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## A Learning Model for Rural Yukon Educators

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WESTERN UNIVERSITY

A Learning Model for Rural Yukon Educators

By

Alexandrea Postoloski

AN ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## Abstract

Rural educators face challenges in accessing timely, relevant, and appropriate professional learning opportunities in Yukon due to the complexities of living and working in geographically and professionally isolated communities (Hellsten, McIntyre, & Prytula, 2011). Complexities surrounding the political landscapes within Yukon also creates a unique set of challenges. Adding to the challenges, Yukon education is also in the process of implementing a new curriculum model that attempts to be more holistic and considerate of the needs of the people living and working within the Territory (Yukon Education, 2011). The current change processes and vision for Yukon education provides a unique opportunity to implement changes to the way rural educators access professional learning (Department of Education, 2018). This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) suggests the creation of a rural based professional learning model using Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model (Cawsey, Deszca, & Ingols, 2016) within Deming's Plan, Do, Study, Act change model (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015) to guide change while providing a framework for those involved in the change process to follow. Obstacles, challenges, and contextual realities are explored and considered within the OIP as well. The goal of the change plan is to provide a working framework for how rural Yukon educators access and acquire pedagogical efficacy in areas of interest and need through a collaborative process with other rural Yukon educators. This model is designed with rural Yukon educators in mind, but may be adapted to meet the needs of other rural jurisdictions.

*Keywords:* Yukon Education, Rural Education, Professional Learning Model, Rural Yukon Educators

### **Executive Summary**

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) focuses on the creation of an organizational change framework to address the professional learning needs of rural educators in Yukon. The Problem of Practice is that rural staff are frequently not able to access professional development as a result of high costs for travel, no available teachers-on-call, and complex learning challenges among their students which when added together make leaving their classrooms very difficult. Research highlights that “professional development for rural schools must be mutually beneficial to school and community partnerships and relations” (Preston, Jakubiec, & Kooymans, 2013, p. 4). When professional development and collaboration do not meet the needs of rural educators it inhibits them from using new innovative teaching and administrative practices that promote the success of all learners within the diverse classroom setting in rural Yukon schools. What is required, is a professional learning model that meets the needs and attends to the unique complexities of rural educational placements in Yukon.

Chapter 1 explores a variety of complexities within the organization. Rural educators face diverse challenges in accessing timely, relevant, and appropriate professional learning opportunities in Yukon due to the complexities of living and working in geographically and professionally isolated communities (Hellsten, McIntyre, & Prytula, 2011). Some of these complexities include diverse political landscapes in rural communities as a result of Land Claims settlements and the resulting self-governing First Nations within them; a new curriculum model that attempts to be more holistic and considerate of the needs of the people living and working within the Territory (Yukon Education, 2011), and; the establishment of new goals within the newly described vision for Yukon education (Department of Education, 2018). However, all of these challenges provide a unique opportunity to implement changes to the way rural educators

access professional learning. This OIP suggests the creation of a rural based professional learning model using Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model (Cawsey, Deszca, & Ingols, 2016) within the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) change model (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015) to guide change while providing a framework for those involved in the change process to follow.

Using the PDSA and Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model, Chapter 2 outlines the planning framework for the development of the change model. The chapter also explores the organization's readiness for change and analyses the role of the leader within the change model. Three possible solutions to address the PoP are presented and evaluated as well as ethical considerations during the change process. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the change process as well as an analysis of the implications of change to the organization.

Chapter 2 describes the importance of leaders within the change process as they have the ability to help those involved "clearly understand that unless they each contribute whatever they can, the team fails" (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 232). The Nadler and Tushman congruence model notes that change leaders must model both the explicit and implicit norms and behaviours of the change process (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). Leaders do not work alone in an organization, especially one as complex as the education system. Leaders encourage collaboration by assigning roles and accountability to members within the team. As Kouzes and Posner (2012) state, "roles must be designed so that every person's contributions are both additive and cumulative to the final outcome" (p. 232). It is through the complex process of collaboration that great things can be achieved between individuals, groups, organizations, and government agencies that may not have the same intent at the start of the collaborative process.

Lastly, Chapter 3 presents the implementation and evaluation schedule as well as a communication plan for the change model described in the OIP. Utilizing the PDSA and Kotter's

Eight-Step Change Model, the plan outlines specific change strategies within the frameworks. For the change model to come to fruition, flexibility and consideration must be paid attention to in order to meet the needs and time constraints of rural educators. The plan allows for adaptations and modifications as needed to provide a flexible implementation schedule if required. Embedded within the presented PDSA and Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model is the expectation that each change initiative is studied and assessed to ensure that ongoing evaluations of the change process occurs. This evaluation process is necessary to ensure that leaders and participants in the change process are not stalled or stuck on a stage which may result in apathy towards the change process. The communication plan is inclusive of all internal and external stakeholders in rural education and is used as a way to celebrate small wins to build momentum and capacity in the change process.

The OIP provides a feasible framework and approach to addressing the need for an online professional learning model that is planned and created with rural Yukon educators in mind. The plan relies on the active engagement of various stakeholders within rural education in Yukon to create a collaborative and holistic way for educators to gain efficacies in the unique pedagogies that are needed to successfully navigate the challenges of being a rural educator in Yukon schools.

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### Glossary of Terms

**First Nation Final Agreements (FNFA):** Eleven of fourteen recognised First Nation groups in Yukon have signed an agreement which guarantees that the signing First Nation is self-governing (Government of Canada, 2017). Each FNFA document is specific to the First Nation for which it is signed (Government of Canada, 2017).

**First Nation Ways of Knowing and Doing:** Related to First Nation worldviews. It is a way in which First Nation peoples see the whole person – physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual – as interconnected to land, air, water, sky, and creatures and is acting in constant relationships to others – family, community, clan, nations (Department of Education, 2018). This is called a holistic view, which is an important aspect of supporting First Nation students in Yukon (Department of Education, 2018).

**Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP):** A theory and research based plan created to address a problem with an organization.

**Problem of Practice (PoP):** An identified problem within an organization that is directly observable, is actionable, and connects to a broader strategy of improvement (University of Western Ontario, 2016).

**Rural Yukon School:** Any school outside of the urban centre of Whitehorse in Yukon.

**Self- Government:** The formal structure through which First Nation communities may control the administration of their people, resources, land, governmental and local programs, and policies, through agreements with federal, provincial, and territorial governments (Government of Canada, 2017).

**Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow:** A monumental document that began the process leading to Self-Government for First Nation peoples within Yukon. It was presented to Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau by the Yukon Native Brotherhood and Council for Yukon Indians, organizations that arose out of the White Papers released by the Federal Government Indian Affairs Office in 1969. This document was taken to Ottawa for the purpose of getting the Government of Canada and the Prime Minister to acknowledge that

“aboriginal rights still existed in the Yukon Territory and that the Government of Canada had a longstanding obligation to negotiate a treaty with the aboriginal peoples of the Yukon” (Council of Yukon First Nations, 2018b, para. 3).

**Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA):** A document signed in 1993, which established a political agreement between Government of Canada, Yukon Territorial Government, and Council for Yukon Indians (Council for Yukon First Nations, 2018a).

## A Learning Model for Rural Yukon Educators:

**Chapter 1: The Organization****History**

The Office of the Auditor General's Report, Public Schools and Advanced Education – Yukon Department of Education (2009), painted a bleak picture of the status of education in the Territory. On standardized tests, Yukon students met expectations in only six of the twenty subject areas assessed (Yukon Department of Education, 2009). The report noted that graduation rates for First Nations students was approximately 40 percent of the graduation rate for other Yukon students which was just over 65 percent across the Territory. In comparison of five-year averages across Canada for secondary school graduation rates, 75 percent of students in secondary school graduate. Nationally, Yukon chimed in at third lowest for graduation rates across Canada (Yukon Department of Education, 2009). The report caused public outcry for change as it painted a bleak future for Yukon students and became the catalyst for creating change to how education operates in Yukon. The system needed to change and was ready for change.

Yukon is in a process of implementing the reforms to the curriculum model in education (Department of Education, 2018). It has been modernized to respond to changes occurring nationally and around the world today. The Ministry of Education in British Columbia (BC) is responsible for implementing curriculum in Yukon and after years of research they agreed “that to prepare students for the future, the curriculum must be student-centred and flexible, and maintain a focus on literacy and math skills, while supporting deeper learning” (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 1). While a shift is occurring in the thinking surrounding the content and



delivery of curriculum in Yukon there is also a need for leadership and professional learning opportunities and practices to shift alongside it.

### **Context**

In Yukon, there are 33 schools which include public, Catholic, French-immersion, experiential, and rural (Government of Yukon, 2018a). Of the 33 schools in Yukon, fifteen are rural schools. Rural, in the context of Yukon education, includes all schools outside of the urban centre of Whitehorse. Within each rural community, different self-governing First Nations are represented (Government of Canada, 2017). Each First Nation Self-Government has a unique identity from other First Nation groups. As a result, no community is in the same Traditional Territory as another and each community has a different political landscape depending on the scope and involvement of the First Nation Self-Government in school policies and vision for education (Government of Canada, 2017). Underlining the different political landscapes are differences in cultures, customs, and languages (e.g. sometimes just dialect differences in languages) creating a vast array of implications for how the politics and policies of rural schools operate to meet the needs of the residents within each community (Department of Education, 2018).

Not only are rural Yukon schools different in their political landscape they are also structured very differently from their urban counter parts. All rural Yukon schools make use of split grade classrooms. Some larger rural schools may have two grades in each classroom with one teacher responsible for delivering programs while smaller community schools may have three and/or more grades in one classroom. Two schools operate as one room classrooms in which one educator is the administrator, teacher, educational assistant, and administrative assistant answering phones and taking care of daily business of the school. The unique scenario

in which rural educators find themselves requires inventive, balanced, and innovative programming that is inclusive of all ages/abilities/grades within their classrooms while still insuring that all curriculum areas are taught each year. At present, little professional learning models focused on rural needs are offered in the Territory. Most programs for educators use a professional development model which do not address the complexities or needs of educators in rural schools. Yukon Department of Education states they “offer professional development to rural teachers in their own communities” (Yukon Government, 2019) but in my own experience as an educator in two separate rural communities, I have yet to experience professional development that directly addresses the needs of rural educators in the schools in which I have worked and/or a professional learning model that allows for rural educators to work effectively and collaboratively together.

### **Changing Curriculum**

The process of change has its challenges. The Yukon Department of Education acknowledges the legacy of Residential Schools and is working within the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to action (2015) to ensure that First Nation voices are heard in the redesign of the curriculum (Department of Education, 2018). Leadership is going to be a key element in the process. As Elliot (2015) states, leadership must be more than “an expression of the values and beliefs of the leaders themselves” (p. 310), leadership must also extend into the institutions to ensure all parties work together and ethically for the purpose of meeting “principles, procedures, and actions that govern, shape, regulate, and guide transactions, especially with external bodies, collaborators, and partners” (Elliot, 2015, p. 310). This ensures the success of organizational change. It is going to take exemplary leadership

skills to transition and transform the system of educational professional learning in Yukon to one which better suits the needs of rural Yukon communities, students, and educators.

Plans for curriculum reform and redesign in Yukon education include a more holistic approach of inclusionary practices surrounding First Nation ways of knowing and doing. This will require changes in how educators deliver and present curriculum content to students. The process of developing new strategies for pedagogical practices requires that all invested parties in Yukon education work together (Department of Education, 2018). The vision for education in Yukon, “Success for Each Learner” (Yukon Education, 2011), became the model for the “Department’s commitment to partnership and collaboration by sharing decision making with a broader group of engaged partners” (Yukon Education, 2011, p. 2). Close partnerships are needed and must “reflect challenges unique to Yukon politics and the multiple governance jurisdictions that impact Yukon education” (Yukon Education, 2011, p. 2). Included in this web of complex partnerships are eleven different First Nation Self-Governments, Territorial government agencies, school leaders, community leaders, educators, and the students. The contributions of each group and member of this partnership must work together to create curriculum and professional learning models that meet the needs of all learners and educators.

### **Politics**

For anyone not familiar with the political landscape of Yukon, it can be challenging to understand the nuances and complexities within it. But, in order to be an effective leader of change, it is imperative that some understanding exists. The Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) signed in 1993 (Council for Yukon First Nations, 1993), established a political agreement between Government of Canada, Yukon Territorial Government, and Council for Yukon Indians (Council for Yukon First Nations, 2018a). The UFA was the result of a 1973 document entitled

*Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* (Council of Yukon First Nation, 2018b). The document was presented to Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau by the Yukon Native Brotherhood and Council for Yukon Indians, organizations that arose out of the White Papers released by the Federal Government Indian Affairs Office in 1969 (Council of Yukon First Nations, 2018b). *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* was taken to Ottawa for the purpose of getting the Government of Canada and the Prime Minister to acknowledge that

“aboriginal rights still existed in the Yukon Territory and that the Government of Canada had a longstanding obligation to negotiate a treaty with the aboriginal peoples of the Yukon” (Council of Yukon First Nations, 2018b, para. 3).

This document started the long and arduous process of negotiations by representatives from the Department of Indian Affairs and the Council for Yukon Indians which resulted in the UFA signed in its final draft version in 1993 (Council of Yukon First Nations, 2018b). Work still continues on this document today.

The UFA is an all-encompassing framework and agreement in which eleven separate agreements, First Nation Final Agreements (FNFA), have been signed (Government of Canada, 2017). Each of the signed FNFA documents guarantees that the signing First Nation is self-governing (Government of Canada, 2017). While there are fourteen First Nation groups living within Yukon, only eleven such agreements have been finalized. Each FNFA document is specific to the First Nation for which it is signed (Government of Canada, 2017). Not all FNFAs have been signed on the same date. Some First Nations have many complexities surrounding agreement matters and require time to resolve issues, policies, and complications (Government of Canada, 2017). The reason for the separate FNFA agreements is to consider and account for

the unique cultural, linguistic, and dialectal differences of each First Nation as well as to specify their needs within the various unique and differing regions in which they live within Yukon.

Authentic and transformational change leaders must understand and have working knowledge of the requirements, expectations, and agreements outlined within the UFA and the various FNFAs when considering system changes to current organizational structures in education. The UFA is a complex document that outlines provisions for land, self-government, compensation monies, the establishment of boards and committees to oversee various portfolios, and to establish tribunals to ensure continued joint management of a number of specific areas defined within the document (Council of Yukon First Nations, 2018a). These provisions are mirrored in the eleven signed FNFAs resulting in eleven independently operated local First Nation Self-Governments. Self-Government outlines provisions for self-determination and autonomy for each signing First Nation's FNFA. Of particular importance to the outlined OIP and PoP, is section 24.3.2.3, items "c" through "f" of the UFA (Council for Yukon First Nations, 1993), which include the rights for First Nation Self-Governments to share and have responsibility for the design, delivery, and administration of programs. These responsibilities include: (a) input and advice on the composition of teaching staff; (b) early childhood, special, and adult education curriculum; (c) kindergarten through grade 12 curriculum; and; (d) the evaluation of teachers, administrators and other employees working within schools and education facilities (Yukon First Nations Council, 2018a). While many First Nation Self-Governments rely on the education models outlined by Yukon Department of Education, all First Nation Self-Governments have influence over the schools in their traditional territories under section 24.4.1.1 of the UFA which guarantees "representation for Yukon First Nations on government commissions, councils, boards and committees" (Council for Yukon First Nations, 1993, p. 262)

in the area of education. As such, Yukon's Department of Education, works in partnership with the eleven First Nation governments to ensure representation of First Nation cultures in all curriculum development. A collaborative approach to curriculum design and school operations ensures Yukon First Nation interests are represented (Yukon Education, 2011). It is also incumbent for all educators to ensure that First Nation ways of knowing and doing are incorporated into daily lesson plans. Without working knowledge of the complexities surrounding the politics within Yukon, it is easy for change leaders to misstep resulting in a lack of "buy-in" from stakeholders to a change model.

Under the redesign of curriculum in Yukon, what and how educators are expected to "teach our students has been redesigned to provide greater flexibility for teachers, while allowing space and time for students to develop their skills and explore their passions and interests" (Ministry of Education, 2015, p.1). This includes greater focus on including local First Nation Self-Government directives into local curriculums in rural and urban schools (Department of Education, 2018). This has greater significance in rural schools as rural schools are on Settled Land Claims areas meaning that the local First Nation Self-Governments play a more significant role in the politics of rural education (Government of Canada, 2017). Professional learning models will have to include local First Nation leaders to teach relevant and localized ways of knowing and doing to administrators, educators, and students so that each specific First Nation group is reflected accurately in pedagogical practices within the community in which the school operates. Earning the confidence of First Nation partners is built through honest, transparent, and authentic leadership practices and leads to good practices in education in Yukon schools.

### **Leadership Position**

#### **Leadership Lens**

The small school in which I work as a senior staff member, classroom teacher, regular Acting Principal, and volunteer as the Yukon Teacher's Association (YTA) School Representative, and YTA Vice President, sits within the Traditional Territory of a self-governing First Nation language and cultural group represented in Yukon. This small school offers regular programming from Kindergarten 4 – only available in rural Yukon schools for students that are four years of age (Yukon Government, 2018a) - to grade 9. Each classroom is comprised of three grades with one teacher responsible for implementing all curriculum and differentiated pedagogical practices to meet the diverse needs of the learners within each classroom. This includes establishing and implementing all special education requirements for students on Individualized Learning Programs, Student Learning Programs, and Behaviour Plans.

### **Leadership Positionality and Ethics**

As a senior staff member, mentor, and leader within the organization of Yukon education, YTA, and the school in which I work, I exhibit the five basic characteristics of authentic leadership as described by Northouse (2016). Authentic leaders are able to demonstrate and understand their purpose within the organization; they exhibit strong values, ethics, and morals; they are able to establish trusting relationships with others within the organization and outside of the organization; they demonstrate self-discipline and act in ways that show their values; and, they are passionate about meeting the goals and vision of the organization (Northouse, 2016). I am self-aware which is a dynamic process and is the degree to which as a leader I am able to reflect and demonstrate an understanding of how I am able to derive and makes sense of the world (Duncan, Green, Gergen, & Ecung, 2017). Duncan, Green, Gergen, and Ecung (2017) state that an authentic leader “is aware of his or her strengths, limitations, how others see him or her, and how (s)he impacts others” (p. 14). These are all qualities that exemplify my leadership

style on a daily basis when working with all persons, agencies, and organizations with a vested interest in education in Yukon.

I show passion for my work and the people with whom I work. I am able to help create a vision for our school and organization through transparent processes describing a vision that is “an image of an attractive, realistic, and believable future” (Northouse, 2016, p. 173) that is “simple, understandable, beneficial, and energy creating” (Northouse, 2016, p. 173). As Duncan, Green, Gergen, and Ecung (2017) note, “with the incorporation of a moral and ethical perspective, the theory of authentic leadership moves beyond transformational or full-range leadership to serve as a foundation for understanding leadership independent of style” (p.14). Colleagues trust in my ability to lead and trust in my ability to help transform the school and organization into the vision that the community surrounding the school and community of educators feel is needed for the success of all learners and educators within it. I work hard at creating meaningful relationships and connections with all people within the school and larger organization. I am able to utilize what Northouse (2016) calls task and relationship behaviours to “help group members achieve their objectives” (p. 71) and “help followers feel comfortable with themselves, with each other, and with the situation in which they find themselves” (p. 71). Being an authentic leader creates trust among my staff and colleagues building positive collegial relationships.

The responsibility for self and responsibility for others is most effective when leaders “charge his or her constituents with translating ethical values and practices into the fabric of the school culture” (Cherkowski, Walker, & Kutsyurba, 2015, p. 13). In the case of Yukon education, is imperative that straight-forward and open dialogues occur between all levels within the organization of the system. Grigore (2013) notes that “the workforce is requesting



authenticity and transparency from its leaders” (p. 200) meaning that the education system needs to clearly outline its value system, visions, and goals while accepting feedback to support and create amendments that promote forward progress and growth. This is what is being asked of the Department of Education here in the Territory. All governments, stakeholders, parents, and students vested in the education system in Yukon want an authentic and transparent system that operates with ethical issues in mind.

Kouzes and Posner (2012) sums up this idea best, “to be able to envision the future, you have to realize what’s already going on” (p. 109). If you are not able to see what the vision is “you can’t effectively, authentically lead others to places you personally don’t want to go” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 125) making it imperative that the vision leaders create is one that encompasses input, feedback, and direction that is best for forward progress. Here in the Territory, the vision for education is one that is inclusive of input from the Yukon Territorial Government, First Nations governments, stakeholders, education leaders, and educators within the system.

The political landscape of Yukon is complex. To be able to navigate and implement change initiatives successfully, leaders must be authentic, transformative, and able to participate in a distributed leadership approach. These qualities of leadership will be an asset in the change process outlined in the PoP and OIP. Yukon offers a unique landscape for change models because of the small, interconnections between staff members, schools, and agencies involved in education. As a classroom teacher, school leader, acting principal, and Vice President of the YTA, I have the ability to elicit change to my organization through my personal and professional connections and through direct conversations with the Minister of Education, Assistant Deputy Minister of Education, members of Yukon Department of Education, First Nation leaders, school

administrators, and educators. Yukon provides a unique situation for transformative change models and opportunities in education because the relatively small size and unique political landscape.

### **Leadership Problem of Practice**

In order for the collaborative process of building an effective and timely professional learning model for rural Yukon educators, strong leadership skills are required. As Northouse (2016) states, “leaders must use authority to mobilize people to face tough issues” (p. 337). It is the responsibility of the leader to use their authority to “get people to pay attention to the issues, to act as a reality test regarding information, to manage and frame issues, to orchestrate conflicting perspectives, and to facilitate decision making” (Northouse, 2016, p. 338). The leader must be active in fostering communications between all those concerned using a multitude of strategies. Old habits of Yukon Department of Education led implementations for programs and pedagogical practices is done so with a continued conservative lens in which a *top-down* model is used. This system will not be an effective practice as Yukon education moves away from the old curriculum and adopts the newly established and current curriculum redesign, in which more localized content is added to daily lessons and learning models. This will require a shift in pedagogical practices and educator learning models. The old model of professional development delivery will face great scrutiny among rural teachers as it does not address the specific needs of rural Yukon communities and their unique and complex situations.

Within the current atmosphere of change, an authentic leader and one who can also make use of situational and distributed leadership practices will be most effective in balancing the many challenges facing the transformation of professional learning in rural Yukon. A professional learning model that incorporates local First Nation ways of knowing and doing is

required. Educators in rural schools, because of the similarities of context, demographics, professional and geographical isolation, can work together to create a professional learning model that allows for acquisition of best and effective pedagogical practices. This change to how rural educators acquire effective skills and tools to teach, will address some of the challenges of working in rural settings. This change model will require leaders with self-awareness as it “is a prerequisite to the development of tendencies in the leader that compliment effective team-building” (Lynch, 2012, p. 28). As the professional learning model is developed authentic leaders will be an asset. As Duignan (2014) states, “authentic educational leaders have to interpret and actualize their ethical, moral, and authentic ideals within a complex and pressure-filled context and must achieve goals through webs of relationships, characterized by risks, constraints, pressures, and human frailty” (p. 162) which in essence, is exactly the situation Yukon education is in. Leaders will need to work collaboratively in authentic ways to address changes needed to the way rural educators access learning opportunities.

To better understand the need for authentic leadership it is important to understand the current reforms and changes to Yukon’s curriculum and the complexities surrounding the influences involved in the politics of education in Yukon. Yukon follows the curriculum outlined by the Ministry of Education in British Columbia (BC). The current curriculum reforms experienced by BC and Yukon were the result of lengthy research focused on international and national trends. The resulting research gave rise to BC’s curriculum and assessment transformation based on recommendations and studies involving authorities on curriculum and assessment designs to guide the changes (Ministry of Education, n.d.). The new curriculum takes “a student-centered approach to learning and focusing on skills development” (Yukon Government, 2018b). As such, Yukon is in the process of creating curriculum goals that include

a Yukon focus to ensure that education is relevant to the people of Yukon. This includes embedding local First Nation ways of knowing and doing as well as local knowledge and materials relevant to the Territory into the curriculum (Department of Education, 2018). It is a massive overhaul of the structures around education and involves all stakeholders with vested interests in education. The climate is rife with opportunities for transformative change models that are new and innovative to allow for better transmission of solid pedagogical practices for rural Yukon educators through professional learning models and collaboration.

While seemingly complex, leaders that are authentic, transformational, and able to work in a distributive leadership way are better able to address the complexities of working closely with all parties to establish joint visions and goals for professional learning models and organizational change. The creation and establishment of curriculum goals and professional learning models also involves working collaboratively with local First Nation governments to ensure all parties agree on the purpose and outcomes of the changes. Despite the unique nature of each community in Yukon, there are close traditional, cultural, and historical connections between the First Nation cultural groups allowing for the overlap of content and pedagogical practices and strategies within each school. While all schools within Yukon make use of First Nation ways of knowing and doing, rural schools experience closer ties and connectedness to individual Self-Governing First Nation groups due to the close proximity of traditional settlement lands outlined in individual FNFAs making them unique when compared to their urban counter parts (Government of Canada, 2017).

Change initiatives outlined in this OIP require leadership practices which address the uniqueness of cultural, political, and regional complexities in Yukon communities and must also address the complexities surrounding the characteristics of rural schools. This includes the

realities of multi-grade/age/ability classrooms as the standard norm in rural schools. All of these factors create a unique set of needs for effective professional learning programs in rural schools. Professional learning must address a barrage of challenges head on with an authentic voice acknowledging the differences but embracing similarities involving strategies exemplifying best teaching practices for rural educators and educational practitioners. It is these strategies that should make up the interconnected web between rural schools for professional learning. It will take an authentic and distributed leadership approach working collaboratively together to transform the current professional development model into one in which professional learning models are used by rural Yukon educators.

Leadership roles within the professional learning model will include ensuring that people are communicating and reflecting on the processes and modifying programs to make them work. Communication methods include face-to-face collaboration opportunities, online video and telephone conferencing, and visitations between team leaders from rural schools. It is also important that leaders ensure teachers with similar classrooms across rural schools have time to collaborate on best pedagogical practices that work in their classrooms. Leaders will ensure that the process of professional learning continues to be effective by checking in and conversing with participants and each other.

What works in single grade classroom in the urban centre, will not necessarily be effective in a rural multi-grade/age/ability classroom where pedagogical practices have to be more dynamic due to the nature of the complexity of the classroom (Hellsten, McIntyre, & Prytula, 2011). Access to quality education that involves well prepared, stable, and culturally responsive teachers that are integrated into community life is vital to the success of rural education (Kaden, Patterson, Healy, & Adams, 2016). A lack of preparedness to work in diverse

settings and student populations with cultures unfamiliar to new and current educators frequently leads to feelings of “helplessness, stress, guilt, and low professional self-esteem” (Kaden, et. al., 2016, p. 141). This then creates high turnover rates among rural educators (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013) in Yukon communities. The success of the developing a professional learning model is not only an asset to the learners within rural Yukon schools but also to those educators working and in teaching in very professionally challenging situations. As Kaden, Patterson, Healy, and Adams (2016) state, “maintaining an effective and stable teacher workforce that understands and embraces the powerful local contexts” (p. 130) of Yukon’s rural communities and the fourteen First Nations within them is “critical for resilient communities” (Kaden, et. al., 2016, p. 130) in a rapidly changing global context.

### **Problem of Practice (PoP)**

I have spent my entire twelve-year career working as both an Education Assistant and now, classroom teacher in rural communities in Yukon. As a senior staff member, YTA School Representative, Vice President of the YTA, bargaining table committee member, and regular acting principal at the small rural school in which I teach, I have observed, through personal experience that the type of professional development model currently used in Yukon does not meet the needs of rural teachers and administrators. The Problem of Practice is that rural staff are frequently not able to access professional development as a result of high costs for travel, no available teachers-on-call, and complex learning challenges among their students which when added together make leaving their classrooms very difficult. Feelings of apathy towards professional development are described as a result of not feeling able *to attend anyway*. Research highlights that “professional development for rural schools must be mutually beneficial to school and community partnerships and relations” (Preston, Jakubiec, & Kooymans, 2013, p. 4). When

professional development and collaboration do not meet the needs of rural educators it inhibits them from using new innovative teaching and administrative practices that promote the success of all learners within the diverse classroom setting in rural Yukon schools. What is required is a professional learning model that provides necessary action and direction to address and adjust inequities currently experienced by rural Yukon educators when accessing professional development and learning opportunities.

### **Factors Shaping the Problem of Practice**

The topic of professional development is often fraught with frustration and challenges for rural Yukon educators. School reports prepared by representatives for all schools in Yukon are filled with rural school members expressing frustrations due to lack of professional development that is *not applicable for rural settings, impossible to participate in because there is a lack of Teacher's on Call* for many rural communities, and *does not pertain to rural educator needs* (Yukon Teacher's Association, 2018). The existing conservative lens for professional development as a model for professional learning is not applicable and challenging to access for rural educators. Because of this conservative lens, the current model supports urban educator training but neglects the complexities and realities of rural Yukon education. Due to the ease for urban teachers to access professional development, it propagates challenges around recognizing the importance of developing a change initiative in which a professional learning model is created that is beneficial to rural teachers. While the role and responsibility of rural school administrators is to increase and focus on strengthening instructional leadership, "thereby, spotlighting the importance of continued professional development" (Preston, Jakubiec, & Kooymans, 2013, p. 1) within their staff, rural educators often express frustrations around accessing and participating in meaningful professional learning experiences.

### **A Framework for the Problem of Practice**

The current system of professional development used in rural Yukon has change potential. As Yukon education moves towards a holistic approach to curriculum design and delivery, opportunities to address current short comings exists. Mizell (2001) notes that “for far too long the professional development practices of too many school systems and schools have led to nowhere” (p. 18). In essence, “staff development has amounted to little more than a disparate set of adult learning activities with few demonstrable results other than participants’ mounting frustration” (Mizell, 2001, p. 19). This sentiment is echoed in school reports presented at YTA gatherings in which school representatives are asked to speak to the needs of their schools and the educators in them (Yukon Teacher’s Association, 2018). Rural teachers everywhere want “targeted professional development [that] identifies and ensures that teachers have the support and resources needed to promote student achievement” (Dieker, Hynes, Hughes, Hardin, & Becht, 2015, p. 11). This is most effective when rural schools direct their own professional learning models using an authentic, distributed, and transformative leadership approach because “the work of the rural school is no longer to emulate the urban or suburban school, but to attend to its own place” (Barter, 2008, p. 469). Benefits to this model include cost effectiveness, a reduction of travel, and the utilization of local and in-house expertise. Use of small collaborative working groups sharing best teaching strategies and practices for complex classrooms for the purpose of transforming professional learning into an effective model to meet the needs of educators working in rural Yukon schools is in the best interest of students, educators, and stakeholders in education.

Transforming classroom teaching practices to be more inclusive of real world, hands-on, and on the land learning (Department of Education, 2018) within pedagogical practices will



require a shift in leadership and professional learning models and practices used in rural Yukon schools. A distributed and holistic approach using a collaborative process to create professional learning to facilitate the development of efficacy in new pedagogical practices is required. At present, the current system of conservative, hierarchical organizational leadership and directives coming in a *top-down* professional development model to schools does not address the complexities and realities rural educators find themselves in. Authentic leaders using a liberal lens, have the opportunity to change professional development into a holistic professional learning model that addresses and attends to the needs of rural educators. As Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) state, “leadership effects are usually largest where they are needed most” (p. 5). Leaders that are able to “talk the walk” (The Learning Exchange, 2017) and express the need for a professional learning model that meets the needs of rural Yukon educators are needed.

In Yukon, there are far too many differences between rural schools and their urban counterparts to have a *one-size fits all* professional development strategy. For rural educator training to be successful, it must be different than urban professional development in order to meet the needs of rural schools. As Fullan (2015) notes, “the chance of any reform improving student learning is remote unless district and school leaders agree with its purposes and appreciate what is required to make it work” (p. 4). To ensure its success, rural leaders must be encouraged to create and promote plans that use a distributed leadership approach shared between local First Nation Self-Governments, Territorial agencies in education, local leaders, administrators, educators, parents, and students that directly focus on community and rural needs within rural schools.

### **Guiding Questions Emerging from the Problem of Practice**

Questions emerging from the PoP surround engaging rural educators in the process of change and creating a vision for a professional learning model that addresses the complexities and realities of rural educator life. Within the OIP, the first question that needs to be asked is how does one present a vision for a professional learning model to rural educators in order to engage them in the experience so they see value in it? The challenges of teaching in rural Yukon schools can be overwhelming. The goal of education is to create lifelong learners who feel confident in their ability to learn and understand their individual needs as learners. Large quantities of money and resources, including personnel, have been invested in creating various professional development programs that are intended to foster improved student results (Webster-Wright, 2009). Most of the professional development opportunities available in the Yukon are provided in the urban centre, which creates a significant access barrier for educators in the rural communities and leaves them with limited opportunities for professional learning. But as Colbert, Brown, Choi, and Thomas (2008) state, “professional development is a common and necessary approach to improving teacher quality” (p. 135) so change is needed. A vision that encapsulates the benefits, needs, and goals of a professional learning model is needed to not only create the momentum in the change process, but to also garner support from rural Yukon educators for whom this change is intended to benefit.

The second question derived from the PoP asks, how will leaders will be selected to help form a coalition of experts and resource personal to help create a holistic vision that is inclusive of localized, rural, community, and educator needs? Embedded into in this question is the need to maintain authenticity of First Nation ways of knowing and doing when shared between rural schools and educators while offering appropriate acknowledgements for leadership roles and contributions made by individual and the self-governing First Nations in the process. This is

process is highlighted by Bolman and Deal's (2013) human resource frame requiring that the OIP and PoP focus on how to create a *fit* between the organization and the people and the people and the organization. Northouse (2016) further points out that the *fit* and the relationship behaviours between leaders, followers, and organizations "help followers feel comfortable with themselves, with each other, and with the situation in which they find themselves" (p. 71). When deciding on leaders for the process of creating a professional learning model for rural Yukon schools, it is important to select leaders that will *fit* into the roles and responsibilities of leadership.

At present, there is a misalignment between accessing professional learning opportunities creating a challenge of access for rural educators. The third question derived from the PoP asks how will rural educators access, network, and collaborate within a professional learning model so that it is manageable, applicable, relatable, and worth the time and effort to be a participant in the process? An online professional learning model for rural educators will create positive changes to the current system and align with the needs of rural teachers.

Looking at the issue of changing the model of professional development into one of a professional learning community in rural Yukon is not without challenges. As the human resource frame notes, ambivalence and the top-down hierarchy structures within education may be some of the biggest hurdles to overcome. Until further research in the form of questionnaires, surveys, and data collection are completed in the larger OIP process, it is unclear at this point, if the PoP is even something rural administrators and educators would like to undertake as it will create more work in the already busy schedule.

### **Leadership-Focused Vision for Change**

The vision, “Success for Each Learner” (Yukon Education, 2011), has been the guiding vision statement for Yukon curriculum reforms. At present, Yukon Department of Education is in the process of overseeing the implementation of BC’s new curriculum into Yukon schools and are attempting to add locally developed curriculum goals in all subject areas (Department of Education, 2018). Although a shift is occurring in what should be taught in classrooms in Yukon, what is not being examined is the need for professional development practices to shift towards a professional learning model to address the short comings in the current system for access and relevant pedagogical practices for rural educators. The same model that existed before in which educators accessed professional development in the urban centre is still being used. This needs to change and a vision for a professional learning model must be implemented alongside the curriculum change to maximally benefit educator and learner success in rural Yukon schools.

The British Columbia Teacher’s Federation (2006) states that “professional development is considered to be a process of personal growth through programs, services and activities designed to enable members, individually or collectively, to enhance professional practice” (para. 1). The purpose of professional development is to improve understandings and pedagogical practices. Rural Yukon educators and administrators receive less professional learning opportunities than their urban counterparts due to the complexities of living and working in rural Yukon settings. These complexities must guide leader considerations by acknowledging and addressing how teaching in rural Yukon schools and classrooms differs when compared to teaching in urban settings. A model in which purposeful reforms to the current system must include a vision to make professional learning applicable, appealing, accessible, timely, and relevant to the realities of working in rural settings.

As Lock (2008) described, rural teachers must expect to face many challenges when they take on rural placements and a lack of professional learning opportunities is one of these challenges in the present system. The removal of the professional development model and the adoption of and implementation of a professional learning model must take into consideration that rural Yukon schools are comprised of complex classrooms with multiple subject area responsibilities in multi-grade/age/ability classrooms complicating rural teaching placements (Hellsten, McIntyre, & Prytula, 2011). Rural settings have higher numbers of First Nation students and it is vital that rural teachers teach in ways that allow students to keep their cultural identity to ensure motivation and ultimately community and cultural stability (Kaden, et. al., 2016). The education system is a player in cultural and economic well-being in rural Yukon communities and has the potential to amplify and accelerate the process of cultural integrity, connections to local environments, and community viability (Kaden, et. al., 2016). As leaders in education strive to make improvements in curriculum, they must also consider how different rural schools are when compared to urban counterparts. Leaders must focus not only on the complexities but must also address the gap in access and relevance of professional learning to ensure that all Yukon educators are using best pedagogical practices in their classrooms that fit localized and complex needs of the communities and the students within the schools.

By creating a model with a clear vision of professional learning for rural educators, improvements in teacher efficacy, feelings of preparedness, and the establishment of new instructional practices and models will lead to the successful implementation of the new curriculum. If the intention of professional learning opportunities is to improve educator quality than all educators must have regular and equal access to it.

### **Change Drivers**

The process of implementing change to Yukon's curriculum has many challenges including a very complex political landscape. Yukon Department of Education is attempting to address concerns outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (2015) document in areas surrounding the development of curricular studies and delivery methods. Section 10 states, "We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples" (Truth and Reconciliation Canada, 2015, p. 2). Because eleven of the fourteen recognised cultural First Nations groups are self-governing, this call to action has been an important step in the redesign roll out of curriculum reform processes in Yukon. The Yukon Department of Education has paid particularly close attention to addressing the need for "developing culturally appropriate curricula" (Truth and Reconciliation Canada, 2015, p. 2) within Yukon schools. It is going to take exemplary leadership skills and a clear vision to transition and transform the system of education in Yukon to one which better suits the needs of Yukon students and considers the cultural diversities within it. A vision for a professional learning model for rural Yukon educators that is carefully crafted will ensure that educators are prepared to teach in ways that garner student achievement and interest.

In creating a vision for professional development for rural educators, leaders must examine the realities and challenges that rural educators and administrators face. Lock (2008) notes that rural educators face a lack of mentorship opportunities as a result of limited access to expert educators within their schools with similar experience(s). Rural Yukon educators not only teach in multi grade/age/ability classrooms, they are often the only educator in the school to teach the grade(s) they teach with no one else to collaborate or share strategies and materials with. This can lead to feelings of professional isolation within individual schools (Lock, 2008).

New and experienced educators in rural communities often have to go at it alone, *inventing the wheel*, within the school and frequently face situations in which few or no staff are able to support them with ideas, advice, or materials. This “lack of professional support and insufficient instructional materials, supplies, and equipment” (Hellsten, et. al., 2011, p. 10) is a common reality in rural settings. But, a professional learning model designed to link rural educators and administrators with others in similar settings and situations addressing common needs and strategies to overcome challenges is possible. The ultimate aim of all change and innovation in education is to improve learning (Harlen, 2010).

### **The Future State**

A professional learning model has to be viewed as a long-term evolutionary process that affords rural teachers time to collaborate sharing ideas while also providing teachers with time to then try the ideas in their own classrooms with students (Goos, Dole, & Makar, 2007). This process takes time because of the complexities surrounding teaching in rural communities. Multi-grade/age/ability makes the *one size fits* all professional development model impractical and will likely fail. Rural teachers need to have time to try a variety of ideas making modifications to their repertoire while also participating in discussions with supportive colleagues in similar teaching situations (Goos, et. al., 2007). The idea that attending a one- or two-day workshop or sitting in on a short presentation to provide effective professional development must be replaced with the vision of an online learning community in which rural teachers are actively involved and sharing in their learning.

Educators in rural Yukon communities need professional learning opportunities that go beyond one or two-day didactic workshops or brief presentations at school conferences in order to gain efficacy in pedagogical practices. Leaders must create a vision in which ongoing

commitment to flexible professional learning models that make use of various scheduling choices and collaborative opportunities are used. This would enable rural educators to have reasonable access to professional learning and collaborative opportunities thus increasing pedagogical understandings and efficacies. An advantage of this flexibility is the opportunity for rural educators to build relationships with one another while working together to share best teaching practices and building pedagogical capacities. Leaders of change must encourage educators, administrators, and stakeholders to collaborate and have conversations at regular intervals where discussions, personal reflections, and understandings are shared. As Borko (2004) states, “strong professional development communities are important contributors to instructional improvement and school reform” (p. 6). The vision for a professional learning model in rural Yukon must become more holistic in its focus and delivery in order to reach all educators and be inclusive of changes implemented in the new curriculum roll out.

### **Organizational Change Readiness**

The release of the Office of the Auditor General’s Report, Public Schools and Advanced Education – Yukon Department of Education (2009) pointed to an education system that was failing at every level. Demands for change from First Nation governments, stakeholders, parents, and students became the catalyst that was needed for an overhaul of the entire education system in Yukon (CBC News, Feb. 3, 2009). Following BC’s Ministry of Education’s lead, Yukon education adopted and began making changes to how education was going operate within the Territory. After consultation and lengthy research, BC created a new model for education and curriculum and because Yukon follows BC’s curriculum, Yukon education also rolled out the new mandate (Yukon Government, 2018b).



As Cawsey, Deszca, and Ingols (2016) note, “change initiators may understand the need for change, but other key stakeholders may not be prepared to recognise that need or believe it is strong enough to warrant action” (p. 106). This aptly describes an interesting paradox occurring at present within the organization described within the PoP. On one side of the paradox, is a remodeling of the curriculum in Yukon to be more holistic, inclusive, and comprehensive to the needs of all learners within the classrooms. The other side of the paradox however, is lacking in a reasonable, timely, and holistic way to engage educators in professional learning and development to implement the new curriculum. The present didactic *one-size fits all* professional development model does not align well with the vision of the new curriculum model and with the needs of rural Yukon educators. Action is needed to address the issue of professional learning for rural educators.

In the 2017/2018 school year, Yukon Department of Education rolled out the first stage of the curriculum redesign for students in kindergarten to grade 9 (Yukon Government, 2018b). In 2018/2019, the grade 10 curriculum was adopted into all Yukon schools followed by the new curriculum for grades 11 and 12 in the 2019/2020, school year (Yukon Government, 2018b). The purpose of the new curriculum is to address the failings of the previous curriculum and teaching practices. The holistic approach in the new curriculum is intended to reach all students to improve learning and promote the “Success for Each Learner” (Yukon Education, 2011). To prepare Yukon educators for the change, the new model for curriculum was discussed at all professional development, Yukon Department of Education conferences, and staff meetings within schools for two years prior to its induction to engage educators in the process and provide environmental conditions for the new change to curriculum. As Cawsey, Deszca, and Ingols (2016) state, “readiness is advanced when organizational members can see how the existing

alignment is getting in the way of producing better outcomes and believe that realignment can be achieved” (p. 106) which is why discussion about the curriculum redesign became such a strong focus of all interactions between Yukon Department of Education, leaders within the organization, primary stakeholders, and educators.

While the curriculum redesign has been described to everyone with a vested interest in education, what has not been clearly described is how teachers and administrators in rural communities will receive training and professional learning opportunities to be comfortable in implementing the curriculum changes. The timing is right for a change model addressing the deficits of the current professional development model. Built into the new curriculum is the opportunity for rural educators to operate their own version of professional learning that better suits the unique needs within their communities and in collaboration with other communities thus addressing the paradoxical misalignment between the vision of the new model within the curriculum redesign and the needs of rural educators for professional learning opportunities.

Professional development must move from a passive form of transmission of information towards a culture of active learning in which teachers are viewed as the learners much like in the classrooms in which they teach (Webster-Wright, 2009). A professional learning model needs to be designed to replace the old way of transmitting information to educators. Learning is a social process but professional development tends to be a one-shot learning experience through didactic means (Webster-Wright, 2009). In order to be effective a professional learning models that allow for collaboration and sharing of pedagogical practices must occur on a regular basis and can be completed over an extended period of time within a community of educators as learners (Webster-Wright, 2009). To be effective, a professional learning model should encourage “teachers to collaborate and utilize strategies that teachers may use with their students” (Colbert,

et. al., 2008, p. 138), and should provide “teachers with the opportunity to continuously assess their own competencies” (Colbert, et. al., 2008, p. 138) thus transforming their own teaching practices.

Professional development programs tend to be a *one-size-fits-all* but, like in the classrooms in which teachers instruct, a variety of learning needs exist among educators and the didactic approach of professional development may not work for all adult learners. Rural educators must be encouraged to collaborate and have conversations at regular intervals where discussions, personal reflections, and understandings are shared. As a part of the model it is important to remember that “professional development is most effective when it occurs in school-based contexts” (Goos, et.al., 2007, p. 26) as it gives rural educators the opportunity to attempt strategies within the context in which they teach and within the diversity of the students that make up their classroom. As Borko (2004) noted, professional learning communities contribute to instructional improvement and school reforms. Experts in areas of need should be encouraged to also be a part of these meetings in order to help guide and inform educators towards efficacy. More is needed in the way professional learning is thought of and delivered if pedagogical and curriculum reforms are to be successful in rural Yukon schools.

### **Conclusion**

Rural Yukon educators do not receive adequate, timely, contextual, and relevant professional learning opportunities under the current model of professional development used to transmit pedagogical practices and efficacies. While the newly adopted BC and Yukon curriculum model uses a more holistic approach to delivering curriculum content in all classrooms, what has not been considered is changing the system for professional learning to match this holistic approach. The timing is rife with opportunities for rural leaders and educators

to capitalize on curriculum reforms to change how rural educators access new, innovative, relevant, and timely pedagogies that work within the complexities and realities of working in rural Yukon settings. A professional learning model that shares a vision for holistic approaches to educational efficacies around areas of need for rural educators using a collaborative approach is needed. Rural Yukon educators face challenges and complexities in their educational settings that are very different from their urban counterparts and need a professional learning model that suits their needs. It is time that rural educators have a professional learning model that is easy to access and provides relevant methods to develop teaching capacities so every student in Yukon finds success in their learning.

Chapter 2 continues to explore the PoP while providing solutions to address the problem in an evaluative way. The change plan model will also be introduced in Chapter 2 along with ethical considerations for implementation and communication.

## Chapter 2: Leadership Approaches for Change

The new model for curriculum in Yukon is designed to improve student understanding and learning based on the research conducted in the process of its creation (Ministry of Education, 2015). The overarching purpose of the new curriculum model is to be more holistic in its approach and incorporate First Nation ways of knowing and doing (Department of Education, 2018). For rural schools, this is very important as the demographics in rural settings is heavily represented by First Nation peoples (Arriagada, 2016). However, what is not acknowledged within the curriculum model and implementation plan is a clear understanding of the demographics and learning needs of the educators expected to deliver the new curriculum mandates. In particular, lack of access to good pedagogical learning opportunities and acquisition models in rural schools that encapsulate and address strategies for classroom management, curriculum delivery, and balancing the complex realities of being a rural educator in Yukon schools has not been addressed. Purposeful attention and consideration leading to the creation of a plan and model to address the needs of rural educators is needed to help rural educators meet the new Yukon education vision, “Success for Each Learner” (Yukon Education, 2011). Reforms aimed at improving how curriculum is designed must also include a model for how the new directives are delivered if the status of education is going to change in Yukon. A weakness of the new curriculum model is that the model lacks an explicit theory or plan describing how to move educational and pedagogical practices forward to help educators meet the demands outlined within it especially for rural educators (Bryk, 2015). As Bryk (2015) notes, all too often, rural educators are left “largely on their own to figure out how actually to hit these targets” (p. 468) which are demanded of them as educators. What is required is a change model that makes use of a transformational lens with a focus on addressing social issues, empowerment, inequalities, and

alienation within student populations and professional learning opportunities for educators (Creswell, 2014) within rural Yukon schools. This will require leadership skills that “create adaptive change that address the complex challenges facing the organization” (Lichtenstein, Uhl-Bien, Marion, Seers, & Orton, 2006, p. 8) within rural Yukon schools.

Creswell’s (2014) pragmatic worldview encourages the researcher “to look at *what* and *how* to research based on the intended consequences – where they want to go with it” (p. 11). As the researcher, influenced by my educative experiences, professional learning opportunities have to change for rural Yukon educators if change is to occur in educator efficacies and pedagogical practices. The passive paradigm of traditional methods for professional development in which an expert relays a didactic approach to bolster educator efficacy (Katz & Earl, 2010) in delivering lessons to single grade and at-grade level learners continues to be of little value and lacks effectiveness for rural Yukon educators. This antiquated professional development model does not address the complexities of the new curriculum model nor the complexities of the environments and political landscapes rural educators find themselves in.

Rural Yukon education is never in absolute unity. Challenges erupt when rural educators attempt to access and participate in professional development. Classroom and school complexities and the compounding realities of working in communities often equates to rural educators not attending one- or two-day professional development workshops. Factors such as a lack of teachers on call, complex classrooms with learners with complex needs – which often means educators do not always feel comfortable leaving for a day or more –, travel through large geographical regions in all sorts of northern Canadian weather can be precarious and expensive, and disdain towards the value of the *didactic expert* has meant few rural educators have taken advantage of professional development due to a lack of providing successful solutions to

complex rural issues (Glover, Nugent, Chmune, Ihlo, Guard, Koziol, & Bovaird., 2016). Katz and Earl (2010) describe a shift in how educators access and participate in professional learning through the use of networked learning communities in which educator learning “is based on knowledge creation theory – that learning and the creation of new knowledge by teachers and principals/headteachers leads to deep conceptual changes and new ways of working in schools and classrooms” (p. 28). A model that relies on the efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness of collaboration between rural Yukon schools and the educators within them is a way to improve pedagogical practices to suit and meet the needs of educators and the students within rural classrooms. As Katz and Earl (2010) note, professional learning communities create knowledge through dialogue and conversations bringing new ideas, tools, and practices to light transforming the process of how rural schools network and communicated best teaching practices.

The *magic leader*, described by authors like Smith and Graetz (2011) and change philosophy engineers like Kotter (1995), Senge (1990), and Lewin (1951) is a lofty goal for one person to attain. The change process must start with recommendations and small steps that appeal to those working in the front lines of rural Yukon classrooms. Developing a strong professional model that is embedded into the jobs of rural educators has value as “educators are now cast as active agents of improvement rather than as passive receivers of knowledge developed by others” (Bryk, 2015, p. 469). As a collective, rural educators under this model of professional learning communities, remove the assemblages of individual educators as learners, and create safe spaces in which they work, share, and learn together (Bryk, 2015). This type of model will require a shift in thinking around how rural educators access professional learning opportunities.

The responsibility for self and responsibility for others is most effective when leaders “charge his or her constituents with translating ethical values and practices into the fabric of the school culture” (Cherkowski, et. al., 2015, p. 13). It is imperative that straight-forward and open dialogue occur between all levels within the organization of the Yukon education system. Grigore (2013) notes that “the workforce is requesting authenticity and transparency from its leaders” (p. 200) which in this instance, requires clarity of vision and goals based on feedback to support creating amendments that promote forward progress and growth. In the model, rural educators themselves are actively involved in self-directed and problem centered approaches adopting new and effective pedagogies shared in working community of professionals with whom parallels may be drawn because of the relative similarity of their circumstances.

The pragmatic lens acknowledges that change does not occur quickly in education nor easily. What works in one rural school, classroom, and community may not work in another. The education system itself is bound by functionalist constraints and the nomothetics of realism, positivism, and determinism (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The education system likes change initiatives in neat, orderly packages which resemble the comforts of the status quo without delineation from the continuance of conformity, consensus, and social integration (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The paradox is that rural educators may find a sense of comfort in the order of the existing state of affairs but recognize that the education system is failing the most vulnerable members and radical change is needed. A more utopic and transformative system based on a framework of integrity and ethical practices with a focus on de-marginalizing and addressing disparities empowering the ideals of social justice to effectively takes strides towards equality (Scotland, 2012), starts with small changes that fit into functionalist frameworks firmly established in the Yukon education system. Knowing this, change must begin by orchestrating



small critical changes to the organization until it catches on and becomes a part of the normative culture of how professional learning occurs for rural educators. Radical change is possible but must be done in small, purposeful, comfortable steps to appease the functionalist system (Scotland, 2012).

Understanding the various leadership lenses in which various agencies within the Yukon operate allows for articulation surrounding assumptions that have been created based on personal experiences, frustrations, and celebrations of change that has occurred within the rural Yukon education system. In Creswell's (2014) transformative worldview, the proposed OIP, "contains an action agenda for reform that may change lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher's life" (p. 9). Opportunities for leaders within Yukon education are rife with endless possibilities to be a part of new and innovative change initiatives. With the recent implementation of a new curriculum model used in Yukon schools the focus of education has taken on a student-centred and flexible approach that supports deeper learning making use of First Nation ways of knowing and doing with local content imbedded into all lessons (Department of Education, 2018). Leaders that make use of an authentic approach to their leadership style will be better suited to working within the complex political landscape of rural Yukon schools. As Northouse (2016) describes, leaders that are authentic are able to create a vision that is realistic, believable, and attracts and energizes people to achieve the goals outlined within the vision. Working together, the leader must be able to attend to, hear, and actualize the goals and visions each agency within rural Yukon education has for their community, linguistic, and cultural goals.

In many ways, leadership among rural Yukon education systems resembles a complexity leadership theory as described by Lichtenstein, Uhl-Bien, Marion, Seers, and Orton (2006) in

which the “social processes are too complex and ‘messy’ to be attributed to a single individual or pre-planned streams of events” (p. 3). Rural Yukon schools work within a framework that is complex and requires adaptations based on the needs of local First Nation Self-Governments and community needs. Key to the complexity leadership theory is that it provides an integrative theoretical framework for explaining and encompassing ideas from complex theories such as shared leadership, distributive leadership, collective leadership, adaptive leadership, and relational leadership theories (Lichtenstein, et. al., 2006). In order to develop a change model for how rural educators access professional learning opportunities, leadership involved in organizational change must understand that “leadership events are not constructed by the actions of single individuals; rather they emerge through the interactions between agents over time” (Lichtenstein, et. al., 2006, p. 4). In essence, leaders must understand that the change process is an interactive process in which all parties involved in the complex system of developing educational models need to work in a collective way to ensure that there is fair representation when creating a lasting vision for a professional learning model for rural educators. The “complexity leadership theory also provides a pathway for respecting diversity” (Lichtenstein, et. al., 2006, p. 8) because it is much easier to cultivate cultural respect through the processes of working towards a common goal for the organization in one-on-one interchanges and engagement. This allows for the formation of alliances between the various agencies involved in Yukon education creating a vision for a professional learning model that meets the needs of rural educators.

### **Framing the Problem of Practice: Kotter’s Eight-Step Change Model**

Evans, Thornton, and Usinger (2012) state, “a firm grounding in change theory can provide educational leaders with opportunity to orchestrate meaningful organizations” (p. 155).

Therefore, it is important to have a model that will help promote the kind of organizational change desired within the organization's already established paradigms to ensure the likelihood of success. Bolman and Deal (2013), state that "change agents fail when they rely mostly on reason and structure [fundamentalist paradigm] while neglecting human, political, and symbolic elements [critical paradigm]" (p. 390). Kotter's (1995) Eight-Step Change Model, introduced in his book, *Leading Change* (Cawsey, Deszca, & Ingols, 2016) is the change model described in this OIP as it addresses the needs of rural educators and works within the functionalist and critical paradigms which operate already within the education organization in Yukon. The change model requires some adaptations to meet the purposes of this OIP and will be described further in the steps where this modification is required. The Kotter model is used as the change model for the OIP because it acknowledges that change must occur in small steps in sequence providing leaders of the change initiative an understanding of what needs to be completed in each step (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). Kotter's change model allows for time for participants to see the relevance of the change and "produce increased resolve concerning the need for change" (Cawsey, et. al., 2016, p. 106). Kotter's model also describes how to know when the organization is ready to move forward to the next phase of the change model thereby, giving participants within the organization relevant data from the organization "to be more open to change and provide members of the organization with the information they need to provoke their thinking concerning the need for change" (Cawsey, et. al., 2016, p. 107). Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model provides the best framework for the change process required in the outlined change initiative within this OIP as it provides a framework for leaders within the organization of rural Yukon educators to know what they should do when they see the organization is ready or not yet ready to move forward in the change progression.

Other change models have validity but were not considered for the purposes of this OIP. Kurt Lewin's (1951) three stage theory of change model, for example, focuses on change agents as the source for changing an organization (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). In this instance, change agents must "understand the situation and system as a whole as well as the component parts that make up the system" (Cawsey, et. al., 2016, p. 45) before planning for the change process. The change model relies on the concepts of *unfreezing*, *change*, and *refreezing* the organization (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). To *unfreeze* the organization, leaders must free members of the organization from the shackles of current state of organizational beliefs and assumptions in order for new ideas and conditions to be inputted and/or developed (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). Once *unfreezing* occurs within an organization, *change* is then possible. *Change* is a complex process that requires resources in the form of people, technologies, and a variety of systems to create a flux in the organization that produces the desired change within the organization (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). Once the desired changes within the organization are completed, the *refreeze* step is enacted and the changes become the new expected norms of the organization (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). Lewin's model is too simplistic for such a complex change initiative as outlined in the OIP. Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model, while not without its shortcomings, provides a highly structured step-by-step process providing structures and cues to change leaders to ensure the forward progression of the change initiative (Cawsey, et. al, 2016). The weakness of Kotter's change model, lies in the failings of leaders to recognise that steps are not yet completed and the next step is enacted before the organization is ready, and/or; in not recognising that the organization is ready for the next step and change leaders do not implement it creating apathy towards the process as little progression is noticed by participants and members within the organization. Kotter's model is most apt for meeting the change needs of the organization promoting the

creation of a professional learning model for educators in rural Yukon schools and will be discussed further in the following sections.

### **Step One: Create a Sense of Urgency**

Burrell and Morgan (1979) note, the functionalist paradigm is “characterized by a concern for providing explanations of the status quo, social order, consensus, social integration, solidarity, need satisfaction, and actuality” (p. 26). The functionalist paradigm operates in the first three steps of the change model. The first step of Kotter’s model, “Create a sense of urgency” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 390), is a call to action for leaders to determine and define the state of the organization and help those in leadership roles within the organization understand that change is needed for improvement (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). This involves “explanations of the status quo” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 26) of the organization and involves a “problem-oriented approach” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 26) to provide a practical solution to problems within organizations related to the functionalist paradigm. This means that “leaders need to illustrate the threats to the system and move enough organizational members from a sense of invulnerability to vulnerability” (Cawsey, et. al, 2016, p. 48) in order to combat complacency that has set into the organization, which in the case of the PoP, is a lack of professional learning opportunities for rural Yukon teachers. Within the larger framework of curriculum development in Yukon, the curriculum redesign and implementation process has ignited a sense of urgency for change in how we address curriculum and student outcomes, but this ignition must also include how rural teachers access professional learning opportunities. This “sense of urgency” among rural Yukon leaders must address and cultivate the need for change in how rural educators plan, access, and participate in meaningful and applicable professional learning opportunities to meet the needs of educators working in rural settings. Changing the

professional development model currently used into a professional learning model for rural teachers in Yukon will address many shortcomings and issues surrounding teacher satisfaction, stress and burnout, and student achievement (Katz & Earl, 2010).

Causes of burnout are related to prolonged stress due to inordinate time demands, inadequate collegial relationships, classroom compositions, lack of resources and equipment, isolation, limited promotional opportunities, lack of professional learning opportunities, and lack of professional supports (Abel & Sewell, 1999). The “consequences of burnout include diminished job satisfaction, reduced teacher-pupil rapport and pupil motivation, and decreased teacher effectiveness in meeting educational goals” (Abel & Sewell, 1999, p. 287). Creating a sense of urgency to engage leaders to drive change processes acknowledging the complex realities of teaching in rural communities is vital to ensuring that rural educators receive the type of professional learning opportunities afforded in a professional learning model thus alleviating stress associated within a rural teaching positions while promoting student achievement.

### **Step Two: Creating a Guiding Coalition**

The second step of Kotter’s model, “Creating the guiding coalition” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 390) requires that leaders within the organization are chosen with purpose to create a coalition that has position power, expertise, and credibility (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). This requires a functionalist approach as “social order” and “consensus” as described by Burrell and Morgan (1979), and are key to the success and purpose of the second step. In this step, the expertise within all stakeholders of rural Yukon education would forge relationships that are focused on creating professional learning opportunities that are unique to the needs of their communities, their schools, the First Nation people within rural communities, and are focused on best teaching

pedagogies with student learning and success in mind. These leaders would make voluntarily commitments to work together to establish a professional learning model that works.

### **Step Three: Create a Vision for Change**

The third step, “Create a vision for change” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 390), asks that leaders create a strategically feasible vision that considers the realities of the organization setting goals that are flexible, attainable, and easily communicated (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). In this instance, Kotter’s model is making use of the functionalist ideology of “needs satisfaction and actuality” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 24). Attainable goals address the *needs* of the organization and system and *actuality* involves creating goals that are attainable within the organization. This vision must include the creation of professional and collegial working relationships between rural leaders, educators, and government agencies to ensure that rural educators are receiving professional learning opportunities that meet the specific needs of the First Nation Self-Governments, community, and curriculum while providing opportunities to share knowledge and practices with each other meeting vision goals.

### **Step Four: Communicating Vision Buy-In**

Kotter’s fourth step of his change model, “Communicating vision buy in” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 390) transitions from the functionalist to the critical paradigm. There is a continuation of the functionalist paradigm requiring that all members within an organization understand and accept the vision outlined by the leaders using the functionalist approach of *social integration*, but it also reflects the critical paradigm in that the vision makes use of socially constructed ideals. These ideals are heavily influenced by internal provocations within the organization enabling the alteration of social constructionism (Scotland, 2012). In this sense, the realities

within the organization embrace *social integration* of the functionalist paradigm as members accept the vision as a part of the regular vernacular of the organization. At the same time, the reality of the organization is altered by purposeful human actions as described by the critical paradigm. In the case of rural educators in Yukon, this is the point at which a professional learning model is deemed uniquely differentiated from standard professional development models currently used in the Territory and is embraced as the new *norm*.

The four remaining steps of Kotter's model make use of the critical paradigm. According to Scotland (2012), the critical paradigm is "anti-foundational" (p. 13) and attempts to create a "utopian world" (p. 13) which addresses language and knowledge that is designed to "empower or weaken" (p. 13) the relations in society. In essence, "the critical paradigm seeks to address issues of social justice and marginalism" (Scotland, 2012, p. 13). Those operating under the critical paradigm must be critically aware of the social driving factors in their preconceived understandings to be able to actuate underlying goals and aims through repeated reflection (Scotland, 2012). For far too long, rural Yukon educators have not been able to access professional learning opportunities that meet their specific needs, but change is possible. It is through the development of a new strategy for a professional learning model that issues of social justice and marginalism will be addressed.

### **Step Five: Empowering Broad-Based Action**

The fifth step of Kotter's model, "Empowering broad-based action" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 390) requires the removal of all barriers within an organization that confine or prevent people from accomplishing their best possible work. Feed-back loops or as the critical approach states, repeated reflection, allows members of the organization to ensure that they are contributing to action goals in effective and efficient ways. The fifth step utilizes the critical



paradigm to allow organizations to empower the people within them to achieve outcome goals outlined in the vision model. This would require rural educators, stakeholders, and team leaders to work together as a team to ensure that the vision created for a rural professional learning model is focused on goal attainment. The requisite for this process to be effective includes frequent meetings or check-ins to discuss ongoing progress to ensure that adaptations or modifications are successful and within the vision and goals outlined for improving professional learning in rural Yukon schools.

### **Step Six: Generating Short-Term Wins**

The sixth step of Kotter's model, "Generating short term wins" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 390) allows members within the organization to observe positive change agents at work. This creates a positive feedback loop and bolsters moral motivating members to actively participate in the change process. In the critical paradigm, this process is related to "ideology critique" (Scotland, 2012, p. 14) for the purpose of exposing hidden ideologies "by revealing participants' places in systems which empower or disempower them" (Scotland, 2012, p. 14). Noting successful applications of pedagogical practices that create positive student outcomes and achievements for the purpose of highlighting them among group members of the professional learning team increases *buy in* by all members. When rural Yukon teachers see it working, they will be more eager to participate and will see value in the process.

### **Step Seven: Don't Let Up**

The seventh step of Kotter's model, "Don't let up" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 390), reminds leaders and members of an organization to not lose sight of momentum created by the change process in order to combat and dissuade the regression process (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). At

this point in the change model, the critical paradigm becomes imperative. Dialogical relations of equity must be promoted between all levels of participants as employees are empowered to take on lead roles within the professional learning model (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). Providing more professional learning opportunities related to the change model within rural Yukon schools will drive change deeper into the organization while ensuring that new practices are deeply rooted into the culture of rural professional learning (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). As Scotland (2012) notes, the critical paradigm requires that organizations “create an agenda for change or reform, enhancing the lives of the participants” (p. 14) which is an essential component of the seventh step of Kotter’s model and essential to the success changing how professional learning is acquired in rural Yukon schools.

### **Step Eight: Make it Stick**

The last and eighth step of Kotter’s model, “Make it stick” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 390), has utopian like outcomes described in the critical paradigm. The changes that occur within an organization are anchored into the culture of operations and expectations within leadership, membership, and partnerships associated with the organization. New social forces have diverged from the original status quo and are now actualized in the culture and norms of the organization. The utopia exists when the critical paradigm has been used to address “issues of social justice and marginalism” (Scotland, 2012, p. 13) and the marginalized have been emancipated from predetermined social constructs within an organization thus overthrowing the “limitations of existing social arrangements” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 32). In the case of professional learning for rural Yukon schools, this means having an established method of professional learning opportunities that meets the needs of teachers in rural schools thus alleviating teacher

burnout, high rates of teacher turnover, and increasing teacher pedagogical efficacy and student learning.

### **Critical Organizational Analysis**

The Nadler and Tushman congruence model as described by Cawsey, Deszca, and Ingols, (2016) provides a framework for change leader's to examine and analyze the organization (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). The model is an open model system in which both environmental factors as well as internal components of the organization are evaluated and assessed based on their compatibility and ability to work for the organization (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). The Nadler and Tushman congruence model is based on the idea that the performance of an organization is derived from work or tasks of an organization, the structures and systems of the organization, the culture of the organization and the people that make up the organization (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). These all play a key role in the critical analysis of the organization.

### **Leaders Developing Shared Vision**

Kouzes and Posner (2012) sums up this idea best, "to be able to envision the future, you have to realize what's already going on" (p. 109). If you are not able to see what the vision is "you can't effectively, authentically lead others to places you personally don't want to go" (p. 125) making it imperative that the vision leaders create is one that encompasses the input, feedback, and direction that is best for forward progress. The Nadler and Tushman congruence model provides insights to how the organization developed and evolved into its current state based on internal and external factors influencing the political, technological, and social factors (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). Using the model, it is noted that within the Yukon Territory, the vision for

education is one that is inclusive of input from the Yukon Territorial Government, First Nations governments, stakeholders, education leaders, and educators within the system.

The goal of the OIP is to engage leaders in a shared vision for the purpose of creating a rural professional learning community “intended to foster the development of such innovative knowledge communities in schools by linking school-based groups to their counterparts in other schools and by facilitating the action of key enablers of learning communities for knowledge creation and sharing” (Katz & Earl, 2010, p. 29). While the new curriculum model is careful to include all agencies, what has been overlooked is the need for changes to the way rural educators access professional learning opportunities. A shared vision for how educators develop efficacy in pedagogies that attends to the vision of “Success for Each Learner” (Yukon Education, 2011), must be developed.

### **Leaders Fostering Innovation**

Leaders encourage innovation by demonstrating that they are able *to let go of the way things are* and welcome *the way things could be*. The Nadler and Tushman congruence model notes that key tasks outline the work that must be executed in order to implement successful change strategies (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). Breakdown is the first step toward innovation, an intentional release of established habits of thought, expectations, assumptions, and beliefs in order to embrace not knowing” (Muse, 2016, para. 2). In the case of Yukon education, leaders within the system had to let go of the old antiquated ways of almost no accountability and begin to establish new innovations in order to create a new model of education (Yukon Department of Education, 2009). It is through the process of fostering and encouraging new ways of thinking through feedback and the insights of those who carry a shared vision that innovations are successfully implanted. Strong leaders encourage dialogue and collaborative processes to get

their team where it needs to go. In this instance, what also needs to be considered is providing rural educators with ways in which to effectively access professional learning opportunities that are timely, effective, suitable, and useful in complex rural settings.

### **Leaders Collaborating and Building Capacity**

The Nadler and Tushman congruence model notes that change leaders must model both the explicit and implicit norms and behaviours of the change process (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). . Leaders must encourage collaboration by assigning roles and accountability to members within the team. Attaining the vision of an organization is always the goal of a collaborative team. As Kouzes and Posner (2012) state, “roles must be designed so that every person’s contributions are both additive and cumulative to the final outcome” (p. 232). It is through the complex process of collaboration that great things can be achieved between individuals, groups, organizations, and government agencies that may not have the same intent at the start of the collaborative process. Leaders create an atmosphere of trust in which collaboration can take place keeping in mind ethics, vision, and innovations that push the organization towards their goals.

### **Leaders Motivating and Creating Community**

The Nadler and Tushman congruence model notes that change leaders have to have a strong understanding of how change can be facilitated through the use of structures and formal systems of the organization and influence the behaviours and actions of the people within it (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). Creating feelings of worth and vitality in the workplace is accomplished when the people within the organization feel valued. Strong leaders take time to acknowledge the hard work, accomplishments, and personal sacrifices made by team members. “If the potential exists within us, leaders find a way to bring it out in us” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 283) by

encouraging and supporting us and most importantly by believing that we can be successful. “Exemplary leaders can, figuratively speaking, bring us back to life” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 282) and can bring an organization back to life in doing so. While the process can be slow, especially if an organization has been *unhealthy* for a long period of time, it is possible to *breathe life* back into an organization and invigorate it if the leadership encourages and creates a supportive climate in which risks and ideas can be taken and shared by all members involved.

### **Leadership Analysis**

The Nadler and Tushman congruence model stresses the importance change leaders have on the impact of the success the change initiative has on the organization and the people within it (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). Leadership is a collaborative process in which leaders “need partners to make extraordinary things happen in organizations” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 30). When assessing what leadership is, it is important to remember that “the study of leadership is the study of how men and women guide others through adversity, uncertainty, hardship, disruption, transformation, transition, recovery, new beginnings, and other significant challenges” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 160). How a leader inspires and creates possibilities for the advent and implementation of innovation through teamwork and collaboration towards positive change within an organization is based on how a leader fosters relationships built on trust, honesty, and genuine, sincere care among all colleagues. As the new curriculum model is implemented in Yukon, there is room for consideration for how rural Yukon educators access professional learning opportunities. The collegial relationships built during the curriculum redesign have the potential to positively impact and address the professional learning needs of rural educators.

While human nature is to enjoy the status quo and be hesitant towards change, leaders must be vigilant about being “out in front of change, not behind it trying to catch up” (Kouzes &

Posner, 2012, p. 182). It is necessary to encourage leaders to take on initiatives to foster and create change within the organization by creating and purposefully constructing a safe place for risk-taking. Change is not an easy undertaking when there are so many vested interests in the Yukon education system. It is important that all members of the rebuilding team feel safe and supported within a constructive environment so that opinions and openness to new ideas can be discussed freely and honestly. Respect of individual opinions, feelings, and feedback is of utmost importance. Leaders must continue to work together to create opportunities for rural educators to access professional learning opportunities that meet the needs of working in rural Yukon schools.

Even within healthy organizations, leaders must “teach” others to “destroy confining barriers and adopt an inquisitive attitude towards others’ opinions and insights” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 181). This type of “generative leadership” as coined in the Surie and Hazy (2006) article, are “those aspects of leadership that foster innovation, organizational adaptation, and high performance over time” (p. 13). In essence, leaders become “enablers of innovation” becoming the “catalyst that creates an effective context for innovation to occur” (Surie & Hazy, 2006, p. 15). Leaders must be role models of change to “confront existing paradigms” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 178) and “disturb the status quo” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 161). When leaders become the agents of innovative change and show that their own “passion fuels motivational drive” (Marron & Cunniff, 2014, p. 147) they are better able to motivate those who may be more reluctant to change the status quo. Change is needed in how rural educators access professional learning opportunities, and it will take exemplary leadership and leaders to ensure the success of a rural professional learning model that is specific and adaptive to their needs.

Creating change is fraught with challenges. It is not as simple as being excited about new innovations and in exuberance pushing it *top down* without consultation and collaboration.

Instead, leaders must be considerate and consultative of those involved and effected by organizational change. In building a culture of change, leaders must first build a culture based on the collective values of the organization, the stakeholders, and those who work within the organization. As Kouzes & Posner (2012) state, “credible leaders honour the diversity of their many constituents, but they also stress their common values. Leaders build on agreement” (p. 57). This means presenting new ideas as well as being open to new ideas. Soliciting feedback by leaders “promotes trust in leadership and creates a climate of trust within the team” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 84). An open, fair, interchange of ideas and knowledge sharing creates an atmosphere of collegial transactions in which all parties are active participants in creating a professional learning model for rural educators. At present, Yukon Government, First Nation Self-Governments, community leaders, education leaders, and various other stakeholders are working collaboratively to find common goals and outcomes to create a new and sustainable vision for Yukon education. What must also be considered is a plan for rural educators that address the complexities of their unique needs for professional learning opportunities.

Patterson, Luthans, and Jeung (2014) note “that by taking an interest in the well-being and development of subordinates, supervisors can establish a supportive work environment that provides the climate necessary for employees to take risks, explore new ways of doing things, and act agentically” (p. 443). The collaborative process at the institutional level in schools involves educators providing feedback to school leaders and school councils on how well various programs work. In turn, the leadership team reports to the agencies making recommendations about improvements or adjustments that may be required for success. It is through the process of collaboration that extraordinary things happen as a result of partnerships bringing “people from different backgrounds to solve problems and come up with new ideas through their shared



commitment and common purpose” (Cravalho, 2014, p. 30). This gives hope and purpose to a diverse team that will be working collaboratively on a new system for a professional learning model for rural educators in Yukon.

The process of collaborating, analysing, and synthesizing multiple view points and ideas within a group that has a common purpose, value system, and goal in mind creates “a greater effect than the sum of their individual effects” (Cravalho, 2014, p. 36). To further hit home the idea of the importance and magnitude of collaboration is the idea that “groups, teams, and communities are far more powerful than individuals when it comes to developing human capital” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 3). To ensure that collaboration is successful, however, leaders must be the agent of trust within the team building process. Each member of the team must feel as though they are a contributing member of the collaboration process and that they can rely upon other team members for support and to do their part as members of the team. As the Yukon education system implements the new curriculum model, each of the various agencies involved in the process are working through challenges to create a holistic vision that meets the needs of everyone involved. This process must also consider the needs of rural educators for accessing professional learning opportunities as they move forward into new curriculum and educational goals.

### **Possible Solutions to Address the PoP**

The complexities surrounding professional learning opportunities for rural educators in Yukon make change initiatives difficult to enact. Distance, geographical isolation, challenging classroom demographics, multiple responsibilities outside of regular teaching duties, as well as varying political landscapes within each community all add to a situation where an educator may already feel overwhelmed in their teaching and administrative duties. What is needed is a change

model that embodies the directives of the new curriculum mandate while meeting the needs of educators. There has never been a better time to change how rural educators access professional learning in their schools and communities.

Organizations use a variety of strategies to make improvements to functions and performance through a process of evaluating and assessing various factors working within and alongside the organization. The outlined PoP provides an opportunity for educational practitioners to operate as agents of change within the educational organization in which they work. Belzer and Ryan (2013) state, a PoP describes a challenge in an educational organization or practice to “seek out and empirically investigate the challenge and/or test solution(s) to address the challenge for the purpose of generating actionable implications, and appropriately communicating these implications to relevant stakeholders” (p. 200). Penuel, Coburn, and Gallagher (2013) describe this as a process of framing an issue. The authors suggest the purpose of a PoP is to recognize and propose a change needed to a system to improve it in some way. Bolman and Deal (2013) go further and state that it is necessary to reframe an issue within and organization because, “reframing requires an ability to think about situations in more than one way, which lets you develop alternative diagnosis and strategies” (p. 4). Below are possible solutions to address the complexity of the challenges within the organization while providing professional learning opportunities for rural educators to help develop and practice best pedagogical practices in their classrooms

### **Theoretical Frame of Proposed Solutions**

The proposed solutions to address the needs outlined within the PoP make use of Bolman and Deal’s (2013) human resource frame. “The human resource frame centres on what organizations and people do to and for one another” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 113). This frame

was chosen because as Bolman and Deal (2013) state the human resource-oriented organization gives “power to the employees as well as invests in their development” (p. 147) which involves a process of “encouraging autonomy and participation, redesigning work, fostering teams, promoting egalitarianism, and infusing work with meaning” (p. 147). It is within this framework that a model for professional learning for rural educators in Yukon schools will become apparent.

### **Rationale for using the Human Resource Frame.**

With its focus on ways in which an organization can meet the needs of the humans who work for it and within it, the human resource frame asks the organization to consider ways in which to best satisfy and build positive and personal group relationships. Fleming-May and Douglas (2014) describe the ideal institution as one that has a “mutually beneficial ‘fit’ between the employee and the organization” (p. 393) in which there is an “articulation and implementation of a shared philosophy and strategy for managing people” (p. 393). In the case of the proposed PoP, this means that the shared philosophy describes a strong professional learning model in which the needs of rural Yukon teachers is met using a collaborative approach between the teaching and administrative staff of rural schools.

### **Technology: Method 1**

The use of technology addresses concerns regarding the perpetuation and widening of an *opportunity gap* as a result of rural educators having less access to professional learning opportunities in rural Yukon schools (Blanchard, LePrevost, Tolin, & Gutierrez, 2016). Blitz (2013) states that “electronic platforms provide ready access to knowledge and resources without the usual limitations of time, space, and pace” (p. i) which provides an ideal model for rural

teachers for whom time, space, and pacing can be challenging given the complexities of their work environments. As Blanchard, LePrevost, Tolin, and Gutierrez, (2016) note, educators who experience effective professional learning opportunities through the use of online technologies “increase their knowledge and skills and/or change their attitudes and beliefs” (p. 209) about pedagogical practices. Under the OIP model, rural schools with similar demographics and geographical challenges for travel would be linked together online using a technology-based model of shared *in-house* expertise for sharing pedagogical practices online that are specific to rural school needs. This partnering would occur between partnered schools and educators through a collaborative process. This process is described in further detail in Chapter 3.

All schools within Yukon have a variety of technological resources within their schools including desk top computers, tablets, lap tops, Promethean™ boards, and/or teleconferencing technologies (Government of Yukon, 2019). All schools in Yukon are also equipped with Internet access, though this can be challenging in some communities as the bandwidth is limited due to infrastructure issues of living in remote locations with low populations.

**Resources needed: Technological, human, financial, time, and informational**

Educators would require access to work or home connections to the internet using a device capable of accessing pictures, video, text, sound, and voice controls. Educators would also require access to various social media formats such as *Skype*™, *Zoom*™, and/or *Blackboard Collaborate*™ for example. Curriculum and assessment resources would also be needed to support building capacities in understanding and educator efficacy in pedagogical practices.

Human resources would also be required. This would include expert educators, new teachers, administrators, local experts, First Nation experts, and various other agency experts as

needed to create a professional learning community that is built upon the highest standards for building capacities and efficacy in sound pedagogical practices. While not all members would be required to participate in person or online in the process at every meeting (i.e. allowing for flexibility in personal and professional schedules or rural educators), the input individuals supplied to the team would be essential for the development of good practices to address the complex pedagogical needs within rural settings. This, for example, would include such things as a First Nation elder teaching students how to make a snare for trapping. This might be a video that all educators and students could access. Or it might be a comparison of Northern Tutchone, Southern Tutchone, and Tlingit origin stories told by elders and shared online for educators and students to access and watch. The job would fall on the educators to collaborate for the purpose of creating lessons to be shared and made available for all rural educators to access as a part of their professional learning community.

There would be little to no cost on the part of rural educators to participate in this form of online communication. Rural educators without a device of their own, would be able to make use of the devices available through their schools (Government of Yukon, 2019). If neither option is available, then costs would incur as a result of having to purchase a device in order to participate and individuals may also incur costs to have access to internet within their home if they chose to participate from home and not work.

There may be some expense incurred as well if schools and/or individuals wished to purchase membership to social media programs that required payments. In most cases, this cost would be in the form of an annual fee through the web-based provider. The cost would be dependent on the program, duration of the membership, and other such fees determined by the provider.

Time would be the biggest challenge for rural educators. Time would be needed to share and discuss pedagogical practices that are working in classrooms and in schools in online formats. While this collaborative approach has many benefits, the time needed to be an active participant in a professional learning community may be a factor for some rural educators facing difficulties in being as active as they would like.

Time would also be required for educators to collaborate to create and share their lesson ideas and strategies with other members of the professional learning team. This would include preparing lessons, linking lessons to curriculum, creating assessment strategies to observe and assess student understanding, providing anonymized student examples, finding applicable links or recommendations to resources available within libraries, schools, and communities, and providing personal feedback on how effective the strategy was after testing it in the classroom.

Information would be shared digitally with members of the professional learning community. Examples of this include, and is not limited to, digital resource packages available for viewing and downloading; digital monthly newsletter that provides updates and exciting news from various schools, educators, and classrooms; personal and group emails; teleconferencing meetings between individuals, school teams, school team leaders, and/or classrooms; live feeds of activities focused on learning areas for other schools, classrooms, educators, and students to view and passively or actively participate, and; team meetings to review vision and goals of the professional learning model using various internet portals to communicate such as *Skype*<sup>TM</sup>, *Zoom*<sup>TM</sup>, and/or *Blackboard Collaborate*<sup>TM</sup>.

**Benefits.** There are many benefits to creating an online professional learning community for rural Yukon teachers. Blitz (2013) notes that “teachers who collaborate online are engaged with the group, develop a sense of community, improve their knowledge of subject and

pedagogical content” (p. i) and are able to make use of new ideas, materials, and strategies within their classrooms and schools. Educators that participate in an online professional learning model, are able to access materials, advice, strategies, and knowledge in flexible ways that allow them to ensure they are using best pedagogical practices to bolster student improvement and achievement (Blitz, 2013). While many rural communities are isolated by geographical distances, technology offers opportunities for educators to have “timely and comprehensive” (Blitz, 2013, p. i) conversations and interventions that promote self-reflection and goal attainment for professional learning.

All rural Yukon schools have internet and online capabilities. All schools are also equipped with a variety of devices that would allow for educators to participate and access professional learning opportunities. The costs are minimal and there is no need to travel great distances to be a part of a professional learning team. Each member of the team would also have the ability to share insights, strategies, and methods in a collaborative way removing the didactic nature of regular professional development programs. All rural educators could easily participate in the model as there is no worry or need for teachers-on-call as educators would not have to leave their communities to access professional learning opportunities. This would reduce overall costs for professional learning in general.

***Challenges and drawbacks.*** Motivation and engagement may be a challenge for educators to participate. Blitz (2013) notes that this may be due to “greater isolation of teachers who collaborate in a completely online environment” (p. i) but the vision of this OIP is to include a variety of educators within individual schools in the process so that educators do not feel isolated. However, due to time constraints and already very busy schedules many rural teachers face, adding another task to their schedule may feel far too overwhelming for an online

professional learning community to be effective. Planning and organization may also be challenging as it involves many people over vast geographical distances with various scheduling differences. As Blitz (2013) notes, key to decision-making lies heavily on scheduling, planning, and structures within the professional learning model to determine the type of collaborative processes and direction working groups want to take. This process can be challenging if leadership is lacking and groups are unsure of goals or visions they have for their learning groups.

Drawbacks to an online professional learning model for rural Yukon schools include poor bandwidth in many communities, connectivity issues at times, and frequent power outages. While these issues are not always prevalent, it can create frustrations if participants are facing operation issues that are not within their control to repair, fix, or address. This may lead to frustrations with the process as it may become too challenging to fully participate.

### **Dedicated Web Page: Method 2**

A dedicated webpage created and designed by and for rural Yukon educators in mind would generate a readily accessible venue for educators to post, comment, and ask questions on sound pedagogical practices and strategies meeting the needs of rural Yukon educators. Hardman (2012) notes websites can be built around any topic or content area and used to engage educators across multiple content and program areas creating easily accessible activities, lessons, and useful and practical options for delivering materials and lessons. As Hardman (2012) also notes, “practitioners in the field can create multidimensional, dynamic projects and build supportive relationships among those who are committed to improving the educational out-comes for students” (p. 21) making websites a valuable resource for rural educators.



**Resources needed: Technological, human, financial, time, and informational**

The design of a webpage would need to include the ability for rural educators to upload and download lesson plans, video, text, and photos. The website would also need to be easily accessible for rural teachers to access at work and at home. The design of the website would need to have portals for grade, age, and ability levels, as well as subject areas outlined clearly so members clearly understand where to access information from or where to post information as well as a *keyword* search filter to speed up the process. Constructive comments, questions, and suggestions for lessons and ideas would also be an asset for creating a framework for a collaborative process between educators. This would require a moderator or a team of moderators to ensure quality and topic appropriateness of content. Ideally, educators could add comments to each lesson or unit posted as well as recommendations to help improve each one. Educators would be encouraged to review lessons and provide feedback in order to create usable and applicable materials for use in classrooms.

There would be minimal financial resources required for access to the webpage. Expenses might occur with the initial costs of designing the webpage and during the course of operation to deal with potential issues that arise within websites including failed links, various bugs within the operating system, and other technical issues. An expert may need to be hired to operate and maintain the site. For rural educators, a small membership fee or no fee would be expected depending on the overall costs of operation of such an extensive site. Low or no costs would encourage all rural teachers to access and participate in the process of maintaining and accessing a professional learning website for rural Yukon educators.

Time resources would be minimal as well. As educators completed unit planning within their own classrooms or prepared their own journal and personal reflections of their lessons, each

member would simply upload the documents to the webpage under the appropriate category. The greatest time required would be for educators to find lessons or lesson ideas that are applicable to their needs. With a *keyword* search filter, this time would hopefully be minimized.

Expert and novice educators as well as administrators would be encouraged to make use of the website directed at improving pedagogical practices for rural educators. This will “also allow teachers to collect information from various websites and access it in one organized area so they can efficiently stay up to date on the latest teaching techniques, pedagogies, and changes in the field of education” (Trust, 2012, p.133). All rural educators and administrators would have access to the web site and even urban educators may benefit from using the website.

Leaders would be needed in each school to encourage educators to post lessons and units to the website. There would also be a need for a team to build the website and maintain it so it stays updated, useful, and current in its information. Issues might occur with the general operations of the website so people who are experts in website design and maintenance would be an asset.

A website provider would be required. The website would have to include a variety of options and interfaces in which people could upload, download, and stream information. Educators would have to have access to Internet capable devices and Internet. If educators wished to upload, download, or steam information, the device that they used would have to be capable of doing these things.

**Benefits.** The benefits of a website for rural Yukon educators would be the ease and flexibility of use. Educators could access and add information, knowledge, and data at leisure. There would be little commitment for educators to participate thus alleviating extra pressures

other forms of professional learning models add to an already busy work schedule. A webpage would also “provide instant access to information and connections to thousands of individuals with an array of expertise” (Trust, 2012, p.133). Information in the forms of lessons, unit plans, and events could be showcased on the website with the ability for other educators to access, use, and add helpful comments to make improvements to strengthen them.

*Challenges and Drawbacks.* The purpose of the PoP is to address the need for developing a professional learning model for rural Yukon educators. A website is a passive information sharing platform with little interaction and collaboration needed or required. While it does address some of the basic needs for rural educators in accessing relevant data, knowledge, and pedagogical materials, it does not necessarily address the need for collaboration.

Without a strong commitment for rural educators to participate, there is the potential few rural educators will in fact participate. As a result, the website may not get any use as people will see little relevance in it if there are few options available. The other side of this argument is that too many educators will add materials and make the website difficult and challenging to navigate as there are too many options for people to access. A balance is needed for the website in order to maintain its relevance and reduce unnecessary information.

### **Maintaining the Status Quo: Method 3**

The final option is to maintain the status quo. This does not address the outlined goals of the PoP but is a possible outcome due to constraints on lack of buy-in to the idea of change, financial, and technological resources and maintenance. Maintaining the status quo will continue the current practices of a professional development model in which few rural educators can access timely, practical, and appropriate professional learning. The didactic approach to

professional development has limited focus on the unique needs of rural educators and does not fit well into the purpose of this OIP but must be considered as it is a possible reality. It is hopeful that the status quo will not be the option taken.

## **Discussion**

In order to enhance pedagogical skills and aptitudes among rural Yukon teachers, the human resource model requires that administrators address the issue of professional learning through an “employee-organization match by adjusting the organization to fit people” (Fleming-May & Douglas, 2014, p. 393). In the case of the proposed PoP this is completed by offering flexible scheduling, support, and training specific and relevant to the schools in which they operate (Fleming-May & Douglas, 2014) through an online format. As Bolman and Deal (2014) note, “progressive organizations give power to employees as well as invest in their development...It also involves encouraging autonomy and participation, redesigning work, fostering teams promoting egalitarianism, and infusing work with meaning” (p. 147). This is the essence of the proposed PoP and fits well in the first model offering an online professional learning and collaboration model.

The premise of the first model is supported by Bolman and Deal’s (2014) human resources frame because it encourages learning through “good mentors who teach others, a management system that lets people try new things as much as possible, and [has] a very good exchange with the environment” (p. 147). Mentors would be those educators and administrators with experience in areas of concern for capacity-building in pedagogical practices specific to the challenges of multi-grade/age/ability classrooms. Administrators and participating educators would create an online professional learning platform in which new ideas are shared and attempted with opportunities for feedback and discussion to revise and/or discuss positive and

negative consequences of new teaching methods tried in the classroom or school. Administrators and educators in paired or partnered schools would have similar demographics and working environments in an attempt to align professional learning in more efficient and rural school-oriented ways. Goos, Dole, and Makar, (2007) state that “professional development is most effective when it occurs in school-based contexts” (p. 26) as it gives rural teachers the opportunity to share and attempt strategies within the context and diversity of the students that make up their classroom. As Mabey (2003) states this individuality within the online professional learning model would lead to capacity-building within organizations because “if employees are developing themselves personally and professionally and the organization is collectively building its capacity to learn, there will inevitably be corporate gain from the ingenuity, innovativeness, and creativity that is untapped” (p. 434). The human resource frame is not only about how the individual interacts with the organization but also “emphasises the exchange between what the organization needs and what the individual has to offer” (Mabey, 2003, p. 436) which is the premise of the PoP.

### **PoP within the Human Resource Frame: Challenges**

While the human resource frame has many positive applications within the premise of the PoP, it is not without limitations. A professional learning model has to be viewed as a long-term evolutionary process that affords rural teachers time to collaborate sharing ideas while also providing educators with time to try various pedagogical practices in their own classrooms with students (Goos, et. al., 2007). Rural educators and administrators are already overwhelmed with many duties within the school and also with the communities in which they work. Adding more work to their schedules will not be regarded as desirable by many rural educators and administrators. Even though the benefits of an online rural focused professional learning model

can be explained to rural staff, as Bolman and Deal (2013) note, “information is necessary but not sufficient to fully engage employees. The work itself needs to offer opportunities for autonomy, influence, and intrinsic rewards” (p. 148). If educators feel overwhelmed with the added work of planning and creating professional learning opportunities for other rural peers this has the potential to create “a downward spiral in motivation and productivity” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 148). Bolman and Deal (2013) also point out that “efforts at fostering participation have sometimes failed for two main reasons: difficulty in designing workable systems, and managers’ ambivalence” (p. 150). Adding more work to an already overwhelming schedule and workload can create feelings of disparity within rural staff members.

### **Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change**

Creating a change model within the framework of a PoP is not without its hazards. Mack (2010) cautions students and practitioners to be aware of our own ontology and epistemology. While we like to think that our desire for creating change is for the common good and for organizational change, the lenses we view the world through, which drive our need to create change, may not be conducive with the views of the various stakeholders in the organization. It is important that leaders within the change process are reflective in their evaluation of decisions they make to ensure that there is an understanding and sense of mutuality, openness, and caring in all decisions and actions that occur (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In the context of educational change models, ethical leaders are those who possess the ability to act fairly and justly to enhance learning experiences of all students and educators, especially those that are marginalized within the dominant system (Elrich, Harris, Klenowski, Smeed, & Spina, 2015). Ethical leaders must always be cognizant of the implications of their actions.

Mack (2010) states, “how one views the constructs of social reality and knowledge affects how they will go about uncovering knowledge of relationships among phenomena and social behaviour and how they evaluate their own research” (p. 6). In other words, your own “ontological assumptions inform your epistemological assumptions which inform your methodology and these all give rise to your methods employed to collect data” (Mack, 2010, p. 6). If we are not cognizant of paradigms in which we operate and the lenses through which we view the world, we may be unaware of extra challenges and stress we might be creating resulting in ambivalence and mistrust in the process. In undertaking organizational change, leaders must do so ethically while considering the implications of their actions (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). Leaders must then consider if they would like to be at the receiving end of their own actions and whether or not they are discussing their choices and reasons for their actions or if they are defending them (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Considerations of one’s ontological and epistemological reasoning behind choices and decisions must be a part of leaders’ ethical decision making in the change process.

As the model of professional learning begins to take shape it is important for leaders to communicate with participants to ensure the vision and goals are being met including whether or not expectations are mutually understood and accepted by all members of the change process (Bolman & Deal, 2013). As Mack (2010) states, “research can never be objectively observed from the outside rather it must be observed from inside through the direct experience of the people” (p. 7). This is important because “the need to consider human beings’ subjective interpretations, their perceptions of the world (their life-worlds) as our starting point in understanding social phenomena” (Mack, 2010, pp. 6-7) will ensure that a professional learning model is enhancing rural educator pedagogical practices and not creating more challenges and

difficulties for them. As Bolman and Deal (2013) note, leaders must consider if the choices they make are for the betterment of the organization and the people within it or if the decisions made would make things worse for the organization and those within it.

Ethical leaders must be comfortable in defending and discussing the choices they have made (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Leaders must consider the content and materials posted and discussed between colleagues, schools, and students. Do these discussions meet the various ethical standards and guidelines within education in Yukon and the First Nation? Ethical leaders must also consider alternatives to discussions and changes if they reside on firmer ethical groundings (Bolman & Deal, 2013). For example, it is important that within the professional learning community, educators abide by the Yukon Teachers Association outlined Code of Conduct (n.d.) while communicating and interacting with each other as well as ensuring that photos, information, and details about students, staff, community, and community members follow the outlined protocols of Yukon Department of Education (Government of Yukon, 2002) and the various First Nation Self-Governments.

Key to ethical leadership is respect. As Northouse (2016) iterates, respectful leadership recognises and accepts the unique qualities and characteristics of individuals while honouring the value of their insights, beliefs, and attitudes towards the change process. Respectful working environments must be created through deliberate efforts of all individuals involved in the change process. Each member of the change process must feel that the working atmosphere is one based on collegiality, respect, and consideration of the various ontologies and epistemologies of those working to establishing change within the organization.

As mentioned in previous sections, the OIP seeks to establish a professional learning model for rural educators in Yukon schools. The change plan seeks to establish a collaborative



approach to building pedagogical efficacies for rural educators that is timely, accessible, and meets the needs of rural educators. It is suggested by Northouse (2016) that ethical leaders help guide their colleagues towards common goals through ethical practices. As leaders move through the change process, they must always act in consideration of what is most appropriate and ethical.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter 2 focused on the planning and development of the OIP. Utilizing Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model, a collegial and collaborative online professional learning model for rural Yukon educators has been described. Within these frameworks, the continual engagement of stakeholders, community members, and those within the organization in the collaborative process make up the people involved in the change process. Through reinforcement of the goals and values of the change process, leaders create a vision for innovative measures that push the whole system towards excellence. Leaders within the change process have the ability to help those involved "clearly understand that unless they each contribute whatever they can, the team fails" (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 232). While the 2009, Office of the Auditor General's Report on education in the Yukon painted a very bleak picture of the system of education in the Territory, the system is making its very best effort to make use of a collaborative approach to embrace new innovations and models of education within the newly implemented curriculum model. The goal is to bolster student learning while attempting to meet all of the individual needs of each learner in their various environments and communities in order to meet the vision of "Success for Each Learner" (Yukon Education, 2011). What was described in Chapter 2 was a change model that addresses the complex needs of rural educators for professional learning opportunities to ensure the success of visions and goals in Yukon education.

In Chapter 3, details of the change model are presented while also exploring ways and means to monitor and evaluate the change process. Figures and tables are used to provide easier understandings of the underpinnings of the change process. Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model and the PDSA model are also explored to help understand the interconnected nature of each framework within the OIP.

### **Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication**

This OIP focuses on creating an online professional learning model for rural educators in Yukon. The creation of an online professional learning model that focuses on a collaborative process between rural educators will help to establish timely, relevant, and effective pedagogies that better suit the complexities and realities of working in small, geographically and professionally isolated communities in Yukon. Rural Yukon educator experiences, while as varied as the locations and landscapes of the communities they work in, still have many similarities in classroom composition, demographics, and social and political structures to navigate. To ensure the long-term adoption of the change process outlined in the OIP, the plan strives to implement a collaborative culture among rural educators, stakeholders within communities, and various agencies working within and alongside Yukon Education. The change plan requires the commitment of leaders from within schools and within the educative process to work in conjunction in a collaborative framework to build and establish a network of educators seeking ways in which to build their efficacies in pedagogical practices to suit the complex challenges of working, living, and teaching in rural locations in Yukon. This chapter explicitly describes the change implementation strategy and presents strategies for evaluating and monitoring the processes involved in the model. Future considerations for maintaining the professional learning model for rural Yukon educators are also explored.

#### **Change Implementation Plan**

To understand change, it is best to understand what is meant by change in the educational context. Change in education is the “departure from the status quo that is intended to alter the goals of education and/or to improve what students are expected to learn, how students are instructed and assessed, and how educational functions are organized, regulated, and governed”

(Henning, Rice, Dani, Weade, & McKeny. 2017, p. 389). The undertaking of transforming the professional learning landscape for rural educators in Yukon will require “not only structural changes but also cultural changes, including a fundamental shift in the habits of mind of teachers” (Ahn, 2017, p. 83). Engaging rural Yukon educators and, to a broader extent, the stakeholders in communities in the change process is essential for change implementation. The shift will require a process involving various individual educators to become leaders within their organizations and will also require that volunteering members of the professional learning model be actively engaged in collaborative meetings, in face-to-face situations, as well as inclusive online or other technology-based formats. Collaboration will cause educators to reflect on their pedagogical practices and understandings while offering constructive ideas for changes to pedagogies to ensure that the holistic intent of the new curriculum is actualized meeting the needs of the First Nation Self-Governments and localized community needs while working towards and eventually accomplishing organizational reform.

Figure 1, provides an overview of the change process using Kotter’s Eight-Step Model. The change process outlined in Figure 1, allows for flexibility of timing, personnel, and the complexities of being a rural Yukon educator. The intention of Figure 1, is to meet the goals of:

1. Creating a climate for change, engaging and enabling the organization, and implementing and sustaining organizational change
2. Providing a timeline that can be repeated each year to accommodate high turnover rates among rural staff and administration teams within rural schools
3. Provide a step-by-step look at the stages of change while also addressing the purpose of each stage of the change process.

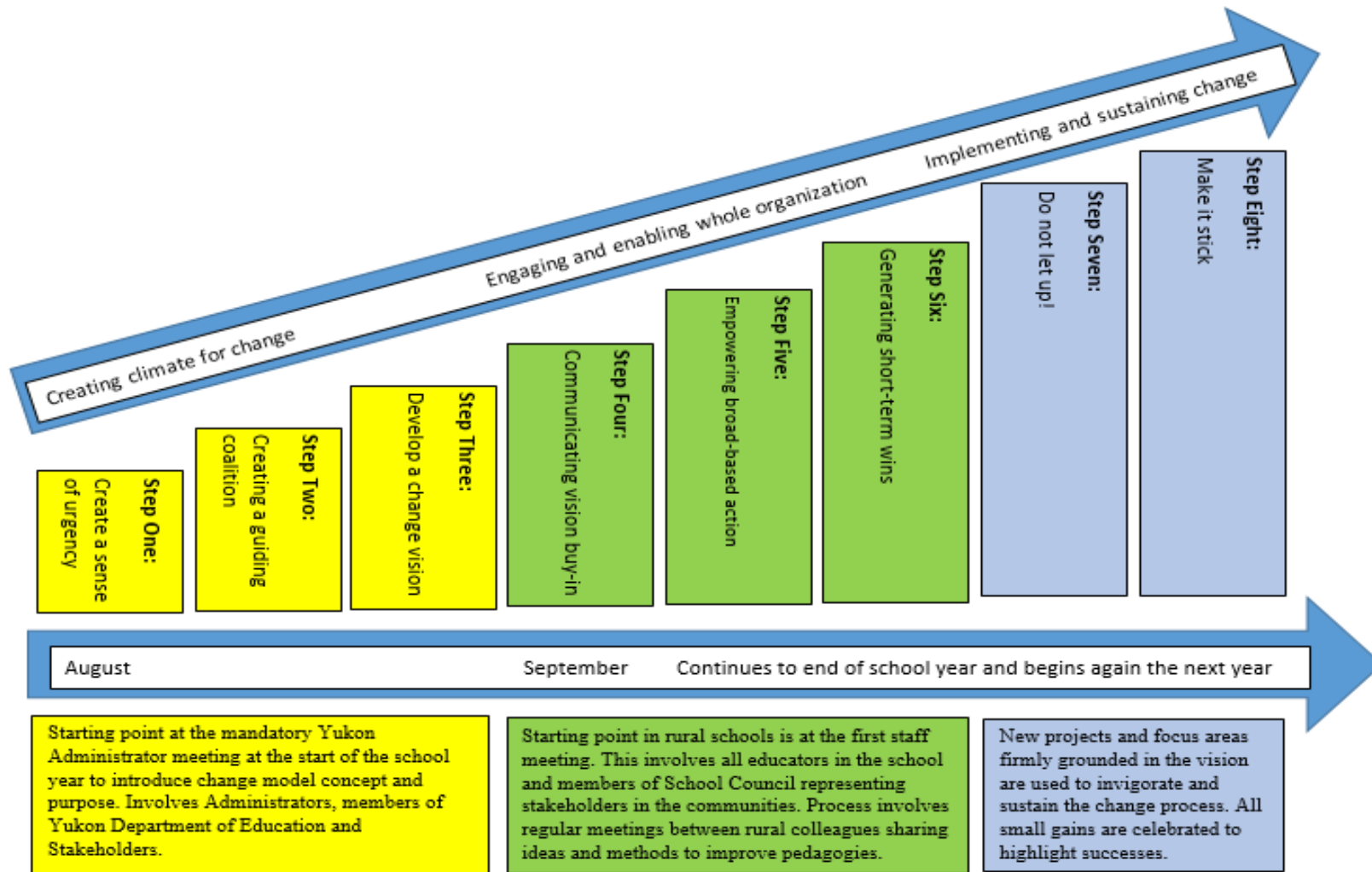


Figure 1: Kotter’s Eight-Step Change Model for a Professional Learning Model for Rural Yukon Educators

Table 1, provides an in-depth overview of each of the changes revealing the “what,” “when,” “who,” and “why” for each stage of the process. The details provided in Table 1, help understand the complexities within each step. To achieve the goals outlined in the change process, the plan incorporates a description of activities and describes the focus of each step of Kotter’s Eight-Step Change Model used in the change process. Given the complexity involved, each step is clearly delineated in order to see the broader purpose and goals to assist members of the change process in their understanding of organizational transformation outlined in the OIP.

Table 1

*Change Implementation: Building an Online Professional Learning Model for Rural Yukon Educators Outline*

<b>Kotter’s Eight-Step Change Model</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Why</b>
<p><b>Step 1: Create a sense of urgency</b></p> <p><b>Step 2: Creating a guiding coalition</b></p> <p><b>Step 3: Develop and change vision</b></p>	<p>Year one (Year two*) Yukon Administrators meeting (face to face)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduction to the concept of building an online professional and technology-based professional learning community between rural schools</li> <li>- Review of purpose</li> <li>- Review change plan</li> <li>- Create a sense of urgency through a presentation</li> <li>- Build a guiding coalition of leaders within the organization</li> <li>- Build a vision for a PLC for rural schools and teachers at the administrator and Yukon Department of Education level</li> </ul>	<p>August</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mandatory meeting in the first week of school for all Yukon school administrators</li> </ul>	<p>Administrators from each of the 35 Yukon Schools, with a focus on rural principals</p> <p>Members of Yukon Department of Education that are always in attendance of these meetings (includes department heads and superintendents)</p> <p>Members of YTA, in particular, the President and Professional Development Chair</p> <p>*For year two, members who were a part of the initial establishment of the change model should be included as spokespeople and potential leaders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Part of Kotter’s eight-step plan</li> <li>- Yukon Department of Education, Yukon Teacher’s Association, and school administrators have input and involvement in the change strategy</li> <li>- Creates a collaborative start to the change process</li> <li>- Development of shared understandings and needs for rural educators</li> <li>- Development of shared understanding of change initiative</li> <li>- Notes from the meeting will be recorded and shared among schools when administrators return to their schools</li> </ul>

<p><b>Step 4: Communicating the vision for buy-in</b></p>	<p>First rural school staff meetings (face-to-face and making use of technology within rural Yukon school)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimum of one hour dedicated to sharing information with school staff to ensure that all educators understand the program and vision at the first meeting of the year</li> <li>- Highlight key <i>needs</i> and <i>expertise</i> areas (within pedagogical understandings and practices) within the staffing population at the school and those that are interested in leadership roles</li> <li>- Purpose of the first meeting is to garner support and <i>in house</i> experts in areas of pedagogical practices and identify educators with an interest in voluntary participation</li> </ul>	<p>August</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All schools have a staff meeting scheduled within the first two weeks of the start date of school to ensure all staff are oriented to the school and procedures</li> <li>- Local school council members and members of local First Nation Self-Government teams involved in education and planning should be invited to first meetings to hear and participate in vision buy-in phase of the change model</li> </ul>	<p>All staff in all schools must attend staff meetings as outlined in our contractual collective agreement. This includes administrators, classroom teachers, education assistants, and other support staff and personal.</p> <p>Future meetings will only have those interested in participating in the professional learning communities and the school administrator for the next meeting to help establish team leaders within each topic area chosen by the members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Part of Kotter’s eight-step change model plan</li> <li>- Ensures that all rural Yukon educators understand and accept the vision</li> <li>- Keep the presentation simple while creating a vivid picture of a better future for professional learning for rural educators. A simple presentation also makes the vision easy to follow and should invite conversation</li> <li>- Establish leaders within schools that are able to <i>walk the talk</i> and become living examples of the change initiative and transformation</li> </ul>
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	<p>- Groupings of topics will be decided based upon the needs established by the whole group</p>			
	<p>Administrator and team/expert leaders meeting (face to face and through the use of technology)</p> <p>- A brief meeting with all administrators and voluntary team leaders from each of rural Yukon school to outline content areas and define parameters of each professional learning team</p> <p>- The purpose of this meeting is to highlight key needs described by staff from each of the schools and combine similar focus areas together in order to establish a common thread and vision between each organization</p> <p>- Leaders and experts that have similar areas of interest can team up and work together to support each</p>	<p>Thursday at the end of the second week of rural school startup</p>	<p>Participating administrators and those volunteering as experts and team leaders will meet</p> <p>This meeting is not for all participants but all participants may attend</p> <p>Members of local First Nation Self-Governments may be invited to provide information regarding needs and interests from their local government and education mandates</p>	<p>- This meeting establishes those interested in working collaboratively together and focuses on the purpose of each professional learning community topic</p> <p>- It helps to build capacities within each team of experts and will allow them to establish timelines and obligations to enact their roles and responsibilities for the team in which they lead</p>

	<p>other creating a more holistic and collaborative approach to team leadership</p>			
<p><b>Step 5: Empowering broad-based action</b></p>	<p>First Professional Learning Community meetings (facilitated by technology and <i>in house</i> face-to-face conversations)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The first meeting will occur in the third week of school starting to accommodate those schools with a later first staff meeting of the year</li> <li>- The purpose of this meeting is to establish the best methods for communication online and set dates that work for participants to ensure that all barriers are removed ensuring the success of the change initiative. A minimum of one established meeting a month is necessary to ensure that all participants are meeting goals and reporting to team leaders</li> </ul>	<p>September – the third week of the school start date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At 4:00 pm on Tuesday to accommodate for students leaving and last of the daily duties and obligations educators have been completed</li> </ul>	<p>All participating administrators, team leaders, and participants from the education team in each school will be present. Not all staff will be present for this meeting as it is a voluntary process to be involved</p> <p>Members of local First Nation Self-Governments may be invited to provide information and clarity regarding protocols, needs, and interests from their local government and education mandates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants will have the opportunity to establish methods of communication that best meets their individual and group needs</li> <li>- Timelines for regular meetings can be established with the understanding that these timelines are adjustable if need be based on individual and group commitments within their schools, communities, and homes</li> <li>- Participants will have the opportunity to assess each topic area for each of the professional learning areas and have discussions with team leaders to describe their specific needs and inquiries</li> <li>- Short term wins are essential to the long term change effort as they showcase that change is possible</li> </ul>

<p><b>Step 6: Generating short-term wins</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Once timelines have been established, members of the professional learning team will then collaboratively generate short term, easy to attain goals based on the created vision</li> <li>- Leaders in this phase are very important as they are responsible for keeping the momentum and celebrating wins so it is important to remind participants to record successes</li> </ul>			<p>and attainable among the members of the professional learning team so it is important that participants know to record and document wins</p>
<p><b>Step 7: Don't let up!</b></p>	<p>Ongoing Professional Learning Community meetings (facilitated by online technologies and <i>in house</i> face-to-face conversations)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Team leaders and educators will meet a minimum of once a month to share insights and ideas with each other showcasing wins and setbacks</li> <li>- Resistance can be debilitating to the change momentum so it is</li> </ul>	<p>September and ongoing throughout the school year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Various professional learning teams will have established times that work for members of that team keeping flexibility in mind</li> </ul>	<p>All participating administrators, team leaders, and participants from the education team in each school will be present. Not all staff will be present for this meeting as it is a voluntary process to be involved</p> <p>Members of local First Nation Self-Governments may be invited to provide information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ongoing meetings ensure victories are highlighted and forward movement in the change initiative continues</li> <li>- Transformational leaders will continue to breathe life and ingenuity into the change process by adding new projects and focus areas to professional learning teams that are</li> </ul>

	<p>important that gains are highlighted and celebrated through a sharing and collegial atmosphere within each group at the start of each meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is important that these meetings focus on continuing to build capacities and understandings of best pedagogical practices for working in rural Yukon schools</li> <li>- New learning directions and opportunities must continually be added to meetings as members of the learning community progress and find new areas of focus</li> <li>- New members may join groups or may transition to new groups as topics of interest and need arise</li> <li>- Members of groups may take leadership of a project or learning activity if they feel they have an</li> </ul>		<p>and clarity regarding protocols, needs, and interests from their local government and education mandates along with further interests to help spur on the change initiative</p>	<p>firmly grounded in the vision that was created</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Team leaders have a responsibility to keep the forward momentum and continually invigorate the change process to ensure that the change initiatives stick</li> </ul>
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	activity to share or want to collaborate on			
<b>Step 8: Make it stick</b>	<p>Bi-annual team leader meetings (facilitated by technology and <i>in house</i> face to face conversations)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus will be on showcasing methods of change that are working and how to address areas that are challenging</li> <li>- Team leaders will share positive outcomes of the change process and will discuss setbacks create a plan to address how to overcome these setbacks in order to make positive changes stick</li> <li>- Team leaders will revisit vision goals to be sure they are on target</li> </ul>	<p>End of January and May meeting (end of term)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting for team leaders to report on how each professional learning team is progressing</li> <li>- A chance for team leaders to share success stories from the individual learning teams to then share with their teams to showcase how change is improving classroom and school practices</li> <li>- Reinvigorate vision goals and assess focus needs</li> </ul>	<p>Participating administrators and those volunteering as experts and team leaders will meet</p> <p>This meeting is not for all participants but all participants may attend</p> <p>Members of local First Nation Self-Governments may be invited to provide information regarding protocols, needs, and further interests from their local government and education mandates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- These meetings provide sustainable evidence that the new way of conducting professional learning among rural educators has merit and is superior to old ways of attending professional development</li> <li>- Meetings also provide team leaders with a chance to communicate with all other team leaders the successes of their group and describe how they achieved these successes</li> <li>- The goal is to is to create a strong, supportive, and positive culture around professional learning for rural Yukon teachers</li> </ul>

\*Year two follows the same pattern as year one but includes members of year one to act as experts, leaders, and representatives of the change initiative. Year two initiates the beginning of a normative state of the change process for the model of professional learning offered and available to rural Yukon educators.

The change plan outlined in Figure 1, and Table 1, offer a broad overview of the steps critical to the change process outlined in the OIP. Within both images, timelines, strategies, and implementation phases are defined in simple terms. Year 1, is the introduction of the process towards creating a normative state for the way professional learning occurs among rural Yukon educators. Year 2, although a repeat of Year 1 steps, has the potential benefit of also having experts, leaders, and representatives who have already been a part of the introduction year. These experts have the ability to effectively manage and lead others unfamiliar with the process towards an understanding of the benefits and effectiveness of the proposed changes, thus assisting in transforming and transitioning the new model of online professional learning into a normative state.

Within Table 1, potential roles and responsibilities for individual members within rural Yukon schools are outlined. As Ahn (2017) notes, the plan is meant to indicate “a group of educators committed to the continuous process of collective inquiry, constructive conversation about instruction and learning, and sharing teaching practice, including observation of colleague’s classroom for the purpose of enhanced student learning and improved teacher practice” (p. 83) within a holistic and collaborative process. It is important for rural educators to be a part of the change process because “change agents who do not communicate effectively with teachers, who do not initiate change within the locus of the school environment, and who do not find ways for teachers to take ownership of the change, often encounter barriers and emotional resistance to change” (Henning, et. al., 2017, p. 389). Therefore, it is vital to the process that the change initiative includes those being asked to change how they receive professional learning opportunities by becoming active members in a plausible solution.

As the change leader, it is incumbent upon me to ensure that the change model does not overwhelm or overburden rural Yukon educators for whom this model is intended to benefit. The change process must be flexible enough to account for individual needs as well as the needs of the groups that form through an interest in pedagogical topic areas of need and/or concern. The change model is intended to benefit rural educators and not burden them or add extra stressors to an already busy and complicated working environment.

Rural educator engagement and participation are integral to the change model. There are many change models in use within organizations, many of which are loosely based on Lewin's (1951) three phases of change model which include the ideas of unfreezing, moving, and refreezing (Calegari, Sibley, & Turner, 2015). Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model has an advantage over Lewin's model in that "it incorporates more specific procedural and clearly identifies the new behaviours desired" (Calegari, et. al., 2015, p. 34) and delineates cognitive, behavioural, and expected responses to the change process (Calegari, et. al., 2015). Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model outlined within this OIP can be connected to the circular Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) model which integrates a process of review and revisions based on the assessment of organizational realities and complexities for rural Yukon educators (Tichor-Wagner, Wachen, Cannata, & Cohen-Vogel, 2017). The first three stages of Kotter's model correspond with the *plan* and *do* stages, while the *do*, *study*, and *act* stages align well with Kotter's remaining five steps in which participants in the change model are responsible for engaging and enabling the organization while implementing and sustaining the change process by ensuring that the change vision is kept in sight.

### **Plan Cycle**

The change plan outlined in Figure 1 and Table 2 involves a process of engaging members of Yukon Department of Education, administrators within rural schools, educators within rural schools, and various stakeholders within the individual communities including the local First Nation Self-Governments in the change process. The initial part of the planning process of the change model occurs in step one of Kotter's model in which the plan of change will be introduced as a result of creating a sense of urgency for a new model of professional learning for rural educators. As Calegari, Sibley, and Turner (2015) note, the duty of change agents should include identifying both, potential losses and benefits, in a compelling way to reduce "complacency by providing dramatic, vivid rationales for the need for change" (p.36). For the purpose of this OIP, this includes identifying the need for rural Yukon educators to have a mechanism to improve pedagogical practices that are best suited for rural realities in the classroom.

Included in the *plan* phase of the PDSA model is also the creation of a guiding coalition built of those who want to help lead the change within their organizations or will assist in seeking out those within their individual schools that would be suited to act as leaders. This step is highlighted in Kotter's second step, create a guiding coalition and occurs at the administrators' meetings prior to the start of the school year. Once a coalition is formed the third step, develop a change vision, can begin. Rural administrators have the responsibility to build upon the next step of Kotter's model, communicating vision buy-in at the individual rural school level. This planning phase of the PDSA cycle uses a collaborative approach to develop shared understandings of professional learning needs for educators working and living in rural Yukon communities and schools. Before any other stage begins, it is imperative that members of the



change process believe there is a need for change, include others who are supportive, and have a clear vision in place.

### **Do Cycle**

Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model has a natural alignment with the PDSA model. As the planning cycle ends, the *do* cycle begins. The *do* cycle is reliant on transformative and authentic leadership and begins with the creation of a coalition of like-minded leaders building momentum as the change model develops and strengthens. Within the *do* cycle, the timeline outlined in Figure 1 and Table 1 provides an estimate, allowing for flexibility of various schedules for individual rural Yukon school implementation. It is important to recognize the significance of creating a guiding coalition at the mandatory administration meetings at the start of the school year as a part of the *do* cycle as it is these individuals that will have the power and expertise to take the change model to their schools to introduce to staff. Rural administrators are then tasked with Kotter's fourth step, vision buy-in, within their respective schools. Transformative and authentic leaders must start the change process among their staff and stakeholders by introducing and "establishing an inclusive, recursive system for generating the vision" (Calegari, et. al., 2015, p. 38) so that it is driven by rural educator input to garner shared organizational "values and vision" (Calegari, et. al., 2015, p. 38). Rural administrators will take the vision and change plan home to introduce to their colleagues.

The first staff meeting of the year within rural schools will start the momentum of the change process among its educators and stakeholders. Administrators will create vision buy-in through the explanation of the change process and larger organizational vision. Administrators will also be in charge of encouraging leaders from within their schools to come forward as experts to lead small collaborative working groups to help meet vision goals. Feedback and input

will be welcomed during this process so colleagues see that their concerns regarding professional learning have been heard and a plan is in place to help “them take ownership of the vision as they now have an investment in the vision” (Calegari, et. al., 2015, p. 38). Individual working groups in individual schools will work together to create a vision for their professional learning needs within their schools. These needs will be based on the larger vision created at the administrator meeting with an understanding that the work they do at the school level will contribute to, and sustain the larger organizational vision. Input from all those involved in the process will be valued and considered as a part of the feedback plan for evaluating and communicating vision buy-in. Adaptations and/or recommendations from members involved will be integral to the overarching vision of the change model and will be shared at leadership meetings in order to hone the vision into one in which the majority is in agreement of and on side of. Flexibility is key as rural educators, not a top-down Department of Education led initiative, have ownership of the change they envision for their own professional learning direction and needs based on their understandings of their complex work environments. This then strengthens the change process as rural educators will feel they have control over their professional learning and vindicated in ensuring best pedagogical practices are being utilized in their classrooms thus empowering broad-based action for change.

As a transformative and authentic leader, I must be able to recognize and adapt to the needs of those I am asking to be a part of the change. Time, effort, and added exertion to see the vision through to fruition can be demanding to those in rural positions as many are already bearing a heavy and demanding workload due to the nature of being a rural educator in Yukon. As the change model evolves, it is important to ensure that all short-term wins are acknowledged and momentum is kept moving in positive ways. Short-term wins are essential for the long-term

change effort as this highlight the effectiveness of the change process and that a professional learning model for rural educators that is guided by rural educators, for rural educators, is possible and will lead to effective, timely, and best pedagogical practices within rural Yukon schools. With busy and complex schedules I predict that there will be challenges for rural educators to maintain positive momentum without the knowledge that they are making positive forward gains in the change effort. Rewarding those who persevere and continually have outcomes consistent with the vision with incentives provide “social proof” (Calegari, et. al., 2015, p. 38) that the change plan works and others may feel compelled through peer pressure to also meet vision goals (Calegari, et. al., 2015).

Leaders will need support from each other to help stay motivated to keep up efforts in the change process. It is important that leaders not only recognize positive gains but celebrate the small wins. As Calegari, Sibley, and Turner (2015) note, “change is more likely to be brought about when there are visible quick wins for the new process” (p. 39) and educators are rewarded for their efforts. When short-term wins are reinforced with recognition and rewards, “they become tangible symbols of the success of the change effort” (Calegari, et. al., 2015, p. 39) Keeping those involved in the change process and motivated to continue their efforts is generated through Kotter’s sixth step, create short-term wins.

Leaders of the change process breathe life and ingenuity into the change process by initiating new attainable goals within the organization. Under Kotter’s seventh step, don’t let up, leaders and members of the collaborative teams make a concerted effort to keep the change process continually moving forward “by not allowing complacency to set in” (Calegari, et. al., 2015, p. 39). To ensure that this step is met, evaluation of the change process should be conducted through dialogues, conversations, interviews, and/or evaluative questionnaires to

assess areas in need of improvement, apathy that may be occurring, lapse of effort on the part of leaders or participants, and/or other areas noted in these interchanges. This does not require a long and drawn out process and serves only to communicate changes or adaptations needed to provide direction and keep the momentum of the change process. Leaders and participants of the change process must feel able to communicate both positive and negative experiences in the process in order to maintain or rectify concerns brought to light. Collaboration and communication through open dialogues and feedback will help leaders and participants of the professional learning model stay on track keeping the end goal in sight. Direction and structure will come from revisiting goals and analyzing steps to meet those goals by not letting up on the change process.

The final step of Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model, make it stick, will be actualized only when there is an organizational change accepting a rural based and focused professional learning model as a normative and sustained process for rural Yukon educators to access professional learning opportunities. Normative, for the purpose and understanding within this OIP, can be described as a structural change in which each year a vision is created or extended from the previous year and collaboration between rural schools and educators is perceived as *that is just how it is done*. The goal is to remove barriers to accessing timely, relevant, effective, and appropriate professional learning opportunities for rural Yukon educators by bringing it to them and allowing them to be experts in pedagogical efficacies to improve students' engagement, learning, and understandings. Calegari, Sibley, and Turner (2015) note that long term effectiveness of organizational change can be challenging to maintain because a "cultural change is extraordinarily difficult" (p. 40). Therefore, it is imperative that "acculturation efforts" (Calegari, et. al., 2015, p. 40) in the form of regular meetings, a visible reward system that

acknowledges and celebrates small wins, and continued commitment from each person involved in the process are unwavering. Failure to do so could potentially lead to the unsuccessful change implementation program and its ultimate demise.

### **Managing the Transition**

The creation of a rural focused online professional learning model for educators in rural Yukon schools is a departure of the prevailing norms in existence for the delivery and acquisition of professional development currently in place in Yukon education. This section identifies the transitional needs of the organization as it moves from the status quo towards a new organizational reality. The various implications on key members and stakeholders within the organization are considered. Transitions are analyzed in terms of strategies, reactions, and empowerment of members involved in the change process. Issues and challenges that may arise are also discussed in terms of potential implementation and sustainability to the organization and various outlined members.

### **Alignment with Organizational Strategy**

The OIP aligns well with the implementation of the curriculum redesign within Yukon education which purpose is to ensure the “Success for Each Learner” (Yukon Education, 2011), The new curriculum model includes the Yukon Department of Education’s commitment to include principles of “partnership and collaboration by sharing decision making with a broader group of engaged partners” (Yukon Education, 2011, p. 2). These partnerships include the input of local First Nation Self-Governments and community stakeholders to “reflect challenges unique to Yukon politics and the multiple governance jurisdictions that impact Yukon education” (Yukon Education, 2011, p. 2). The OIP also addresses the purposes of the curriculum redesign which stresses a greater need to “provide greater flexibility for teachers, while allowing space

and time for students to develop their skills and explore their passions and interests” (Ministry of Education, 2015, p.1) including a greater focus on local First Nation Self-Government directives into local curriculums in rural and urban schools (Department of Education, 2018). Built into the OIP is a focus on the needs of rural Yukon educators as they navigate the curriculum redesign and the political climates in the communities in which they live. The OIP acknowledges rural educator needs and an obligation to create, deliver, and participate in meaningful learning opportunities focused on students in the classrooms and on educators’ own professional learning to ensure best pedagogical teaching practices are used to meet these objectives.

### **Understanding Stakeholder Reactions**

Reactions by various stakeholders will vary. There will be stages in engagement in the change process as the creation of a rural professional learning model cause organizational change (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). Cawsey, Deszca, and Ingols. (2016) note that there are three anticipated change reactions. The first stage occurs before the change process is enacted and is exemplified by “high anxiety and fear” (p. 230) of what the change process might look like for the life of the organization and individuals working in it; what will change for individuals, and; what impacts the change process will have on the life of the organization and the people working within it. The second phase of reaction to change occurs once the change process has been announced (Cawsey, et. al., 2016). During this phase stakeholders may “feel shock” (Cawsey, et. al., 2016, p. 230) or “have feelings of being overwhelmed” (Cawsey, et. al., 2016, p. 230) by the process and some “may feel angry or betrayed” (Cawsey, et. al., 2016, p. 231) because “they may feel that their trust in the organization and leaders has been violated” (Cawsey, et. al., 2016, p.231). The final reaction to change occurs at the end of the initial change process and is highlighted by acceptance as people within the organization “begin to let go of the past and start to behave in

more constructive ways” (Cawsey, et. al., 2016, p. 231). It is practical to anticipate that there will be those that react positively, negatively, or will be ambivalent to the change implementation process.

How individuals react to change is going to be dependent on their personally held beliefs about the change process. According to Armenakis and Harris (2009), beliefs about change can be categorized into five varying categories. Individual beliefs about change are categorized by the authors as (a) discrepancy — the belief that change is needed and necessary, (b) efficacy — the belief that the change process can be implemented successfully, (c) appropriateness — the belief that the change design is correct for the change needed, (d) principal support — the belief that leaders within the organization support the plan and, (e) valence — the belief that the change will benefit all individuals within the organization. While these five beliefs may be held by all rural educators and stakeholders in rural education to some extent, not all will feel that the organizational improvement plan will benefit them or work for them. Some rural educators and stakeholders may feel that this change plan will only add more work to their already daunting and challenging work schedule, some may feel helpless in their attempts to engage meaningfully to the process due to time, resource, and resource personnel constrains, and some may feel ambivalent and apathetic to the process due to the amount of changes already occurring in Yukon education.

Understanding that all stakeholders may not be supportive of the change plan, highlights the need to create a sense of urgency and shared vision for a professional learning model for rural Yukon educators based on a collaborative and inclusive approach. The process of creating a sense of urgency and vision must address the benefits this change process will have on student engagement in their education, First Nation involvement in education, and the overall

improvement to pedagogical practices that work in rural settings. Ultimately, the change process must be viewed as a positive change to how professional learning opportunities are acquired in rural schools and how to address and create a model of sustainable professional learning that meets the needs of rural educators. The change model outlined in the OIP evolves out of a need to establish a culture of sustained and shared learning that values the contributions of all members of rural Yukon education, ensuring a “collective responsibility is taken for enhancing teaching and learning” (Andrews & Crowther, 2012, p. 155). Hargreaves and Fullan (2013) note that building educator pedagogical efficacy has global consequences on student success, learning acquisition, and educator satisfaction.

### **Empowering the Change Process**

Leadership competencies associated with change include being able to engage others in the need for change and in the whole process of change by building commitment within individuals; ensuring that the change process is understood, and; by ensuring that all individuals involved in the change process are supported as they explore answers to challenges that occur (Higgs & Rowland, 2005). Empowering the change process involves marshalling engagement and commitment of those from within the organization as well as those directly involved in the change process (Higgs & Rowland, 2005). The transformative processes of the change initiative is based on the authenticity and transformative qualities of leaders engaged in building a professional learning model for rural educators that meets the demands and addresses the complexities and realities of working and educating in rural Yukon schools.

### **Resources and Supports**



As indicated in Chapter 2, the OIP requires human and technological supports as well as extra time for educators to plan, meet, and collaborate using various technologies. The plan will place additional expectations on administrators, teachers, Educational Assistants, and First Nation education advisors/mentors, involved in the development of a professional learning model for rural Yukon educators. As outlined in Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model, participation in the process is voluntary but those that indicate that they would like to be involved in the professional learning model either as leaders or participants, must be committed to ensuring that they attend all online or teleconference meetings organized by group members. As described in Table 1 in the previous chapter, participants must also come to meetings prepared to share and discuss pedagogical strategies, unit/lesson development, student response to lessons delivered, and all other possible interactions related to the focus of their professional learning team. Leader meetings will occur on a monthly basis to ensure that the vision for change is stressed and maintained, while smaller working groups may choose to meet once a week or bi-weekly in order to share and hone best teaching practices. The OIP introduces new ways of gaining efficacies in pedagogical practices for rural educators and requires no travel but does require regular access to technology in order to access meetings and collaboration opportunities. Little to no financial costs are involved as all rural schools have various technologies that will allow them to engage in an online learning and collaborative process (Government of Yukon, 2019). The OIP must be introduced to administrators in a way that elicits a sense of urgency within these members of the organization in order to plant the seeds of change into the minds of leaders involved in the change process. Rural administrators must also have a vision in mind for change and must be able to have complete understanding of the change initiative. The reason for deep understandings is so they are prepared to garner support from members within their schools

and are able to answer questions about the challenges and roles within the process to develop collaborative professional learning models to address various complex needs felt and recognised within rural Yukon schools by educators (Blitz, 2013). The use of transformative and authentic leadership skills will be an asset as leaders move the change initiative forward within their schools and within the various stakeholders directly involved in rural schools including local First Nation Self-Government officials delegated to education portfolios. Empowerment of rural educators to take on new challenges of developing a professional learning model that meets rural educator needs comes from a collaborative process that utilizes the sharing and refining of best teaching practices in rural settings. It will be a professional learning model designed by rural educators with rural educator needs in mind.

### **Potential Issues with Implementation**

There are multitudes of issues that could arise out of the change model presented as noted in Chapter 2. Issues and challenges may arise out of three main groups involved in the process; rural administrators, members of the professional development team at the Yukon Department of Education, and rural educators.

The first and potentially most critical issue may arise out of a lack of administrator buy-in to the idea of a change model that utilizes rural educators as leaders and participants in their own professional learning model at the Yukon administrator meeting at the start of the school year in August. This lack of buy-in has the potential to halt the process before it even begins (Henning, et. al., 2017). It is essential that a sense of urgency for a change to the way that rural educators participate and access professional learning opportunities is done so in a clear and concise way in order to elicit a need for change to the current system.

The second challenge for rural administrators may arise in the process of creating a clear vision for a professional learning model for rural educators. Conflicting ideologies surrounding what professional learning for rural educators looks like and is planned for may be in conflict with ideas and processes that the Yukon Department of Education has planned for the school year (Calegari, et. al., 2015). The ideas that the Yukon Department of Education may already have costs and budgetary processes in place to address professional development for educators across Yukon. The organizational improvement plan may contravene plans already in place.

At the individual educator level, rural educators may feel too overwhelmed to participate in the change model. If administrators are not able to communicate vision buy-in to staff members and stakeholders within their schools, a lack of personnel to act as leaders and participants may stifle the process thus eradicating it from coming to fruition (Henning, et. al., 2017). It is imperative that participants are garnered in order to enact the change process as it all rides on the successful recruitment of participants into the system and process of change. The implementation of the change plan may be stalled by unwillingness, inability, or apathy of rural educators to add more duties and obligations to their already overwhelming workloads and commitment schedules.

It must also be noted that due to high turn-over rates within rural Yukon schools of educators, this may also be a cause for concern for the implementation process (Kaden, et. al., 2016). High turn-over rates may result in members leaving working professional learning models leaving no one or too few people within the group to make the collaborative process work. The withdrawal of participants within a professional learning model creates gaps and spaces that reduce the effectiveness of the collaborative approach to learning and may result in the failure of the change initiative if people view this as a waste of their time and effort (Kaden, et. al., 2016).

This can be detrimental to the overall process of change as negative feelings towards the process as a result of failures may reduce the likelihood of individuals wanting to commit to a process that has not worked.

Technological issues can sometimes be an issue in rural settings. Lack of bandwidth, frequent power outages, and lack of internet connectivity are all realities of living and working in rural settings in Yukon. These challenges can create frustrations and anxiety around the process of collaborating with others through the use of technology. While all schools are equipped with a variety of technologies (Government of Yukon, 2019), if there are no trained professionals on site in rural communities to make repairs, repairs can take weeks to be dealt with. This can create lags in the ability of participants to participate and have materials or resources readily available to contribute to professional learning teams in meaningful ways. Frustrations can lead to disengagement in the process creating issues around retaining individuals in the organizational improvement model.

### **Limitations**

The goals outlined in the OIP to create a professional learning model for rural educators constructed by rural educators is not without challenges. As Bryk (2015) notes, all too often, rural educators are left “largely on their own” (p. 468) and specific changes needed to address short comings and failings of the current model for how rural educators receive and participate in professional development must be addressed. The approach to garnering support must highlight the benefits and advantages of a professional learning model that meets the challenges and complexities of working and living in rural schools head on with a model that works. Rural educators and stakeholders in rural schools need to see the benefits of a system that empowers them to have control over how and what professional learning looks like in their schools. As the

Department of Education (2018) notes with student learning outcomes, the collaborative process has benefits in the learning process. Therefore, educators will benefit from the establishment and utilization of a collaborative approach to foster deeper understandings through the mutual process of sharing best pedagogical practices that work in complex classrooms and educating situations which, is not an easy process. It must also be acknowledged that the complexity of the change process will not be easy as it is also challenging to change the mindset of an organization. The complexity of the change process cannot and should not be underestimated as the process moves forward.

While the OIP focuses on a collaborative approach between rural educators to create and direct a model for professional learning, the need for organizational and membership buy-in to the change process cannot be undervalued. The change initiative is dependent on how successful the front-end change processes are described to the membership within the organization. If a sense of urgency is not created, if a vision for a rural professional learning model is not created, and if school administrators are not able to share and convey the importance of the vision to gain buy-in from the educators in their home schools, this change implementation program will not come to fruition (Henning, et. al., 2017). Without rural educators to act as leaders and participants, there is no change model. The model is reliant on individuals who are able to create and bolster support through authentic and transformative leadership skills thus endowing people with a sense of purpose to see the change process through to the end.

### **Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluative processes must be a part of the change plan outlined in the OIP. Essential to the process of establishing a professional learning model for rural educators are leaders who can effectively enact change that is inclusive of valid monitoring and review

practices (Higgs & Rowland, 2005). For the purposes of the outlined change model, *soft data*, in the form of feedback during time set aside for collaboration between small working groups and leaders will guide the change process. Feedback may be collected in written form and/or verbally during these meetings. While there are positive implications on student learning outcomes and the potential reduction of educator turn-over rates in rural Yukon schools, long-term analysis required to follow up on these is beyond the scope of this OIP.

Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model built into the PDSA cycle will guide the implementation and development of the change process and will also be used to direct the evaluation and monitoring processes. Conzemuis and O'Neill (2002) describe the PDSA change model as having the ability to continuously reinforce concepts of learning and improvement in the change process. The PDSA model is comprised of *plan*, *do*, *study*, and *act* stages in which the latter three stages are directly correlated with the processes of evaluation and monitoring the change process. These three stages, *do*, *study*, and *act*, require continuous interactions and contributions of rural educators involved in the process of change. The PDSA stages are related to Kotter's various stages of change as well enabling the two models to work in unison to ensure accountability of monitoring and evaluation processes are in place.

### **Do, Study, and Act Stages**

The *do*, *study*, and *act* stages of the PDSA model echo stages outlined in Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model. Step four of Kotter's model requires leaders within the organization to effectively communicate vision buy-in from the members (Cawsey, et. al., 2015) Effective communication is essential during this stage to ensure that all participants in the change process understand and are comfortable with the goals and vision of the change process. This involves and in-depth understanding and grasp of the *do*, *study*, and *act* processes of the PDSA model.

Kotter's fifth step involving the empowerment of broad-based action, requires that up-to-date information and analysis are utilized in the form of feedback loops to provide the necessary information for people to be fully engaged in the process of change (Cawsey, et. al., 2015). This step is heavily aligned with the *study* aspect of the PDSA model. Kotter's sixth step which requires gathering and celebrating short term wins within the organization that highlight the positive aspects of the change process, is a requirement of the leaders within the change process (Cawsey, et. al., 2015). In Kotter's sixth step, leaders, must identify significant improvements and positive outcomes elicited through conversation and feedback during collaborative meetings of members and leaders involved in the change process ensure that morale and motivation are bolstered and members continue to be excited and engaged in the change process. Kotter's seventh step requires leaders and members of the change process to keep the momentum by surveying the needs of the membership and adding new projects, people, or efforts into areas of need as noted through the collaborative process between rural educators (Cawsey, et. al., 2015). This can only be done when leaders are certain that participants have gained efficacies in pedagogies that have positive benefits to rural educators working in their complex classroom settings. Once again, the *do*, *study*, and *act* processes outlined in the PDSA model are inherently important to the change process outlined in the organizational improvement plan. Finally, Kotter's eighth step ensures that the change process has created new ways of thinking within the organization (Cawsey, et. al., 2015). In this step, leaders and members are asked to take notice of the indoctrination of the change process as a normative state for how rural educators develop and access professional learning opportunities. This involves surveying, analysing, and discussing noticed changes and the positive outcomes of the change model. The latter steps of the PDSA model, *do*, *study*, and *act* are well incorporated into the Kotter's eight step change model and the

organizational improvement plan. Accountability for measuring and evaluating various processes outlined in the change plan are monitored in a continuous evaluation cycle as outlined in the PDSA model.

### **Measurement Data**

The PDSA model provides a framework in which monitoring and measurement processes are expected as a way to give credibility and accountability to the change process. The PDSA model is adaptive to the needs of the change model allowing for leaders and agents of the change process the ability to create tools and a framework to survey, measure, monitor, and analyse data collected to ensure that it is going as according to the goals and vision outlined within the change model. Table 2, outlines the data which must be gathered and evaluated to ensure the change vision and goals are being met. Table 2 is divided into sections and aligns with Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model to ensure ease of understanding.



Table 2

*Overview of Data to be Collected for the Purpose of Monitoring and Evaluating the Change Process*

<p><i>Do action:</i></p> <p>Aligned with Kotter’s Eight-Step Change Model</p>	<p>Data to collect</p>	<p>When</p>	<p>Analysis and evaluation</p>
<p>Step one: Create a sense of urgency</p>	<p>Statement included in presentation regarding the need for a rural model for professional learning.</p> <p>Feedback from rural administrators in the form of verbal and written responses.</p>	<p>Administrator’s meeting in August</p>	<p>Can administrator define the urgency needed for rural model for?</p> <p>Do rural administrators feel empowered to move forward with the change model described?</p>
<p>Step two: Creating a guiding coalition</p>	<p>Verbal and written agreement from rural administrators to move forward in the change model.</p> <p>Agreement to encourage and incorporate staff as leaders and as participants.</p>	<p>Administrator’s meeting in August</p>	<p>Are there people with levels of power to act as leaders and representatives to take the information presented to their schools to elicit engagement in the process?</p> <p>Are there remaining obstacles that must be overcome?</p> <p>Are administrators willing to anchor new approaches into the organization and culture of professional learning for rural educators?</p>

	List of administrators to ensure that there are enough key players on board to ensure the success of the change process.		
Step three: Developing a change vision	<p>Clarification of how the future will look different from passed methods for professional learning.</p> <p>Clear vision that is focused, flexible, and east to communicate.</p> <p>The vision must be viewed as strategically feasible for rural educators to accomplish. This comes from collaboration on what the vision and goals are for the change process.</p>	Administrator’s meeting in August	<p>Is the vision imaginable? Does it convey a clear picture?</p> <p>Is the vison appealing enough to hold long term interest of participants and leaders?</p> <p>Is the vision realistic and attainable?</p> <p>Is the vision focused enough to provide guidance in decision making?</p> <p>Is the vision flexible enough to allow for individual initiatives and alternative actions in case of changing conditions?</p> <p>Is the vision easy to communicate to others quickly and concisely so it is easy to understand?</p>
Step four: Communicating vision buy-in	<p>Educators in all rural Yukon schools need to be informed of the change model to garner participants and support.</p> <p>Administrators and leaders must use effective communication channels to inform people in their schools of the</p>	August: Start of rural school year	<p>Are leaders <i>walking the talk</i>? Do leaders feel that they have become the living embodiment of the vision and change process?</p> <p>Are others motivated and inspired to become of the change process because of the vision?</p> <p>Have all communications of the vision been simple, vivid, repeatable, and invitational?</p>

	<p>change process. There cannot be too much communication of the vision.</p> <p>Data on forms of communication should be collected to ensure all possible methods have been exhausted again and again.</p>		
<p>Step five: Empowering broad-based action</p>	<p>Barriers to the change process must be managed and addressed.</p> <p>Up-to-date information of the change vision must be communicated throughout the organization.</p> <p>Feedback loops and collaborative networks must be actionable and in place for information and goals to be communicated.</p> <p>Leaders that are enthusiastic and committed to the change process must be identified.</p>	<p>Thursday at the end of the second week of rural school startup</p>	<p>Have all barriers been addressed? Are there any barriers that may have a negative impact on the change process? What measures need to be enacted in order to address these barriers?</p> <p>Have feed-back loops been established within collaborative working groups in order to communicate vision and goals of the change process?</p> <p>Are open and honest dialogues occurring between leaders and participants of the change process?</p>

<p>Step six: Generating short-term wins</p>	<p>All successes (big and small) related to the change effort must be acknowledged and celebrated.  All short-term wins need to be visible to the whole organization.</p>	<p>September  throughout the school year.</p>	<p>Describe and provide examples of how collaborative working groups are acknowledging and celebrating their successes.  What methods are being used to share and celebrate short-term wins? Is this successful? Why or why not?  Is there enough visibility for short-term wins?  How are short-term wins connected to the change process? Is this being communicated clearly?</p>
<p>Step seven: Don't let up</p>	<p>Addition of new projects and/or people to the change process to revitalized and keep momentum.  Senior leaders are focused on providing clarity for the purpose of change to the organization in alignment with the vision.  Educators at all levels within rural education in Yukon schools feel empowered to lead projects and contribute to collaborative groups.  Constant effort is kept to keep the sense of urgency high and compliancy low.</p>	<p>September  throughout the school year.</p>	<p>Are new projects being added when projects are completed? How are measures kept on projects to ensure that they are completed?  What is the involvement of senior leaders in the change process?  Are they regular and active members of collaborative groups and are they communicating within these groups?  Do all educators in rural Yukon school fell empowered to take on leadership roles within their collaborative groups?  How is the sense of urgency being maintained to keep the forward progress in the change model?  Are small wins continually being honoured and acknowledged within working groups and during leader meetings?</p>

	<p>Proof that the change process is working is constantly at the forefront of all collaborative meetings between leaders and participants. Small wins are always being honoured and acknowledged.</p>		
<p>Step eight: Make it stick</p>	<p>Descriptions from participants and leaders on how the new model for professional learning for rural Yukon educators differs from the old method. Success stories. Measures to reinforce the new method into the cultural norms and expectations for professional learning opportunities.</p>	<p>End of January and May meeting (end of term)</p>	<p>How do participants and leaders now view the process of attaining professional learning opportunities in rural Yukon schools?                  How many success stories were gathered and acknowledged throughout the process?                  What measures need to be put in place to ensure that the new model for professional learning for rural Yukon teachers continues and is ingratiated into cultural norms?</p>

The data collected in accordance with Table 2, will highlight insights and concepts while, at the same time, “guiding change strategists and implementers to think actively about the learning that is going on during the change process” (Mento, Jones, & Dirndorfer, 2002, p. 56). The intent of the collected data is to provide formative and summative assessment to guide decision making of leaders and participants in the change process. If, for example, creating vision buy-in takes longer than expected, formative assessment in the form of feedback will provide guidance for the time line of the implementation process and can be expanded to accommodate the extra time needed to garner support from rural educators in the process. Throughout the change model, summative assessment will provide insights on the effectiveness of the stages within the change model and will help direct when the next stage should be implemented. Table 2, only serves as a guide and is not a prescribed course of action. The measurement plan outlined in Table 2 must be adaptable and flexible to maintain its appropriateness to the change implementation plan and the realities and complexities of rural Yukon schools.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Leaders within the change model will be responsible for gathering and sharing collected data. Leaders within the organization will include administrators and expert educators that volunteer to take on leadership roles. Data will be used to guide next steps in a collaborative change process to ensure that the vision goals are being met. Collaborative meetings will be recorded using technology to be shared with participants if they are unable to attend meetings and to be used as guiding tools for future decisions. These recordings can be saved in a data bank within each working group. The data recorded provides an invaluable resource for engaging

collegial and collaborative relationships between rural Yukon educators that may otherwise work and educate in isolation. It creates a common vision, purpose, and is a tool to assist in building efficacies in best pedagogical practices for educating in complex rural settings. Confidentiality is of utmost importance and must comply with the Yukon Teacher's Association and Yukon Department of Education ethics of information sharing processes.

Progress and acknowledgments will be shared within the working collaborative teams and shared between leaders to ensure that participants see the benefits of the change process. This will be communicated through conversations and a reward system established by members of the collaborative group. Changes, delays, or areas of concern will be addressed using a collaborative approach to ensure that the vision and goals of the change process are attainable, realistic, and on course to the overarching vision as described in the Kotter's second step and discussed in Tables 1 and 2. Continued monitoring and engagement in the change model will help plan and gauge the successful implementation and the progression of change stages to ensure that a new model or professional learning for rural Yukon educators comes to fruition.

### **Change Process Communication Plan**

An effective communication plan needs to be clear, consistent, continuous, and include the input of all members of the change team (Lewis, Schmisser, Stephens, & Weir, 2006). Formal communications should be established to provide details and insight to the purpose of the change plan and its general purpose to all rural educators and stakeholders with invested interests in rural schools. This includes appropriate members of the Yukon Department of Education, First Nation Self-Government education support workers and education advisors, rural school administrators, and rural educators. The purpose of the new professional learning model as outlined in the OIP includes a holistic approach to the acquisition of pedagogies consistent with

goals and visions in rural education as describe in the new curriculum. This OIP may be used as a part of the formal communication strategy as a way to include a detailed account of the change model within the OIP to describe all facets of Kotter’s Eight-Step Change Model and the PDSA model to elicit organizational change. The description of the OIP must include a detailed description of the purpose, rough outline of timelines, resources needed including personnel and technologies, and details about the change model and why steps are necessary. The purpose of formal communication is to ensure that a clear understanding of the process is in place prior to the start of the change plan to ensure that the change plan sticks to its goals and purpose.

Informal communications will also be required. This form of communication will happen as a result of the collaborative process (Calegari, et. al., 2015). Informal communications are a part of the natural feed-back loop of Kotter’s Eight-Step Change Model and of the PDSA model. This type of communication guides daily, weekly, and/or monthly interactions and ensures that participants continually feel connected to a professional learning team and the collaborative process. Informal communications also serve as a way to help participants keep the vision in mind and keeps a constant sense of urgency in place in order to achieve the proposed goals of the change process.

### **Communication with the Yukon Department of Education**

Prior to the start of the implementation of the change process, members of the Department must be provided with details regarding the change model to *on board* them with the idea and understanding of the rationale behind the need for a rural model for professional learning (Calegari, et. al., 2015). The link between the change model, as described in the OIP, with strategies outlined in the new curriculum model which focuses on a holistic approach to education with specific attention to incorporating First Nation ways of knowing and doing into



regular curriculum goals and outcomes, must be clearly defined for Departmental officials involved in rural education. Rural Yukon schools have a unique connection to First Nation Self-Governments due to the political landscapes rural schools find themselves in (Yukon Education, 2011). This creates a natural relationship between the schools and First Nation Self-Governments and provides opportunities for rural educators to not only make and share connections with each other for pedagogies that work in their unique classroom settings, but also provides opportunities to link First-Nation ways of knowing and doing into the process of professional learning (Department of Education, 2018).

### **Communicating with First Nation Self-Governments**

Yukon First Nation Self-Governments in some rural communities have a lot of political influence on education in their traditional territories (Government of Canada, 2017). As such, it is essential to communicate the change model as described in the OIP with the First Nations to garner support for the process (Department of Education, 2018). In communicating the change model, the purpose must be linked clearly to curriculum and educational goals. The importance of educator efficacies cannot be understated enough and the process of ensuring that First Nation governments have a clear understanding of why a rural model for professional learning is essential to have in place and is invaluable. The benefits to the educators in the schools and in turn, for the students within the classrooms of these educators cannot be underestimated. It must also be communicated that opportunities for First Nation governments and those that work in the area of education have opportunities to act as participants and leaders in professional learning teams as experts and leaders to offer insights and opportunities for promoting and educating in traditional knowledge and ways of knowing and doing (Department of Education, 2018).

### **Communicating with Rural Administrators and Educators**

Rural administrators will be the first direct contact point into rural schools for the change model. Rural administrators “understand themselves and their influence and image in their organizational context” (Cawsey, et. al., 2016, p. 29-30). They also have the required power and credibility to communicate vision buy-in at the school level among rural educators. As a result, it is imperative that above all others within the organization, that administrators understand the change model clearly so they are able to describe it to the members of their school team concisely (Northouse, 2016). Administrators and rural educators are not expected to be leaders of the various working groups within their schools but will have inside knowledge of those individuals that will make exceptional leaders within the context of professional learning and pedagogical efficacies and have the opportunity to influence these members to participate. Administrators have first-hand knowledge of those who may want to participate as a part of a collaborative team to help build their understandings (Northouse, 2016) of working and living in the rural Yukon context. In essence, rural administrators and educators provide leadership perspectives to champion communications necessary to promote vision buy-in and form leadership and participant volunteers as outlined in the OIP.

If rural administrators and educators choose to be a part of the change process and a part of professional learning groups, they do not have to do so as leaders but may choose to act as participants within the organizational change model. Some may choose to collaborate to create a professional learning model that focuses on meeting the high demands of being an administrator and educator in rural Yukon communities, for example (Hellsten, et. al., 2011). Others may choose collaborative working groups that look to advance efficacies in pedagogical practices surrounding First Nation ways of knowing and doing or First Nation partnerships. Ideas for

working groups will be at the discretion of collaborative teams and of interest to meet the needs rural educators, these ideas are merely hypothetical for the purpose of understanding context.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter 3 provides the details describing the final implementation strategies for the OIP. Figure 1 and Table 1 describe the framework for implementation as well as a proposed timeline linking Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model and the PDSA model to see the change plan through to fruition, while Table 2, provide an overview of data to be collected for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating the change process. As a whole, the improvement plan and change model provides an informed solution based on research to address the lack of professional learning opportunities for rural Yukon educators. The change models described in the improvement plan include making use of Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model and the PDSA model to ensure appropriate progressions and steps are taken to enact change on the organization. The approach makes use of a collaborative and holistic approach to professional learning that is inclusive of all rural educators for whom professional learning opportunities are frequently challenging to access due the complexities of working as an educator in rural Yukon settings. The OIP meets the goals and vision of Yukon education and the new curriculum and promotes the "Success for Each Learner" (Yukon Education, 2011) including rural educators.

### **Conclusion: Next Steps and Future Considerations**

This OIP endeavours to provide a solution to address the challenges of accessing professional development as described in the PoP for rural Yukon educators. A continuous change model for improvement to the current system for accessing professional learning opportunities for rural educators has been presented utilizing Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model

and the PDSA model. I recognize that while the creation of this OIP has positive implications for change, I also recognize that change is a long and continuous journey which requires changes to the culture of practices long established within the organization. Change does not always come easily nor does it come without resistance and challenges along the way.

While the goals of the OIP are related to the creation of a professional learning model organized and operated by rural educators for rural educators utilizing a collaborative process, I anticipate that benefits to educator efficacies in pedagogical practices will have greater implications on student achievement, community involvement, and educator satisfaction in their rural positions. My hope is that the establishment of a rural focused online professional learning model will increase the desire by educators to stay longer in rural placements, reducing turn-over rates, and increase the desire to be a part of a collaborative approach to learning together for the betterment of student learning and community supports for schools and all the educators within them (Adams & Woods, 2015).

The strategies described in this OIP are a part of an ongoing process to change how education looks in Yukon. The development of a new curriculum model in Yukon to be more inclusive of all learners in the classrooms must extend to include the differences in the way educators learn and access professional learning opportunities. A logical next step for the change plan is to present it to educators, administrators, members of Yukon Department of Education, members of Yukon Teacher's Association, and First Nation stakeholders to describe the process, vision, goals, and expected outcomes of the change model. The process of presenting the change model to these people and organizations is to garner questions, suggestions, and support to see the plan come to fruition. It also provides an opportunity to collaborate with all invested members of education in Yukon to ensure that all voices are heard.

In conclusion, this OIP presents strategies to create a rural based professional learning model for rural educators by rural educators using a collaborative process between schools, educators, and stakeholders. The purpose of the OIP is to address the unique needs of rural educators while also acknowledging the complexities of working and living in geographically, professionally, and politically isolated communities in order to improve educator efficacies in best pedagogical practices for rural education. The PDSA and Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model provide frameworks to elicit change to the current organization. Built into the OIP are measures to address communication, reflection, and revisions while also paying attention to ethical considerations and the needs of those involved in the change process.

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