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The Ripple Effect: How One Rural School Can Embrace Indigenous Learning on a Journey Towards Truth and Reconciliation

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Abstract

In a K–9 rural school in Alberta, the lack of opportunities for land-based learning and understanding of Indigenous truths, histories, and ways of knowing creates a significant gap in knowledge that is an ethical obligation to address. For the school to engage in social justice and transformation to address this problem of practice, it is crucial to address this gap and work towards decolonization and indigenization. The goal of this Organizational Improvement Plan is to ensure that staff gain a deep awareness and understanding of the historical oppression and marginalization of Indigenous peoples in Canada due to colonization, both historically and through colonial systems that persist today. This transformational process will require building the critical consciousness of the staff and creating a compassionate learning environment that enables them to engage in this important work. Although the school has a racially homogenous population, it is imperative to take a firm anticolonial stance to address the legacy of colonialism that has been perpetuated in Canada for centuries. The change implementation plan adopts systems thinking to facilitate social change by recognizing the interconnectedness of different parts of the school system. It allows for a comprehensive understanding of the social issue being addressed in the problem of practice. A knowledge mobilization plan is developed to effectively disseminate the insights gained from the implementation to stakeholders and the wider community. By leveraging anticolonial theory and taking a proactive approach to education, staff can build the necessary awareness, attitudes, and actions to support decolonization and indigenization in the school and beyond.

Keywords: decolonization, indigenization, social justice, anticolonial theory, critical consciousness, systems thinking

Executive Summary

The purpose of this Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) is to address a problem of practice (PoP) at Grassland Academy (GA; a pseudonym for the school): the lack of ability to engage GA students in Indigenous learning opportunities to promote truth and reconciliation efforts. It explores the lack of Indigenous learning opportunities at GA and the role of education in promoting truth and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. This work is intended to move into the larger system of the Southern Public School Division (a pseudonym) while maintaining confidentiality.

To address the complexities of this PoP at GA, it is essential to consider the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (2015) calls to action. GA is situated in a predominantly White, colonial community where many lack the motivation to learn about the impact of colonization on Indigenous peoples, both historically and presently. However, the Alberta government has mandated that teachers and school leaders create a strong knowledge base about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit culture, history, and perspectives (Alberta Education, 2020a, 2020b) that promotes understanding, respect, and reconciliation for all students. By integrating the commission's calls to action into their teaching approach, staff can examine colonial assumptions and implicit biases, promote Indigenous-based pedagogies that align with Indigenous truths, histories, and ways of knowing, and increase the amount of Indigenous curriculum content in social studies. This approach allows students to appreciate diverse perspectives and develop a more inclusive and equitable understanding of Canada's history and present-day realities, fostering a path towards reconciliation.

Chapter 1 presents transformative leadership theory, the role of a school leader in promoting social justice and equity, and the ethics of justice, care, and the profession.

Furthermore, it discusses the concept of homogeneity, which refers to a lack of diversity and the dominance of a single culture or perspective within a given context. In the context of a White, colonial, homogenous school such as GA, hegemonic power structures and systems of oppression are often perpetuated and reinforced. As the school leader, I am committed to promoting social justice and equity while actively working to challenge and dismantle these power structures. By recognizing the impact of homogeneity and hegemony on the school community, a transformative leader can prioritize the voices and experiences of those who have been historically marginalized or excluded. This endeavour involves promoting critical consciousness and integrating anticolonial and social justice perspectives into the curriculum. It also requires building relationships with marginalized groups and creating opportunities for dialogue and learning.

Through these efforts, a transformative school leader can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable school environment that values indigeneity and decolonization. Indigenization and decolonization are two concepts that are increasingly important in the context of Canadian education. Indigenization integrates Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into educational institutions, and decolonization works towards creating a just educational system for Indigenous peoples by dismantling the effects of colonialism.

In Chapter 2, transformative and authentic leadership theories are described to approach the change. Transformative leadership and authentic leadership share a focus on promoting positive change and addressing social inequalities by empowering marginalized individuals and communities through a leader's self-awareness, transparency, ethical behaviour, and commitment to values, inspiring followers to trust and engage in a shared purpose. Three models are used to create a framework of change: (a) The change path model (Deszca et al., 2020),

which emphasizes the importance of planning and execution to achieve successful outcomes; (b) the systems thinking for social change model (Stroh, 2015), which highlights interconnectedness among systems and holistic thinking to address social issues; and (c) the iceberg model (Stroh, 2015), which highlights the awareness of the school leader and their followers' assumptions when creating a culture of communication and learning. Together, these models provide a comprehensive framework to tackle the complex tasks involved in fostering greater indigenization and decolonization, promoting significant change, and creating a positive impact in GA and the community.

To assess the school's readiness for change, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) are analyzed to evaluate overall readiness, identify areas for improvement, and develop contingency plans to mitigate potential risks. Three solutions are proposed and evaluated for their potential to address the PoP. Each solution is assessed based on its ability to cultivate greater collective awareness, attitudes, and actions at GA. The chosen solution is a hybrid approach of (a) unpacking colonial assumptions and racial biases and (b) learning land-based pedagogies.

Chapter 3 outlines how to implement Stroh's (2015) systems thinking for social change four-stage model, in conjunction with appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2000) and the ladder of inference (Senge et al., 1994), to address transforming colonial mindsets, unearthing implicit biases, and learning land-based pedagogies in a school. Professional learning communities (PLCs) and an invested teacher-led committee, the Indigenous Awareness Committee (IAC), will be established as the formats to do this work. The PLCs provide a space for teachers to collaborate, reflect on their own assumptions and biases, and plan and implement changes in their classrooms, and the IAC will oversee the overall progress of the initiative and

ensure that the work is aligned with the OIP's vision for change. Through this collaborative effort, the school staff will be able to effectively integrate land-based pedagogies and Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum, while also raising awareness and challenging the colonial mindsets and implicit biases that have been ingrained in the school's system.

A knowledge mobilization plan is essential to transfer research on colonialism, decolonization, and indigenization into the work of PLCs and IAC. The plan identifies ways to translate the research findings into practical strategies that teachers can implement to promote Indigenous ways of knowing and address implicit biases and colonial mindsets through land-based learning opportunities. Through the plan's implementation, the research findings can be effectively disseminated, applied, and integrated into the daily work of educators, leading to meaningful and sustainable change at GA. The monitoring and evaluation stage of Stroh's (2015) systems thinking for social change model will be used to assess the effectiveness of the knowledge mobilization plan in integrating land-based pedagogies. It will highlight the decolonization and indigenization work of the PLCs and IAC, allowing for adjustments to be made to ensure the ongoing success of the initiative.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge that I live, work, and play on Treaty 7 territory, the ancestral and traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy: Kainai, Piikani, and Siksika, as well as the Tsuu T'ina First Nation and the Stoney Nakoda First Nation. I acknowledge that this territory is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3, within the historical Northwest Métis Homeland. I acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples who have lived in and cared for these lands for generations. I am grateful for the traditional knowledge keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. I make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and an expression of my gratitude to those whose territory I reside on.

I am blessed to be able to work with a staff who are passionate about teaching and learning. I know this work will land positively with them and they will dedicate themselves to the journey towards the truth and reconciliation of and with Indigenous peoples. Also, I am appreciative of my superintendent, who may not know the extent to which her support, as a colleague and friend, has helped me on this 3-year journey. I hope this work can be carried forward throughout our school division.

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List of Acronyms

4-D	Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny
AI	Appreciative Inquiry
CSL	Compassionate Systems Leadership
GA	Grassland Academy (a pseudonym)
IAC	Indigenous Awareness Committee
IRS	Indian Residential School
KMb	Knowledge Mobilization
LQS	Leadership Quality Standard
OIP	Organizational Improvement Plan
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PoP	Problem of Practice
SPSD	Southern Public School Division (a pseudonym)
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Chapter 1: Problem Posing

In May 2021, the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc band in British Columbia found evidence that 215 children were buried on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School (IRS; Peters, 2021). The news has reverberated globally and prompted renewed efforts to address historical injustices and foster reconciliation between the Government of Canada and Indigenous communities. It serves as a recent illustration of Indigenous peoples' ongoing efforts to bring attention to the centuries-long injustices they have experienced as a result of colonialism in Canada. Notably, in 1990, the Mohawks of Kanesatake reserve near Oka, Quebec, erected a blockade in protest of a golf course expansion on disputed territory, which ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Wright et al., 2020). The commission was tasked with facilitating enhanced consultation and collaboration between government entities and Indigenous communities. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was created as a response to the 2006 IRS Settlement Agreement (Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre, n.d.). Similarly, in 2019, Wet'suwet'en protests centered around a natural gas pipeline planned to go through Wet'suwet'en territory (Meng, 2020). These protests led to similar blockades of rail lines, causing significant disruption across the country and creating animosity toward Indigenous groups from non-Indigenous Canadians.

The aforementioned examples highlight the recurrent trend of Indigenous communities expressing apprehension and seeking aid, which is followed by provisional government interventions that fail to produce long-lasting results. Therefore, the objective of this Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) is to investigate approaches that Grassland Academy (GA; a pseudonym) can adopt to foster comprehension and compassion towards Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, this project seeks to identify methods to encourage collaboration with

local Indigenous communities in safeguarding their cultural legacy, factual history, and worldviews. In accomplishing these goals, it is crucial for descendants of White settler colonizers to reevaluate their viewpoints.

This chapter aims to provide a theoretical framework to my school, GA, and its stakeholders in realizing their roles in fostering a decolonized future for Indigenous peoples in Canada. The ultimate objective is to inculcate this perspective among students, teachers, and the broader community, creating a ripple effect of transformative change and support.

Positionality and Lens Statement

In this section, I explore how the theoretical approach to leadership, ethical paradigms, and social justice leadership intersect. In addition, I cover the pivotal responsibility of school leaders in shaping the educational landscape and fostering positive learning environments through transformative change. Effective leadership in this role requires a theoretical approach that embraces critical consciousness and acknowledges the influence of personal ethical paradigms on decision-making. Embracing social justice leadership principles allows school leaders to promote equitable treatment, challenge prevailing power structures, and uphold human rights. By blending theory, ethics, and dedication to social justice, school leaders can inspire meaningful change and create inclusive learning environments for the entire school community.

Leadership Position

I acknowledge that I live and work on Treaty 7 territory, the ancestral and traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy and homeland to the Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3. I situate myself in this work as a third generation Canadian of non-Indigenous, White settler heritage and recognize my generational, colonial role in the oppression and marginalization of Indigenous people. As principal of GA, I have the agency to create a system-wide awareness of

Indigenous truths, primarily through pedagogical practices and culture, while focusing on issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, and reconciliation.

Role of a School Leader

Since the late 1990s, school administrators have shifted from being primarily managers to driving transformation and executing reforms (Fullan, 2016). As the principal, my authority and roles are defined by provincial and school division documents. These include the *Leadership Quality Standard* (LQS), which emphasizes that effective leadership results in quality teaching and optimal learning for all students (Alberta Education, 2020a, p. 2). Alberta outlines nine competencies and indicators for school leaders, but two are particularly relevant to supporting Indigenous awareness: Competency 5, which involves supporting foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit; and Competency 9, which entails understanding and responding to the larger societal context (Alberta Education, 2020a, pp. 4–5). Additionally, my role as a principal is guided by the Education Act (2023) and the policies and procedures of Southern Public School Division (SPSD), of which GA is a part.

Principals are responsible for leading and managing the school community, setting the overall vision and direction for the institution, and ensuring that all aspects of the school's operations are running smoothly (Alberta Education, 2020a). They play a crucial role in creating a positive learning environment that fosters academic excellence, social growth, and emotional well-being for all students (Cohen, 2015). Principals work with teachers to develop and implement curriculum and pedagogy, evaluate student progress, and create a supportive learning environment (Fullan, 2014). They also work with parents, the school board, and community leaders to establish partnerships that promote the success of the school and its students.

It is important for a principal to reflect on their worldview because their underlying beliefs and assumptions about the world shape how they perceive, interact with, and lead others (Wheatley, n.d.). A principal's worldview influences their decision-making, their communication style, and their ability to empathize and connect with their stakeholders. Pollock and Briscoe (2020) indicated that the principals involved in their study tended to interpret and comprehend student diversity based on their own perspectives and backgrounds. By reflecting on their worldview, a principal can gain insight into their own biases and limitations, which can help them better understand the perspectives and needs of others. They can also become more aware of the cultural and social influences that shape their worldview, and how those influences may impact their leadership style and decisions. Furthermore, a principal who actively engages in reflective practice can develop a more inclusive and equitable approach to leadership, one that values diversity, promotes empathy, and encourages open communication (Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2019). In doing so, that principal can create a more positive and supportive school culture that benefits all members of the school community.

Theoretical Leadership Approach

Perspective, according to Best and Kellner (1991), is the way an experience is seen. They noted that “it never mirrors reality exactly as it is, that it is always selective and unavoidable, mediated by one's pre-given assumptions, theories, values, and intents” (Best & Kellner, 1991, p. 265). Leadership necessitates a level of consciousness that extends beyond the present moment, encompassing a comprehension of the bigger picture—including the paradigms that influence us as individuals, the beliefs that uphold us, the values that steer us, and the principles that motivate us (Valk et al., 2010). This consciousness refers to an individual's understanding of

their own worldview. Personally, my worldview aligns with social justice ideals and the concept of critical consciousness advocated by Capper (2019).

In my view, the role of a school leader is to work towards promoting equitable treatment and liberation for individuals or groups who face oppression or marginalization from the dominant societal group (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Khalifa, 2018; G. R. Lopez, 2003; Santamaría, 2014). Educators have an ethical obligation to uphold the human rights of Indigenous peoples and to challenge prevailing power structures to advance this cause. Although past injustices may persist, an awareness of historical realities can empower school leaders to shape a more just and equitable future.

According to Freire's (1970/2018) critical theory, education should help students recognize the social, economic, and political forces that influence their lives, particularly if they are members of oppressed groups. The foundation of this OIP involves critically examining the awareness or critical consciousness of GA school staff: a group of White, dominant-culture educators, who may unwittingly perpetuate the oppression and colonization of Indigenous peoples, as a collective, through their teaching practices. By using the principles of critical pedagogy and critical consciousness, educators can scrutinize their practices and become more aware of the systems of oppression present in society. This, in turn, empowers students to challenge these systems and strive for social change. Arguably, part of the responsibility of reframing historical perspectives of oppression and marginalization in Canadian society to encompass Indigenous knowledge and worldviews falls on the shoulders of educators, and it is the main focus of this OIP. Based on the perspectives of Freeman (2001), it can be contended that when the professional socialization of teachers is approached in a way that helps them

recognize themselves as catalysts for societal transformation, it is probable that students' understanding and proficiency in these social dimensions will improve.

Various scholars (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002; Diemer & Bluestein, 2006; Diemer & Li, 2011; Windsor et al., 2014) have contended that critical consciousness comprises two key elements: (a) sociopolitical analysis, also referred to as critical reflection, critical analysis, or social analysis; and (b) critical action, also known as civic engagement and social action. Within the scope of this OIP, addressing White colonial settler perspectives requires both critical analysis and action. This is because, as argued by Rice et al. (2022), the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples remains influenced by settler colonialism.

Epp (2008) stated that to address the root of the settler problem—the level of White supremacy evident in White Canadians—and fundamentally shift the power dynamics that reinforce colonial behaviours, structures, and relationships, it is essential to identify and challenge the racial socialization processes within White settler communities. Hughes (2020) contended that White settler racial socialization plays a crucial role in maintaining White supremacy by transmitting attitudes and behaviours related to race and ethnicity to children and youth, often through subtle and unintentional means. Therefore, educators must first cultivate critical awareness of their role as White settlers in perpetuating the oppression and marginalization of Indigenous peoples before they can impart this understanding to their students. As the school leader, it is my responsibility to increase my critical consciousness as a White settler, and an understanding of ethical paradigms can aid this process.

Ethical Paradigms and Leadership Lens

Numerous ethical frameworks have been developed to guide educational leaders in various contexts (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016; Walker & Kutsyuruba, 2013). M. E. Brown and

Treviño (2006) defined ethical leadership as demonstrating appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, as well as promoting such behaviour through communication, reinforcement, and decision-making. Ethical leaders who advocate for and show respect to others are considered effective. In this OIP, three ethical paradigms—justice, care, and profession—are used to integrate Indigenous truth and knowledge in classrooms. These paradigms shape my approach to analyzing the complexities of authentic Indigenous knowledge, history, Indigenous connection to the land, and the challenges of incorporating this knowledge into existing teaching practices.

Ethic of Justice

An ethic of justice focuses on laws, policies, and other legislative documents that pertain to education and the wider community (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). This model asks school leaders to consider not only the laws that impact schooling, but also abstract concepts like fairness, equity, and justice. The TRC's (2015) 94 calls to action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP; 2007) are frameworks that support the decolonization of the education system and tackle ongoing colonization, inequality, marginalization, and oppression affecting Indigenous communities. The education-related calls to action are numbered 62 to 66 (TRC, 2015), as described in Appendix A. To steer their endeavours, GA staff will prioritize key objectives outlined in these calls to action.

At the meso level, the LQS delineates the expected behaviour of school leaders according to the provincial government's specifications (Alberta Education, 2020a). Competency 5 of the LQS supports Indigeneity by requiring leaders to promote foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit for the benefit of all students (Alberta Education, 2020a, p. 4). Whereas an ethic of justice focuses on leadership in relation to policies, laws, and other standards, an ethic

of care emphasizes a more personal approach to creating an environment where moral decision-making is central to the organizational culture.

Ethic of Care

An ethic of care prioritizes a social justice approach by helping leaders make responsible and moral decisions for the greater good of society (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). This paradigm involves an emotional response to ethical dilemmas, and empathy and compassion play a significant role in decision-making. In particular, the concepts of allegiance, conviction, and emancipation are critical for justifying the work of reconciliation within schools and supporting my own position in this effort, as Noddings (2003) and Sergiovanni (1992) have outlined.

An ethic of care is concerned with building positive relationships and fostering a sense of community within an organization (Formentin, 2021). This approach emphasizes the importance of emotional labour, or the effort leaders make to understand and respond to the emotional needs of those in their care. As such, an ethic of care is especially relevant in the context of reconciliation efforts, as it helps create a safe and supportive environment for everyone involved.

School leaders who embrace an ethic of care must be willing to listen to the voices of those who have been historically marginalized, including Indigenous peoples. By prioritizing empathy and compassion in decision-making, these leaders can help address the ongoing impacts of colonization and create a more inclusive school culture. Additionally, leaders who adopt an ethic of care must be willing to challenge their own assumptions and biases, recognizing that their personal experiences may not reflect the experiences of others. By doing so, they can help build a more equitable and just education system for all.

Ethic of the Profession

According to Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016), decisions made in the educational context should take into account the ethical paradigm of the profession. They stressed the importance of school leaders finding a balance between their personal and professional code of ethics. In Alberta, school administrators' work is guided by the LQS (Alberta Education, 2020a). LQS Competency 4 states:

A leader nurtures and sustains a culture that supports evidence-informed teaching and learning. Achievement . . . can be demonstrated by indicators such as:

- (a) fostering in the school community equality and respect with regard to rights as provided for in the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*;
- (b) creating an inclusive learning environment in which diversity is embraced, a sense of belonging is emphasized, and all students and staff are welcomed, cared for, respected, and safe. (Alberta Education, 2020a, pp. 3–4)

By applying these ethical paradigms to my leadership framework, I establish guiding principles and values for decision-making and actions. This foundation enables practical engagement in truth and reconciliation work, addressing the harm caused by systemic racism and oppression against Indigenous peoples. For instance, I prioritize creating a safe and inclusive environment that embraces Indigenous cultural diversity and ensures equitable access to education and resources. I also incorporate Indigenous perspectives and knowledge into the curriculum and school policies, while actively fostering positive relationships with Indigenous communities and leaders. Framing my leadership with these ethical paradigms allows me to take

concrete steps towards fostering a just and equitable school environment, promoting the decolonization and indigenization of GA.

Social Justice and Leadership

Research supports the idea that school leaders have an ethical responsibility to promote social justice causes and create an equitable learning environment for all students. As Griffiths (2013) and Theoharis (2007) have noted, school leaders who prioritize social justice work actively seek to address inequities and promote a culture of equity within their schools. One aspect of this work is to acknowledge and address the historical and ongoing injustices faced by Indigenous peoples. Ryan and Tutters (2017) argued that school leaders bear the responsibility of acknowledging and remedying inequities and cultural unawareness within their organizations. They should actively strive to cultivate an inclusive and culturally responsive school culture.

Khalifa et al. (2016) argued that a socially just school leader must prioritize student well-being, create an ethical atmosphere of behaviour and academic probity, and uphold professional standards in the education profession. This prioritization involves fostering a school culture that embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion, and working to address systemic inequities and injustices in a proactive and meaningful way. Therefore, as a proponent of social justice causes, I believe it is essential for school leaders to prioritize the promotion of equity, inclusion, and cultural responsiveness within their schools. By acknowledging and addressing the injustices faced by Indigenous peoples and working to build a more inclusive and just school culture, they can create a better learning environment for all students.

I believe, along with Skrla et al. (2007) and Oplatka and Arar (2016), that school leaders who embrace a social justice framework are more effective in identifying and challenging biases and discrimination within their schools. Moreover, these leaders are more likely to engage in

ethical decision-making, promote democratic participation, and address issues of social justice and equity in their schools, making them better equipped to address the complex challenges facing schools today. Integrating social justice and ethical decision-making can help create a school culture that is accountable, transparent, and respectful (Brooks & Theoharis, 2018; Starratt & Stelmach, 2003). This culture promotes an environment where students can thrive academically and personally, without fear of discrimination or bias. Furthermore, it allows school leaders to create a sense of belonging and inclusion for all members of the school community, regardless of their background or identity.

In summary, by prioritizing both social justice and ethical decision-making, school leaders can create a school culture that is welcoming, inclusive, and supportive of all students. This culture can lead to improved academic outcomes, enhanced personal growth, and a more equitable learning environment for all.

Organizational Context

SPSD covers a large rural area of almost 30,000 square kilometers. It comprises 18 public schools, 18 Hutterite colony schools, and one distance learning school for high school students, serving a total of approximately 3,300 students. GA, located within SPSD, is a pre-K to Grade 9 school with almost 280 students and is the focal point of this OIP. The school is situated in a small hamlet with only 249 residents (Statistics Canada, 2021), resulting in nearly all students being bussed in from surrounding farms, ranches, and acreages. Many families attending the school have lived in the area for generations. According to the Government of Canada census in 2021, the county in which GA is located has a population of 7,662, of which 5,570 have lived in the area for at least three generations (Statistics Canada, 2021).

The staff at GA consists of 15 certified teachers, six educational assistants, two custodians, one noncertified librarian, and one administrative assistant. The staff and larger school community are mostly racially homogenous, consisting of White settler colonists. This racial make-up is important to note in the context of addressing colonialism and its impact on Indigenous people in Canada. Although the OIP focuses on GA, the coordinator of Indigenous education for the SPSD will play a crucial role in supporting this initiative. Moreover, the new superintendent of SPSD has prioritized equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization work. The division is in the process of drafting its first-ever diversity, equity, and human rights policy, indicating a commitment to this important work. In summary, there are allies beyond the school who will support GA's indigenization efforts.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the TRC's (2015) 94 calls to action and UNDRIP (2007) serve as critical guides for efforts to decolonize people's worldviews and practices. These documents provide a roadmap for the OIP to ensure that GA staff remain focused on the ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous peoples as a result of colonization and its enduring impacts.

The TRC was established by the Canadian government to investigate the IRS system and its impact on Indigenous peoples, both past and present (Moran, 2015). The TRC's work brought to light the tragic history of Indigenous peoples who suffered forced assimilation in an attempt to exert colonial control and eradicate Indigenous culture. The TRC's (2015) final report documented the devastating legacy of the IRS system, which included physical and sexual abuse, cultural genocide, and the intergenerational trauma experienced by survivors and their families. The introduction of the TRC's final report summarized the legacy of the IRS system:

For over a century, the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a

process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as “cultural genocide.” (2015, p. 1; see also Reconciliation Education, n.d., para. 2)

To steer the endeavors of GA teachers, the staff will prioritize key objectives outlined in these calls to action. The primary goal is to ensure that GA’s students and staff possess a thorough comprehension of Indigenous historical truths, encompassing the IRS system and its lasting effects on Indigenous communities today. This understanding will serve as the basis for their efforts in decolonization, reconciliation, and acknowledging the Indigenous relationship with the land.

UNDRIP (2007) is an international document that urges countries to adopt its principles. Initially, Canada and three other nations declined to sign due to a contentious provision supporting the self-determination of Indigenous peoples in their political, legal, economic, social, and cultural institutions (Hanson, 2011). However, on June 21, 2021, the Canadian government ratified UNDRIP into law (Department of Justice Canada, 2021). This step is significant in acknowledging the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples and revitalizing and respecting their cultural practices and traditions. By embracing the principles of UNDRIP, Canada has promoted the well-being of Indigenous families and communities and advanced the reconciliation process (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, n.d.).

Historical Context

The SPSD community is largely politically conservative, with a history that reflects the political culture of Alberta. According to Wesley (2011), this culture is rooted in individualism, populism, and autonomy. Alberta is often seen as a conservative stronghold, with a political

ethos that embraces sentimentalism, moral traditionalism, free-market capitalism, and libertarianism (Wesley & Wong, 2022). However, as Barker (2009) noted, this political mainstream is built on settler colonial assumptions, with the concept of the western frontier ignoring the presence and significance of Indigenous peoples in the region. The belief that the provincial government has the right or responsibility to regulate natural resources for the benefit of Albertans or Canadians ignores the awareness and sovereignty of Indigenous communities in the area (Preston, 2013). This history explains the origins of today's populist movement and the continued presence of colonialism, especially regarding land ownership in rural communities.

Although the history of Alberta's settlement and related political ideologies provide context, they do not necessarily indicate that rural Albertans hold an anti-Indigenous stance. However, it is essential to establish a connection between the significance of land and resources to both rural non-Indigenous Canadians and Indigenous peoples in this OIP. I elaborate on this connection in the section entitled Framing the Problem of Practice.

Social Context

GA has a predominantly White student and staff population, with 280 students and 26 staff. In the 2022–2023 school year, GA had three students of colour; seven students who identified as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit; and four students for whom English was not their first language, making it not a very diverse school in terms of culture or race. It is important for White individuals to recognize their privilege and understand how colour blindness can contribute to perpetuating colonial viewpoints. McIntosh (1989) argued that colorblindness, in the context of race and racism, ignores the historical and social realities of racial oppression and discrimination, making it a problematic approach to addressing racial inequality. She advocated

for a proactive approach that acknowledges and addresses the ways in which racial inequality is ingrained in institutions, attitudes, and behaviours, in order to achieve true racial justice.

To promote a more equitable and just school environment, it is important to develop an awareness of the privileges that come with having a certain skin colour compared to those of visible minorities, particularly Indigenous people. These privileges are often unseen and must be recognized and confronted to uncover implicit biases and harmful colonial behaviours. By doing so, privileged individuals can initiate the important work of reconciliation, which is necessary for achieving true equity and justice. Privileges associated with skin colour are deeply embedded in Canadian society and can result in systemic discrimination and marginalization of certain groups. Therefore, it is important to understand how privilege contributes to this issue and to take action to counteract it. This process involves actively examining one's attitudes, behaviours, and actions towards Indigenous teachings and worldviews, and recognizing the ways in which one may be complicit in perpetuating harmful colonial practices.

By taking a critical and reflective approach, GA staff can create a school environment that actively promotes diversity, inclusivity, and respect for Indigenous peoples and their cultures. This work requires ongoing effort and a commitment to dismantling oppressive structures, but it is crucial in creating a more just and equitable society for all. Additionally, in staff conversations about our cultural responsiveness, it is important to avoid comments such as "I don't see colour" or "we are not racist; we work to create an equitable place for all," as these comments demonstrate colour blindness. Choi (2008) stated that colour blindness is an approach to race relations that ignores race and racial differences, and Apfelbaum et al. (2012) argued that individuals must see colour and acknowledge it in order to create transformative change.

To achieve true transformation and social justice, GA's staff and students need to embark on a path of reconciliation that aligns with the recommendations of the TRC (2015) and UNDRIP (2007). It is not enough for the staff, students, and community to simply learn about Indigenous people and their history without the former acknowledging their collective complicity in the latter's oppression due to colonial structures and beliefs. Without a profound understanding of the truth of Indigenous peoples in Canada, efforts towards change will be superficial and unsustainable. As educators, it is our responsibility to address this lack of understanding within our school.

Leadership Problem of Practice

Throughout the OIP, the PoP is framed as the challenge of engaging GA students in Indigenous-informed learning to advance truth and reconciliation efforts. The teachers at GA do not have the skills or knowledge yet to provide Indigenous-informed learning opportunities that could help the predominantly White student community understand Indigenous history, sovereignty, and their relationship with the land. To elaborate, the teachers at GA do not possess the necessary skills and knowledge to design and implement learning experiences that are grounded in the Indigenous perspective and connect students with the land in meaningful ways. These experiences could include outdoor activities, field trips, storytelling, and cultural practices that enable students to develop a deeper understanding of Indigenous history, culture, and relationship with the land (Bowra et al., 2021; Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, 2020). As a result, students at GA are missing out on important opportunities to engage with and learn from Indigenous perspectives. To address this gap, the school will need to invest in teacher professional development and seek support from Indigenous knowledge keepers and community

members to co-create Indigenous learning opportunities that are grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

To effectively lead the change towards a more decolonized, Indigenized school culture at GA, it is important to acknowledge the ethical weight of assuming the responsibility of influencing others. As a leader of social justice, it is my ethical duty to engage in this work and collaboratively solve this problem. According to Northouse (2021), leaders have a greater authority and influence than their followers, which comes with the accountability of being aware of the impact their leadership has on their followers' well-being. Heifetz (1994) suggested that leaders use their authority to manage and frame issues, facilitate decision-making, and create a sense of trust, nurturance, and empathy among followers.

The envisioned future in this OIP is for staff to demonstrate awareness, attitudes, and actions that lead to the actualization of truth and reconciliation. Creating a sense of duty is the initial step. Effective leaders not only recognize the need for change but also guide their staff by fostering trust, empathy, and accountability for their impact on their followers' well-being. Goleman et al.'s (2013) research on emotional intelligence highlights the importance of developing skills to recognize and manage emotions effectively, both for oneself and others. By cultivating emotional intelligence, staff members can navigate bias and colonial perceptions, engaging in open and inclusive discussions. Additionally, leaders who understand and consider their followers' perspectives and emotions during the change process can address concerns, provide support, and foster stronger connections, increasing the likelihood of successful change implementation (Dutton et al., 2002).

The OIP focuses on three key areas in addressing the PoP. The first is developing an awareness of the truth of Indigenous history in Canada, including issues such as treaty rights, the

IRS system, and the ongoing impacts of colonization. The second area of focus is on examining the attitudes and perceptions of members of the dominant White cultural group, which can often hinder efforts towards reconciliation and decolonization. Finally, the OIP addresses specific actions that need to be taken in order to promote culturally relevant pedagogies in GA educators' daily classroom practices. By addressing these three areas, staff can work towards creating a more just and empathic school environment.

Framing the Problem of Practice

Anticolonial theory will substantiate the framing of the problem, which is staff's inability to engage students in Indigenous learning opportunities. This theoretical framework will support a shift in understanding of how colonialism has impacted and continues to impact Indigenous people today. According to Dei and Kempf (2006), anticolonial theory is a framework of critical analysis and resistance against the practices and ideologies of colonialism. It seeks to understand and challenge the structures of power, domination, and exploitation that were created through colonialism, including the ways in which colonialism has shaped social, economic, and political relations between colonizers and colonized people. From a place of critical consciousness and through a social justice lens, this work must acknowledge individual and collective positions of power in this colonial system.

An important element of social justice education involves being able to distinguish between intent and impact, which is especially crucial for privileged students who must comprehend how their actions can either reinforce or undermine power structures that grant them advantages while suppressing others (Morris, 2019). Wolfe (1994) argued that "settler colonialism is a structure, not an event" (p. 96), meaning that it is an ongoing system of oppression rather than a historical event. Understanding settler colonialism as both a historical

position and a contemporary practice enables teachers to perceive their role within a settler colonial system and understand how their actions can be influenced by the impact of that system, regardless of their intentions. Younging et al. (2009) emphasized that challenging and rejecting racist and colonialist programming; rethinking values of domination, consumption, and exploitation; and taking action to fundamentally alter the current power imbalance are necessary steps towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Anticolonial Theory and Awareness

According to Wolfe's (1994) perspective, settler colonialism is not merely a historical event but an enduring framework that characterizes settler societies even today. Settler societies are not postcolonial: They are fundamentally settler colonies characterized by entrenched settler dominance. Acknowledging this perspective allows settlers to comprehend the impact of current policies and politics on Indigenous peoples and address systemic injustices. To progress towards decolonization, it is crucial to recognize personal biases and the privilege associated with Whiteness. Decolonization is a comprehensive process that involves dismantling colonial power across a nation's culture, society, economy, and politics to empower Indigenous self-determination (Alfred, 2005; Kuokkanen, 2007). Achieving true decolonization means unraveling the power and privilege of colonialists (Styres, 2017) and engaging in critical discourse to explore how Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships are contingent on power and privilege (S. Wilson, 2008).

McIntosh's (1989) concept of White privilege suggests that White people unconsciously benefit from invisible power, historically and presently. To uncover the truth of how White privilege is supported individually and systemically through pedagogical practices, GA's staff must understand what they are unconscious of or blind to. Additionally, decision-making can be

influenced by implicit or unconscious biases, which are attitudes and stereotypes that individuals unconsciously hold about different groups of people, and often affect actions (Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, 2018). Thus, to start decolonizing the teachers' practices, an understanding of how bias and privilege sustain colonial structures is needed.

Anticolonial Theory and Appreciation of Land and Place

Wolfe (1999) contended that the settler's primary objective is to obtain land, rather than to exploit the labour of Indigenous individuals, resulting in direct conflict between the settler and Indigenous person over land. The Indigenous person's mere presence on their land impedes the settler's efforts to settle on it. The Indigenous relationship with the land is integral to their worldviews, cultures, and ways of knowing. For thousands of years, Turtle Island (North America) has been home to Indigenous peoples who have recognized the fundamental importance of their relationship with the land and water. Many Indigenous creation or origin stories emphasize the acknowledgment of their position within the land and their obligation to live respectfully and engage in reciprocity (Atleo & Boron, 2022). Understanding Indigenous peoples' relationship to the land is crucial to the work at GA in decolonizing educator practices.

Anticolonial Theory and Action

Throughout this OIP, I examine the school's ethical responsibility to take a more direct approach to creating greater indigeneity. Rosa (2021) suggested using the word "uncolonizing" when discussing actions that involve separating and disengaging from remnants of colonialism. As a settler, I recognize the importance of decolonizing and uncolonizing my leadership approach by acknowledging the knowledge passed down through various sources such as the land, living creatures, spiritualities, cultures, histories, and ancestors. This approach challenges the dominant colonial framework that has suppressed and erased valuable knowledge in favour

of Western and Eurocentric ideals. According to A. E. Lopez (2020), “Decolonized education is about renewal, restoration, and hope. It’s about finding new leadership approaches for engaging students, communities, and educators to bring about transformative change” (p. 69). Chapter 3 provides an in-depth discussion of the actions GA educators will take to transform pedagogical practices and enhance student learning. In conclusion, both decolonizing and uncolonizing approaches to leadership empower marginalized voices and perspectives, foster inclusivity and equity, and strive to build a society that values diverse ways of knowing and being.

Guiding Questions

Two guiding questions emerge from the PoP; I discuss each in turn. The first guiding question asks, “How can Indigenous-centered teaching methods be deeply and meaningfully implemented within the existing curriculum?” As mentioned earlier, the TRC’s (2015) 94 calls to action include four that directly relate to a formal education setting (numbers 62 to 65; see Appendix A). These calls to action are a provincial responsibility in Canada, as kindergarten to Grade 12 education falls under the purview of provincial and territorial governments. The Alberta government has taken steps to fulfill these calls to action by creating curricular outcomes that address First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge, ensuring that all students learn about residential schools and treaties, and offering a wide range of professional development opportunities for teachers (Alberta Education, n.d.-a; Alberta Teachers’ Association, n.d.). The government has also established the Indigenous Education and Reconciliation Circle, a forum that brings together various education stakeholders in Alberta to collaborate on advancing reconciliation through Indigenous teachings (Government of Alberta, n.d.). Furthermore, professional practice standards for school leaders (Alberta Education, 2020a) and teachers

(Alberta Education, 2020b) now include sections on the responsibility of educators to apply foundational knowledge of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

However, meeting professional obligations and standards is not enough. The TRC's (2015) calls to action and UNDRIP (2007) require a more comprehensive and embedded approach to Indigeneity in education. This approach goes beyond simply incorporating Indigenous units or readings into the curriculum. Rather, it requires a deeper engagement with Indigenous perspectives, histories, cultures, and ways of knowing. Collaborating with Indigenous Elders, scholars, and knowledge keepers can support this journey. Despite GA's homogenous context, it is crucial to create a school culture that embraces and engages deeply with Indigenous perspectives. Developing teachers' collective efficacy through collaborative work can support this journey. According to Donohoo (2017), efficacy beliefs strongly influence educators' actions, behaviour, and focus. When lacking a sense of collective efficacy, educators may avoid certain actions due to feelings of inadequacy, potentially impacting their practice and student achievement. Understanding educators' beliefs about their capability to influence student outcomes is promising in shaping effective instructional practices.

The second guiding question asks, "How can school staff, as a collective, take actionable steps to overcome deeply ingrained colonial mindsets and engage in the process of decolonizing the school system to align with Indigenous knowledge, histories, cultures, and relationships with the land?" Leadership is often influenced by societal factors, where leaders establish collaborative systems to achieve a common goal (Chemers, 1997; Chin, 2015). Today's effective school leaders need to be versatile individuals who can understand global trends and local needs (White & Cooper, 2017). Truth and reconciliation are two such priorities that require attention, as emphasized in this OIP. Katz (2018) suggested that reconciliation begin with understanding

the truth of the past for Indigenous people in Canada and acknowledging, if we are among the colonizers, our role. We must apologize and find a way to make restitution while working towards creating a culture of equity and decolonizing our practices and structures.

School principals should not lead the reconciliation journey as experts, but rather engage with Indigenous leaders as supporters, advocates, and genuine allies (Osmond-Johnson & Turner, 2020). Collaborating with Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers will help ensure that the school's staff arrive at the truth. According to Styres et al. (2022), truth is a product of who is involved in the process of discovering it. It is non-Indigenous individuals' collective and individual responsibility to find, discuss, and even negotiate what is true in the journey towards moral truth. Engaging in critical reflection as a group and as individuals will guide this work.

Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

Currently, there is a growing momentum to embrace Indigeneity and promote reconciliation within the GA community. Fortunately, many staff members are becoming more aware of the need to work towards reconciliation or, at the very least, to develop a better understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, and relationships with the land. However, due to GA having a primarily non-Indigenous population, there is not a sense of urgency to understand the reasons for and methods of reconciliation. To move forward, it is important for school stakeholders to gain an understanding of the two worldviews—Indigenous and colonial—to collectively reflect on our role as White, settler colonialists. This reflection will support the journey towards reconciliation and the creation of a school culture that embraces and respects Indigenous perspectives, histories, cultures, and ways of knowing.

Vision for Change

At GA, there is a lack of understanding of how colonization has impacted Indigenous people, their connection to the land, and place in society today. To move towards reconciliation, it is crucial to reflect on the historical emancipation and genocide of Indigenous people and its ongoing effects. Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing must be combined to understand the colonial structures, policies, and procedures that currently exist in the schools.

Schools have traditionally been tools to maintain inequity, rather than promote social change, according to Eubanks et al. (1997). To create a more equitable system, the historical and current truth of Indigenous oppression and marginalization must be embedded into teaching, learning, and collaborative practices. Colonial settlers and teachers hold a position of power at GA to address this inequitable system and act as a model for other schools. By collaborating with Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers to develop a shared vision for change, teachers can avoid appropriating Indigenous work and instead legitimize the OIP's goals of raising awareness, promoting appreciation, and taking action towards reconciliation.

The Gap

Freire's (1970/2018) concept of education can catalyze conversations and reflection about current practices and how they align or misalign with working towards reconciliation. Educators at GA must work to understand Indigenous realities today and the accurate histories that brought them here. It is through understanding the values of equity and justice that sustainable change can occur. Socially just perspectives support an understanding of the oppression of Indigenous people and can act as a tool to repair it today and to reframe the future.

According to Freire (1970/2018), dialogue between the privileged and the oppressed, the colonial worldview and Indigenous worldview, is necessary for practical social change.

Engaging in the work of understanding each staff member's values of equity and justice can support this dialogue. Through love, humility, faith, and hope, GA staff can work towards creating a socially just learning environment that engages students in critical thinking and raises awareness about the historical and current realities of Indigenous people.

Truth Before Reconciliation

To begin the journey of reconciliation, one must learn the truth about the settler's past and present role in creating the conditions of today. In Canada, the goal of settler colonization was to eliminate Indigenous people, "if not physically, then as cultural, political, and legal peoples distinguishable from the rest of Canadian society" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 4). However, this history is not taught in the school system. To create a framework for the work of reconciliation, the first step is to identify and address conscious and unconscious biases. By understanding how these biases impact pedagogies, relationships, perspectives, and values, individuals can better position themselves in relation to the work of reconciliation (Stein, 2020). Settlers must also shift from a colonial lens to an Indigenous one, treating Indigenous knowledge as equal to their own. This shift will support understanding of how to create empathy and compassion for legitimate change within an ethic of justice, care, and the profession.

Looking to the future, GA aims to Indigenize its pedagogies and school culture, to become more focused on land-based learning while reflecting a purposeful journey to reconciliation. Learning the truth about Indigenous histories and their impact on Indigenous people today in Canada will support a strong relationship between local Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the school community. To build this road to reconciliation, GA staff need to access various levels of formal leadership positions within SPSD. The TRC's (2015) final report and calls to action, UNDRIP (2007), the Indian Act (1985), and The Rights of the

Aboriginal Peoples of Canada (1982) under the Canadian Constitution are documents that frame our responsibility as educators and Canadians in the work toward truth and reconciliation with the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people of Canada. Additionally, the *Teaching Quality Standard* (Alberta Education, 2020b) and LQS (Alberta Education, 2020a), the Government of Alberta's (n.d.) education for reconciliation resources, and the curriculum of Alberta are also essential in supporting educators' work within the school.

To decolonize pedagogical practices, a range of stakeholders need to be involved, including students, educators, administrators, community members, and school district personnel. Students can advocate for changes in the curriculum and instructional practices that reflect diverse perspectives and experiences. Teachers can make changes to their teaching practices and assessment methods to ensure they are inclusive and equitable. School administrators can allocate resources to support faculty and staff training, curriculum development, and student support services. Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers can provide valuable input and support for decolonizing pedagogy, and the district coordinator of Indigenous education can create strategies that support decolonizing pedagogy.

Leadership plays a pivotal role in the decolonization process, which involves critically examining and challenging deeply ingrained colonial attitudes, beliefs, and practices that have shaped non-Indigenous thinking and education systems for centuries. Decolonizing leaders actively question the status quo, challenge dominant narratives, and advocate alternative ways of thinking and teaching. They foster inclusive spaces for diverse perspectives, cultivate critical thinking skills, and strive for equitable and inclusive learning environments. Tuck and Yang (2012) emphasized the importance of disrupting colonial frameworks and Eurocentric perspectives in education. By creating inclusive spaces, educational leaders contribute to an

environment where students from diverse backgrounds can thrive. Additionally, research highlights the significance of critical thinking skills in decolonizing education. Giroux (1994) argued that critical thinking is essential for understanding power dynamics, questioning dominant narratives, and driving social transformation. Decolonizing leaders prioritize the development of critical thinking skills among staff and students, enabling them to analyze information critically, challenge biases, and engage as active citizens.

By prioritizing anticolonialism in leadership, I can actively contribute to dismantling systemic oppression and fostering a just and equitable society. This endeavour necessitates leaders who embrace continuous learning, confront their biases, and acknowledge the historical and ongoing impact of colonialism on Indigenous peoples. Repairing the harm caused by colonialism requires meaningful and respectful actions. Through a focus on decolonization in leadership, I can initiate transformative change within GA and beyond.

Chapter 1 Conclusion

Chapter 1 establishes a foundation for engaging in the work of social justice and ethical school leadership, guiding GA's staff towards understanding their role in the journey towards truth and reconciliation. Despite the school's racial homogeneity, learning about Indigenous truths, histories, and ways of knowing is crucial, fostering empathy and advancing the change process. In Chapter 2, a collective vision for change is built, viewed through an Indigenous-based learning lens. This vision aligns with authentic and transformative leadership theories, supported by a systems thinking approach to social change. Additionally, solutions are explored to address GA's lack of understanding regarding the potential of land-based practices in facilitating decolonization and indigenization.

Chapter 2: Planning and Development

Leading a school towards a deeper understanding and appreciation of Indigenous histories, cultures, and ways of knowing can be a daunting task. To address this challenge, the leadership approach must be genuine, transparent, and grounded in authentic leadership, as well as emphasize respect, appreciation, and trust, embodying the principles of social change through transformative leadership. To frame the change process and achieve greater Indigenous awareness, the change path model (Deszca et al., 2020), viewed through a transformative lens, is employed. This chapter outlines three solutions to the PoP that prioritize staff learning and understanding of Indigenous ways of life, aiming to achieve a more comprehensive, collaborative, and meaningful approach to decolonization and Indigenous reconciliation.

Leadership Approach to Change

Lakomski and Evers (2022) argued that the organizational context within which the leader operates evokes needs and requirements with related demands of leadership strategies unique to that context. As discussed in Chapter 1, GA is a school with a largely White, culturally homogenous population of staff and students, where the work of becoming a more culturally responsive organization could meet with both internal and external resistance. In other words, the majority of staff may not consider the PoP a priority for change, but there are some critical outliers and strong supporters within the school, including me.

From a theoretical standpoint, the nature of the PoP and my personal leadership characteristics align with an authentic and transformative leadership approach. Although my values and viewpoints are congruent with authentic leadership theory, the core of this work involves transforming how school personnel, as individuals and as a group, comprehend and appreciate Indigenous truths. Authentic leadership theory proposes that leaders who display self-

awareness, transparency, ethical behaviour, and a strong sense of their own values and beliefs will be more effective in gaining followership and achieving positive outcomes (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Furthermore, transformative leadership theory proposes that leaders who are able to inspire and empower their followers to engage in critical reflection and work towards collective action for positive change can generate transformation at both the individual and social level (Shields, 2010; Weiner, 2003).

Authentic Leadership Theory

Authentic leadership encompasses positive psychological capacities and an ethical climate that fosters self-awareness, moral perspective, balanced information processing, and transparent relationships between leaders and followers (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 94). Research indicates that authentic leadership positively influences team dynamics. Leroy et al. (2015) found a positive relationship between authentic leadership and team creativity and innovation. Decolonizing non-Indigenous frameworks and structures in schools involves addressing the impact of colonialism on educational institutions and working to undo its harmful effects. This process elicits emotions like discomfort, guilt, and sadness as individuals confront historical and ongoing injustices. Creating a psychologically safe environment is crucial, allowing for challenging conversations and learning without fear of retribution or judgment. Jia et al. (2018) discovered that authentic leadership positively relates to team psychological safety, which promotes open communication and collaboration. When staff members feel safe to ask questions, express their thoughts and emotions, and learn from mistakes, they are more receptive to growth and learning.

Through this process of learning, GA staff will gain a deeper understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, and epistemologies. This knowledge can lead to a sense of

empathy and compassion, as well as a greater appreciation for the diversity and richness of Indigenous worldviews. It can also spark a desire to take action, whether through personal reflection, advocacy, or collaboration with Indigenous communities. Ultimately, decolonizing non-Indigenous frameworks and structures can have a profound emotional impact, both on individuals and on society as a whole. It requires a willingness to confront difficult truths, but it can also lead to healing, reconciliation, and a more just and equitable future for all.

Transformative Leadership Theory

This OIP questions how equitable and responsive the teachers' pedagogies are in the integration of Indigenous perspectives, worldviews, and knowledges into Western curricula. Furthermore, this OIP supports the work of creating an awareness of the inequitable treatment of Indigenous people in Canada and beginning to transform the staff's perspectives and worldviews to align with a more Indigenous viewpoint and connection to the land. Through this alignment, the ethical underpinning of improving pedagogical practices to match the staff's collective shift in viewing the world is critical. Greater alignment with Indigenous worldviews will support the work of including more land-based learning opportunities, which in turn will build the path to greater reconciliatory behaviours. As leaders of this work, the staff must understand the need for colonizers to maintain a delicate balance between accepting the obligation to unlearn their past beliefs and behaviours to challenge their settler mindset, while also displaying reverence towards Indigenous people, their lands, and their self-governance (Davis et al., 2017). Furthermore, "while it is not the responsibility of Indigenous peoples to educate settlers, consultation and engagement with Indigenous peoples remains crucial" (Davis et al., 2017, pp. 406–407).

Transformative leadership genuinely envisions Freire's (1998) contention "that education is not the ultimate lever for social transformation, but without it transformation cannot occur" (p.

37). Shields (2014) has created a succinct yet powerful understanding of transformative leadership theory. The overview states that engaging in the work means a

call to exhibit moral courage; the mandate to effect deep and equitable change; the necessity of balancing critique with promise; need to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice; focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice; emphasize both private and public (individual and collective) good; address the inequitable distribution of power; [and] emphasize interdependence, interconnectedness, and global awareness. (Shields, 2014, p. 30)

Transformative leadership theory is essential to the work of indigenizing the curriculum and pedagogies within the GA context. Indigenization requires a weaving of Indigenous teachings and ways of knowing into the current colonial model. Conceptually, the process of indigenization involves broadening the school staff's limited understanding of Indigenous knowledge and incorporating Indigenous viewpoints in a way that leads to significant transformation (Kuokkanen, 2007). As a transformative leader committed to bringing about change, it is crucial for me to approach this undertaking with compassion, as it will likely elicit strong emotional reactions, as described previously. It is also important for me to recognize and value the strengths that staff members possess in contributing to a more decolonized awareness and appreciation. Furthermore, as a principal with formal power, I must balance this authority with the ethical responsibility to actively engage in actions that foster equity and justice. This balance requires consistent reflection on both personal and organizational levels.

To begin the work of transforming the staff's Indigenous awareness, critical reflection on White settler heritage biases toward Indigenous people will be pivotal. Shields and Hesbol (2020) stated that a key tenet of transformative leadership is to work to dismantle "beliefs,

assumptions, and mindsets that perpetuate inequity and to reconstruct them in more equitable ways” (p. 31). Taking a social justice perspective and adopting a transformative leadership approach will aid in the effort to promote more equitable practices at GA. This involves confronting stakeholders’ fundamental misunderstandings of the injustices inflicted upon Indigenous peoples due to colonization and developing an appreciation for Indigenous cultures, respect for their teachings, and understanding of their histories of oppression.

Dei and Kempf (2006) argued that decolonizing school spaces, such as classrooms, requires a transformation of teachers’ understanding of their dominant and oppressive behaviours through critical self-reflection, which must, in turn, be used to lead to action. An altruistic leader engages in this work because their primary interest is in ensuring that the rights and well-being of others are paramount to their own (Northouse, 2021). By combining the principles of authentic leadership and transformative leadership, leaders can create a powerful framework for supporting Indigenous-based learning and greater decolonization. Authentic leaders can build trust and respect with staff members (Aho & Quaye, 2018), and transformative leaders can empower staff to take ownership of their own learning and to be active agents in the decolonization process (Garcia, 2018). Together, these approaches can support the development of strong, resilient, and empowered communities that are able to navigate the complexities of decolonization and Indigenous-based learning. To successfully build a framework for leading the change process using the change path model, systems thinking, and compassionate systems leadership, it is essential to explore how authentic and transformative leadership approaches can synergistically contribute to this transformative journey.

Framework for Leading the Change Process

To effectively transform GA staff's understanding and appreciation of Indigenous learning, and fulfill everyone's responsibilities in this area, a structured approach to change is needed. According to A. E. Lopez (2020), this approach will involve a democratic process, where staff and students collaborate to identify gaps in their understanding of Indigenous perspectives and teachings. Despite policies requiring educators to learn about Indigenous cultures, minimal change has occurred over the past half century. Therefore, it is crucial to institutionalize anticolonial, Indigenous-positive practices within the organization to create meaningful change. Decolonization and indigenization will require a sensitive and politicized journey, which demands compassion, appreciation, and love. By engaging in this work, GA teachers will build collective efficacy and indigenize the curriculum and pedagogies.

Navigating a change process successfully is critical to an organization's growth. Deszca et al.'s (2020) change path model, Stroh's (2015) systems thinking, and Senge et al.'s (2019) compassionate systems leadership (CSL) offer valuable insights for effective change management. CSL, developed by Senge et al. (2019), highlights empathy, collaboration, and systems thinking in leadership to increase innovation and engagement among team members. Similarly, Stroh's systems thinking for social change stresses understanding interconnectedness within a system and identifying leverage points for change. Addressing underlying structures that perpetuate problems is crucial. Deszca et al. provided a four-step roadmap for change: awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization. By combining these models, I can develop a comprehensive approach that identifies leverage points, addresses underlying systems, and provides a roadmap for implementation and sustainability.

Compassionate Systems Leadership Framework

Senge et al.'s (2019) *Introduction to Compassionate Systems Framework in Schools* “conceptualizes compassion as an essentially systemic property of mind: to cultivate compassion is to be able to appreciate the systemic forces that influence people’s feelings, thoughts and actions” (p. 1). The emotional weight of coming to terms with the oppressive and racist practices of settler colonialism of the past and present will be heavy, affective work. Ensuring a focus on the social and emotional health of the staff will be necessary for both long- and short-term success. In cultivating a place for compassion within the school organization, staff will begin to understand their own and others’ emotional state, how it is manifested in the work they do, and how they can support one another in this transformative journey.

School staff may resist decolonizing their practices due to various reasons, including White fragility. DiAngelo (2018) defined White fragility as a state where even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, leading to defensive responses. This stems from the socialization of White people to see themselves as “normal” and others as “deviant” or “different,” creating a sense of entitlement and defensiveness when confronted on race-related issues. These perceptions can hinder critical discussions on colonialism, racism, and privilege, essential to decolonizing educational practices.

Furthermore, colorblindness, or the belief that race should be ignored, can lead staff to resist indigenizing their worldviews by ignoring Indigenous perspectives and experiences. Bonilla-Silva (2013) coined the term *colorblind racism*, which defends the racially unequal status quo using colour-blind ideology. This approach can lead to the erasure of structural racism and a denial of the experiences of people of colour. In addition, GA staff may feel overwhelmed or unsure of where to begin in decolonizing their practices, leading to resistance to change. To

overcome these barriers, ongoing learning, reflection, and confronting uncomfortable truths about power, privilege, and oppression are essential.

The CSL framework (Senge et al., 2019) comprises three central phases that can foster a more empathetic school culture and enhance leadership at all levels. It consists of interconnected parts that can inspire transformative change within a system. The first part is developing the skillset of a systems thinker, which involves understanding systemic structures, patterns of change, and the impact of artifacts on the organization. Senge et al. (2019) recommended that leaders reflect before taking action. As the principal of GA, I will adopt routines encouraged by CSL, such as journaling and meditation, to aid reflection on the school's Indigenous awareness transformation. I can use CSL to envision how staff can implement provincial teaching standards and gain foundational knowledge of Indigenous people by reflecting on guiding questions from Chapter 1. Additionally, CSL can help school personnel understand how a colonial mindset, implicit bias, and White privilege manifest in the school's culture, structures, and pedagogies.

In the second phase of the CSL framework, systems sensing skills encourage participants to appreciate the complexity of the system and find problems within the organization that require addressing (Senge et al., 2019). Through this CSL approach, staff will include a number of practices that facilitate greater perspective-taking and knowledge-building about systemic behaviour. As a group, we will begin to recognize patterns that lead us to frustrations related to this PoP, while supporting the creation of solutions that will lead to greater Indigenous awareness, appreciation, and action.

Finally, in the third phase of CSL, school staff will use the above skills to “nurture a compassionate systems stance” (Senge et al., 2019, p. 9) to understand a variety of perspectives and cultivate connectedness. CSL works to foster a deep awareness and more authentic

relationships by creating time and space for everyone to safely share their thoughts and emotions. Engaging in the authentic leadership approach as described earlier will support the development of this psychologically safe space. This approach will help the staff to generate transformative conversations that will lead to creative solutions to indigenization. CSL lends itself to an understanding that everyone is connected; that appreciating what people do, individually and collectively, leads to meaningful systemic change.

The foundational work of CSL is to appreciate the people involved, their experiences, and how they influence the system. Beginning to create a compassionate, emotionally sensitive school culture will support the construction of a critically conscious environment where Indigenous truth, cultural awareness, and strategies for indigenization and reconciliation are visible. Additionally, using the premise of appreciative inquiry (AI; Cooperrider et al., 2000), this work can be approached through the lens of GA's strengths. The staff works well together as a team of educators to support and appreciate each other, making AI a good fit in this context.

Systems Thinking: The Iceberg Model

Senge (1990) and Stroh (2015) both used the iceberg metaphor to explain systems thinking. Systems thinking, according to Senge (1990), can be a powerful tool for transforming organizations by helping leaders understand the complex interactions and interdependencies between different parts of the organization and the wider environment in which it operates. By taking a systemic approach, organizations can identify the root causes of problems, rather than simply addressing symptoms, and develop strategies that are more effective and sustainable over the long term (Senge, 1990).

Stroh (2015) described systems thinking as an iceberg (see Appendix B): “[At the tip] we see the events and patterns in our lives that we can easily observe and measure. But beneath the

surface, there are often deeper, systemic structures and mental models that are driving those events and patterns” (Stroh, 2015, p. 19). The metaphor of an iceberg serves as a prompt to delve deeper and wider than the visible events and patterns, so as to genuinely comprehend and tackle the root causes. By so doing, the organization can begin to recognize the interdependent nature of various components of the system and their impact on the results that are witnessed.

Stroh’s (2015) iceberg model for systems thinking for social change can be broken down into three stages—events, structures, and mental models—and used within the GA context. Using these stages, the staff will be able to pinpoint and resolve the fundamental cultural and structural factors that reinforce colonialism, obstructing their comprehension of, attitudes towards, and behaviours in relation to Indigenous histories, cultures, and worldviews. The first stage represents the iceberg above the waterline; the observable, tangible events and patterns that can be seen and measured, such as poverty, crime, or homelessness. These events could include insensitive language, lack of intentionally teaching diversity within the curriculum, Indigenous cultural appropriation, or tokenism. The second stage of the model is the deeper systemic structures below the waterline that are not immediately visible or apparent. They include the policies, regulations, cultural norms, and other underlying structures that contribute to the events and patterns observed. One such structure at GA is the mostly unintentional prioritization of Western knowledge systems over Indigenous knowledge as seen in pedagogical practices. Finally, mental models are the deeply ingrained assumptions, beliefs, and values that underlie the structures of the system. They shape one’s understanding of the world and how one interacts with it, and they can influence one’s decisions and actions. Mental models are often hidden from view and are difficult to change, but they can have a significant impact on the outcomes

observed. As a staff at this stage, we may want to examine how colonialism has shaped the dominant worldview in education and how it is manifested in our daily work.

Understanding and addressing all three stages of the iceberg model (Stroh, 2015) can garner a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the system I seek to change and develop more effective solutions to the challenges the staff face. The iceberg model is a useful framework for transforming a White, homogenous school to become more empathetic and compassionate towards Indigenous people. By engaging with the hidden, underlying structures and cultural norms that perpetuate colonialism in GA, our school can begin to create a more decolonial and indigenized learning environment for all students.

Furthermore, identifying leverage points in a system is key to creating lasting change (Senge, 1990). Leverage points in a system are often not where the highest concentration of visible activity occurs but rather where one small shift can produce many significant changes (Senge, 1990; Stroh, 2015). Potential leverage points at GA include incorporating Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into daily practices (Battiste, 2013), or land-based teaching practices to create space for the transmission of Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Cajete, 2000). In these ways, the teachers and administrators can create a space for the revitalization and promotion of Indigenous cultures and traditions.

Change Path Model

Usually, the most powerful drivers of change come from outside of the organization (Deszca et al., 2020). Part of the first phase of Deszca et al.'s (2020) change path model, awakening, involves the collection of data from inside and outside the organization that will support the need for change. There must be a level of collective understanding as to the reason for change; in other words, identifying the gap that this OIP is designed to address. As discussed

in Chapter 1, GA's gap lies in the lack of collective teacher efficacy to embed Indigenous teachings throughout the curriculum through a process of indigenity and connecting the importance of land to Indigenous people.

During the awakening stage, the organization identifies necessary changes (Deszca et al., 2020). In this context, the TRC's (2015) calls to action and UNDRIP (2007) represent powerful catalysts for change. These documents emphasize the importance of organizations, including schools, taking steps to gain a deeper understanding of Indigenous histories and working towards genuine indigenization and reconciliation. They also outline the steps necessary for achieving reconciliation with Indigenous peoples (TRC, 2015; UNDRIP, 2007). The principles of CSL (Senge et al., 2019) and the iceberg model (Stroh, 2015) can be powerful tools to leverage in the awakening phase. By engaging in active listening and empathic dialogue, identifying underlying causes, and fostering a culture of compassion and collaboration, as the school leader, I can develop more effective solutions and promote positive change in GA during this stage.

The mobilization phase involves mobilizing resources, building a team, and developing a plan for change (Deszca et al., 2020). Relatedly, CSL emphasizes the importance of empathy and collaboration in leadership (Senge et al., 2019). Leaders need to understand the needs and perspectives of all stakeholders involved in the change process, including those who may be resistant to change. In the mobilization phase, leaders can use CSL principles to build relationships with stakeholders and develop a shared vision for change. Additionally, the iceberg model can be used to conduct a thorough analysis of the problem and identify the root causes (Stroh, 2015). This analysis can help to inform the development of an effective change plan. In summary, the principles of CSL and the iceberg model can be valuable tools in the mobilization phase of the change path model.

The acceleration phase of the change path model involves implementing the change plan and monitoring progress (Deszca et al., 2020). This phase is critical for ensuring that the change is successful and sustainable. The OIP's change plan, monitoring, and assessment are discussed in detail in Chapter 3. The principles of CSL (Senge et al., 2019) and the iceberg model (Stroh, 2015) can be valuable tools in the acceleration phase. By continuing to focus on empathy, collaboration, and systems thinking, I can build trust and maintain momentum during the implementation process. Additionally, by using the iceberg model to monitor progress, the staff and I can ensure that the change is effective and sustainable.

With a plan in place in the acceleration phase, the final step, institutionalization, involves embedding the change into the culture and systems of the organization (Deszca et al., 2020). I can ensure this outcome by continuing to use the principles of CSL (Senge et al., 2019) to focus on empathy, collaboration, and systems thinking. Additionally, by using the iceberg model (Stroh, 2015) to analyze the underlying systems, I can ensure that the change is sustainable over the long term.

The objective of the change plan is to enhance GA staff members' awareness of their role as colonizers in oppressing and marginalizing Indigenous peoples, leading to a greater systemic appreciation of Indigenous cultures, ways of knowing, and difficult histories. Although the change model's simplicity promotes autonomy in framing the process, it must incorporate feedback loops into each step to make it an iterative process (Deszca et al., 2020).

Combination of These Models

To address the PoP, integrating CSL theory (Senge et al., 2019) and the iceberg model (Stroh, 2015) into the change path model (Deszca et al., 2020) offers a more sustainable and holistic approach. CSL theory emphasizes the interconnectivity of various systems and factors

that contribute to a particular problem, promoting a holistic approach to understanding and addressing root causes (Senge et al., 2019). On the other hand, the iceberg model highlights the need to go beyond surface-level events and patterns to truly comprehend and address the underlying causes of an issue (Stroh, 2015). By integrating these two models into the change path model, GA staff can develop a more comprehensive understanding of the problem and create effective strategies for meaningful and long-lasting change.

The change path model (Deszca et al., 2020) is the basic framework; combining it with the iceberg model (Stroh, 2015) and CSL (Senge et al., 2019) expands it to be more contextually relevant and engage GA staff in the emotional work of Indigenizing our curriculum and delivery (see Appendix C). Using CSL can assist in identifying what is working well in our school system (Senge et al., 2019), and the iceberg model can provide a comprehensive understanding of multiple perspectives. By embracing this integration, GA staff can transition from a linear approach to an iterative process that involves critical reflection, leveraging organizational strengths, and fostering staff emotional well-being, which becomes crucial when addressing the challenges of organizational change readiness through a social justice and social-emotional lens.

Organizational Change Readiness

Teachers have an ethical and moral obligation to ensure Indigenous awareness (Alberta Education 2020a, 2020b). Addressing the lack of Indigenous knowledge is crucial to the success of the OIP. The change path model (Deszca et al., 2020) can be applied to understand how embracing indigeneity will support staff in understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing and true histories. GA teachers must recognize the ethical and moral implications of their role in supporting Indigenous knowledge, histories, and connection to the land and establish a desire to

make the necessary change happen within the school community. It is essential to clarify the current and desired future state to aid in establishing GA's readiness for change.

The awakening phase of recognizing the need for change assumes that a level of readiness is present, and developing a shared understanding of the need for change requires an understanding of the value of the change. Measuring the readiness of a culturally homogenous school to engage in the work of decolonizing practices and using more Indigenous-based pedagogies is a complex and ongoing process that requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. A change readiness survey can help to establish a starting point (refer to Appendix D). This survey should be administered after initial discussions about the specific problem and the desired future vision have taken place. The survey will help gauge the staff's level of preparedness and willingness to embrace the forthcoming changes.

Another helpful tool to assess staff readiness to engage in decolonizing practices and Indigenous-based pedagogies is a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis (Ballowe, 2010). SWOT analysis has become an essential tool for assessing a company's market position, but it can be applied to other contexts, including education, to examine the internal and external factors that may impact an organization, particularly during periods of uncertainty or hesitation (Benzaghta et al., 2021). By identifying these factors, institutions can develop strategies to improve their performance and achieve their goals.

A study by Battiste and Henderson (2021) highlighted the importance of incorporating Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and practices into education as a way of decolonizing and promoting reconciliation. SWOT analysis can help the school identify its strengths in this area, such as a commitment to equity and social justice, as well as its weaknesses, such as a lack of knowledge or understanding of Indigenous cultures and histories. SWOT analysis can also help

schools to identify opportunities for growth and development. For example, L.A. Brown and Strega (2005) found that partnerships with Indigenous communities can be a powerful way to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into education. SWOT analysis can help GA to identify opportunities for partnerships and community engagement, as well as funding opportunities to support Indigenous focused professional development (L. A. Brown & Strega, 2005).

However, it is important to recognize the limitations of SWOT analysis and consider using it in combination with other tools to provide a more comprehensive and objective assessment. To understand GA's readiness for change related to decolonizing practices and land-based pedagogies, the SWOT analysis will be used in the following way:

1. Strengths: GA staff will identify collective and individual strengths. From my observations, GA's strengths include having passionate and dedicated staff, a supportive and responsive district Indigenous educator, a positive school culture, and a commitment to equity and social justice.
2. Weaknesses: The school staff will identify areas for improvement. Weaknesses include limited Indigenous focused resources, a lack of knowledge or understanding of Indigenous cultures and histories, a lack of representation of Indigenous peoples in the school community, and resistance to change.
3. Opportunities: The school staff will identify opportunities that may support this plan, including partnerships with local Indigenous communities, funding opportunities, community engagement, or professional development opportunities.
4. Threats: The school staff should identify potential threats to their ability to engage in the work, including resistance from stakeholders, limited resources to support teacher growth, and competing curriculum priorities.

5. Develop a plan: Based on the SWOT analysis, my perspective as school leader, and the data collected from staff, the school will develop a plan that leverages its strengths, addresses its weaknesses, capitalizes on opportunities, and mitigates threats. The plan will include specific actions, timelines, and responsibilities.
6. Monitor and evaluate progress: The school should regularly monitor and evaluate progress, adjust as needed, and celebrate successes along the way.

SWOT analysis can help a culturally homogenous school like GA to assess readiness and develop a strategic plan to decolonize practices and use Indigenous-based pedagogies (Jackson et al., 2021). The SWOT analysis will be worked through with all stakeholders to leverage strengths, address difficulties, understand staff and stakeholder readiness, and work through solutions to this PoP.

GA has shown a strong preliminary commitment to embracing change and decolonizing practices in education. The teachers' recognition of their ethical and moral obligations to support Indigenous knowledge, histories, and land connections, coupled with their willingness to make necessary changes, reflects a high level of readiness. The use of a change readiness survey and SWOT analysis further demonstrates GA's proactive approach to understanding staff preparedness and developing a strategic plan that leverages strengths, addresses weaknesses, capitalizes on opportunities, and mitigates potential threats.

Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

Engaging adult learners in Indigenous worldviews, modes of perception, and connection, as well as learning to challenge White settler perspectives, are essential for GA staff's individual and collective journey towards appreciating Indigenous perspectives and reconciling past wrongs. Authentic leadership is necessary to establish a psychologically safe space for educators

during challenging changes (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Psychological safety refers to an environment where individuals feel safe to share their thoughts and opinions without fear of criticism or negative consequences. It is crucial for promoting trust, open communication, creativity, and innovation within groups. Research has shown that teams with high levels of psychological safety outperform those with low levels (Edmondson, 2018). Individuals who feel psychologically safe are more likely to speak up, share ideas, and offer constructive feedback at work (Kahn, 1990).

To create a psychologically safe environment, leaders must make a deliberate effort to be open and receptive to feedback. This can be achieved by modelling open communication, actively listening, and showing empathy (Edmondson, 2018). A culture of psychological safety can be established by setting clear guidelines for respectful communication and behaviour and exploring members' ethics and values. Educators and school leaders have a professional and ethical duty to apply foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in Canada, as outlined in the *Teaching Quality Standard* (Alberta Education, 2020b) and LQS (Alberta Education, 2020a). A socially just approach to this work requires acknowledging the responsibility to address the oppression, marginalization, and cultural genocide of Indigenous people in Canada. Without a fundamental understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, and ways of knowing, teachers may not be equipped to engage in this work. It is crucial to consider possible solutions for GA to participate in this work.

Solution 1: Unpacking Colonial Assumptions and Racial Biases

Chapter 1 highlights how GA's present-day school reflects the influence of the dominant settler colonial culture. However, educators often perpetuate this model without recognizing the impact of their biases, maintaining the status quo and largely overlooking Indigenous knowledge

and awareness. Cultural reproduction is the phenomenon that replicates rather than challenges the existing system (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000). Implicit bias research reveals that White teachers tend to favour White students and hold negative biases towards non-White students (Glock & Karbach, 2015; Hartlep, 2015; Van den Bergh et al., 2010), which may contribute to the PoP in GA as a result of unchallenged implicit biases among the White staff. Staats (2016) described implicit bias as attitudes or stereotypes that affect one's understanding, actions, and decisions unconsciously, even among individuals who operate within the sphere of social justice and egalitarianism, resulting in inequitable outcomes.

To address unconscious biases that may negatively affect Indigenous awareness and learning, GA staff can adopt Edgoose et al.'s (2019) multistep approach that comprises educating, approaching, and moving forward, with five methods in each strategy. Staff must educate themselves about their biases, approach this work with a purpose, and create strong relationships and safe spaces to engage in emotionally charged, ongoing work. To understand and collect data on biases, GA staff will take an implicit bias test. As the staff work to acknowledge their privilege and power, they must avoid othering, marginalization, and exclusion of those who are less dominant, acknowledging Indigenous people's unique histories and experiences. To do so requires cultural humility and an intentional incorporation of indigeneity. Difficult conversations and introspection can help facilitate this process.

Solution 1 Strengths

For staff to effectively challenge implicit biases and colonial assumptions, we must adjust how we approach the work of equity and diversity by recognizing our unconscious biases. This will help define a path towards indigenization and increase the chances of success in decolonizing GA's pedagogies, school structures, and policies. By reframing our approach to

Indigenize our pedagogical practices, we can also support students in understanding their own unconscious biases. Although this work starts with the adults in the building, it will ultimately impact students and help them reach their full potential as global citizens. One specific strategy to support this work is to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into the curriculum, which can involve working collaboratively with Indigenous community members and organizations. It is also important to create a supportive and inclusive school culture that values and respects Indigenous knowledge, languages, and cultures, and actively works to dismantle systemic barriers and biases. By taking these steps, staff can work towards building a more just and equitable education system for all students.

Solution 1 Limitations

Although this approach can increase awareness of individual biases and aid in making bias-informed decisions, it does not address the larger systemic issues of racial bias within the greater school community. Despite increased awareness, implicit bias may still have an automatic and unconscious impact, as demonstrated by Staats's (2016) research. Communicating the concept of implicit bias to staff may be challenging, as it influences decision-making and interactions unconsciously. Therefore, it is important to approach this work humbly and be willing to adapt strategies as needed. If the individualized approach does not produce lasting change, a more systemic approach may be necessary.

Solution 2: Learning from Indigenous People

To become genuine allies to Indigenous peoples, the predominantly White staff with privilege and power must increase their understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, and ways of knowing (Smith et al., 2015). Self-reflection and listening to Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers can help dismantle oppressive systems within the school and build awareness

of Indigenous education. K. T. Brown and Ostrove (2013) proposed two essential traits that allies must possess: a genuine desire to support social justice and establish meaningful relationships with marginalized communities.

As part of this effort, GA will establish a committee of interested staff members to plan for Indigenous History Month in September, coinciding with National Truth and Reconciliation Day. Engaging in classroom and school-wide activities that focus on Indigenous awareness, such as listening to Indigenous voices through podcasts, videos, music, and articles; learning about Treaty 7 and its historical and contemporary significance; and understanding the lasting impact of the IRS system on Indigenous peoples, can build an understanding of Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing. It is essential to recognize the role of historical oppression and genocide of Indigenous peoples in Canada and take action to rectify past wrongdoings.

In the context of this plan, allyship means partnering with Indigenous peoples to address historical and present injustices and dismantle colonial systems. To become an ally, non-Indigenous individuals of settler heritage must be invited by Indigenous people to participate, establish trust, and avoid assuming what is best for them (Regan, 2010). Trustworthy relationships create accountability and commitment to sustained action and collaborative efforts (Irlbacher-Fox, 2012). Spending time with individuals from different backgrounds can also reduce conflict and prejudice (Zhou et al., 2019). However, although allyship is crucial, it is not enough to address structural biases that perpetuate inequities.

Solution 2 Strengths

To build genuine partnerships and promote equity and self-determination for Indigenous peoples, the staff and students must actively learn from local Indigenous leaders and teachers. This collaborative allyship approach should involve direct engagement with Indigenous

knowledge and history, as well as decolonizing our curriculum and pedagogies. Battiste (2013) emphasized that Indigenous peoples must guide this process by setting standards and protections for centering Indigenous knowledge.

Solution 2 Limitations

Although it is important for school staff to become Indigenous allies and engage in decolonizing work, there are limitations to this approach. Allyship alone may not be sufficient to address systemic issues of colonialism and ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples. To bring about lasting change, there needs to be broader societal and political efforts to address structural inequalities and discriminatory policies. Additionally, centering Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in the curriculum and pedagogy may not fully address power imbalances and the ongoing impacts of colonialism. Ongoing critical reflection and centering the voices and perspectives of Indigenous peoples are crucial. Token gestures and one-time events are insufficient for true allyship, which requires long-term commitment and sustained effort.

Solution 3: Learning Land-Based Pedagogies

Land-based education is pivotal for strengthening the sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous nations. To promote land-based education, GA staff need to shift their Eurocentric lens to embrace Indigenous teachings that are deeply connected to the Earth. This shift in perspective will challenge the school's dominant Western thoughts about land use and promote greater empathy for Indigenous worldviews, ultimately fostering an appreciation of Indigenous teachings (Aikenhead & Michell, 2011).

Land-based pedagogies prioritize Indigenous knowledge systems, cultural practices, and languages, and can support students' academic success, cultural resilience, and personal growth, as well as promote decolonization and reconciliation in education (Restoule et al., 2013; A.

Wilson, 2008). Teachers can acknowledge and respect the land by inviting Indigenous Elders, knowledge keepers, and community members to share their knowledge and stories with students. They can incorporate Indigenous perspectives, teachings, and values into their practices and engage students in experiential and hands-on learning activities with the land (McGregor, 2018).

GA staff will form a professional learning community (PLC) to learn about Indigenous knowledge, stories, and worldviews, working independently and in collaboration with Indigenous Elders. The PLC's work can be shared with the whole staff at every professional development day to promote Indigenous awareness. By actively engaging in land-based learning, the school staff can gain a deeper understanding of Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing, promoting the sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous peoples.

Solution 3 Strengths

Land-based pedagogies provide a valuable opportunity to learn about and appreciate Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing, as Indigenous identity and worldviews are closely tied to the land. This approach promotes empathy, understanding, and respect for Indigenous peoples, as well as positive attitudes towards reconciliation and decolonization. Land-based learning also offers opportunities for healing and relationship-building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, as it recognizes Indigenous peoples' role as stewards of the environment (McCoy et al., 2017).

Participating in land-based activities supports the restoration of the land and respects Indigenous peoples' knowledge and practices related to the environment. Overall, incorporating land-based pedagogies into the curriculum can create more meaningful and authentic learning experiences, and contribute to the broader goals of Indigenous education and reconciliation.

Solution 3 Limitations

Incorporating land-based pedagogies at GA, a K–9 school, faces two key challenges. First, engaging Grade 7–9 teachers who do not teach social studies may not see the relevance of land-based learning to their subject areas, leading to resentment and dismissal. Second, finding local Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers with an understanding of the prairie land may prove difficult due to the homogenous nature of the community. These limitations need to be addressed to successfully integrate land-based pedagogies into the school’s curriculum.

Tuck and Yang (2012) cautioned that land-based pedagogies cannot be viewed as a solution to the larger systems of power and colonialism that have oppressed Indigenous peoples, as land is inherently political. They stated that “land is never just ‘land’ or property but is always already political” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5), suggesting that land-based pedagogies are not a panacea for the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples.

Chosen Solution

The chosen solution is a hybrid of Solutions 1 and 3. Appendix E compares the three solutions relative to building awareness of Indigenous truths, changing attitudes and perceptions, and prompting faculty action based on four desired outcomes: awareness of Indigenous truths, attitudes or perceptions, actions, and iceberg depth. The first outcome, awareness of Indigenous truths, is fundamental to dismantling colonial assumptions and promoting cultural understanding. By gaining a deeper understanding of Indigenous histories, perspectives, and contributions, teachers can challenge stereotypes and biases that may have been perpetuated by Eurocentric education. Second, changing attitudes and perceptions is crucial in fostering an inclusive and respectful learning environment. Teachers’ attitudes towards Indigenous cultures and peoples influence their interactions with students and their incorporation of Indigenous perspectives into

the curriculum. Positive attitudes can lead to a more empathetic and supportive learning environment for all students. Third, measuring changes in teachers' actions determines whether they are incorporating Indigenous perspectives into their teaching practices. This outcome reflects how new knowledge and attitudes are reflected in a tangible shift towards integrating Indigenous content and land-based pedagogies in the classroom. The fourth outcome, iceberg depth, relates to the deeper layers of culture hidden beneath the surface (Stroh, 2015). A higher rating suggests a more profound transformation, where teachers are actively integrating Indigenous worldviews into their teaching, curriculum development, and school culture.

These outcomes were picked because they provide a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the proposed solutions. By examining awareness, attitudes, actions, and the depth of engagement with Indigenous perspectives, educators can gain a holistic understanding of the impact of unpacking colonial assumptions, learning from Indigenous people, and adopting land-based pedagogies. It allows for a nuanced evaluation of progress and helps identify areas that may require further support or development. Ultimately, these outcomes aim to foster an educational environment that embraces Indigenous knowledge, promotes reconciliation, and empowers Indigenous students to succeed.

To achieve decolonization and reconciliation at GA, staff need to uncover biases and integrate land-based pedagogies into lessons. This hybrid approach of Solutions 1 and 3 involves working with Indigenous Elders and knowledge keepers and addressing internalized biases that affect decision-making (Cajete, 2000; Tuck & Yang, 2012). It requires a shift in attitudes and approaches towards Indigenous cultures and histories, rather than just adding Indigenous content to the curriculum (Tuck & Yang, 2012). To truly embrace Indigenous teachings, staff must acknowledge and address their biases and support one another's growth (Coulthard, 2014).

Changing attitudes is a critical step towards decolonization, requiring recognition of how colonial power structures have shaped attitudes and ways of thinking (Battiste, 2013; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2020).

Decolonization of education requires examining attitudes and values instilled by society and the education system (Battiste, 2013). Staff must recognize and challenge the impact of colonialism on knowledge and practices and center Indigenous knowledge systems in teaching (Battiste, 2013; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2020). Decolonization is an ongoing process that requires a lifelong commitment to learning and unlearning (Battiste, 2013). Ultimately, as educators, there is an ethical obligation to work towards decolonization and reconciliation in schools. By uncovering biases, integrating land-based pedagogies, and committing to ongoing learning and unlearning, the staff can create a more inclusive and respectful learning environment for all students. It is each teacher's responsibility to commit to this ongoing work and create a future where Indigenous peoples and their knowledge are respected and celebrated.

Chapter 2 Conclusion

In conclusion, achieving transformative change in Indigenous awareness and appreciation at GA requires a compassionate and comprehensive leadership approach. Integrating authentic leadership theory and transformative leadership theory offers a promising strategy aligned with my characteristics as the principal. By blending these approaches and fostering trust, openness, and critical self-reflection among staff, GA can create a powerful framework for indigenized learning and greater decolonization. However, this transformative journey necessitates ongoing commitment, collaboration with Indigenous communities, and a dedication to fostering an inclusive and equitable educational institution. A plan for achieving that objective is provided in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Implementation, Communication, and Evaluation

Building an implementation plan around awareness, appreciation, and action toward land-based learning for reconciliation guides this third and final chapter of the OIP. Detailed steps for implementing change, communicating the need for change, and monitoring and evaluating change are presented in this chapter. The objective is to develop a succinct plan of action for the chosen solution of this PoP—to understand educators’ implicit biases and remove their interference in engaging in more land-based pedagogical practices.

Change Implementation Plan

The key to successful organizational growth and development lies in the organization members’ ability to embrace and understand the inherent interconnectedness of different change approaches (Girod & Whittington, 2015). As a change agent, it is crucial for me to be self-aware of my preferences for incremental adjustments or radical shifts, as this awareness significantly influences how I lead transformative initiatives. To implement change effectively, it is essential to adopt sustainable, long-term solutions (Stroh, 2015) and utilize systems thinking frameworks (Senge, 2006), involving the community to address genuine problems of practice collaboratively. In this context, Stroh’s (2015) systems thinking for social change serves as a valuable decolonial framework, aligning seamlessly with GA’s overarching change plan focused on fostering equity and well-being for all learners through the decolonization of school learning practices.

By leveraging insights from systems thinking for social change (Stroh, 2015), the transformation process outlined in Chapter 2’s hybrid solution is effectively guided, leading to coherent and successful educational outcomes. GA staff will be empowered to engage critically and collaboratively, acknowledging the complexity of factors influencing change and emphasizing the need for holistic, sustainable solutions. This approach strengthens the pursuit of

equitable education and well-being for all learners, making the change initiative more meaningful and lasting.

Schools as Instruments for Systems Change

In his seminal work on schools and democracy, Dewey (1916/2009) contended that the education system acts as a place for indoctrination of students to maintain the current social structure. This systems perspective relates back to critical theory and using a level of critical consciousness to understand the practices in schools that continue to oppress marginalized groups. For both Dewey and Freire (2005), systemic change emerges when individuals become aware of their role in society and how their actions maintain the current social order. Hatcher (1997) asserted that “education should develop individual capacities, however they must be for the benefit of the local community and society at large; the development of individual capacities is for the common good” (p. 24). The primary solution of this OIP is to uncover implicit biases through critical reflection to support decolonizing pedagogical practices and implement greater land-based learning.

As a social justice leader, I apply a systems thinking approach to transform staff practices and promote ethical leadership. This approach fosters indigenization of GA and supports decolonization of the broader social system. Systems thinking considers the system as a whole, incorporating diverse perspectives, interrelationships, and reciprocal effects among its elements (Boardman & Sauser, 2008; Shaked & Schechter, 2014). Accordingly, a systems thinking approach will be employed to implement the chosen solution into GA.

Senge et al.’s (1994) ladder of inference (see Appendix F) and Cooperrider et al.’s (2000) AI frameworks will be layered over the systems thinking approach to facilitate change implementation. The ladder of inference promotes understanding of how individuals interpret

experiences, and AI identifies and builds upon an organization's strengths (Cooperrider et al., 2000; Senge et al., 1994). Bushe (2012) advocated combining AI with other change management frameworks, such as the ladder of inference, to achieve a holistic understanding of the issue and possible solutions.

To begin, the ladder of inference can be used to identify the mental models that people have about a particular issue or problem (Argyris, 2010; Senge, 2006). In the context of a school's work towards truth and reconciliation using land-based learning, decolonization, and greater Indigenous awareness, mental models refer to the underlying assumptions, beliefs, and values that students, staff, and faculty hold about Indigenous peoples and their history. For example, if the school community holds negative mental models about Indigenous peoples, the school may need to incorporate more education and awareness-raising initiatives into the change implementation plan to challenge these mental models and promote more positive attitudes and behaviours. By understanding and challenging mental models that perpetuate systemic discrimination and marginalization, the school can create a more positive and inclusive environment that values Indigenous peoples and their contributions to Canadian society. The commitment to engage in this work with Indigenous people, as Ramírez (2021) argued, involves challenging institutional racism, addressing unconscious biases, and using the positionality of teachers to denounce injustices and promote respect and reciprocity. The staff must strive to advance the rights of Indigenous peoples and recognize that as allies, their actions should align with and be guided by Indigenous community members.

GA will use the structures of AI (Cooperrider et al., 2000) to identify strengths in the school community, such as its commitment to social justice and engagement in critical conversations about Indigenous peoples. This identification could involve conducting interviews

with students and staff to gain a comprehensive understanding. AI transcends being merely an organizational methodology and instead transforms the staff's perspective and existence in the world. It will provide the faculty with a unique lens through which to perceive reality (Watkins et al., 2011). In this AI frame, GA staff will no longer perceive problems and solutions as isolated components, but rather as interconnected elements forming a cohesive whole. This whole comprises the collective aspirations for the future and the journey GA will undertake to manifest that desired future.

A change implementation plan could then be created to build upon these positive qualities, creating a more inclusive environment that values Indigenous peoples and their contributions. A proposed change implementation plan can be found in Appendix G.

Transforming Colonial Mindsets: Systems Thinking for Social Change

Stroh's (2015) systems thinking for social change model helps to address complex social issues by emphasizing the interconnectedness of elements within a system. This model recognizes that social change is not linear; it requires a comprehensive understanding of system dynamics to create lasting impact. GA's school system is the context for the OIP, and the plan's three stages will embed principles of AI (Cooperrider et al., 2000) and CSL (Senge et al., 2019) to leverage individual and collective strengths for transformative change (see Appendix G).

Stage 1: Identify the Problem

At GA, this stage involves understanding the root causes of staff's lack of implementation of Indigenous histories, cultures, and ways of knowing, as well as the impact of colonialism on Indigenous populations today. Staff are engaged to support the change for the futurity of Indigenous peoples in the local context. The goal is a comprehensive understanding of the PoP and its systemic context at GA.

Create Relationships. During this stage, staff conduct research on Indigenous histories and cultures, examine settler colonial worldviews and biases in decision-making, and understand more deeply those adversely affected by colonialism. TRC (2015) calls to action and UNDRIP (2007) will be used to support decolonization efforts. To manage the emotional impact, an Indigenous Awareness Committee (IAC) of GA staff wanting to become allies of this work will be created to build a foundation for the what and how of change before involving the wider staff. The IAC will coach staff in developing Indigenous pedagogical practices and adopting a more decolonized perspective. The IAC can provide training, support collaboration, offer resources and feedback, and advocate for change.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) highlighted the importance of coaching in driving change. Specifically, the IAC's engagement with staff will include the following:

- Providing training on Indigenous pedagogical practices, including culturally responsive teaching strategies and curriculum development, which can help staff to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and knowledge into their teaching choices.
- Supporting collaboration among staff members, as well as between staff and Indigenous community members, to build relationships and ensure that Indigenous perspectives and knowledge are integrated into the work being done.
- Providing resources such as books, articles, videos, and other materials that support Indigenous pedagogical practices and decolonization efforts.
- Offering feedback to staff members on their work, including lesson plans, curriculum materials, and assessments, to help ensure that Indigenous perspectives and knowledge are being integrated effectively.

- Advocating for change at the institutional level, such as by incorporating policies and practices that support Indigenous pedagogical practices and decolonization efforts.

This stage establishes a foundation for the process by comprehending the problem, context, and stakeholders involved. Without this understanding, developing an effective strategy for sustainable change will be challenging.

Guiding Generative Conversations and Dialogue. Boell and Senge (2017) suggested that organizations are social fields shaped by interactions and relationships among individuals, with generative conversations being a key aspect of this concept. Generative conversations create new possibilities and shape new realities by tapping into the collective intelligence of members (Boell & Senge, 2017; Kahane, 2007). Effective leaders facilitate these conversations, establish a culture that fosters them, listen attentively to staff concerns, and collect the resulting data. The IAC will initiate these honest exchanges with staff, leading to new knowledge and understanding and fostering an environment that supports trust, empathy, and collective commitment. Kahane (2007) advised individuals to take the following steps when applying generative conversations: (a) pay attention to their state of being; (b) actively participate in the dialogue by sharing their thoughts, perspectives, and experiences; (c) remember that they do not have the truth about anything; (d) engage with and listen to others who have a stake in the system; (e) reflect on their own role in the system; (f) listen with empathy; (g) listen to what is being said, not just by themselves and others, but also through all of them; (h) allow for periods of silence and reflection; and (i) relax and be fully present. By applying these principles of generative dialogue within the context of indigenization and decolonization, GA staff will engage in meaningful and transformative conversations that lead to the cocreation of new realities and the hopeful initiation of the dismantling of colonial structures and systems (ChangeFusion, 2015; Kahane, 2007).

The use of generative conversations creates a safe and open space that facilitates meaningful change. Kovach (2021) emphasized that a safe and respectful learning environment is critical for integrating Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into teacher education. Battiste and Henderson (2021) argued that incorporating Indigenous knowledge systems into education is necessary for decolonization, and Tuck and Yang (2012) contended that cocreating solutions with Indigenous communities ensures that decolonization efforts are grounded in their needs and aspirations. Finally, Conrad (2022) stressed that holding staff accountable for achieving decolonization goals through generative conversations builds momentum and achieves meaningful change.

Creative Tension. To foster progress and innovation, the IAC committee will identify creative tension in the school. This balance of opposing forces and ideas can drive creativity, change, and progress (Stroh, 2015). To create opportunities for creative tension to emerge, I will encourage open communication, collaboration, and diverse perspectives during staff meetings, professional development sessions, and any other collaborative meetings. Negative feelings from tension can be addressed through CSL's emotional awareness techniques (Senge et al., 2019). By focusing on the vision of building Indigenous awareness, a stable system can be achieved (Compassionate Systems Leadership, n.d.-b). Therefore, creating a safe space for collaborative, generative conversations is a foundational piece for creative tension to materialize (Compassionate Systems Leadership, n.d.-a).

As the school leader, I can work on meeting safety in several ways: (a) steering the conversation back on topic if it veers off course or becomes repetitive or malicious, (b) encouraging participation from individuals who have yet to share their thoughts or opinions, (c) preventing any one person from monopolizing the conversation by intervening or redirecting the

discussion, and (d) requesting further explanation or elaboration from someone, when necessary, by asking targeted questions. For the 2023–2024 school year, I will use professional development days early in the year to address the gap between current and ideal levels of understanding and attitudes towards Indigenous cultures and history. These days will focus on identifying gaps and challenges and are part of Stage 1 of GA’s larger plan. The final step of this first stage is to create a clear vision for change.

Collaborative Vision for Change. To create a collaborative vision for change, staff must embrace creative tension and recognize their ethical responsibility to engage in the transformative process of decolonizing school structures through Indigenous-informed practices. This involves valuing Indigenous culture, histories, and ways of knowing, while also becoming aware of past and present colonial practices. An ethical framework can guide decision-making and ensure positive change for all stakeholders. Conducting a staff analysis will identify those who will be most affected by proposed changes, consider their perspectives, and minimize negative impacts when creating a vision for the future.

To uncover unacknowledged perspectives such as implicit biases and other mental models, I will conduct empathy interviews and share the data anonymously with the IAC (to create supports) and with all teachers (to understand perspectives). These interviews will involve analyzing personal identities, prejudices, principles, and past experiences that may affect interpretation of what is being conveyed. According to Nelsestuen and Smith (2020), empathy interviews are useful in recognizing system issues that require attention, exploring the underlying causes of a problem from a community viewpoint, and collecting data that spark innovative, people-focused concepts for change.

Clear communication and transparency are essential to successful implementation. Käser and Miles (2002) found that collaboration and knowledge exchange require trust. As the leader, I can use my transparency to build trust and credibility, facilitating the successful implementation of changes. Trust also helps mitigate anxieties and uncertainties during times of organizational transition. Therefore, leaders should establish trustworthy relationships with their team members to handle changes effectively (Islam et al, 2020; Judge et al., 2004).

In Stroh's (2015) change process, the first stage is to develop a collective understanding of the current reality and identify the gap between the current state and the desired future state. Shields's (2010) transformative leadership approach emphasizes the importance of creating a shared vision for change grounded in social justice principles. Authentic leadership also aligns with this stage, as it involves self-awareness and a commitment to values that align with social justice and equity. By reflecting on their own biases and assumptions, authentic leaders can ensure that their leadership aligns with the needs of the organization (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Creative tension is an essential element that aligns with transformative and authentic leadership. It involves creating a sense of discomfort or disequilibrium to drive change. According to Freire (1970/2018), this discomfort is necessary for critical consciousness. Transformative leaders can use creative tension to challenge the status quo and encourage their followers to think critically (Shields, 2010). Authentic leaders can use creative tension to engage in difficult conversations and address conflicts (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Stage 2: Analyze the System

The second stage of the systems thinking for social change model is to analyze the system (Stroh, 2015). This stage involves examining the relationships and interactions between different parts of the system, including the roles and actions of different stakeholders. The goal is

to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics and interactions that are driving the PoP.

In this stage, the IAC will build a systems map (Stroh, 2015) to visualize the interdependencies within the system and identify leverage points for change. Data from surveys of staff's understanding of Indigenous cultures and histories, as well as implicit bias tests, will be used to refine the map and identify underlying causes of the problem, rather than just its symptoms. Staff perspectives and power dynamics must be considered to identify barriers to change and areas of resistance. Applying AI principles, discussed in Chapter 2, can help staff approach the problem through existing strengths, creating a positive and inclusive culture that manages implicit bias.

A research-supported way to manage implicit bias using AI is through appreciative interviews with staff (Bevington, 2015; Cooperrider et al., 2008). These structured conversations focus on sharing positive experiences and successes related to Indigenous learning and equity within the organization. This approach creates a culture of awareness and inclusivity that can counteract inequitable implicit bias and reframe pedagogical practices. To build a culture of inclusivity, AI can help identify and leverage the strengths of diverse individuals and teams, encouraging diversity and reducing the impact of implicit bias. Inclusive policies and practices can be designed and implemented by gathering input from diverse stakeholders, including Indigenous voices. Once the complexity of the issue and its impacts have been understood, GA can move to Stage 3 and develop an effective strategy for lasting change.

Stage 3: Develop a Strategy

In this stage of systems thinking for social change (Stroh, 2015), strategies and interventions developed in earlier stages are implemented to achieve measurable improvements

in indigenizing the school. I offer five strategies with corresponding examples that could be implemented in Stage 3:

1. Developing and implementing school policies and procedures that address the underlying causes of the problem: (a) Conduct a comprehensive review of existing policies and procedures to identify any elements that perpetuate marginalization or do not align with Indigenous perspectives and values; (b) consult with Indigenous community members, Elders, and knowledge keepers to inform the development of new policies that reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and prioritize cultural sensitivity; and (c) implement procedures that support the integration of Indigenous knowledge, history, and perspectives into the curriculum.
2. Creating partnerships and collaborations among stakeholders, inside and outside of the school staff, to leverage resources and expertise: (a) Establish partnerships with local Indigenous organizations, community members, and Elders to ensure authentic representation and input in decision-making processes; (b) collaborate with Indigenous education experts and scholars to provide professional development opportunities for staff to enhance their understanding of Indigenous cultures, histories, and teaching methodologies; and (c) foster relationships with local Indigenous artists, performers, and storytellers to enrich the educational experiences of students and create opportunities for cultural exchanges.
3. Engaging and empowering staff members to take ownership of the problem and be active participants in the solution: (a) Offer professional development workshops and training sessions that promote cultural competence, including sessions focused on Indigenous histories, traditions, and teaching practices; (b) create spaces for staff to

- share their experiences and perspectives, fostering a sense of belonging and ownership in the process of indigenizing the school; and (c) encourage staff members to collaborate and cocreate initiatives that integrate Indigenous knowledge and practices into the curriculum, classroom activities, and school events.
4. Implementing evidence-based interventions that have been shown to be effective in addressing similar problems: (a) Review research and studies on successful strategies for indigenizing education and implementing evidence-based interventions; (b) adapt and implement proven programs, approaches, and teaching methods that have shown positive outcomes in promoting Indigenous cultures, languages, and histories; and (c) regularly evaluate the effectiveness of implemented interventions through ongoing data collection and analysis, seeking input from students, staff, and the community to inform continuous improvement.
 5. Monitoring and evaluating the progress of the strategies and interventions over time and adjusting as needed: (a) Establish clear goals and indicators to track the progress of indigenization efforts, such as increased representation of Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum, improved academic outcomes for Indigenous students, or enhanced cultural awareness among staff; (b) regularly assess the implementation of strategies through surveys, focus groups, and data analysis to identify areas of success and areas that require adjustments or additional support; and (c) use the feedback received to inform decision-making processes and adapt strategies accordingly, ensuring a responsive and iterative approach to indigenizing the school.

By employing these specific strategies, GA teachers will work towards indigenizing their practices, curriculum, and overall educational environment, fostering a greater sense of

inclusivity and cultural appreciation. That work will be done collaboratively with Indigenous communities, with ongoing evaluation and reflection, to ensure the continuous improvement of these initiatives. Stroh's (2015) four-stage change process can prepare GA staff for more land-based pedagogies by establishing a shared understanding of the purpose and context of the work and identifying the contributing factors to the current situation. This process helps to create a shared vision of land-based pedagogies and recognize any cultural biases, power imbalances, or resource gaps. By working through each stage, staff can move towards a collaborative, transformative, and socially just approach to education.

Professional Learning Communities. PLCs are collaborative structures within schools aimed at improving teacher performance and student learning outcomes (Dufour et al., 2016). According to Dufour et al. (2016), the fundamental purpose of PLCs is to create a shared culture of learning among teachers, where they engage in a continuous cycle of inquiry, reflection, and action to improve instructional practices. In this sense, PLCs are not simply about providing professional development opportunities for teachers, but rather creating a collaborative and supportive community where teachers can work together to identify areas for growth and develop innovative solutions to improve student learning. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement, PLCs contribute to building a strong school community that is dedicated to student achievement and success.

PLCs offer teachers a structured approach to professional learning that is evidence-based, job-embedded, and aligned with student needs and school goals, resulting in improved teaching strategies and student outcomes (Hord, 2009). By promoting equity and cultural responsiveness in the classroom, PLCs can serve as a critical tool in supporting land-based pedagogies that prioritize Indigenous ways of knowing and learning (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Dufour et al.,

2016). Data collected from the SWOT analysis can support PLCs at GA in identifying best practices and achieving a shared vision of learning that is culturally responsive and relevant.

The PLCs will be tasked with completing an Indigenous awareness training program. The anticipated outcomes of the training include learning about Indigenous cultures, how to work with and support Indigenous peoples, and contemporary and historical issues Indigenous peoples face. PLCs can implement land-based pedagogies with a deeper understanding of Indigenous cultures, histories, and ways of knowing gained from the training program. This approach will help a non-Indigenous staff greater align their pedagogies with Indigenous teachings.

Land-Based Pedagogy. Land-based pedagogy can support non-Indigenous understanding through experiential learning that breaks down stereotypes and misconceptions about Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing (Gruenewald, 2003). Indigenous scholar Simpson (2004) explained that Indigenous ways of knowing “come from the land, and the destruction of the environment is a colonial manifestation and a direct attack on Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous nationhood” (p. 377). Integrating Indigenous perspectives and knowledge in the curriculum can also promote a more inclusive and respectful view of Indigenous cultures (Restoule, 2011). Furthermore, land-based pedagogy can foster relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and encourage support for Indigenous knowledge systems (Restoule, 2011).

The successful implementation of the change plan at GA relies on two central aspects: embracing the interconnectedness of different change approaches and adopting sustainable, long-term solutions through systems thinking. As a change agent, self-awareness of leadership preferences for incremental adjustments or radical shifts is essential in leading transformative initiatives. Furthermore, leveraging the systems thinking for social change (Stroh, 2015)

framework in the transformation process strengthens the pursuit of equity and well-being for all learners, guiding the change initiative towards coherent and lasting educational outcomes. To communicate the need for change and the change process, stakeholders must understand the importance of building a land-based learning culture and engage in knowledge mobilization (KMb) and professional learning strategies to enhance the impact of educational investments.

Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and the Change Process

To implement the change plan, stakeholders must understand the importance of building a land-based learning culture. KMb aims to transfer research outcomes into practical applications through various strategies, enhancing the impact of educational investments (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2019). Professional learning involves aligning knowledge to meet specific educational needs rather than just disseminating information (Cordingley, 2008).

Knowledge Mobilization Plan

The KMb plan aims to effectively transfer research findings into practical settings to enhance research impact. It involves identifying stakeholders, assessing knowledge needs, selecting appropriate strategies, implementing them, and evaluating their effectiveness (Lavis et al., 2003). The aim of this OIP is to facilitate the understanding of the GA school staff regarding the relationship between land-based pedagogy and Indigenous truth and reconciliation. In light of the absence of land-based education in the GA classrooms, staff will need to engage with the evidence supporting the importance of land-based pedagogy for truth, reconciliation, and decolonization within institutional structures. To implement a greater understanding of Indigenous histories, culture, ways of knowing, and connection to the land at GA, the KMb plan will comprise five steps, as follows:

1. **Identify key stakeholders who will be involved in the plan:** This will include primarily teachers and students, but also parents, Elders, and community members in a more minor role.
2. **Synthesize the research evidence:** The plan should include a synthesis of the relevant research evidence on Indigenous histories, culture, ways of knowing, and connection to the land. This will involve reviewing academic literature, community-based research, and Indigenous knowledge systems.
3. **Tailor and disseminate the evidence:** Once the evidence has been synthesized, it should be tailored and disseminated to GA staff. This may include developing resources such as lesson plans, videos, and workshops that are designed to promote greater understanding and appreciation of Indigenous histories and cultures.
4. **Monitor and evaluate the process and outcomes:** It is important to monitor and evaluate the KMb plan to determine its effectiveness in promoting greater understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, and ways of knowing. This may involve conducting surveys, focus groups, or other forms of evaluation to assess changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours (see the section entitled Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation for details).
5. **Build partnerships:** Partnerships with Indigenous communities, elders, and knowledge holders is critical to the success of the plan. This may involve inviting community members to speak in classrooms, hosting cultural events, and involving Elders and knowledge holders in the development and implementation of the plan.

By using a KMb plan in this way, a K–9 school can work towards implementing a greater understanding of Indigenous histories, culture, ways of knowing, and connection to the land. The

plan can help to create a shared understanding of the importance of this knowledge and promote greater awareness and appreciation of Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing among students, teachers, and the wider school community. See Appendix H for a KMb plan and timeline.

Target Audience

The target audience for this OIP is GA's certified teaching faculty, with indirect participation from support staff. Stakeholders, including Indigenous Elders, knowledge keepers, and local community members, play a vital role in the success of the plan by addressing the needs and concerns of the teachers impacted by the research results (Barwick et al., 2020; Boaz et al., 2018). Involving stakeholders in KMb efforts, and defining land-based learning and culturally relevant pedagogies with teachers, can improve research relevance, quality, and impact, supporting the translation of research into action.

Messenger

The messenger is crucial in KMb, requiring credibility, expertise, and effective communication to engage stakeholders and translate complex information into accessible language (Lavis et al., 2003). Messengers' impact on the success of a plan through building trust, promoting engagement, and increasing message reach is well documented (Lavis et al., 2003). Social capital and trusting relationships are also important factors in message acceptance and action (Geuna & Muscio, 2009; Reid, 2014). As the school leader, reflection on these roles is necessary, but additional support is needed through knowledge brokers (Cooper & Shewchuk, 2015) such as Indigenous allies, university and college Indigenous scholars, SPSPD's director of Indigenous education, and the school's IAC group. Effective KMb relies on engagement, which can be fostered by an approachable messenger who promotes a sense of community around the

message. According to Phipps (2012), engagement is achieved through reciprocal learning and support between researchers and decision-makers.

Message

As a school community of settler colonial descent, it is our staff's ethical and professional responsibility to understand and appreciate Indigenous histories and cultures (Alberta Education, n.d.-b), understand the impact of colonization on Indigenous people in Canada, and address our complicity in that oppression (McCoy et al., 2017). Land-based pedagogies can help staff rethink their non-Indigenous perspectives and appreciate the significance of land to Indigenous cultures (Styres & Zinga, 2013). To do this work, one must build relationships with local Indigenous people and recognize their spiritual, interconnected relationship with the land. An effective message tailored to the target audience can build support, increase engagement, and drive action towards desired outcomes in a KMb plan. It defines the plan's purpose and goals, aligns stakeholders towards a common goal, and should be easy to understand and resonate with the audience's needs and interests.

Crafting a carefully worded message is crucial for successful KMb and must be tailored to achieve desired outcomes. Given the duty to Indigenous communities and people outlined in the Alberta Program of Studies (Alberta Education, n.d.-b), the message must also communicate the need for equitable and diverse practices that support Indigenous peoples and reflect the voices of staff in the vision forward. The target is to enhance understanding of Indigenous perspectives through more embedded teaching practices and curricular outcomes.

Knowledge Transfer Process and Communication Plan

Clear communication is crucial for successful KMb and can take various forms, including written materials, training, webinars, workshops, and films. Effective communication requires

tailoring strategies to support staff and considering their needs, preferences, and communication styles. The goal is to engage staff in knowledge transfer and learning within their teaching practices through a cycle of learning, conversing, feedback protocols, and repetition. The IAC and PLCs will be used, with an accountability strategy that will ensure all voices contribute to the work. Communication plays a pivotal role in the success of PLCs in this context.

For PLCs to enhance student learning outcomes and teacher collaboration, effective communication is key (Vescio et al., 2008). Strong PLCs positively impact student achievement and require regular opportunities for dialogue and collaboration among members. Effective communication involves establishing norms and structures that support open and honest communication, active listening, and constructive feedback (Hord, 1997). Frequent, two-way, and collaborative communication is essential for establishing a shared understanding of goals, commitment to them, and progress towards them (Stoll & Louis, 2016).

Lewis (2019) noted the importance of communication in organizational change, with a focus on spreading information, gathering feedback, and integrating employees. In the context of GA staff learning about Indigenous teachings and ways of knowing through land-based learning, working with the IAC and PLCs can support classroom implementation. Communication is significant in both formal and informal settings, and new methods may be needed for disseminating information while adhering to established channels such as email, shared documents, and planned conversations. The dissemination of information aims to enhance teachers' awareness of Indigenous histories, cultures, and ways of knowing.

In conclusion, the KMb plan serves as a roadmap for effectively transferring information and expertise within the school. The change process is a crucial component of this plan as it ensures that the knowledge is not only transferred but also effectively used to drive desired

outcomes. By involving all teachers in either a working group, PLCs, or both, while leveraging various technologies, the KMb plan and change process work in tandem to promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement. By implementing a well-structured plan and embracing change, GA can achieve its desired outcomes.

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

To implement change at GA, monitoring and evaluation are key. Markiewicz and Patrick (2016) stated that the difference between monitoring and evaluation is that monitoring is “routine in nature and undertaken in real time, while evaluation is periodic with a deeper level of analysis” (p. 5). The goal of the OIP is to increase staff awareness, attitudes, and action toward Indigenous histories and ways of knowing, with more land-based learning opportunities for students. Summative evaluation will measure this progress, whereas qualitative measures will be used for frequent monitoring. This goal will act as a metric for progress (Lewis, 2019), and evaluation will measure changes in staff perceptions, empathy towards Indigenous people, awareness of Indigenous history, and understanding of its impact on Indigenous people today.

This chapter discusses the implementation plan for the OIP, including Stroh’s (2015) systems thinking for social change model’s fourth stage of monitoring and evaluating change. During this stage, staff members engage in ongoing evaluation and adaptation of implemented strategies and interventions. Its purpose is to assess the effectiveness of these methods, identify areas for improvement, and adjust as needed to achieve desired outcomes.

Staff will collect and analyze data on the progress in understanding Indigenous cultures, histories, and ways of knowing. Additionally, they will assess how indigeneity learning is embedded in pedagogical practices and student outcomes. Data analysis will guide decisions

about improving the effectiveness of strategies and interventions. Some examples of strategies that will be done at this stage include the following:

- Use PLCs to monitor the progress of the strategies and interventions over the school year with ideas to further the work of indigeneity.
- At monthly staff meetings, identify areas that need improvement and make adjustments with a timeline attached, as necessary.
- Communicate and discuss the results gathered through the KMb plan to staff as a whole, then work more intimately on action items during monthly PLC time.
- Adapt the strategies and interventions as needed to ensure that they continue to be effective.
- Continuously evaluate feedback from staff with Indigenous community members and the larger school community, to ensure that the strategies and interventions are meeting their needs.

To ensure effectiveness of strategies and interventions over time, this stage is iterative and requires continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation. Monthly school-based professional development days will embed time to support this process. Staff will use the AI 4-D model (discovery, dream, design, destiny; Cooperrider et al., 2008) to create an iterative process of goal setting, change, and collaboration. The ladder of inference (Senge et al., 1994) and Indigenous community input will be used in conjunction to support a decision-making process based on thoughtful conclusions.

Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Model, Ladder of Inference, and Indigenous Input

The collaborative nature of the AI process, according to van der Haar and Hosking (2004), aims to facilitate the cocreation of knowledge with the organization by involving a wide

range of staff and stakeholders. Achieving an equal distribution of voice is crucial in this cocreation process. It is essential to address differences and conflicts among various perspectives constructively; avoiding them altogether should not be the goal.

AI is the skillful and collaborative act of posing questions that aim to uncover responses that can enhance system members' ability to perceive, anticipate, and amplify positive potential (Jansen et al., 2010). The purpose of AI, according to Cooperrider et al. (2000), is to generate theories that focus on envisioning tomorrow's possibilities rather than solely mapping or explaining past events. The process is to provide anticipatory descriptions of what could happen in the future. Furthermore, as the leader engaged in activities related to this organizational development, I will adopt a positive outlook and focus my attention on positive aspects, then ask others about stories that contain life-affirming energy. Upon hearing these stories, the staff involved in this inquiry will analyze the recurring themes and create shared visions of an ideal future and strategies developed will bring this future into existence (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003). Using the recommendation of Carr-Stewart and Walker (2003), we will narrate stories that convey optimism and resilience within our community of educators. These stories will demonstrate how staff can take advantage of their combined abilities to enhance everyone's knowledge and understanding of Indigenous culture.

To adopt a land-based approach in teaching, teachers need to understand the societal implications of these pedagogies. AI methodologies, based on social-constructivist theory, can help in facilitating this development. Qualitative data from surveys and empathy interviews will be used to monitor growth. Social constructionists argue that research is influenced by the community in which it is conducted, and that social science research creates the reality it

investigates (Bushe, 2012). Engaging with Indigenous research and literature can aid in decolonizing pedagogical practices.

The goal of this OIP is to appreciate and honour Indigenous worldviews and cultures through collaborative work with Indigenous-informed learning. From this perspective, the purpose of AI as a research tool is not to reveal what already exists, but rather to facilitate collective exploration of what could be possible if everyone's strengths were leveraged. Therefore, it is not meaningful to question the validity of the qualitative data generated by AI but rather to examine whose interests these methods serve and whether they are generative in serving those interests. The stages of AI marry together with Stroh's (2015) systems thinking for social change theory and the KMB model (Lavis et al., 2003), both previously discussed. See Appendix I for a table outlining these principles and their relation to the PoP.

As defined by Cooperrider et al. (2008), AI is a collaborative and evolving process of exploration that seeks to uncover the most positive aspects of individuals, organizations, and the world they inhabit. It entails identifying the key factors that contribute to a system's vitality, effectiveness, and capacity for positive change in economic, ecological, and human contexts. AI will support this OIP to "affirm the symbolic capacities of imagination and mind as well as the social capacity for conscious choice and cultural evolution" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 3) within GA's organizational development. Employing AI as an overarching philosophy, methodology, or strategy for evaluation has the potential to yield significant and valuable outcomes. This approach supports participatory evaluation by prioritizing the questions asked, considering inquiry as a continuous and integral aspect of organizational functioning, adhering to structured procedures, and stressing the significance of the findings. Specifically, AI will be used

to monitor the phases when engaging in collecting data through classroom observations, student work, empathy interviews, and generative conversations.

Regardless of how it is used, AI will enhance participation in the evaluation process, optimize the utilization of results, and enhance the capacity for learning and growth within GA. Through focusing on exceptional performance, it generates ongoing chances to reflect on moments of excellence and harness them to steer the organization towards a more optimistic future in embracing land-based learning.

Ladder of Inference

By incorporating the principles of the ladder of inference (Senge et al., 1994; see Appendix F) in conjunction with AI (Cooperrider et al., 2008), the process of cycling through the various stages of the inquiry will yield data and reflections that have been validated by all stakeholders and grounded in observations. The ladder serves as a framework for individuals to draw informed conclusions based on reflective thinking and collaborative discussions of their cognitive processes (Senge et al., 1994). The integration of these approaches will facilitate greater transparency in staff thinking and provide support for the PLC in addressing problems.

A socially just and ethical framework recognizes that systems of power and privilege shape the way knowledge is created and disseminated. It acknowledges that dominant perspectives are not objective or neutral, but rather reflect the interests of those in power. By embracing this perspective, as an organizational development practitioner I can work to identify and challenge the biases that will be inherent in the school's journey toward Indigenous awareness and strive to create more equitable perspectives within the staff.

AI's four dimensions (Cooperrider et al., 2008) and the ladder of inference (Senge et al., 1994) will be used to assess the discrepancy between the staff's current understanding of

Indigenous histories, cultures, and ways of knowing, and the truth about them. As a collective of White settlers, we need to critically evaluate our privilege and power to progress towards authentic land-based learning opportunities. The AI 4-D model will help develop a recursive solution to this issue, and the ladder of inference will ensure we do not draw premature conclusions. This work will occur within the PLC groups.

Stages of Appreciative Inquiry

This section investigates each stage of AI and their seamless integration into the transformative change process, with a specific focus on AI's capacity to generate positive and sustainable organizational outcomes at GA. Through an amalgamation of theoretical underpinnings and real-world implementations, this analysis offers invaluable perspectives on the strategic use of AI as a catalyst for promoting transformative change within GA.

Stage 1: Discovery

In the discovery phase, PLCs will be encouraged to highlight the most constructive aspects of the community, the school, and the team of teachers. The conversation starts with practical inquiries that help to identify and appreciate existing strengths. To achieve this objective, Cooperrider et al. (2008) stated that attention must be directed towards instances when the organization has performed exceptionally well and people felt energized and productive. By recognizing and investigating the distinctive factors such as leadership, relationships, technologies, core processes, structures, values, learning processes, external relationships, and planning methods that contributed to the successful outcomes, the focus is shifted from shortcomings to achievements. Even the smallest successes are analyzed and learned from in a methodical manner.

Additionally, in this stage, focus rests on discovering the positive aspects of staff philosophies of teaching and pedagogical practices. PLCs will use the ladder of inference (Senge et al., 1994) to explore the data (strengths) that have been uncovered, and to challenge teachers' assumptions and conclusions about what is happening. By doing so, jumping to conclusions can be avoided, while ensuring that perceptions are based on accurate and relevant data.

Stage 2: Dream

The teaching staff will work together to create a collective vision for the preferred future of engaging in more land-based practices. Cooperrider et al. (2008) noted that unlike other planning or visioning methods, AI derives its vision for the future from real examples of success from its positive history. Instead of conceiving theoretical solutions to past issues, AI urges the participants to visualize a desired future that is based on past accomplishments but unbound by practicality, and that engages their imagination and creativity. For the GA context, drawing upon our existing pedagogical practices and identifying both our individual and collective strengths will happen. The objective is to integrate these strengths with land-based pedagogies in a complementary manner. The ladder of inference (Senge et al., 1994) will be used to explore staff beliefs and assumptions about what is possible for our school. By challenging limiting beliefs and assumptions, a more expansive vision for the future can be created.

Stage 3: Design

Based on the positive aspects and strengths identified in the discovery phase, the work within the design phase (Cooperrider et al., 2008) will imagine a future where the challenge of indigenizing GA culture and curriculum has been overcome, and the community is thriving. In this stage, GA will develop a plan to achieve the desired future. The ladder of inference (Senge et al., 1994) will explore the meanings and assumptions behind the plan to ensure that they align

with the school's vision and values. Staff can thus ensure that the plan is based on accurate and relevant data, and that it reflects the organization's desired future.

Stage 4: Destiny

This final stage of the 4-D model (Cooperrider et al., 2008) includes a plan of action to create the desired social change while monitoring progress and adjusting as needed. The staff must celebrate successes along the way and continue to build on their strengths as a community of learners. Additionally, the ladder of inference (Senge et al., 1994) will be used to monitor the outcomes of the plan and to evaluate the impact of the organizational change, reflecting on the school's action. This stage ensures that staff actions are aligned with underlying beliefs and assumptions, and that the data and feedback from the environment have been taken into account.

In the Community of Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers

Another dimension of this process necessitates the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, given that the envisioned future is contingent upon the incorporation of Indigenous histories, cultures, and epistemologies related to land-based knowledge systems. In addition to monitoring change through staff's Western worldview, it is crucial to incorporate an Indigenous perspective into the evaluation framework, to ensure that community cultural protocols are comprehended and followed, and to establish a relationship of trust and respect with Indigenous people. It is important to identify and address significant concerns, while also recognizing and integrating the Indigenous community's political, social, and cultural values into the work (Steinhauer, 2002, Tuhiwai-Smith, 2020).

As agents of support for Indigenous peoples, it is incumbent upon GA's staff to approach this task with a disposition of receptivity and a willingness to learn. Through this process, the teachers can expand relevant knowledge of Indigenous histories, cultures, and worldviews, and

leverage this newfound understanding to cultivate systemic awareness of the realities and experiences of Indigenous peoples. Stroh (2015) posited that the pursuit of transformative change necessitates ongoing learning, iterative processes, a propensity for modifying strategies, and, crucially, active collaboration with those who stand to gain the most from these efforts. In the case of GA, local Indigenous stakeholders who support the school community's learning and growth are the primary beneficiaries of this endeavour, and as non-Indigenous individuals, it is incumbent upon the staff to accept support for this undertaking.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

Through this OIP, the journey towards creating a more decolonized, equitable, and inclusive school community has been initiated. Insights from anticolonial theoretical perspectives emphasize the crucial role of challenging implicit biases and embracing socially just perspectives as foundational elements for lasting change. As the next steps, the focus turns to a deeper examination of the Alberta curriculum, seeking to identify areas where colonial legacies persist and where certain voices are given undue prominence. As part of this examination, the school will work towards decolonizing educational outcomes, ensuring that all perspectives, particularly those of Indigenous communities, are authentically represented and valued.

A second step, in line with the commitment to critical consciousness (Capper, 2019), involves a deeper exploration of the iceberg model (Stroh, 2015) to unveil how systemic racism manifests within the school and community. This exploration will not only facilitate an understanding of the visible aspects of racism but also uncover the underlying and often more insidious structures that perpetuate inequities. Armed with this awareness, lasting change that dismantles these oppressive systems can be instigated.

Collaboration will be at the heart of these endeavours, as the school seeks to lead the school division towards becoming intentionally equitable. This collective effort involves engaging with students, parents, staff, and the broader community, recognizing that sustainable progress towards decolonization and indigenization requires the active participation and solidarity of all stakeholders. To foster collaboration, the school will establish regular forums for open dialogue, where diverse perspectives can be shared and valued.

Expanding the work of decolonizing and indigenizing the school necessitates continuous learning, unlearning, and reflection. This process calls for ongoing professional development that elevates Indigenous voices, perspectives, and knowledge systems within the curriculum. To achieve this outcome, the school will implement culturally responsive training programs for teachers and staff, providing them with the tools and understanding to authentically integrate Indigenous content and perspectives into their teaching practices.

Acknowledging that the process will be complex and multifaceted, the commitment remains strong, driven by a shared vision of justice and equity. This journey empowers the staff and students to engage critically with the world around them, challenging oppressive narratives and advocating for a more inclusive and compassionate society. This process of critical consciousness is central to the work of decolonization and indigenization, as it encourages a deeper understanding of power dynamics and the systems that perpetuate inequalities.

Through these intentional steps, the school will continue to build a transformative and decolonized educational environment. “Truth and reconciliation in a Canadian school context requires educators, administrators, and organizations that work diligently at ensuring all students and communities thrive. It involves a lot of humility and risk-taking in pushing the boundaries” (Toulouse, 2018, p. ix). By embracing anticolonial theoretical perspectives and nurturing critical

consciousness, the school sets the stage for a more just and inclusive future, where the rich cultural heritage and contributions of Indigenous communities are celebrated and integrated into all aspects of education.

Chapter 3 Conclusion

Integrating Indigenous perspectives into GA's practices and pedagogies sets off a transformative journey. It begins with small impacts on individual students, gradually growing as more students learn about Indigenous ways of knowing. By infusing Indigenous content throughout the curriculum, students gain exposure to diverse cultural perspectives, fostering greater understanding and appreciation for Indigenous cultures and histories. This knowledge then spreads to influence families, friends, and communities, amplifying the transformative impact beyond the classroom.

As students adopt a decolonial mindset and become culturally aware, they become agents of change in their communities. Challenging stereotypes, promoting inclusivity, and engaging in conversations help to dismantle systemic inequities and prejudices. The transformative ripple effect extends to the school's culture and wider society. GA's staff and administration also play a crucial role as advocates and facilitators of this work. As their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous perspectives deepen, reconciliation and social justice become ingrained in the institution's values and practices.

Although the path to a more just and equitable society may be long, the cumulative efforts of students, educators, and the community drive the momentum for lasting change. Embracing Indigenous perspectives is not limited to the OIP timeline but rather paves the way for a future that truly values and celebrates Indigenous knowledge, histories, and contributions, creating a more inclusive and harmonious Canada for generations to come.

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Appendix A: TRC Calls to Action on Education for Reconciliation

This excerpt is sourced from TRC (2015):

62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:

- i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.
- ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
- iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.
- iv. Establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education.

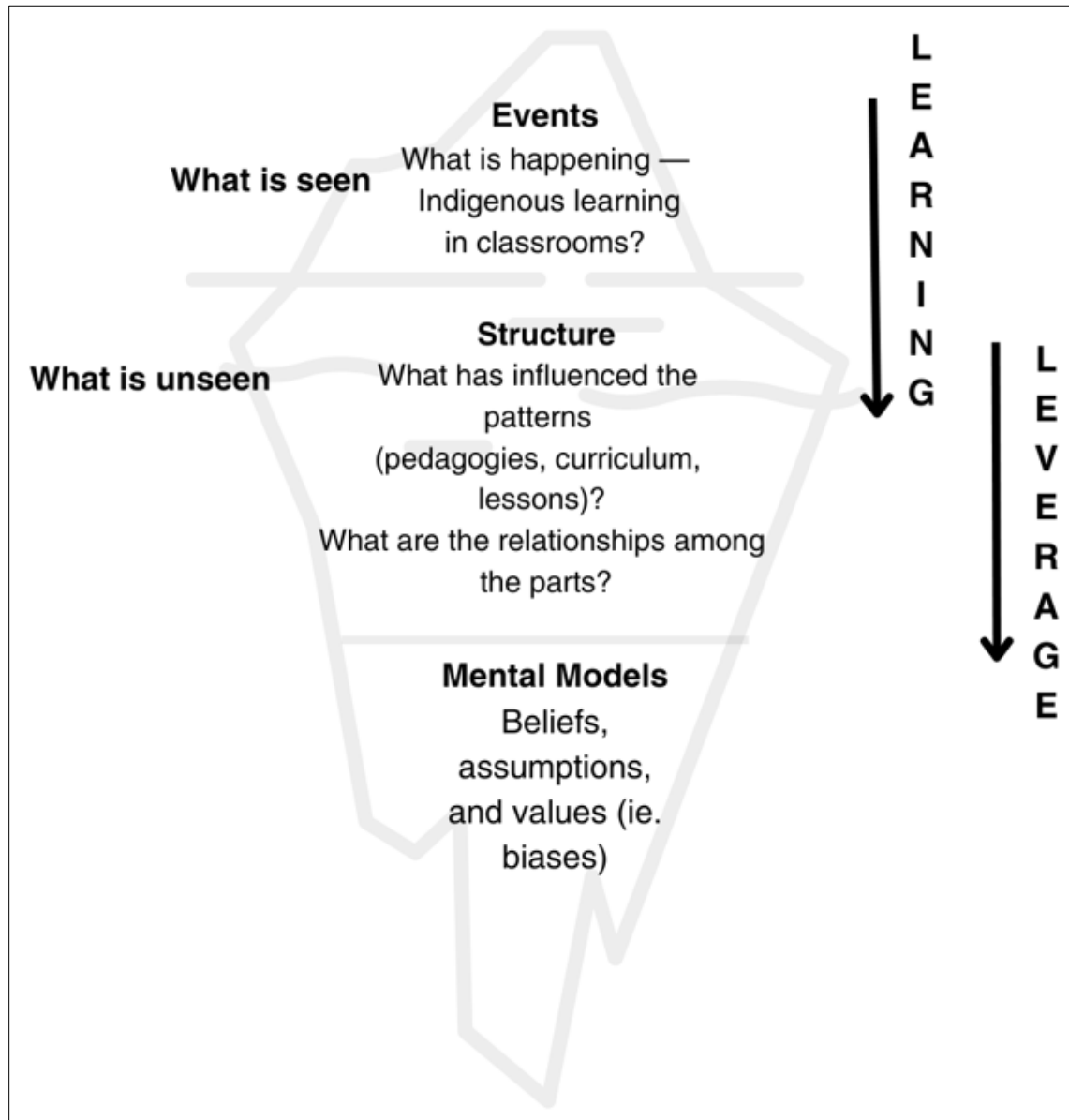
63. We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:

- i. Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
- ii. Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.
- iii. Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.
- iv. Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above.

64. We call upon all levels of government that provide public funds to denominational schools to require such schools to provide an education on comparative religious studies, which must include a segment on Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and practices developed in collaboration with Aboriginal Elders.

65. We call upon the federal government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, post-secondary institutions and educators, and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and its partner institutions, to establish a national research program with multi-year funding to advance understanding of reconciliation. Youth Programs

66. We call upon the federal government to establish multiyear funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation, and establish a national network to share information and best practices. (pp. 238–245; see also People for Education, n.d.)

Appendix B: Iceberg Model

Appendix C: Change Implementation Plan Framework

Phase or aspect	Change path model (Deszca et al., 2020)	CSL (Senge et al., 2019)	Iceberg Model (Stroh, 2015)
First	Awakening: What needs to change?	Reflection and meditation: Where am I and where are we as a staff in Indigenous awareness?	Events: The tip of the iceberg visible above the waterline: Observable, tangible events and patterns that can be seen and measured, such as land-based pedagogies.
Second	Mobilization: Internal and external challenges that lead to a vision.	The complexity of the system: deep listening and focused communication; working collaboratively to determine the change drivers.	Structures: The deeper systemic structures below the surface, not immediately visible or apparent. They include the policies, cultural norms, and other underlying structures that contribute to observable events and patterns.
Third	Acceleration: What is the plan and how will it be implemented?	Using multiple perspectives to effect transformative change: Includes input from staff, students, community stakeholders, and Indigenous community members.	Mental models: The deeply ingrained assumptions, beliefs, and values that underlie the system's structures. They shape one's understanding of the world and how one interacts with it, and they can influence decisions and actions. Mental models are often hidden and difficult to change, but they can have a significant impact on the observable outcomes.
Fourth	Institutionalization: This change becomes part of the culture.	Create a culture of care and respect: perspective taking; understand the whole system of issues, challenges, patterns, and trends; transform the system through policy and resources.	Mental models (continued)

Appendix D: Change Readiness Assessment (Baseline)

Use the question below to assess each PLC's readiness for the change.

Team: _____

Questions to Assess Change Readiness	Yes	Partial	No
(Awareness) Does your team understand...			
1. the problems inherent in the current situation?			
2. the opportunities that are being missed if the change doesn't happen?			
3. what is trying to be achieved?			
4. how things will be better?			
5. how the change will impact pedagogical practices?			
6. what their role will be in the future state?			
(Desire) Does your team ...			
1. know that school administration is aligned with the change efforts?			
2. feel their concerns, questions, and needs are being heard?			
3. feel hopeful about the future?			
4. see value in the change?			
5. believe a well thought out strategy is being put in place to achieve the change?			
(Knowledge) Does your team ... (skills, information, training)			
1. have the necessary information, knowledge and skills to successfully fulfill their role?			
2. know where to go for additional information about the change?			
3. know what school/district/provincial resources are available to support the personal side of change?			
4. know what success looks like?			
5. have a plan to achieve success?			
6. know which behaviors will need to change?			
(Ability) Does your team ... (infrastructure, systems, tools)			
1. believe that the school has provided appropriate resources (time, staff, information, etc.) to support the anticipated change?			
2. have the necessary systems, processes, and policies in place?			

Questions to Assess Change Readiness	Yes	Partial	No
3. have the ability to execute the new behaviors required for the change?			
4. know how to perform the required tasks?			
(Reinforcement) Does your team ...			
1. view school administrators as a resource for removing/overcoming barriers?			
2. have mechanisms in place to reinforce the required behaviors?			
3. have metrics in place to assess the ongoing effectiveness of the change?			
Total:			

Note. Adapted from *Change Management Toolkit: Tips, Tools, and Techniques for Leading a*

Successful Change Initiative, by P. Sarran, D. Clark, & K. Mendonca, n.d., p. 16. Copyright n.d.

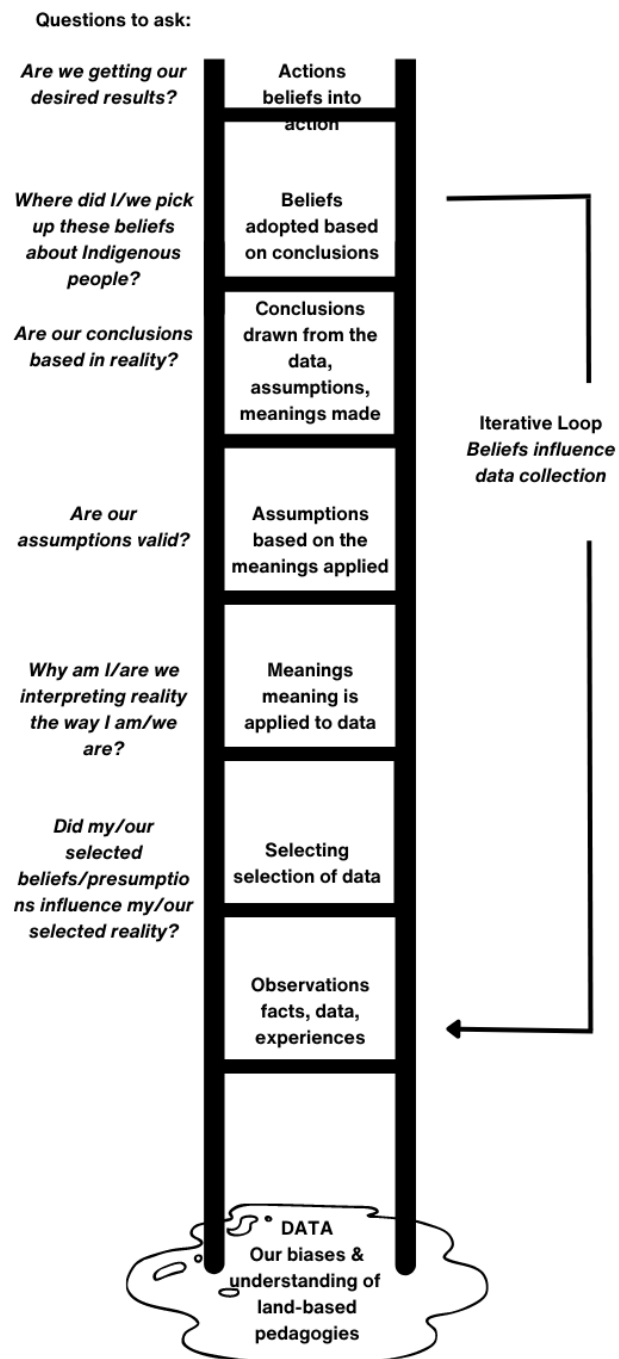
by University of California Berkeley.

Appendix E: Solutions Comparison

Solution	Desired outcome			
	Awareness of Indigenous truths	Attitudes and perceptions	Actions	Iceberg depth
Solution 1: Unpacking colonial assumptions and racial biases	High	High	Medium	Deep
Solution 2: Learning from Indigenous people	High	Medium	Low	Tip
Solution 3: Learning land-based pedagogies	High	Medium	High	Structures

Note. The 3-point scale (*low, medium, high*) relates the desired outcome to the probability of success within GA. Iceberg depth relates to Stroh's (2015) iceberg model to show levels of complexity of the solution. Tip = surface events; structures = just below the surface and not immediately apparent; deep = underlying beliefs and values.

Appendix F: Ladder of Inference



Note. Adapted from *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*, by P. M. Senge, A. Kleiner, C. Roberts, R. B. Ross, and B. J. Smith, 1994, p. 243. Copyright 1994 by Currency Doubleday.

Appendix G: Change Implementation Plan

Stage	Timeline	Tasks	Implementation
Identify the problem: Build the foundation for change	Fall 2023	Decide who the primary stakeholders for change should be and create a plan as to how to engage them; create an initial vision for change; build individual capacities to work collaboratively.	Create relationships: Affirm change readiness, create a shared understanding of why change is necessary, create frameworks for generative conversations, and frame creative tension. Form IAC: Identify the current reality, the preferred future, and our strengths in relation to the problem. Establish a vision: Use an ethical framework to define our values and principles to build a vision.
Analyze the system: GA's current realities	Winter 2024	Collect data on the current reality; organize and improve on the collected data; support individual analysis; create a framework to engage in meaningful conversations.	Collect data: Complete implicit bias test; create a survey for staff with questions on their level of familiarity with Indigenous histories and cultures; use AI to manage data gathering through compassion, empathy, and positive emotions; and find evidence for change in the data.
Develop a strategy: Making a commitment to change.	Spring 2024– Spring 2025; GA strategic plan	Understand the status quo and reasons for change; clarify benefits of change and costs of not changing; create a shared vision for change.	Use PLCs: Outline the creative tension, build capacity in staff to embrace the vision, complete Indigenous cultural awareness training, implement land-based pedagogies.
Implement and monitor: Bridging the gap	Ongoing	Develop interventions and a process of feedback loops.	Monitor progress throughout with monthly conversations with staff, celebrate successes, and practice deep listening to collect data.

Note. Adapted from *Systems Thinking for Social Change: A Practical Guide to Solving Complex*

Problems, Avoiding Unintended Consequences, and Achieving Lasting Results, by D. P. Stroh,

2015, p. 75. Copyright 2015 by Chelsea Green Publishing.

Appendix H: Knowledge Mobilization Plan

Component	Description	Details
Target audience	Who are the relevant stakeholders that will benefit from this project or research?	Teaching staff Students
Messenger	Who is involved in mobilizing the knowledge?	Principal Indigenous Awareness Committee (IAC), a school-based working group Local Elders and knowledge keepers District Indigenous coordinator University and college professors
Message	How will the message be communicated?	Develop a high level of proficiency in understanding and using land-based pedagogies. Create an awareness and generate a common understanding and appreciation of Indigenous cultures, histories, and worldviews. Change attitudes toward Indigenous people by learning more about their ways of living through an appreciation of the land.
Knowledge transfer process and communication plan	How will we know if we have achieved our goals?	Build an appreciation of why: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous awareness training • National Film Board of Canada Indigenous Cinema Collection • Podcasts • Journal articles • Magazine and newspaper articles • Websites • School yearly strategic plan Tools to learn and use land-based pedagogies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conferences • Workshops and training • Presentations

Component	Description	Details
Evaluation/ impact	How will we know if we have achieved our goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLCs: Teachers will be asked to work in teams to go through material. <p>Staff will have completed Indigenous awareness training.</p> <p>Land-based pedagogical practices will be visible in classroom walkthroughs.</p> <p>A common language will be evident in ongoing conversations among staff.</p> <p>Decision-making will reflect both Western and Indigenous worldviews.</p> <p>Students will demonstrate an understanding of the connection between land-based learning and Indigenous perspectives.</p>

Appendix I: GA Change Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Stage	Model				
	STSC (Stroh, 2015)	AI 4-D cycle (Cooperrider et al., 2008)	Ladder of inference (Senge et al., 1994)	Monitoring and evaluation tools (Stroh, 2015)	Preferred outcomes
1	Build the foundation for change	Discovery	Data and meaning	Set realistic goals: understand our biases and knowledge limitations (short-term); use land-based pedagogies across curriculum (medium-term); honour Indigenous histories, cultures, worldviews in demonstrable ways (long-term).	Goals reflect our strengths and achievable targets outlined in PLCs.
2	Face the current reality	Dream	Add meaning and make assumptions	Define indicators: complete Indigenous awareness training; take implicit bias test; conduct appreciative interviews; complete land-based practices professional development; observe with feedback land-based pedagogies in classrooms.	Adhere to timelines; use common language; make early successes evident.
3	Make an explicit choice	Design	Draw conclusions and adopt beliefs	Assess visible outcomes; engage in collaborative reflection on outcomes.	PLCs plan for achieving goals; communicate strategies to staff—look for similarities, differences, and ways to support them.
4	Bridge the gap	Destiny	Take actions based on beliefs	Build organizational capacity; foster continuous learning.	Goals achieved; high motivation and success; strong, lasting relationship with Indigenous peoples.