is anticipated that as this team is already embracing change, some difficult (Shields, 2018) or hard (Abrams, 2009) conversations would be possible. In the second and third year of the change plan, the P/VP would shift their gaze to intellectual and social friction (Clarke, 2020) occurrences between participants, and an increased number of change agents. In keeping with the principles of Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction (Katz, 2018), the teachers would be met where they are at on their CRR journey with the goal of addressing the three change drivers—colonial perspectives, the divergent path of minoritized students, and the inability to meet the diverse needs of all students. The PLC would be given release time to meet for a half-day every two months, anticipating that the group of five teachers will grow into many more.

Tools and Measures Year 2 and Year 3

Student Participation and School Climate Survey. Although an increase of minoritized student participation in a variety of extracurricular events would be a good indicator of a shift towards decolonization, it would likely take some time to build the culture of trust and inclusion necessary to support it (Safir & Dugan, 2021, Khalifa, 2018). There is significant research that has found student participation and belonging in a school directly correlates with academic development (Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2003; LaSalle et al., 2020; Teitel et al., 2021) and further, what LaSalle et al. (2020) refer to as cultural mismatch between teacher and student contributes to disciplinary discrimination. “School boards must administer school climate surveys to their students, parents and school staff at least once every two years” (OME 2023). The purpose of the survey is to assess the learning environment in terms of the relationship between the school and the community. Metrics include inclusiveness, sense of belonging, cultural safety, and representation (OME, 2020-2023). The school/community relationship are thought to diminish "inappropriate behaviour" (OME, 2020-2023).

This anonymous, OME mandated data is comprehensive and would be used to help understand the experiences the school is providing for the students, their caregivers, and the community. Further information about the student experience could be attained by the school conducting a heat map of cultural safety and vulnerability biennially in the alternate years. Student generated data points such as these offer valuable information in helping educators understand the broad array of student experiences (LaSalle et al., 2020).

Student Achievement Data. I have touched on the annual EQAO data collection mandated by the OME. In elementary school, all grade three and six students have a written test to assess their reading, writing, and mathematical skills. In 2021/22 the tests became completely digital. The PSB created a framework for student well-being (2015) which makes a connection between feeling safe at school and higher academic achievement, as measured by the likes of EQAO. The call to have these tests decolonized owing to their detrimental impact on racialized students (Eizarad, 2019) cannot be emphasized enough. There is an inherent bias that measures adherence to cultural norms. However, nor can the continued collection, publication, and interpretation of EQAO data be ignored as it is used by some to inform the choice as to where to purchase a home in communities such as ours where one must live in the catchment area. So EQAO data will be monitored throughout the change plan. The data is collected at the end of the school year and made available in the fall of the next school year. Last year's data would be reviewed each fall of the three-year plan, as would the baseline data prior to the implementation of the change plan. EQAO results would offer just one data point in the context of many others, including in-class assessments of various subject matters and report card data.

Visual Representation. Visual representation is one of the three factors central to an inclusive school identified by Dei et al. (2000). That is, minoritized students should see themselves represented in the “visual/physical landscape of the school and the classroom” (p. 207). Dion (2010) cites the physical space as an important place to reflect Indigenous presence, opportune for building artistic connections between the school and the community. In her comprehensive study, several schools in Toronto were audited by posing three questions (Appendix C) around the positive Indigenous representation that could be seen, an audit that could be replicated at UCS. The questions encompass looking for library resources with Indigenous content and combing the halls to find and evaluate the impact of images and messages (p. 67). Similarly, Khalifa et al. (2016b), refer to collaborative walkthroughs in the CRSL framework, while Trindade (2021) refers to art as one of the languages of culture.

Visual representation for all minoritized groups would be measured by a physical space walk-though audit (Dion, 2010) prior to implementation of the change plan by the administrative team, who would assess the data, and devise some possible strategies for enhancement. At the beginning of the first year of the change plan implementation, teachers would be invited to do an audit collectively. This would signal to teachers that visual representation is important and being monitored. In the middle of the second year, staff, students, caregivers, and the community would be invited to participate in an audit, and then again at the end of the third year to help assess the progress.

Cultural Humility Self-Reflection Tool. This tool was developed by School Mental Health Ontario (2023b) for school staff as a touchpoint to gauge where professional growth might be warranted. The tool is encouraged to be used as a basis for professional dialogue. It is aimed at educators building capacity with students who do not share their cultural identity to better support the students’ mental health. It would be done by the administrative team and teachers prior to implementation of the change plan, and then at the end of the second and third year of implementation. It would be voluntary, and time would be given during a staff meeting so as not to impose on the teachers’ own time.

Teacher Assignment Preference. Explained earlier, teacher assignment preferences speak to desirable teaching positions and a willingness to teach the students in the respective programs. With increasing cultural understanding through the change implementation plan, it is anticipated that there would be more flow between the programs and a desire to teach all students. For the most part, this data is confidential between the teachers and the P/VP, but we have shared percentages in terms of requests for specific assignments and programs to help teachers understand the bigger picture. This data would be collected each year.

LBL Questionnaire. See Appendix D for the Land-based Learning questionnaire that I created for kindergarten students. Variations of this questionnaire would be made for multi-grade groups of students. It would be administered to all students prior to the implementation of the change plan, and then at the end of each of the three years. In the third year, it would be administered to all staff (as a component of a staff meeting), caregivers (as a component of a school council meeting), and community members (as a component of their in-school visits) to assess where there are gaps in Knowledge of LBL. Answering, would of course be voluntary, which would have an impact the results.

These metrics are aimed at changing the narrative and demonstrate that all Knowledge systems and cultures are valued. The tension between the current and desired state of the organization can be addressed through what is sometimes referred to as ‘subversion’ (Dei & Jajj 2018, Portelli & Eizadirad). Subversion is a nonviolent system of dismantling old understanding and creating a new social order. The objective is to disrupt the status quo by reducing the current harm being done to minoritized students while offering hope. With support, teachers will hone their critical consciousness to subvert the colonial hegemonies that permeate the organization.

Table 3

How will we measure and evaluate the changes?

Direct Student Impact	**Indirect Student Impact**
• Student discipline (Years 0, 1, 2, 3) • Community involvement (Years 0, 1, 2, 3) • Student attendance (Years 0, 1, 2, 3) • TC (dialogic/collaborative discourse) (Years 1, 2, 3) • Student participation in extra-curriculars (Years 2, 3)	• Student achievement data (Years 0, 1, 2, 3) • Visual representation data (Years 0, 1, 2, 3) • LBL questionnaire (0, 1, 2, 3) • School climate survey (Years 0, 2) • Heat map (Years 1, 3)
Direct Impact on/of Teacher Skill	**Indirect Impact on/of Teacher Skill**
• Student discipline (Years 1, 2, 3) • Community involvement (Years 1, 2, 3) • TC (dialogic/collaborative discourse) (Years 1, 2, 3) • PLC (Years 1, 2, 3)	• R-F-C questionnaire (Years 0, 1, 2, 3) • OPC reflection activity (Years 0, 2, 3) • Student achievement data (Years 0, 1, 2, 3) • Visual representation data (Years 0, 1, 2, 3) • Cultural Humility Self-Refection Tool (0, 2, 3) • LBL questionnaire (0, 1, 2, 3) • Teacher assignment preference (Years 0, 1, 2, 3) • School climate survey (Years 0, 2)

Note. Year zero is meant to refer to the collection of baseline data at the end of the year prior to the change implementation plan.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

In chapter one, ‘the what’ was introduced, that is the concern over the opportunity gap and the teachers’ and P/VPs ability to address it. In chapter two, ‘the why” was analyzed, why decolonization and equity are important to changing the organization and what approach is appropriate and within my agency to explore. In chapter three, ‘the how’ is suggested through an implementation plan and monitoring. Minoritized students at my school have continued to be marginalized. That is, they have not been afforded the same opportunities nor sense of well-being that students in the majority have had. The findings shared here, aimed at decolonizing my urban community school, have emanated from a transformational leadership framework, informed by Indigenous Knowledge, through a lens of culturally relevant and responsive leadership. Building healthy relationships has been a common thread, in conjunction with a transdisciplinary pedagogical approach (Drake, 2021; Wilson, 2021) informed by multicentric Knowledges and merit further investigation. Tuck & Yang (2012, p. 5) state that “…disruption of Indigenous relationships to the land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence” and I would argue this disruption has negatively impacted us all—both those in the minority and those in the majority, inside the school walls and out.

If LBL were more intentionally integrated into the curriculum, we would approach education in a less colonial, more accessible way while increasing student wellbeing and sense of belonging and improving the prognosis of the planet (Salazar et al., 2022). If the tenets of the curriculum document entitled “Environmental Education: Scope and Sequence of Expectations” (2017) and other such Ministry resources were overlaid with current instructional practices, there would be a shift in approach by educators to include a broader worldview on teaching and learning, from the Land, and an interconnection with all subjects. As educational leaders we need to facilitate and mandate the instruction of LBL in our schools by building our own personal and professional connection to the Land, as well as teacher capacity in this area.

Urban biophilic educational research is gaining popularity and consequently there is a significantly growing body of CRR resources available to educators such as *Race and Nature in the City: Engaging Youth of Colour in Nature-Based Activities* (Scott & Tenneti, 2020), Nxumalo & Cedillo's (2017), *Decolonizing Place in Early Childhood Studies: Thinking with Indigenous Onto-epistemologies and Black Feminist Geographies,* Topa and Narvaez's *Restoring the Kinship Worldview* (2022) to name but a few. In her seminal 2013 work, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer writes "to become naturalized is to live as if your children's future matters, to take care of the land as if our lives and the lives of all our relatives depend on it. Because they do" (p.215).

UCSs students, caregivers, and staff have begun to indicate that they are ready to change our organization to one which is more inclusive, socially just, and equitable. I hope that this OIP meets with Shield's (2018) charge to courageously advocate for deep and equitable change, balancing private and public good, while also meeting the needs of all UCSs students and staff. Starting with a leadership team that is committed to TL, grounded in CRRW, informed by Indigenous and multicentric Knowledge the goal is to decolonize our school to close the opportunity gap and make our school equitable. With a well-established teaching team, we hope the work will grow and root to the point that it is institutionalized, and successful outcomes are achievable by all students.

Narrative Epilogue

While I am critically aware of my own position of privilege and that it is an affront to assume to speak for anyone other than myself, I am also cognizant of the fact that I am paid to be an educational leader and thereby have been given some power to make changes in the organization in which I work. I grappled with issues such as capitalizing the words Knowledge and Land throughout this research, risking irritating my readers but felt strongly that part of decolonization work is reconsidering our relationship with both. My intention is to use what power I have ‘positively’ (Shields, 2018). Regrettably, I have made many mistakes on my journey. For example, I have been criticized for teaching about the Medicine Wheel (in conjunction with readings by Indigenous authors, and when possible supplemented by Indigenous Knowledge Keepers) as a non-Indigenous person, which I have done for many years and for which I take full responsibility. At the same time, however, I was clear with students that I am not Indigenous and that what I share is my interpretation of the teachings that have been shared with me. My personal and professional dissonance lies with having (limited, outsider) Knowledge and sharing it, or continuing to focus on the White, privileged narrative I was taught in school. I have often invited Indigenous Knowledge Keepers to my school and my classroom, but they are not there all day, everyday—I am.

Had I not shared my interpretations would the scores of students I have had the honour of teaching ever have been exposed to the Medicine Wheel? I was their assigned teacher. Would it be better that the students that cycled through my classroom year after year had no exposure to the Medicine Wheel? Last week, I was approached by a non-Indigenous parent at my school who thanked me because her four-year-old talked about the Medicine Wheel at home, and she, as an adult, had only been introduced to it herself in the last year or so. Using this small but significant example, I am not sure how to address the tension it creates going forward. How can a classroom teacher assume the responsibility of being culturally relevant and responsive to all cultures without interpreting the cultures through their teaching, informed only by professional reading and by community partners only occasionally? Was I exhibiting moral courage as called for by Shields (2018), or was I engaging in cultural appropriation?

It is my hope that by rallying diverse community members to share their Knowledge about the Land, by giving teachers time to collaborate, and opportunities for all our school community to engage in rich, honest conversations with each other that a way to address this dissonance will be made clear. Can Knowledge belong exclusively to one cultural group? If so, until there is cultural representation spread amongst the teacher population how will the dominant narrative be changed? Can any one individual speak for a cultural group whether they are a member of that group or not? “Cultural acceptance describes the degree to which students feel respected, regardless of their academic ability, racial and ethnic background, religion, etc.” (LaSalle et al., 2020). Do teachers of any culture have the ability and right to be ambassadors of all cultures?

The example of the Medicine Wheel is focussed on teaching practice. In terms of leadership, it can feel overwhelming to be responsible to make each student of the plethora of cultures we have at our school feel valued and represented when I do not have the necessary tools and knowledge myself. Dei and Adhami (2022) offer this:

> Leadership is not about a person or a mere subject position. Consequently, we must conceptualize educational leadership as encompassing, emboldening, and empowering the collective processes and abilities of all learners, educators, and communities to take charge of our human destiny, to produce viable knowledges that speak to our complex realities. Educational leadership is working to create spaces in different learning sites for multiple ontologies and epistemologies to thrive and coexist. (p.787)

The question becomes do I risk making mistakes by leading and teaching outside of my lived experience or remain what Dion (2016) conceptualized as the ‘perfect stranger’ thereby absolving myself of responsibility. I have asked myself these questions, critically self-reflected, throughout this research and well beyond. I do not claim to have answers, but what I have learned is where humanity currently is in terms of our relationships with each other and with the Land, we are in dire need of change. Critical self-reflection alone while waiting for someone else to make the changes is not a viable option. As educators we need to augment our *Knowledge of diverse learners*, similarly so as a species. The reading and writing process of this OIP has given me the opportunity for further reflection and areas of consideration for actions that can make a change. The teachers, principal, and I can only do this work authentically, ethically, and sustainably if we learn from and with the students, families, and community we are serving.

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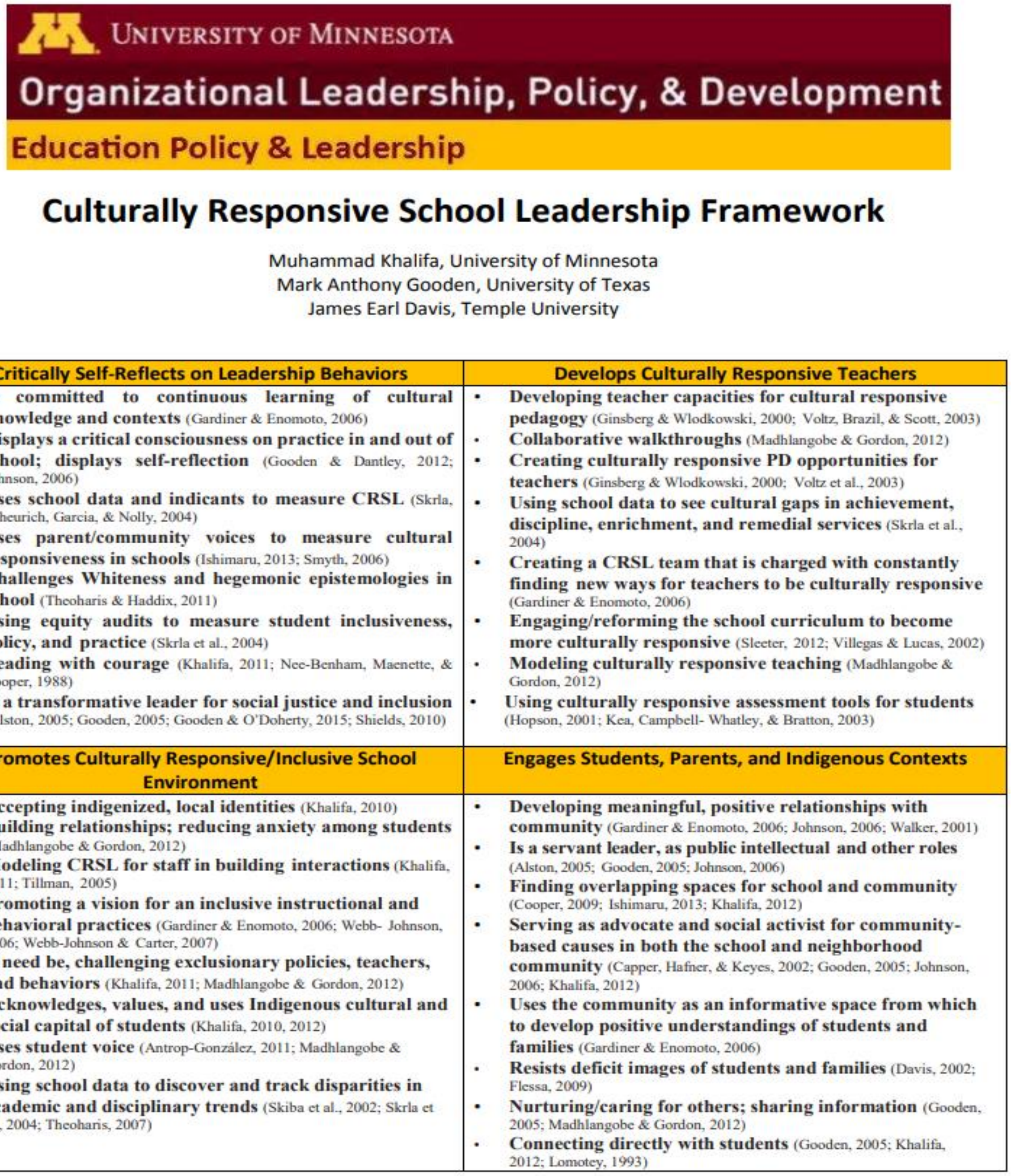
Appendix A: Culturally Responsive School Leadership Framework



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Organizational Leadership, Policy, & Development

Education Policy & Leadership

Culturally Responsive School Leadership Framework

Muhammad Khalifa, University of Minnesota
Mark Anthony Gooden, University of Texas
James Earl Davis, Temple University

Critically Self-Reflects on Leadership Behaviors	Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers
• **Is committed to continuous learning of cultural knowledge and contexts** (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006) • **Displays a critical consciousness on practice in and out of school; displays self-reflection** (Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Johnson, 2006) • **Uses school data and indicants to measure CRSL** (Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004) • **Uses parent/community voices to measure cultural responsiveness in schools** (Ishimaru, 2013; Smyth, 2006) • **Challenges Whiteness and hegemonic epistemologies in school** (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011) • **Using equity audits to measure student inclusiveness, policy, and practice** (Skrla et al., 2004) • **Leading with courage** (Khalifa, 2011; Nee-Benham, Maenette, & Cooper, 1988) • **Is a transformative leader for social justice and inclusion** (Alston, 2005; Gooden, 2005; Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015; Shields, 2010)	• **Developing teacher capacities for cultural responsive pedagogy** (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000; Voltz, Brazil, & Scott, 2003) • **Collaborative walkthroughs** (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012) • **Creating culturally responsive PD opportunities for teachers** (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000; Voltz et al., 2003) • **Using school data to see cultural gaps in achievement, discipline, enrichment, and remedial services** (Skrla et al., 2004) • **Creating a CRSL team that is charged with constantly finding new ways for teachers to be culturally responsive** (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006) • **Engaging/reforming the school curriculum to become more culturally responsive** (Sleeter, 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) • **Modeling culturally responsive teaching** (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012) • **Using culturally responsive assessment tools for students** (Hopson, 2001; Kea, Campbell- Whatley, & Bratton, 2003)
Promotes Culturally Responsive/Inclusive School Environment	**Engages Students, Parents, and Indigenous Contexts**
• **Accepting indigenized, local identities** (Khalifa, 2010) • **Building relationships; reducing anxiety among students** (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012) • **Modeling CRSL for staff in building interactions** (Khalifa, 2011; Tillman, 2005) • **Promoting a vision for an inclusive instructional and behavioral practices** (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Webb- Johnson, 2006; Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2007) • **If need be, challenging exclusionary policies, teachers, and behaviors** (Khalifa, 2011; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012) • **Acknowledges, values, and uses Indigenous cultural and social capital of students** (Khalifa, 2010, 2012) • **Uses student voice** (Antrop-González, 2011; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012) • **Using school data to discover and track disparities in academic and disciplinary trends** (Skiba et al., 2002; Skrla et al., 2004; Theoharis, 2007)	• **Developing meaningful, positive relationships with community** (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Johnson, 2006; Walker, 2001) • **Is a servant leader, as public intellectual and other roles** (Alston, 2005; Gooden, 2005; Johnson, 2006) • **Finding overlapping spaces for school and community** (Cooper, 2009; Ishimaru, 2013; Khalifa, 2012) • **Serving as advocate and social activist for community-based causes in both the school and neighborhood community** (Capper, Hafner, & Keyes, 2002; Gooden, 2005; Johnson, 2006; Khalifa, 2012) • **Uses the community as an informative space from which to develop positive understandings of students and families** (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006) • **Resists deficit images of students and families** (Davis, 2002; Flessa, 2009) • **Nurturing/caring for others; sharing information** (Gooden, 2005; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012) • **Connecting directly with students** (Gooden, 2005; Khalifa, 2012; Lomotey, 1993)

Note. Reprinted from Khalifa, M. A., Gooden, M. A., & Davis, J. E. (2016). Culturally responsive school leadership framework. University of Minnesota. Organizational Leadership, Policy, & Development: Education Policy & Leadership. https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/col-dept/education/docs/updated-crsl-framework.pdf

Appendix B: A Land Story

As a child I was both haunted and inspired by the Dr. Seuss story, The Lorax. Haunted by the Onceler's reckless disregard for all living things—to my mind typical of colonizers—in the relentless drive for financial and personal gain. I was inspired because the story was not over. What happened to the last of the Truffula tree seeds entrusted to the child? One can see this same narrative repeat itself over and over since first contact.

I will indulge, by a Western worldview, in taking the time to briefly outline of the story of Chaudière Falls and Islands specifically Asinabka—colonially known as Victoria Island, on the Ottawa River. Since time immemorial, the Anishinaabe cared for and lived on these lands. For the last five hundred years Europeans such as Samuel de Champlain and Philemon Wright have laid claim to the land and surrounding water. By using the river to transport logs, to make pulp, paper, and metals, settlers polluted the water and Land.

Once a vibrant trading and gathering place for many First Nations, its proximity to the Parliament Buildings, the nexus of Canada's political and symbolic power, the space has often been newsworthy. Even the name of the area, located in Algonquin Territory, Ontario, and Québec, is a juxtaposition of historical and contemporary Indigenous, English, and French beliefs and disputes. Temporarily hosting an Indigenous-run tourist spot, the National Capital Commission promised to return the Land to the Algonquin People, only to revoke the agreement and sell it to a private developer who intended to call the ensuing development 'Zibi' without even consulting Kitigan Zibi, the host Nation. The Land was found to be so contaminated owing to the settler industries of past centuries that it was deemed uninhabitable. Ironically, the private developer is seeking huge governmental financial aid to clean it up so they can further develop it. How does one address such deeply entrenched ideologies in working towards decolonization?

Appendix C: Oscar's Question

One day, after the inquiry-based norms of the class had been established, one of my Kindergarten students, Oscar (a pseudonym) scooped up some gravel in his tiny little hand and asked me if we could learn about it next week. On the outside I responded affirmatively. On the inside, despite considering myself a fairly experienced Land-based learner and teacher, I have to admit I scoffed. While I did not expect a four-year-old to understand that a gravel truck had scattered the gravel to make it easier to walk on the ice, I drew a blank as to how I would engage the class in some meaningful learning around his question. So, I brought some rocks and we started to explore and learn about different kinds of rocks and how they were formed. We read nonfiction and stories such as *If You find a Rock* (Christian, 2000), *Everybody Needs a Rock* (Baylor, 1974), *A Rock is Lively* (Hutts Aston, 2012). The students (90 of them in three classes) were riveted. Then, it dawned on me. Oscar's question was not just about the gravel; it was about how it got there and why. Where did it come from originally and what was the impact of taking it from the source. What was the impact of dumping this gravel in our urban school yard. That is the nature of Land-based learning. It is not always the sharing of arcane Knowledge, it is often a matter of seeing what we have learned not to see and asking questions about it.

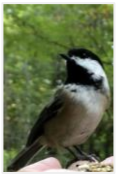
Appendix D: Land-Based Learning Questionnaire

I'm going to ask you some questions and show you some pictures. I want to learn more about you as a learner.

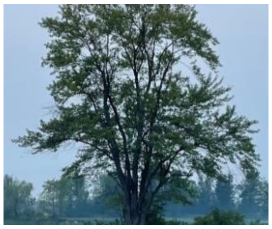
1. How does being outside make you feel?

2. What kinds of things do you do outside?

3. What do you like/not like about being outside?



4. What is this?
5. How does it move?
6. Where does it live?



7. What is this?
8. Is it living or nonliving?
9. What does it do for us?
10. What can we do for it?

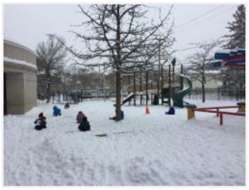
11. What is nature?

12. What is the difference between natural and built (or manmade)?

13. Is there nature in the schoolyard?

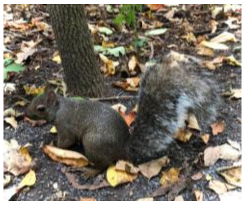
14. Tell me some things you need to do to stay safe when you are outside.

15. How many seasons are there?



16. What season is it in this photo?

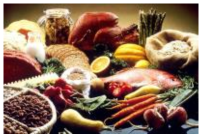
17. How do you know?



18. What is this?

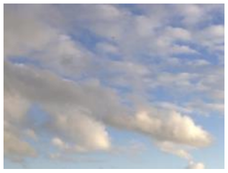
19.How does it move?

20. Where does it live?



21. What is food?

22. Where does it come from?



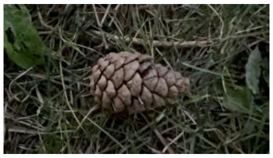
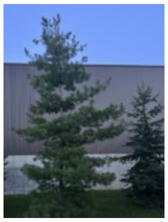
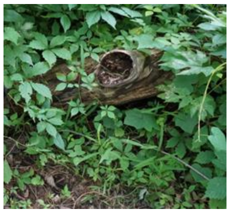
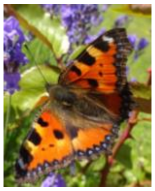
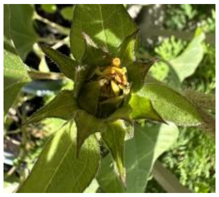
23. What are these?

24. What are they made of?

25. Can you name some different kinds of weather?

26. Pick one kind of weather and tell me what you do to prepare/be ready for that kind of weather.

27. On the first row, there is a photo of a pinecone, a pine tree, and earth. Before the pine tree is a tree, it is a pinecone. After the pine tree has died, it turns into earth. Can you tell what happens before or after in each of these pictures?

Note. This LBL questionnaire would be used as a baseline and formative assessment.

Appendix E: Change Implementation Tools and Measures, First Three Years

	Baseline Data	**Year 1 (B, M, E) ***	**Year 2 (B, M, E)**	**Year 3 (B, M, E)**
1	Tool: EQAO Measure: Academic achievement data Respondents: Grade 3 and 6 students	Tool: EQAO Measure: Academic achievement data Respondents: Grade 3 and 6 students	Tool: EQAO Measure: Academic achievement data Respondents: Grade 3 and 6 students	Tool: EQAO Measure: Academic achievement data Respondents: Grade 3 and 6 students
2	Tool: Reading, writing, math scores Measure: classroom generated data such as PM Benchmarks Respondents: All students with focus on English program	Tool: Reading, writing, math scores Measure: classroom generated data such as PM Benchmarks Respondents: All students with focus on English program	Tool: Reading, writing, math scores Measure: classroom generated data such as PM Benchmarks Respondents: All students with focus on English program	Tool: Reading, writing, math scores Measure: classroom generated data such as PM Benchmarks Respondents: All students with focus on English program
3	Tool: Student attendance Measure: days absent Respondents: OA collects from student attendance management system	Tool: Student attendance Measure: days absent Respondents: OA collects from student attendance management system (M, E)	Tool: Student attendance Measure: days absent Respondents: OA collects from student attendance management system (M, E)	Tool: Student attendance Measure: days absent Respondents: OA collects from student attendance management system (M, E)
4	Tool: Tracking sheet Measure: office intervention for discipline Respondents: P/VP track student discipline interventions (E)	Tool: Tracking sheet Measure: office intervention for discipline Respondents P/VP track student discipline interventions (M, E)	Tool: Tracking sheet Measure: office intervention for discipline Respondents: P/VP track student discipline interventions (M, E)	Tool: Tracking sheet Measure: office intervention for discipline Respondents P/VP track student discipline interventions (M, E)
5	Tool: Physical space walk-through audit (Dion, 2010) Measure: CRRW reflected on walls Respondents: P/VP	Tool: Physical space walk-through audit (Dion, 2010) Measure: CRRW reflected on walls Respondents: P/VP, Teachers (B)	Tool: Physical space walk-through audit (Dion, 2010) Measure: CRRW reflected on walls Respondents: P/VP, Caregivers, Community Staff, Students, (M)	Tool: Physical space walk-through audit (Dion, 2010) Measure: CRRW reflected on walls Respondents: P/VP, Caregivers, Community Staff, Students, (E)

6	Tool: Sign-in sheet Measure: Community and Caregiver visits to school/purpose Respondents: OA collects data electronically (E)	Tool: Sign-in sheet Measure: Community and Caregiver visits to school/purpose Respondents: OA collects data electronically (B, M, E)	Tool: Sign-in sheet Measure: Community and Caregiver visits to school/purpose Respondents: OA collects data electronically (B, M, E)	Tool: Sign-in sheet Measure: Community and Caregiver visits to school/purpose Respondents: OA collects data electronically (B, M, E)
7	Tool: R-F-C Questionnaire (Deszca et al., 2020) Measure: Responses given a numeric value Respondents: VP	Tool: R-F-C Questionnaire (Deszca et al., 2020) Measure: Responses given a numeric value Respondents: P/VP (M)	Tool: R-F-C Questionnaire (Deszca et al., 2020) Measure: Responses given a numeric value Respondents: P/VP (M)	Tool: R-F-C Questionnaire (Deszca et al., 2020) Measure: Responses given a numeric value Respondents: P/VP (M)
8	Tool: Reflection Activity (OPC, 2012) Measure: P, VP reflection data (yes/no binary) on equitable school leadership Respondents: P/VP	Tool: A Survey of Privilege and Entitlement (Lindsey et al., 2003) Measure: numeric value to cultural awareness Respondents: P/VP (E)	Tool: Human Relations Need Assessment (Lindsey et al, 2003) Measure: District should vs. does (awareness of policies) Respondents: P/VP, Teachers (B)	
9	Tool: Cultural Humility Self-Reflection Tool (SMHO, 2023b) Measure: Quantitative and qualitative data Respondents: P/VP, Teachers (E)		Tool: Culturally Humility Self-Reflection Tool (SMHO, 2023b) Measure: Quantitative and qualitative data Respondents: P/VP, Teachers (E)	Tool: Cultural Humility Self-Reflection Tool (SMHO, 2023b) Measure: Quantitative and qualitative data Respondents: P/VP, Teachers (E)
10		Tool: Tracking Measure: Student participation in extra curricular events (sports, clubs) Respondents: Teachers collect student attendance (B, M, E)		Tool: Tracking Measure: Student participation in extra curricular events (sports, clubs) Respondents: Teachers collect student attendance (B, M, E)
11	Tool: Teacher Assignment Preference form Measure: quantitative data by program selection	Tool: Teacher Assignment Preference form Measure: quantitative data by program selection	Tool: Teacher Assignment Preference form Measure: quantitative data by program selection	Tool: Teacher Assignment Preference form Measure: quantitative data by program selection

	Respondents: Teachers (E)	Respondents: Teachers (E)	Respondents: Teachers (E)	Respondents: Teachers (E)
12	Tool: Talking Circle Measure: Anecdotal quantitative, qualitative, data collection & reflection by P/VP Respondents: students, staff, caregivers, community	Tool: Talking Circle Measure: Quantitative & qualitative anecdotal data collection & reflection by P/VP Respondents: students, staff, caregivers, community (B, M, E)	Tool: Talking Circle Measure: Quantitative & qualitative anecdotal data collection & reflection by P/VP Respondents: students, staff, caregivers, community (B, M, E)	Tool: Talking Circle Measure: Quantitative & qualitative anecdotal data collection & reflection by P/VP Respondents: students, staff, caregivers, community (B, M, E)
13	Tool: School Climate Survey Measure: School climate (safety, inclusion) Respondents: Staff, students, and caregivers	Tool: Heat map Measure: areas of cultural safety and vulnerability in the school Respondents: students	Tool: School Climate Survey Measure: School climate (safety, inclusion) Respondents: Staff, students, and caregivers	Tool: Heat map Measure: areas of cultural safety and vulnerability in the school Respondents: students
14		Tool: PLC Measure: Quantitative data Respondents: Participation of teachers as tracked by P/VP (E)	Tool: PLC Measure: Quantitative & qualitative data Respondents: Participation of teachers as tracked by P/VP (E)	Tool: PLC Measure: Quantitative & qualitative data Respondents: Participation of teachers as tracked by P/VP (E)
15	Tool: LBL Questionnaire Measure: Qualitative & quantitative data Respondents: Teachers, students	Tool: LBL Questionnaire Measure: Qualitative & quantitative data Respondents: Teachers, students, caregivers (E)	Tool: LBL Questionnaire Measure: Qualitative & quantitative data Respondents: Teachers, students (E)	Tool: LBL Questionnaire Measure: Qualitative & quantitative data Respondents: Teachers, students, caregivers, community (E)

Note. This table summarizes the tools and measures used to monitor the change by year over the first three years. The letters in brackets are used as abbreviations as follows, B – beginning of school year, September; M – middle of school year, January; E – end of school year, June.

Appendix F: Knowledge Mobilization Plan

Year 1	Transmedia	Layering	Bridging
Message	• Opportunity gap • EQAO, student achievement data highlighting gap	• Opportunity gap • School climate survey results	• Opportunity gap
Target Audience	• Stakeholders	• Stakeholders	• Stakeholders
Messenger	• P/VP, with a student feature	• P/VP, change agents	• Stakeholders
Process & Communication (Multimodal)	• Written—electronic and printed • Feature of weekly communication, including photos of student work • Dual language student-written component • Multilingual, translations available	• Oral • Large or small group communications • Town halls • Translators and/or multicultural liaison officers • LBL questionnaire (at beginning and end of year)	• Oral • Dialogic discourse (TCs) • Storytelling, personal stories • Establishing transparency
Evaluation	In year one, this data for evaluation would be collected by the P/VP and shared with the change agents • Community/caregiver visits to school as tracked through sign-in, physical space walk-through audit, student participation in extra-curricular events • Change agents would do and discuss in their PLCs - Cultural Humility and Self-Reflection tool (SMHO, 2023b), Survey of Privilege and Entitlement (Lindsey et al., 2003), LBL questionnaire (Appendix D), physical space walk-through audit (Appendix G, Dion 2010) The following tools would be used and discussed amongst P/VP • Student attendance, office interventions for discipline, R-F-C questionnaire (Deszca et al., 2020), OPC reflection activity (OPC, 2012), Cultural Humility Self-Refection Tool (SMHO, 2023b), teacher assignment preference forms, anecdotal data from TCs, PLC attendance The following metrics are publicly available • EQAO, School Climate Survey		

Year 2	**Transmedia**	**Layering**	**Bridging**
Message	• Cultural representation equity	• Cultural representation equity	• Cultural representation equity
Target Audience	Stakeholders	Stakeholders	Stakeholders
Messenger	P/VP, change agents	P/VP, change agents	Stakeholders
Process & Communication (Multimodal)	• Feature of weekly communication, including photos, videos of student work • Dual language student-written component • Multilingual, translations available • Physical space walk-through audit by staff	• Oral • Large or small group communications • Translators and/or multicultural liaison officers • Heat map (student input)	• Oral • Dialogic discourse (TCs)—storytelling, personal stories • Building trusting, reciprocal relationships amongst stakeholders
Evaluation	In year two, this data for evaluation would be collected by the P/VP and shared with the change agents • Student attendance, office interventions for discipline, community/caregiver visits to school as tracked through sign-in, physical space walk-through audit, student participation in extra-curricular events, student heat-map results • Change agents would be coached in the art of self-reflection, and continue to develop CRRP and LBL skills in collaboration with P/VP, community Knowledge Keepers, and through PLCs The following tools would be used and discussed amongst P/VP • R-F-C questionnaire Deszca et al., 2020), OPC reflection activity (OPC, 2012), Cultural Humility Self-Refection Tool (SMHO, 2023b), teacher assignment preference forms, anecdotal data from TCs, PLC attendance		
Year 3	**Transmedia**	**Layering**	**Bridging**
Message	• Land-based learning	• Land-based learning	• Land-based learning
Target Audience	Stakeholders	Stakeholders	Stakeholders
Messenger	P/VP, change agents	Stakeholders	Stakeholders
Process & Communication (Multimodal)	• Feature of weekly communication, including photos, videos of student work, student contributors	• Oral • Large or small group communications	• Oral • Dialogic discourse (TCs)— • storytelling, personal stories

	- Dual language student-written component - Multilingual, translations available	- Translators and/or multicultural liaison officers - Physical space walk-through audit by stakeholders	
Evaluation	In year three, this data for evaluation would be collected by the P/VP and shared with change agents and recipients - Student attendance, office interventions for discipline, community/caregiver visits to school as tracked through sign-in, physical space walk-through audit, student participation in extra-curricular events, student heat-map results Change agents and recipients would be encouraged to practice self-reflection using tools such as - School Climate Survey, A Survey of Privilege and Entitlement (Lindsey et al., 2003), Human Relations Need Assessment (Lindsey et al., 2003), Cultural Humility Reflection Tool (SMHO, 2023b) The following tools would be used and discussed amongst P/VP - R-F-C questionnaire Deszca et al., 2020), OPC reflection activity (OPC, 2012), Cultural Humility Self-Refection Tool (SMHO, 2023b), teacher assignment preference forms, anecdotal data from TCs, PLC attendance		

Note. This table superimposes the change tools and measures to be implemented over the first three years with Anderson's (2019) three main Knowledge mobilization strategies.

Appendix G: Dion's (2010) Physical Space Audit

The school audit report included three questions (Dion, 2010, p. 7) focused on inclusion of Indigenous culture. Here the questions have been modified to look for inclusion of diverse cultures.

1. Does the school display any posters, images, and messages celebratory of difference and diversity? Describe the location, content, and impact.
2. Does the school have any positive art, messages, images representative of diverse cultures? Describe the location, content, and impact.
3. Does the school library have books, magazines, films, or other resources with content representative of diverse cultures? Please give a detailed description of the content.

Note. Question one is in the same form as it was asked in Dion's audit. Questions two and three have been modified to look for inclusion of Indigenous culture and other minoritized cultures.

Retrieved from: Dion, S. (2010). *Decolonizing our schools: Aboriginal education in the Toronto district school board, a report on the urban Aboriginal education pilot project*. York University. https://www.ontariodirectors.ca/UA_Pilot_Project/files/Toronto%20RE/Decolonizing%20Our%20Schools%203.pdf