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## Bridging Cultures: Preparing Non-Indigenous Teachers to Teach Indigenous Epistemology in a Rural Public School

Simonjay Moreton  
smoreton@uwo.ca

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## Abstract

This Organizational Improvement Plan looks to lay the framework to help non-Indigenous teachers challenge negative Indigenous stereotypes, overcome their fear of unintentionally culturally appropriating an Indigenous culture, and be able to effectively integrate Indigenous epistemology into course curriculum to fulfill the First Nations, Metis and Inuit requirement of the Alberta Teacher Quality Standards. This framework leverages the Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel in conjunction with the ADKAR change model to facilitate a cultural change at Ranchlands Public School, a small rural school situated in Southern Alberta. As the Principal, I intend to implement a transformational change that will institute a shift in mindset by connecting Indigenous Elders with non-Indigenous teachers through a blended online and on-land learning platform. Engaging Indigenous Elders in sharing their knowledge, usually through the traditional art of storytelling and/or mentorship, helps to minimize the potential for cultural appropriation by non-Indigenous teachers. With the Elder stepping into the role of ‘instructor’, and the non-Indigenous classroom teacher assuming the role of ‘pupil’, there will be a natural shift in learning towards recognizing the contributions and knowledge systems of other cultures. It is by interlacing Indigenous and Euro-settler cultures into the educational framework and culture of a class that students will begin to build a respect for other cultures; that our Indigenous students will feel valued as their traditional Indigenous knowledge is being recognized in the school; and in time, both knowledge systems, although distinct, will be used to help students explore the prescribed curriculum at a deeper level.

*Keywords:* Indigenous epistemology, transformational leadership, ADKAR change model, Medicine Wheel, Teaching Quality Standards, cultural change.

## Executive Summary

This Organizational Improvement Plan is structured differently than many other improvement plans as the reader walks with the author on a philosophical journey to learn how to integrate Indigenous epistemology—Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing—into classroom lessons and school culture. I do this because I firmly believe that effective and sustainable change happens when a person is able to see themselves as an integral part of the change process. As such, my Organizational Improvement Plan considers the practical implementation of the First Nations, Inuit, and Metis competency requirement of the Teachers Quality Standards and the application of this standard in a rural, predominantly White, public school located in southern Alberta (Alberta Education, 2020c). With only a handful of self-identified Indigenous students constituting the Indigenous population at Ranchlands Public School, there has been considerable resistance among staff to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into lessons and school culture (Personal communication with staff, 2018 – 2022). The issue is further compounded by the limited funding that the provincial government has allocated to the Southern Alberta School Division to support this Indigenous initiative and provide training and resources to all of the schools, teachers, and students throughout the division (Treasurer of SASD, personal communication, 2022).

In Chapter One, the reader is exposed to my leadership positionality, a brief history of how I came to be the principal of Ranchlands Public School, the situational context of the School, and the organizational problem that this Organizational Improvement Plan will address. I then explore my preferred leadership style, which is a transformational servant style of leadership that leverages a shared instructional leadership approach when implementing change; the postmodern-constructivist lens that I view the world through; and the obstacles that need to be

addressed and overcome if non-Indigenous teachers are going to start valuing Indigenous knowledge systems and integrate Indigenous epistemology into teaching practice. The context of Ranchlands Public School is further discussed by examining the political, economic, social, and technological aspects, both internal and external, that have a direct impact on change initiatives and teaching practices at Ranchlands Public School.

In Chapter Two, I adopt the Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel as an Indigenous framework and adapt it by integrating the ADKAR change model to facilitate organizational change at Ranchlands Public School (Bell, 2014; Hiatt, 2006). In doing so, I have shown that it is possible to braid Western ways of thinking and doing with Indigenous epistemology, and vice versa. Finally, I explore the change readiness of Ranchlands Public School to integrate Indigenous perspectives into classes by exploring the individual as well as the organizational readiness for cultural change (Shorter, 2017). Chapter Two concludes by exploring several potential solutions to the problem of practice and settles on implementing a hybrid solution which incorporates video conferencing with direct face-to-face instruction by an Indigenous Elder.

Chapter Three explores the change implementation plan which is broken down into three main stages. The first stage explores the prerequisites and prework that needs to be considered and put into place prior to inviting Indigenous Elders to work with teachers and students. Structures, such as ensuring that the Elder has been recognized as an Elder in their community, challenging Indigenous stereotypes, investigating Indigenous protocols, and engaging in cultural sensitivity training are several factors that need to be explored prior to implementing this change initiative. The second stage of the change implementation plan is the implementation of the hybrid solution, where teachers and students connect with Indigenous Elders either in a face-to-face or through a video conferencing platform. The third and final stage of the change

implementation plan engages teachers in reflecting on their cultural experiences, connecting these experiences with course content, and helping other teachers integrate Indigenous epistemology into their classes and lessons.

I then explore how I will communicate the need for change to students, parents, teachers, and the community; how I will monitor and evaluate the change process before, during, and after the change has been implemented; and I conclude the chapter with a final change readiness assessment to ensure that this Organizational Improvement Plan will have a positive and intended impact on staff and their ability to integrate Indigenous epistemology into course and class content (Shorter, 2017; University of California, n.d.).

Doing so completes one learning journey cycle around the Medicine Wheel and returns the reader back to the beginning of the Medicine Wheel, at the infancy stage, where the reader now has some knowledge about Indigenous epistemology, ontology, and pedagogy that they have learned while reading this Organizational Improvement Plan (Bell, 2014). Now, with a new perspective, how are you—the reader—going to be able to braid other cultures into your current world view to support and empower marginalized students from other cultures? Read the OIP again to find out.

"Curiouser and curiouser!"

Alice, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*  
(Carroll, 2008)

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to all my family who have stood with me, discussed with me, and walked with me on this wonderful journey. Now that I have crossed the finish line, it is wonderful to see my wife, two daughters and my mother standing beside me. I could not have accomplished this without your support, encouragement, and making me laugh when things got rough.

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To all the administrators who collaborated with me on this project and our wonderful superintendent who supported me throughout this entire journey. Thanks for all the support, questions, and guidance you have given to ensure that my organizational improvement plan comes to fruition and will be successful once implemented.

To my amazing and supportive staff, who have worked with me through this whole process. Thank you for all your patience and the discussions we have had in developing an actual plan that will work in the context of our school and will support all of our students in their learning.

A special thanks to all the Indigenous Elders who have shared their knowledge with me over the years. I have learned a lot and now hope to pass this knowledge onto others.

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## Acronyms

- BC (British Columbia)
- DEHR (Diversity, Equity, Human Resources)
- EA (Educational Assistant)
- EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion)
- FF (Farmers' Fields)
- FNMI (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit)
- LQS (Leadership Quality Standards)
- MoE (Ministry of Education)
- OIP (Organizational Improvement Plan)
- PEST (Political, Economic, Social, and Technological)
- PoP (Problem of Practice)
- RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police)
- RPS (Ranchlands Public School)
- SASD (Southern Alberta School Division)
- SLQS (Superintendent Leadership Quality Standards)
- TQS (Teacher Quality Standards)

## Chapter One: Problem Posing

The First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) competency requirement of the Teacher Quality Standards (TQS) requires that all teachers in Alberta develop and teach foundational Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and ways of knowing (Alberta Education, 2020c). It is this provincial government directive that has laid the foundation for my Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP)—non-Indigenous teachers throughout Alberta are expressing anxiety and some resistance to having to teach about a culture they are unfamiliar with (Scott & Gani, 2018; Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2015; Personal communication with staff, 2016 – 2022). This situation has created a rift between policy and praxis, and in doing so has framed my Problem of Practice (PoP) in that non-Indigenous teachers are struggling to incorporate Indigenous epistemology—the traditional ways of thinking and knowing, that have been passed down from generation to generation, which connect Indigenous people to their culture and land—into classes as a regular part of the knowledge content of the courses that they teach.

This problem is not only specific to Ranchlands Public School (RPS, a pseudonym) and the many small rural schools located within the Southern Alberta School Division (SASD, a pseudonym), but extends across the nation as schools across Canada try to incorporate more Indigenous content into school and classroom culture in an effort to support Call # 62 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015). For example, as part of this reconciliation effort, the Ministry of Education (MoE) in British Columbia (BC) has recognized the significance of this PoP as non-Indigenous educators throughout BC are also requesting guidance and support to successfully weave Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into their classes and course content (BC MoE, 2015).

Guided by several questions, the reader of this OIP will gain an understanding of the complexities that must be navigated to effectively incorporate Indigenous perspectives within a Euro-settler context that ultimately defines the cultural norms of both the community and the school. In doing so, my positionality, leadership agency, and perspective vision for addressing my PoP within the organizational context of RPS will be made clear.

### **Leadership Positionality and Lens**

In this section I explore the different facets of how I became the principal of a small rural school, examine how my worldview frames my leadership style, both theoretical and experiential, and explore how my world perspective, which is different than the local rural mindset, has had and continues to have, on change initiatives implemented at RPS.

### **Personal Leadership Position and Responsibilities of a Principal**

Becoming the principal of RPS has been a 20-year journey of self-discovery. While at university I found that I had a knack for breaking down complicated concepts into small pieces that my fellow students could easily understand. After graduation, I joined a teacher internship program teaching English to Kindergarten students in South Korea. The enjoyment I received from this experience led me to pursue my teaching degree where I volunteered for a practicum placement in an Indigenous community in Nunavut. It was during this time that I realized that there was a disconnect between teaching the curricula that prepares students to enter the workforce or pursue a post-secondary education outside of their communities, and the education that my Indigenous students wanted and needed to learn in order to be successful and live within their own community. This realization has also been acknowledged by the United Nations (n.d.), Kleinfeld (1975), Rahman (2012), and more recently by Williamson and Vizina (2017).

With the limited number of professional jobs available in this remote northern community, it was difficult for a person, Indigenous or otherwise, to find employment other than at the local Northern Store, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the nursing station, or the school (Carter et al., 2003; Myers, 1996). As such, students often expressed that learning land skills such as trapping, hunting, and fishing were more important than learning algebra, as it was these survival skills that brought sustenance to their families and the community at large, a stance that both the United Nations (n.d.) and Wildcat et al. (2014) acknowledged to be true. Learning from my Indigenous students, and in working with Inuit Elders, I learned that everything in life is connected, that community is important, and that for my students to value what is being taught in class, I needed to teach course content within the cultural context that my students could easily understand and relate to. This is an understanding that underpins instructional theory, and is reflective of teaching culturally responsive lessons (Reigeluth, 1983; Oskineegish, 2014).

To help a *kabloona*, an Inuit term used to describe White Europeans, develop these connections, the host school provided opportunities for me to experience traditional on-land activities and learn directly from Inuit Elders in the community. The experiences of learning how to hunt, fish, and build an igloo led to a transformational shift in my teaching pedagogy as I found that I naturally started incorporating aspects of these cultural activities into the curricular content of the courses I was teaching. A prime example of this was when I talked about survival of the fittest in a Science class and related this concept back to our hunting expedition where the Inuit Elders told us to shoot only the male caribou, but not to shoot the caribou leading the herd as these were the strongest caribou and were needed for the herd to be strong and reproduce (Personal communication with Inuit Elders, 2001). Incorporating stories from my on-land experiences into my classes resulted in learning becoming more meaningful and relevant for



many of my Indigenous students and in me becoming more accepted and integrated into the community (Serrat, 2008; Rossiter, 2002).

After completing my practicum in Nunavut, I ventured overseas to China where I worked at a highly prestigious BC offshore school, and my success in teaching high school Science was quickly rewarded with being promoted to department head. Years later, I returned to Canada after accepting a teaching position as the sole high school teacher for Grades 10 to 12 at a remote fly-in Dene community in the Northwest Territories. Approaching learning from the view that my students needed to be able to walk in two worlds, where students need to learn the academic skills required to pursue a post-secondary education, as well as the traditional Indigenous life skills needed to live in the community, I encouraged local Elders to share their traditional knowledge and skills and engaged our students in learning aspects of the curricula by participating in various on-land activities (Salusky et al., 2022).

It was during these cultural adventures that I was aware of a paradigm shift where I moved from being the knowledge keeper into the role of student where I listened and learned from the Elder(s), as well as my own students, who shared their knowledge and experience of how to shoot, hunt, and fish (Freeman et al., 2018). This paradigm shift, from teacher to learner and from student to teacher, resulted in mutual respect being generated and shared between students, the Elders, and myself, and I firmly believe this contributed to students, who had historically dropped out of school around mid-October, finishing a full year of school.

Over the next decade, I furthered my career in education as I pursued opportunities both in Canada and overseas. As I shifted from teacher into administration, and from vice principal to principal, my duties and responsibilities changed until I finally settled in the lovely rural community of Farmers Fields (FF – a pseudonym), as the principal of RPS. As the principal, I

ensure that students are learning the prescribed provincial curricula and that all teachers are meeting the new competency requirements of the TQS; however as the formal school leader, I am now in a better position to directly influence the culture of the school as well as those learning and working in it (Alberta Education, 2020c). Having a direct impact on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) enables me, as a transformational leader, to address the White hegemony of this small rural school and give marginalized parents and students an active voice in programming and in implementing change at RPS (Tucker & Russell, 2004).

Empowering marginalized groups has been a passion of mine since I experienced exploitation at work and in the marketplace while living and working overseas. I have experienced the powerlessness and frustration of not having my voice considered in decision-making, even though I had first-hand knowledge of what could accelerate student learning, as I was not part of the dominant culture. These experiences have helped me realize the importance of listening to people's diverse opinions when making decisions in the best interest of all students and the positive effect that doing so has on each person feeling respected, valued, and included within the school. These sentiments are further substantiated by Noguera (2009) as well as Nishii and Leroy (2021).

In creating an inclusive environment, I recognize that building relationships with students, parents, and staff is vital in driving effective change in policy, practice, and programming (Fullan, 2002). I also recognize that a principal's vision must include a global plan that can be broken down into small, detail-oriented, and actionable parts that are then delegated to respective individuals and/or groups of individuals so that the global collective moves toward making the school's vision a reality. As principal, under Section 1(1)(s) of the Education Act, I acknowledge that I am responsible for the academic success, safety, and well-being of students and staff, and I

will put structures and supports into place for those struggling with moving in the new direction that the school is taking (Government of Alberta, 2022b).

### **Personal Leadership Identity, Agency, and Power**

I fully embrace Hargreaves and Shirley's (2019) leading-from-the-middle approach to leadership as I recognize that some change initiatives require an authoritative or top-down directive approach, while other change initiatives, such as changing the culture of an institution, require more of a bottom-up approach where staff have input and influence as to how a school goal is achieved. As initiatives are always implemented in the best interest of students, I consider myself a servant leader who operates within a postmodern-constructivist paradigm as I acknowledge that all world views are different, but are equally valid (Kachel & Jennings, 2010).

Patterson (2003) recognizes that servant leadership is an extension of transformational leadership which focuses on building commitment and capacity of followers in being able to meet an organization's goals. Patterson (2003) also contends that a servant leader develops organizational goals taking into account the well-being of the organization's followers. It is my belief that servant leadership is a natural leadership style for a principal because, as Guo (2014), Lee (2017), and Zahabioun et al. (2012) have identified, students need to develop a broad set of skills including 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, global citizenship skills, and skills needed to enter the workforce on top of their academic skills required to pursue a post-secondary education. It is the principal's responsibility to ensure that proper programming and supports are put into place to ensure that all students are structured for success on their preferred and chosen pathway.

By acting in the best interest of the followers, a servant leader exhibits the virtues of love, humility, selflessness, vision, trust, empowerment, and service for all (Patterson, 2003). These seven virtues reflect my own personal beliefs about education in that policies, programs, and

practice must be created and implemented in the context of those we serve. As a testament to this, RPS organizes work placements and offers the Green Certificate Program, a program where students are exposed to crop or animal production, so that our farm kids can receive mentorship and high school credit working at local businesses or in specific agricultural disciplines (Government of Alberta, 2022c; RPS, Education plan, 2018 – 2021). By meeting the needs of the students, and structuring them to fulfill placements within the community, students learn the important skills that contribute to the overall well-being and success of the community, and in doing so become active participants and contributors to the community as a whole (Government of Alberta, 2022c).

My experiences living and working in other cultures have helped me realize that there are multiple ways of knowing, many ways of doing, and different ways of perceiving the world and how it works (Elder Brenda Francoeur, personal communication, 2023). Recognizing that meaning is a contextual construct and that there are multiple truths and likewise multiple perspectives form the basis of the postmodern paradigm which enables people to view and explore other cultures, learn from them, and challenge their own world view as they synthesize what they have learned and develop a new understanding of how the world works (Wilson, 1997).

Wilson (1997) contends that postmodern perspectives underlie a lot of constructivist theory and writing, while Bada & Olusegun (2015) explain that knowledge within the constructivist paradigm is constructed from experiences and that these experiences define and help redefine a person's perception, understanding, and thinking about the world, how it works, and where they fit in. Savery and Duffy (1995) contend that learning starts when the learner experiences cognitive dissonance between new information and their current understanding of the world, thereby generating a new understanding and meaning which is the premise on which

the constructivist paradigm operates and an idea that Gorski (2009), Wilson (1997), and Oskineegish and Berger (2021) all support.

I believe that both the postmodern paradigm and the constructivist paradigm are essential in bridging cultural barriers and in developing empathy and respect between people of different cultures. I operate within both of these paradigms, and as a servant leader I work hard to ensure that my students are exposed to new experiences and ways of thinking which will help them become good global citizens who are proud of who they are, can respect opposing points of view, and are able to interact and work with people from other cultures. The challenges of doing this will be made apparent in the next section of the OIP, which explores the organizational context of RPS.

### **Organizational Context**

Farmers Fields (FF), like many rural agricultural communities in southern Alberta, was established by European settlers who came in search of arable land on which to build a farm and raise their families (Alberta Estonian Heritage Society, 2011; Government of Alberta, 2023a). As the community grew, the traditional White, Eurocentric, Christian values and lifestyles of these European settlers established the cultural norms of both the community and the school (Berry, 2015; Encyclopedia of the Great Plains, 2011; Plaizier, 2009). As a servant leader, it is my duty to prepare the students of RPS to become active contributors to society: therefore, students need to learn the skills that will help them live in the community, work on the family farm, and prepare them to either enter the workforce or pursue a post-secondary education upon graduation. My understanding of what makes a good servant leader is further supported by Anderson (2013), Greenleaf (1991), and McGee-Cooper & Trammell (2001) in that a servant leader helps those being served to grow as people.

The next section will expose the reader to the organizational structure of the school, as well as the political, economic, social, and cultural factors that directly and indirectly influence decisions made at RPS. It is by exploring these facets, along with what is already in policy and practice, that I have become fully aware of the challenges that non-Indigenous teachers must overcome in order to meaningfully incorporate Indigenous epistemology into their classes.

### **Organizational Structure**

RPS is a medium-sized school within SASD and offers a Junior Kindergarten through to Grade 12 program to over 100 students of the community of FF and surrounding area. The hierarchical organizational structure at RPS is common to many other public schools in Alberta where the provincial government prescribes the curriculum and sets all global educational goals for schools and Districts across the province (Government of Alberta, 2022b). Apart from changing policy and practice to meet government requirements, each district also develops its own regional policies and goals to address any areas of concern identified when analysing the division's annual Assurance Survey results (SASD Three-Year Education Plan, 2022 – 2025). In addition to being given the responsibility to implement both governmental and divisional directives, each school develops its own local school goals and initiatives to address social and academic issues within their respective school and community contexts (RPS, Education Plan, 2018 – 2021).

Using the formal feedback collected from the school's annual Assurance Survey in conjunction with the informal feedback collected from monthly school council meetings, biweekly staff meetings, and monthly student union meetings ensures that the voices of students, parents, and teachers are all considered when setting school goals and implementing change at RPS (RPS, Education Plan, 2018 - 2021). I believe that it is through making informed decisions,

implementing initiatives, and developing policy and practice in the best interests of students, staff, and the community at large that my qualities of being a servant leader are most valuable.

### **Political**

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, the Alberta government incorporated an FNMI competency requirement into the Teacher Quality Standards (TQS), the Leadership Quality Standards (LQS) for principals, and the Superintendent Leadership Quality Standards (SLQS) (Alberta Education, 2020c; Alberta Education, 2020a; Alberta Education, 2020b; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). This competency requirement requires educators, at each level, to demonstrate how they are exposing staff and students to foundational Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and ways of knowing. Non-Indigenous teachers have voiced concern about this government mandate as many non-Indigenous teachers currently lack the knowledge and/or experience with Indigenous cultures to fulfill the FNMI competency requirement of the current TQS (Alberta Education, 2020c; BC MoE, 2015; Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2015; Kanu, 2005; Scott and Gani, 2018; Personal communication with staff, 2016 - 2022).

As the traditional values of the first European settlers still define the cultural norms of RPS and the FF community, the government mandate to integrate Indigenous knowledge into school and classroom culture seems to be in direct opposition to the efforts of FF and similar rural communities looking to preserve their traditional "settler" way of life (Friesen & Purc-Stephenson, 2016). The tremendous coercive pressure that rural communities exert on the school and the staff to ensure that policy and practice align with the community's values and goals ensures that change at the school happens slowly if at all.

## **Economic**

In its “hayday”, RPS had upwards of 300 students, but with improved farming technology, larger farming operations buying out the smaller family farms, local families moving into urban city centers, and farms hiring Mennonite farmhands whose families prefer to homeschool their children, the student enrollment at RPS has been steadily declining over the past 20 years (Government of Alberta, 2022a; Personal Communication with the former principal of RPS, 2017; RPS, Education Plan, 2017 – 2020; RPS, Education Plan, 2018 – 2021). As RPS's funding is directly tied to student enrolment, the decline in our student numbers has resulted in reduced staffing, multi-graded classes, and the elimination of many non-core classes being offered onsite at RPS (RPS, Education Plan, 2018 – 2021).

As a servant leader, I recognize that many of our students will live and work on a farm after graduation. Therefore, RPS needs to continue to offer agricultural and work experience programs that expose our rural students to skills that will help them on the family farm or could transition into potential employment within the community. Placements, where students develop skills in the trades, will help retain the students that we currently have and hopefully entice home-schooled Mennonite children, whose parents have historically been hired as farmhands, to enrol at RPS. It is by increasing student numbers that the school will obtain additional funding that can be used to help support new initiatives, such as helping non-Indigenous teachers improve their integration of Indigenous epistemology into course and classroom content.

## **Social and Cultural**

Ranchland Public Schools (RPS) is a remote rural school, set within a predominantly White agricultural society, with an all-White administration and teaching staff and a student body consisting of 81% White, 12% Mexican Mennonite, 2.4% self-identified Indigenous, 2.4%



Pakistani, 1.6% Filipino and 0.6 % Chinese (RPS, Education Plan, 2017 – 2020). The large geographical distance of the community from the nearest Indigenous reserve or diverse city center has ensured that the White hegemony of the first European Settlers is reflected in the cultural norms of the community (Alberta School Councils' Association, 2023; Friesen & Purc-Stephenson, 2016). Further, this White hegemony underpins the assumptions and expectations—the hidden curriculum—of what is taught at RPS today (Brophy, 1982; Friesen & Purc-Stephenson, 2016; Statistics Canada, 2019).

For rural communities such as FF, in order maintain their rural identity and traditional way of life, it is critical that “outsiders”, anyone not born in the community, conform to the cultural norms of the community (Friesen & Purc-Stephenson, 2016). As a servant and transformational leader, I must walk a fine line to establish an inclusive learning environment where both the dominant culture of the community and the marginalized cultures of minority students are reflected and respected within the school. Establishing an inclusive environment for all students at RPS is further explored in the next section under policy and equity.

### **Policy and Equity**

Alberta's Inclusive Education Policy (Government of Alberta, 2022d) has mandated the universal acceptance and belonging of all children. Therefore, all schools in Alberta are required to promote an understanding and respect for others, and students and staff throughout Alberta are being guided to embrace a multicultural multiple perspective approach towards learning. The TQS, LQS, and SLQS driving EDI, in conjunction with promoting reconciliation through an FNMI competency requirement and the Diversity and Respect mandate of the Education Act (Government of Alberta, 2022b) where all schools in Alberta are to promote an understanding and respect for others ensures that all stakeholders working within the school system are striving

to give students equal opportunity and voice within each school (Alberta Education, 2020c; Alberta Education, 2020a; Alberta Education, 2020b).

SASD has recognized the importance of EDI and has recently established the Diversity, Equity, and Human Resources (DEHR) committee to address policy and practice throughout the division to ensure that all ethnic groups are given an equitable voice and opportunity in education. As a DEHR policy developer, the policies and worldviews that promote recognizing the diversity of people and in valuing other knowledge systems and ways of doing at the divisional level have now been integrated into the mission and vision statements at RPS.

For anonymity purposes I cannot directly quote the mission and vision statements of RPS, but in essence the school looks to provide quality and inclusive education where all students develop the attitudes, skills, and knowledge to make them well-rounded lifelong learners and positive contributors to their community (RPS, Education Plan, 2018 – 2021).

In the next section, my leadership PoP will be clarified and obstacles identified that need to be addressed and overcome if non-Indigenous teachers are going to start valuing Indigenous knowledge systems and begin to integrate Indigenous content into their classes on a more regular basis.

### **Leadership Problem of Practice**

At RPS, a small rural public school in southern Alberta, non-Indigenous teachers across all subject areas are struggling to integrate foundational Indigenous knowledge into their classes to meet the FNMI competency requirement of the Alberta TQS (Alberta Education, 2020c; personal communication with staff, 2017 - Present).

The difficulty that many non-Indigenous teachers are having in meeting this government requirement has resulted in teachers superficially integrating Indigenous content into classes

and/or choosing not to teach Indigenous content altogether (Scott and Gani, 2018; Bartlett et al. (2012; Personal communication with staff, 2017 - 2020). I believe that teaching Indigenous content as an add-on to a course, or omitting it completely, not only devalues Indigenous cultures, but also undermines provincial, divisional, and school efforts in working towards reconciliation.

Due to the limited knowledge, understanding, and exposure that our non-Indigenous teachers have had with Indigenous cultures; the lack of curricular objectives that require specific Indigenous content to be taught within the current K to 12 core curricula; and the overall lack of additional funding provided by the government or school district to help build capacity and support teachers in developing skills to teach foundational Indigenous content, has resulted in non-Indigenous teachers experiencing difficulty and anxiety when trying to incorporate Indigenous epistemology into their classes (Alberta Education, 1996; Alberta Education, 2000; Alberta Education, 2005; Alberta Education, 2008; Alberta Education, 2014; Alberta Education, 2016; Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2015; Hennig & Paetkau, 2018; Kanu, 2005; Scott & Gani, 2018; BC MoE, 2015; RPS staff, personal communication, 2018 – 2022; Treasurer of SASD, personal communication, 2022).

With specific reference to RPS, local teachers have questioned the relevance of teaching Indigenous content when they have no Indigenous students registered in their class; have disputed teaching about Indigenous perspectives as our Land Acknowledgement acknowledges several Indigenous groups traditionally living in southern Alberta, but there is no one Indigenous perspective that can be taught that is reflective of them all; and some teachers continue to contest the inclusive practice that seemingly prioritizes Indigenous cultures over other cultures present in a rural public school (Scott & Gani, 2018; RPS staff, personal communication, 2017 – Present).

As the principal of RPS, I will encourage a shift in school and classroom culture where teachers begin to value Indigenous knowledge systems, challenge local stereotypes, and become intrinsically motivated as they learn to integrate Indigenous epistemology into the knowledge content of the courses that they teach.

In the next section, I will frame my PoP by exploring the political, economic, social, and technological aspects of the school and the community at large. In doing so, the reader will develop a better understanding of the internal and external influences and their impact on if, and to what degree, Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing will be taught in classes.

### **Framing the Problem of Practice**

As an educator and servant leader, it is my responsibility to ensure that all students are adequately prepared with the skills they need to succeed in life after graduation, whether this be working on a farm, pursuing a post-secondary education, or directly entering the workforce. When implementing change within a small rural school, the principal, as a transformational leader, must consider, and be culturally sensitive towards, the backgrounds of students, teachers, and the community at large if a change initiative is going to be effective and sustainable.

In the next section the reader will explore the political, economic, social, and technological (PEST) aspects of my problem of practice (PoP) in order to gain an understanding of the background influences that contribute to and/or hinder non-Indigenous teachers being able to incorporate Indigenous epistemology into the knowledge content of their courses (Chartered Management Institute, 2013).

### **PEST Analysis**

As briefly described above, a PEST analysis provides a holistic understanding of the complexity and underlying issues that must be addressed and overcome in order to achieve an

amicable and effective resolution to this PoP (Chartered Management Institute, 2013). The following sections examine the four elements of a PEST analysis within the context of empowering non-Indigenous teachers to better incorporate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into their classes and course content.

### ***Political***

The politics that both support and undermine the teaching of Indigenous perspectives in classes are generated and/or influenced by the government, the media, and the community at large.

**The Government.** The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015), in conjunction with the Alberta government's TQS, LQS, and SLQS, are meant to ensure that educators at all levels are applying FNMI perspectives within their own sphere of influence, in order to educate both students and teachers in Indigenous customs and cultures; Indigenous histories, including learning about residential schools; and the legislation as it pertains to Indigenous people and the provincial Treaties that pertain to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Albertans alike (Alberta Education, 2020c; Alberta Education, 2020a; Alberta Education, 2020b). It is intended that the school community acquire and apply Indigenous knowledge within their own educational context as they build empathy, capacity, and understanding about Indigenous people, Indigenous ways of thinking, and the positive contributions that Indigenous people have made in and to Canadian society (Alberta Education, 2020c; Alberta Education, 2020a; Alberta Education, 2020b).

**The Media.** Beaudoin and Thorson (2004) contend that rural communities are susceptible and are heavily influenced by the views portrayed in newspapers and aired on network television news. Historically, Indigenous people in the media were portrayed as either

noble environmentalists who obstruct capital projects that bring money and employment to local communities, or as victims who were often drunk, violent, and a burden on society (Harding, 2005; Eason et al., 2021). In this context, Wellburn (2009) found that the media's historical negative reporting reinforced and perpetuated the negative stereotypes, prejudice, and racism towards Indigenous people which were then adopted and integrated into the cultural views and perspectives of many rural White communities throughout southern Alberta.

This view is one that Gilchrist (2010) contends is reflective of the Western, White, male lens that culturally constructs the media. As similar views are being voiced by staff in the staffroom and at staff meetings, and both Alton-Lee et al. (1993) and Larrivee (2000) contend, it is very plausible that these prejudiced views and implicit biases might also be voiced in the classroom. Which, in the context of this OIP, goes against the inclusive nature of schools, the aim of reconciliation, and the goal of this PoP to integrate Indigenous epistemology into classes as a regular part of the knowledge content of courses (FF community members and RPS staff, personal communication, 2017 – 2020).

**The Community at Large.** With the community continually working to preserve the traditional “settler” way of life, the White hegemony and Euro-settler mentality on which FF was founded is as prevalent today as it was when the community was first founded (FF town website, 2013; Friesen & Purc-Stephenson, 2016). A few factors have contributed to FF being able to retain their traditional Eurocentric culture, the first of which is that the community is located far from either a diverse city centre or nearby Indigenous reserve (Alberta School Councils' Association, 2023), and with few external influences for change, it is easy for the community to maintain its traditional customs and culture. The second factor is that the majority of teachers at RPS are local-area hires who were born and raised in southern Alberta, and share the attitudes,

values, and beliefs of their community which they currently cannot help but incorporate into their classes and classroom culture (Alton-Lee et al., 1993). The third factor contributing to the community's cultural preservation, the status quo, is the pressure that newcomers face to adopt and adapt to the cultural norms of the community (Friesen & Purc-Stephenson, 2016).

When attempting to implement a change that challenges the beliefs or values of the community, it is important that a transformational leadership approach be applied, where teachers feel comfortable and competent in implementing a change, not because they are told to, but because they see the value and benefit of doing so (Hamidianpour et al., 2016; Fullan, 1993). In other words, there must be a shift in mindset prior to implementing change in order to minimize resistance from the teachers and pressure from the community to revert to the old ways of thinking and doing (Drew et al., 2004).

### *Economic*

As a result of the recent change in provincial education funding models, the addition of two grants supporting Truth and Reconciliation, and the additional \$23 per self-identified Indigenous student, the provincial government has allocated approximately \$40,000 a year to the Southern Alberta School Division (SASD) to support the integration of foundational Indigenous knowledge into educational platforms across the division (Treasurer of SASD, personal communication, 2022). This money has to educate principals on treaties, legislation, and residential schools and provide support to over 10 schools, hundreds of teachers, and thousands of students, so \$40,000 a year does not provide adequate funding to fully support the FNMI competency requirement at the divisional, school, and teacher levels. And, after having received a few hundred dollars to support the FNMI initiative at RPS, I can confirm that this modest

allocation is definitely not enough to meet the mandated requirements or provide anything more than a token of support for the cause.

Up to this point, any money that RPS received as a result of Indigenous students enrolling at the school was allocated toward purchasing additional Educational Assistant (EA) time so that both our Indigenous and our Mennonite students receive additional classroom supports. However, with the new government mandate, RPS must now support teachers in learning about Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, and as a result, this money is now being reallocated to support the FNMI competency requirement and is currently being supplemented with additional school funds. This is not a long-term solution as the annual decline in student enrolment, and the subsequent drop in funding, has already negatively impacted the programming at RPS. As the principal of this school, to allocate even more school resources to fund an initiative that on the surface looks like it only supports a handful of students, will be met by resistance from students, teachers, and the community at large.

### ***Social Norms and Influences***

With McDonald and Crandall (2015) recognizing that what people do and what they are expected to do are the two types of social norms that underpin the culture, language, and social interaction of a society, it is crucial that the social norms of the community be taken into account when implementing change within a rural community or at a rural school. Therefore, the following section will look at the social norms of the FF community and the impact that these norms have on people both inside and outside the school system.

**External.** Benoit et al. (2018) recognize that the community values of rural agricultural societies, such as those found in FF, reflect a traditional value system and lifestyle of the European settlers who first settled and established family farms in rural Alberta. The essential



connections and relationships that connect people with people, people to place, and people to the land help define one's rural identity and are as important today as they were in the past (Barter, 2008; Benoit et al., 2018).

Friesen and Purc-Stephenson (2016) also contend that the external pressure put on a person to fit into these rural communities can cause a person, especially a young person, to resist change and maintain the status quo as they put the needs of the community ahead of their own. Therefore, the community's value system, in conjunction with one's own family values, help shape a rural person's identity by guiding how they think, feel, and act in order to fit into and become part of the community. These traditional Eurocentric Christian values are further reflected in the hidden curriculum being taught at school and learned in each classroom (Alsubaie, 2015).

**Internal.** As both Little (2016) and Powers (1963) contend, a person's power and influence can be attributed to one's wealth, a notion that transcends nations and underpins the local mindset of FF. In fact, a teacher's informal school status at RPS is based on the size and success of one's family farm, the amount of time that the person and/or family has lived in the area, and the duration that a person has worked at the school (RPS staff & FF community members, personal communication, 2017 – 2019). As one's status increases, so does their respect and influence, both at school and in the community. As such, teachers with the highest community status have historically become the informal leaders and mentors at RPS. Hiring local teachers, especially those who have ties to agriculture, helps reinforce the communal principles of the community and helps embed community views and values into the classroom and school culture, which in turn underpins the hidden curriculum being taught in school (Alsubaie, 2015; Bland et al., 2014).

### ***Technological Influences***

FF has access to all the technologies that would be found in a large urban city center. Technologies such as high-speed internet, mobile devices, and daily use of personal devices such as Chromebooks, iPads, and laptops are commonplace within both the school and the community.

Beaudoin and Thorson (2004) acknowledge that rural communities are highly susceptible and are heavily influenced by the views portrayed in newspapers, on network television news, and in comments made on local social media platforms. These “global” views have significantly impacted the local people’s attitudes, views, and behaviours as to what they believe and how they act, both inside and outside the community (Beaudoin & Thorson, 2004; Escobar-Chaves et al., 2005; Roberts & Doob, 1990).

With negative media views and stereotypes about Indigenous people being integrated into rural “White” communities throughout Alberta, combined with the lack of social media feeds that actively push Indigenous content, either positive or negative, to the residents of FF and the lack of discussion about Indigenous issues at the local coffee shop, one can draw the conclusion that Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing are not of interest or of value among the locals of FF (Eason et al., 2021; Ly & Crowshoe, 2015; Wellburn, 2009).

### **Guiding Questions that Frame this PoP**

The PEST analysis above frames the context of my PoP, but it raises several questions that must be addressed if non-Indigenous teachers are going to be able to effectively integrate Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into their classes and course content.

With the TQS directing teachers to teach Indigenous content, the first question that needs to be asked is: what are the specific requirements that teachers need to meet in order to fulfill the FNMI competency requirements of the TQS (Alberta Education, 2020c)? Unlike most curricula,

the minimum requirements for teachers to meet the FNMI competency are not specified. This will result in a broad range of teacher effort, ability, and success in incorporating Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into course content.

One example of an unsuccessful attempt to incorporate Indigenous epistemology into course content was reflected in the following teacher comment: “Three teepees plus five teepees is eight teepees. There, I have met the FNMI requirements [of the TQS]” (Teacher, personal communication, 2019). This comment reflects one teacher’s passive-aggressive resistance towards incorporating Indigenous perspectives into classes, which ultimately undermines the reconciliatory work being done at the government, district, and local school levels, as the teacher has made no attempt at making any meaningful connection to Indigenous epistemology. The teacher’s comment is reflective of an additive approach (Banks, 2014) towards knowledge integration, where Indigenous content has been added to the main curriculum specifically to fulfill a mandated requirement, instead of being intuitively incorporated into the knowledge content of the course to promote the exploration of course topics at a deeper level, which is the main objective of this OIP.

The second question that must be asked is: what do the non-Indigenous teachers at RPS need to feel comfortable and competent in integrating Indigenous content into their courses? This question is vital to the success of this OIP as what I, as the principal of the school, believe teachers need, might not be what the teachers want in order for them to effectively learn about and integrate Indigenous content into the courses they teach.

The next question that needs to be considered when teaching about Indigenous cultures is where does cultural appreciation of the Indigenous culture end and cultural appropriation of the culture begin? This question is very important, as I believe that culturally appropriating an

Indigenous culture is counter-intuitive toward the goal of reconciliation and the establishment of the FNMI competency requirement of the TQS in the first place (Alberta Education, 2020c; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). As such, non-Indigenous teachers must learn the appropriate protocol so as to not culturally appropriate an Indigenous culture when integrating Indigenous content into the courses they teach.

As a transformational leader, I firmly believe that an effective leader must lead by example, and this leads us to the final question of how Indigenous epistemology can be integrated into the culture of the school. Finding an answer to this question demonstrates the school's commitment towards reconciliation and sends a strong message to teachers and the community that this initiative is important, and that everyone in the school will work toward making it happen.

The next section considers the answers to these questions as I structure my leadership vision for change and build capacity for non-Indigenous teachers to incorporate Indigenous epistemology in their classes as a regular part of the knowledge content of their courses.

### **Leadership Vision for Change**

My vision for this PoP is for non-Indigenous teachers to feel comfortable and confident in braiding Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous perspectives into classes as a regular part of the knowledge content of their courses. According to Banks (2014), Indigenous integration of knowledge into classes can be accomplished in one of four ways. The first method is the *contribution approach*, which recognizes the contributions of each cultural group. Another method, the *additive approach*, is one which occasionally appends content, concepts, and perspectives to the main Eurocentric curriculum. More inclusive is the *transformational approach*, which uses a multiple-perspectives approach to teach the curriculum; while the fourth

approach, a *social action approach*, encourages students to take action in order to drive social change.

In moving from an additive approach to a multiple-perspective approach, where Indigenous knowledge systems are taught alongside the Western curriculum, the reader will be exposed to the gap between the current and envisioned future state of the organization; the impact that realizing this envisioned state will have on students, teachers, and the community at large; and the various types of leadership that must be implemented to accommodate this paradigm shift in thinking so that the community, teachers, and students all support the integration of Indigenous content into school and classroom culture.

### **Gap Between Current and Envisioned State of the Organization**

This next section looks to explore how teachers are currently integrating Indigenous content into their classes, identifies areas that are posing obstacles for more Indigenous content to be integrated, and reveals an envisioned state where each obstacle has been overcome so that non-Indigenous teachers are intrinsically motivated to incorporate Indigenous content into classes on a more regular basis.

Prior to any discussion or attempts to implement further change, it is crucial that the reader understand what has already been implemented at RPS so that students, teachers, and the administration can build on these efforts as we work towards the envisioned state of this OIP. Initially, and in addressing one of the first guiding questions of this OIP as to the specific requirements that teachers need to meet to fulfill the FNMI competency requirements of the TQS, I required that all teachers develop and teach at least one lesson connecting Indigenous content for each course they teach because no standards had been set by government or SASD (Alberta Education, 2020c). Resistance to this school-wide directive was considerable and, unfortunately,

helped establish and/or reinforce the additive approach and attitude of teachers towards having to integrate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into their classes (Banks, 2014).

In order to move from an additive approach to a multiple perspective approach, where Indigenous knowledge systems are valued and taught alongside Western knowledge systems, several obstacles must be overcome. I have developed Table 1 to expose the reader to each of these obstacles as well as their envisioned state once teachers are readily able and are intrinsically motivated to integrate Indigenous perspectives into class and course content.

**Table 1**

*Exploring the Envisioned State of Teaching Once Obstacles are Overcome*

<b>Obstacles Impeding Indigenous Philosophy and Knowledge from Being Taught in Class</b>		<b>Envisioned State Once Indigenous Epistemology is Incorporated into Classroom Culture and Practice</b>
Negative attitude towards Indigenous people	→	See Indigenous people in a positive light
The belief that there is little value in teaching Indigenous content	→	Multiple perspective worldview that recognizes and values Indigenous and Western knowledge systems
Very limited knowledge about Indigenous people and Indigenous cultures	→	Make connections with Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing
Cultural appropriation of an Indigenous culture	→	Cultural appreciation of Indigenous cultures

*Note.* A compiled table highlighting the issues non-teachers have identified about integrating Indigenous epistemology into classes and my envisioned state. Negative attitudes towards Indigenous people is from Teachers' perceptions of the integration of Aboriginal culture into the high school curriculum, by Y. Kanu, 2005, *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 51(1), 50–68. <https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/ajer/article/view/55100>. There is little value in teaching Indigenous content is from What is Indigenous Knowledge and Why Should We Study It?, by Semali and Kincheloe (2002). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203906804>. Non-Indigenous teachers have limited knowledge about Indigenous people is from Learning to teach

for reconciliation in Canada: Potential, resistance and stumbling forward, by Aitken and Radford, 2018. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0742051X17314634>. Cultural appropriation is from Examining social studies teachers' resistances towards teaching Aboriginal perspectives: The case of Alberta, by Scott, D., & Gani, R. (2018). *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 12(4), 167–181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15595692.2018.1497969>.

Table 1 provides an understanding of the current and future state of the school and recognizes the various leadership approaches that need to be implemented at the classroom (micro) and school (meso) levels to ensure that the envisioned state of this OIP is reached.

Morcom and Freeman (2018) recognize that all students benefit from incorporating Indigenous epistemology into classes, as non-Indigenous students will be exposed to other ways of thinking and doing, enabling them to acquire 21st-century skills and develop empathy and respect for other cultures, especially Indigenous cultures; while, our self-identified Indigenous students will come to acknowledge that their Indigenous heritage is important as traditional Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing will be reflected and integrated into the school and classroom culture.

For teachers and the community at large, integrating Indigenous epistemology into school and classroom culture requires a fundamental paradigm shift in thinking which not only challenges the traditional ways things have been done, but ultimately challenges the beliefs, values, and rural identity of those who were born and raised in rural southern Alberta. This is an issue at the micro level, because the values and beliefs of the teacher as the leader of the classroom ultimately determine the norms and culture as well as what is taught in the classroom (Brophy, 1982; Long, 2003). As such, when a teacher's beliefs and biases conflict with the change initiatives of the school, there is a high probability that the change initiative will not be

implemented in the classroom regardless of school directives or government mandates (Scott, 2013; Hinde, 2004).

Fortunately, SASD is actively engaged in reconciliation work at the macro level, by establishing and hiring an FNMI coordinator to help schools across the division access Indigenous resources; developing Dreamweaver and soap carving tool kits for all schools to use; and purchasing several Indigenous books, so that Indigenous content will be integrated into all school libraries. Some might consider this approach to be a tokenistic gesture of support as these cultural constructs are not being delivered or evaluated by an Indigenous Elder. Even so, I contend that learning about Indigenous epistemology has to start somewhere, and the message that Indigenous content will be incorporated into all schools throughout the division, as we collectively work towards reconciliation, has been broadcast loud and clear.

At the school level, the principal is the leader and as principal I recognize the enormous impact that approaching change using a combination of servant and transformational leadership has had on reforming and shaping student and teacher ways of thinking, knowing, and doing in the past. However, I also contend that it is only by teachers advocating for change, through a shared instructional leadership approach, that any change will have a profound and sustained impact on teaching praxis and community mindset. Therefore, it is crucial that teachers are recognized as crucial change drivers when implementing change within a school (Cosenza, 2015). In my decade of experience as an administrator, I have found that aligning a teacher's mindset, in conjunction with developing their skills needed to implement a change, drastically increases the probability that a change initiative will be actively used (Anderson et al., 2022).

Once teachers are on board, students and their parents will soon follow; and once change is implemented in classes, it is crucial that the principal, as a transformational leader, implement



similar change by integrating Indigenous epistemology into the culture of the school. As students and teachers are engaging in the same change initiative, at different levels and in different contexts, in time, the change initiative will become integrated and woven into the school and classroom culture (Copland, 2003; Levin & Fullan, 2008).

### **Conclusion**

As the principal and formal leader of RPS, I recognize that non-Indigenous teachers are having difficulty and are expressing anxiety at how they can incorporate Indigenous content into their courses without culturally appropriating an Indigenous culture (BC MoE; Scott & Gani, 2018; 2015; RPS staff, personal communication, 2018 – 2022).

I firmly believe that if Indigenous concepts are going to be effectively integrated into course content, that teachers and students need to be exposed to Indigenous ways of thinking, knowing, and doing (Stachowski et al., 2008). I also believe that once people begin to make connections between Indigenous ways of knowing and their own understanding of how the world works, that students and staff alike will begin to recognize that Indigenous knowledge systems are distinct but equally valid compared to the traditional Euro-settler knowledge system that is currently in place (McDrury & Alterio, 2003). This will challenge Indigenous stereotypes and will lead to Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing to be taught alongside the prescribed curricular content to facilitate the exploration of course topics and learning at a greater depth.

In the next chapter, the reader will explore my approach to change and the various leadership styles I use when implementing change at RPS as we dive into the planning and development stage of this OIP.

## **Chapter Two: Planning and Development**

This chapter explores my leadership philosophy and approach to change; establishes a framework that braids Western and Indigenous philosophies to effectively lead change; explores the change readiness of RPS to implement the change; and explores plausible solutions to this problem of practice (PoP) of which the best solution will be chosen to be implemented.

### **Leadership Approach to Change**

My problem of practice (PoP) for this organizational improvement plan (OIP) is to get an all-White teaching staff at Ranchland Public School (RPS) to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into classes on a more regular basis. As the principal of RPS, I see myself as a transformational servant leader who uses a shared instructional leadership approach to create change within my school. In the following section, the reader will be exposed to my leadership style and the organizational context of my PoP.

### **Leadership Philosophy and Approach**

The fundamental foundation of a servant leader is to institute policy and practice which will effectively benefit those the leader serves (Spears, 2010). In my role as principal, the three stakeholder groups I serve are our students, the teachers, and the community at large inclusive of our school division. Patterson (2003) recognizes that servant leadership is an extension of transformational leadership, where the attention of the leader is primarily focused on the follower instead of the organization. As the servant leader leads by doing, they model for others how to serve, and it is through this behaviour and modeling that followers in the organization are inspired to reciprocate, as service begets service, which ultimately results in a transformation of organizational culture (Patterson, 2003). As such, I have a duty to initiate, develop, and

implement policy, programming, and practice in the best interest of the students and the teachers I serve.

For the teachers at RPS, I am guided by Hattie's (2015) research on teaching practices and the effect size each strategy has on student achievement to help guide professional development for our teaching staff. I recognize that students need to learn the skills to be able to work on the family farm as well as the academic skills to enter the workforce or pursue a post-secondary education (RPS parents at school council meetings, personal communications, 2016 – present); therefore, RPS provides elective work experience placements so students can experience hands-on learning by working in a local business or on a local farm as they gain credits towards fulfilling their high school graduation requirements (RPS, Education plan, 2018 – 2021). Even though RPS has had an extremely high graduation rate, the school is always looking for new programming to improve the academic and life skills of the students we serve (RPS, Assurance Survey Results, 2021).

Tucker and Russell (2004) recognize that transformational leaders lead by example, seek to change the mindset and/or current practices based on the needs of the students, and build trust as they inspire and motivate others to follow their example. As a transformational leader, I use a combination of formal data from survey results and informal data from staff and school council meetings to identify issues at RPS (RPS, Assurance Survey Results, 2021; RPS parents and RPS teachers, personal communication, 2017 – 2021). I then prioritize these issues, collaboratively construct an envisioned state, where the problem has been resolved, and work with staff to devise and implement a plan that allows staff and students to work collectively toward a common vision or goal. According to Podsakoff et al. (1996), transformational leadership requires people to

clearly understand the leader's vision if they are going to be motivated to implement change within their own context and beyond the minimum levels specified by the organization.

I recognize that even though I am a transformational servant leader of my own accord, I utilize a shared instructional leadership approach when implementing change. I do this because I recognize that teachers have autonomy on how and to what depth they teach each aspect of the curricula (Brophy, 1982; Remillard, 1999). In recognizing that teachers are the formal leaders within their classrooms and the informal leaders within the school, the shared instructional leadership approach is instrumental when implementing a new change initiative because it empowers teachers to step into leadership roles and adapt the change initiative to fit their own context by pushing curriculum development, improving instruction, and by developing new projects to increase student achievement (Kaplan & Owings, 1999). This helps to create buy-in and personal accountability which in turn contributes to the successful implementation and sustained commitment of the teachers to the change (Stegall & Linton, 2012).

I recognize that by targeting the integration of Indigenous epistemology into classes I could potentially further marginalize other minority groups who attend RPS (Scott & Gani, 2018). My hope is that as teachers work through this pedogeological change process and begin to weave Indigenous culture into class content, they will eventually become comfortable with not being the *all-knowing* expert and will begin to solicit and incorporate knowledge of and/or perspectives from other cultures into the course content they teach. This will enable all students to develop a deeper understanding of concepts being explored and opens the door for students from other cultures to be reflected and incorporated into course content and classroom culture in the future.

I believe that within the context of the FF community, my transformational style of leadership, which supports a multiple perspective approach to knowledge integration, will be more effective than implementing a transformative approach that outwardly calls out the system and targets the decolonization of the curriculum. As Burnam (2016) acknowledges, decolonization reflects a call to action for the return of unceded Indigenous lands and for a disruption of the Euro-Settler way of thinking. I believe that the transformative approach and using phrases such as *decolonize the curriculum*-would trigger resistance from students, staff, and the community at large which consists predominantly of Euro-Settler descendants; as many of the community members own and operate family farms and would not want to give up their livelihood, which is how the locals interpret decolonization (FF community members and RPS staff, personal communications, 2016 – 2020).

Approaching this cultural shift using only a transformational servant leadership approach will allow me to guide and assist teachers and students in implementing this cultural change within the school, while the shared instructional leadership approach will allow me to work with individual teachers to help facilitate the pedagogical cultural change within the classroom. Now that the types of leadership I employ when implementing change have been made clear, the following section will describe my preferred change framework for implementing sustainable change at RPS.

### **Framework for Leading the Change Process**

The three criteria I required in selecting a framework for this OIP were that the framework had to be applicable to being used in an educational setting, so that it could be readily applied at RPS. Second, that there is an integrated spiral of inquiry that encourages teachers to continue on their learning path. This promotes sustainability of the change initiative as teachers

explore new and better ways to integrate Indigenous epistemology into the courses they teach. And finally, an Indigenous framework needed to be used as doing so demonstrates that Indigenous epistemology is practical and can be used within a Western context. I have therefore adopted the Medicine Wheel as the Indigenous framework to lead change within this OIP, as this framework fulfills the three criteria described above.

In the subsequent sections the reader will gain an understanding of the structure of the Medicine Wheel and how it works, the cultural disconnect that an Indigenous epistemology has with Western society, and how I have adapted the Medicine Wheel to fit the cultural context of the school to implement a transformational change in school and classroom culture.

### **Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel**

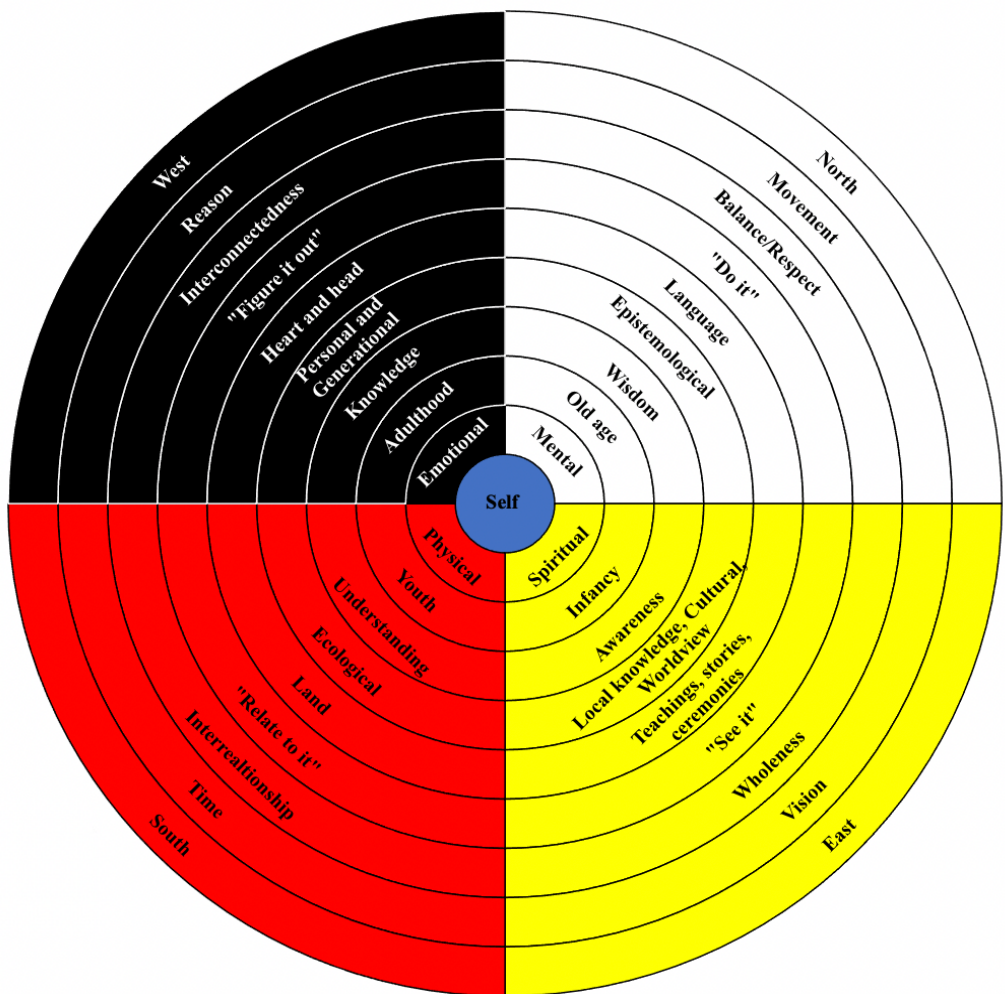
The Medicine Wheel, according to both Bell (2016) and Mashford-Pringle and Shawanda (2023), incorporates all the traditional Indigenous teachings into its framework. LaFever (2016) recognizes the Medicine Wheel as a teaching and learning framework that builds on Bloom's three domains of learning—cognitive (mental), affective (emotional), and psychomotor (physical)—by adding a spiritual domain which provides a holistic approach to learning and can be used as a guide for any journey (Bell, 2016; LaFever, 2016). With the majority of Medicine Wheels of North America being situated in Alberta (Johnson, 2017; Cookson, 2021), I believe that the Medicine Wheel framework will be an appropriate Indigenous framework to facilitate the learning journey of teachers as they learn how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into the courses they teach.

Even though many Indigenous groups have developed their own Medicine Wheel, specific to their own cultural context and connections with the land, I have opted to use Bell's (2014) highly recognisable Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel, with its very distinct Yellow, Red,

Black, and White sections to frame my problem of practice. Bell (2016) recognizes Johnston's (1976) *four hills of life*: Infancy, Youth, Adulthood, and Old Age, and acknowledges the path of life as a circle starting in the east and going clockwise to the north (Beaulieu, 2018). With Listener (2019) identifying the individual or self being at the center, I have adapted Bell's (2016) Medicine Wheel to encompass all of these attributes, which are illustrated in Figure 1, so it will be easier for the reader to understand.

**Figure 1**

*Compiled Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel*



*Note.* A compiled Medicine Wheel, March 2023. The Medicine Wheel is adapted from Bell (2016, p. 18).

Figure 1 illustrates an adapted Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel where the Individual, or Self, is at the centre (Listener, 2019) and is directly influenced by the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental domains that constitute a person's development (Bell, 2014; Mashford-Pringle & Shawanda, 2023). This holistic approach towards education, that focuses on taking care of the person as a whole, is integral to *mino-bimaadiziwin*, an Anishinaabe term for *living a good life* and is embedded in the lifelong learning of an Indigenous person as they proceed through the four life stages of infancy, youth, adulthood, and old age, each characterised by the east, south, west or north directions respectively (Bell, 2016, p. 7).

### ***Infancy***

During infancy, a person develops an awareness of the world and how it works by listening to stories, engaging in learning, and participating in ceremonies. It is during this *see it* phase that each person begins to develop the principle of wholeness that connects each of us to the aspects of life and the universe that surrounds us as we each develop our own way or vision of seeing our external world (Bell, 2014). This stage on the Medicine Wheel is characterized by the Eastern directional teaching, signifying the start of something, and this is where a person's life journey and their learning journey begins (Bell, 2016).

### ***Youth***

The second stage—Youth—spans both childhood and teenage years. It is characterised by the Southern direction and is the understanding or *relate to it* phase where one explores their surroundings, tries different things, makes connections with the land, and tries to replicate lessons learned as they continue to develop and build inter-relational connections between the spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional aspects of a person's whole being with all that



surrounds them, thereby developing a better understanding of the world, how it works, and where they fit in (Bell, 2014).

### ***Adulthood***

This third stage of life is represented by the Western direction and is the *figure it out* phase where people use their hearts and heads to develop a deeper understanding and application of the knowledge they have acquired. It is during this stage that people use their relationships with others, their inter-connectedness with all things, in conjunction with logic and reason and apply their knowledge to resolve difficulties and overcome obstacles they encounter (Bell, 2013; Bell, 2016).

### ***Old Age***

The final stage of life is represented by the Northern direction and is defined by wisdom which is expressed when an action is driven by one's learning. Wisdom, during the movement or *do it* phase, would be expressed when an Elder teaches a descendant a skill that they learned in life (Bell 2014). Using fishing as an example, the Elder would teach the student when, where, and how to fish. In doing so, the student will learn the language associated with fishing as well as the skill of being able to fish. As such, a new balance has been established with the generational knowledge being passed on to an *infant* who observes the Elder demonstrating how to fish or to the *youth* who participates in the fishing process themselves (Bell, 2013). This completes the learning circle for the Elder and starts the student on their own learning journey.

This circle of life, with the embedded circle of learning, reflects the learning journey our non-Indigenous teachers will experience as they work to integrate Indigenous epistemology into classes. Starting their journey at the infant stage, with little to no knowledge about Indigenous cultures, the teacher will be exposed to stories and ceremonies that will bring learning into

context. Now with a bit of background knowledge, the teacher will move to the youth stage, where they will try and connect these stories to course content and/or their own lives, which could challenge the way the teacher views the world and I believe makes the experience meaningful for each individual as this is where learning takes place (Oskineegish & Berger, 2021). When actual connections have been made, the teacher would be at the adult stage and can apply both the context and the concept to curricular outcomes which would then be integrated into classes and shared with students during the old age stage and the final cycle in the learning process until the cycle starts again by exploring the same topics at a greater depth using a spiral of inquiry.

### **The Cultural Disconnect Between an Indigenous Framework and Western Society**

As Kapyrka and Dockstator (2012) contend, there is a fundamental difference between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems and their respective ways of thinking and knowing. Indigenous knowledge systems look at the inter-relatedness and inter-connectedness of everything, as reflected in the circular shape of the Medicine Wheel where there is no beginning or end. Compare this to the structured linear thinking of Western knowledge systems which utilize a systematic structure to classify, categorize, and interpret meaning, or in the context of this OIP to investigate, plan, and implement change (Indigenous Corporate Training, 2016; Nicholas, 2018). Implementing an Indigenous ideology within a Western context, especially when all RPS staff are from a Eurocentric background, will not be effective as both systems and ways of thinking are so different from each other (Semali and Kincheloe, 1999; Bell, 2016).

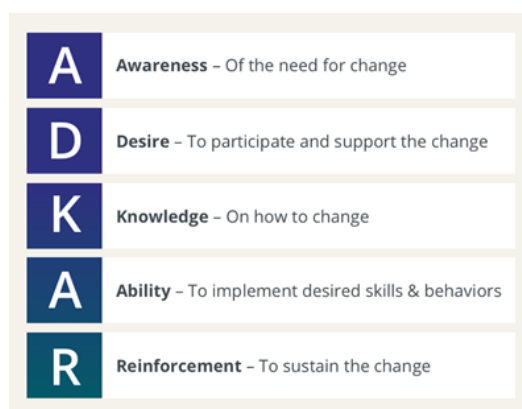
I also believe that when implementing a cultural change in a school, using a model that teachers are readily familiar with creates a sense of continuity and will help decrease the stress and resistance of teachers when implementing change (Moslemi, 2011). Therefore, when leading

change, I will use the ADKAR change model (Hiatt, 2006) as the majority of teachers, whether they work at RPS or not, should already have a working knowledge of this model as it follows the logical application of pedagogy and praxis that one learns from engaging in professional development and then trying to implement the training/learning in one's own classroom.

Figure 2 explains what each letter of the ADKAR acronym means and the step-by-step progression reflects the linear and systematic way Western knowledge systems structure and categorize information (Indigenous Corporate Training, 2016; Nicholas, 2018).

## Figure 2

### *ADKAR Change Model*



*Note.* ADKAR change model from Prosci (2022).

Figure 2 shows that the ADKAR change model is an acronym representing the five stages of Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement and is reflective of the way change is traditionally implemented within a public school as teachers become aware of the need for change. Awareness is generated through the analysis of the annual Assurance Survey results, discussions during staff meetings, or mandates by external organizations such as the government or school division to institute a change (Hiatt, 2006; RPS, Assurance Survey Results, 2021). Awareness then leads to the desire for educators to want to address the issue, and so teachers participate in professional development (PD) opportunities to learn the skills and knowledge to

be able to address the problem. After developing an understanding of an issue, and how to address it, the teacher must then apply what they have learned in their classroom context, reflect on the implementation and success of the intervention/change process, and commit to refining the change practice within the classroom on an ongoing basis. Reinforcement, the final stage of the ADKAR change model, ensures that the change process is further supported by the teacher as well as the school to ensure that teaching pedagogy and praxis does not revert back to the old familiar way of teaching and doing (Gilbert et al., 2021; Hiatt, 2006).

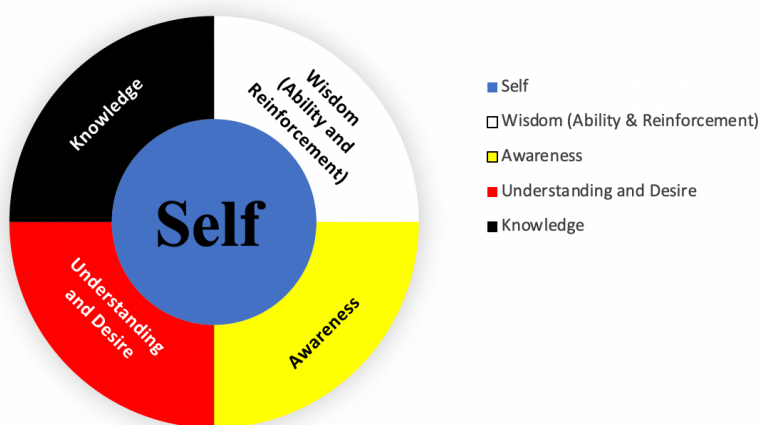
Even though I recognize Lewin's (1947) change model of unfreeze, change, refreeze is applicable when implementing a simple change in a school, this change model would not be applicable within the context of this PoP as any quick fix, such as requiring all teachers to develop one Indigenous lesson plan per course they teach, could be misinterpreted as tokenism and would undermine the goal of getting teachers to incorporate Indigenous epistemology into course content on a more regular basis. Kotter's 8-step change model, on the other hand, as illustrated in Appendix A, could be an acceptable change model for this OIP if forming a guiding coalition and the vision priorities were switched (Deszca et al., 2020).

With a mandatory change, such as requiring teachers to show how they are meeting the FNMI competency requirement of the TQS, I believe that the principal needs to prioritize a vision of the resolved state and to communicate that vision to all staff prior to soliciting teacher buy-in. For example, requiring teachers to show how they are meeting the FNMI competency requirement of the TQS (Alberta Education, 2020c), given that teachers have no choice but to change their practice and praxis to comply with the government mandate, requires teacher compliance and not necessarily teacher buy-in.

In Figure 3, I have adopted the linear ADKAR change model and incorporated it into the circular framework of the Medicine Wheel by integrating one's desire for change into Bell's (2014) understanding phase; it is only after one becomes aware of the problem, and identifies the root cause of a problem, that one has the desire to fix the problem. Likewise, I have integrated ADKAR's final two stages, ability and reinforcement, into Bell's (2016) wisdom phase where wisdom is recognized by one's ability to create action from the knowledge learned, and reinforcement is reflected in one's ability to teach it to others (Bell, 2016, p. 18).

### Figure 3

#### *ADKAR Change Model Embedded Into the Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel Framework*



*Note.* A compiled Medicine Wheel, March 2023. The Medicine Wheel is adapted from Bell (2016, p. 18) by embedding the ADKAR change model from Prosci (2022). A complete picture of the Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel with the ADKAR change model incorporated is available in Appendix B at the back of this OIP.

Armed with a full understanding of the transformational framework needed to lead change, the next step prior to implementing change is to assess the teacher's attitude and desire towards incorporating Indigenous epistemology into their classes as a regular part of the knowledge content and instruction of the course. Therefore, in the following section, the change

readiness of RPS will be assessed to determine if teachers at RPS are in fact ready to implement this change initiative within their current classroom culture.

### **Organizational Change Readiness**

Determining the change readiness of an organization prior to implementing a change does not guarantee that a change initiative will be sustainable or effective. However, it does indicate if the leader needs to do additional work or solicit more stakeholder input prior to implementing the change because doing so will increase the likelihood that the change initiative will be implemented and that those who will implement the change will be successful (McKnight & Glennie, 2019). In order to ascertain an organization's readiness for change, individual change readiness must be taken into consideration along with the overall readiness for change in the organization (Smith, 2005).

With respect to this PoP, an assessment of individual change readiness will explore the change readiness of teachers and the principal at RPS, while an assessment of general organizational change readiness will explore the willingness of students, their parents, and staff in engaging with the change within their own contexts both at school and within the community. Each of these change readiness platforms will be explored in the subsequent section.

### **Individual Change Readiness**

Individual change readiness, as recognized by Smith (2005), is a person's readiness for change and within the context of this OIP will be examined at the administrative and teacher levels as seen below.

#### ***Leader***

As a servant leader and principal of RPS, the formal leader of the school, I recognize that educators at all levels have a duty to prepare students with the skills they need to follow their

path in life, whether that be to enter the workforce directly or to pursue a career following a post-secondary education. In either case, students need to develop a sense of self while simultaneously developing respect for people from other cultures if they are going to be successful living and working in a more diverse urban city center (Zhu, 2011).

As a result of living and working abroad, I have developed a strong sense of who I am, where I come from, and what I believe in. I have also developed a recognition and respect for other ways of thinking and doing as I have learned how to interact with people from other cultures. As such, I fully support integrating Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into classes, not only to facilitate reconciliation or to meet the FNMI competency requirement of the Teacher Quality Standards (Alberta Education, 2020c), but to broaden the views and world perspective of our students as they learn to respect and develop empathy for other cultures and start to recognize that there are other ways of thinking, knowing, and different ways of doing (Zhu, 2011; Stachowski et al., 2008).

From my experiences living and working with the Cree, the Inuit, and the Dene, I have learned that each Indigenous group has its own deep connections with the land, that each group teaches through ceremony and stories, and that Indigenous people of all three groups are intrinsically motivated to act in the best interest of their community (Battiste, 2005; Bell, 2013). As such, I can see that there are definite parallels between these Indigenous cultures and the agricultural society where RPS is located today. I also believe that teachers could effectively integrate Indigenous epistemology into everyday classes by tying curricular objectives to practical applications that connect with the land and our local community (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2019).

### ***Teacher***

As most teachers at RPS were born in, or have lived in, this rural agricultural community for many years, they have adopted and adapted to the community's cultural norms (Friesen & Purc-Stephenson, 2016; FF community members and RPS staff, personal communications, 2016 – 2020). Because teaching is very personal and the cultural elements and beliefs of the teacher, as well as the local community, are intrinsically incorporated into lessons and classroom culture, as part of the hidden curriculum, local teachers may not be willing to incorporate knowledge and ways of knowing from other cultures into their classes because some feel that doing so could jeopardize the image of a rural Alberta identity and what it means to live and grow up in FF (Alsubaie, 2015; Cairns, 2013; Tkachuk, 2021; Leist, 2007; FF community members and RPS staff, personal conversations, 2016 – 2020).

Even though this view has been expressed by a couple of teachers, I believe that others on staff are more open to the inclusive discussion of incorporating other cultures and alternative views into classes. With the increase of minority and LGBTQ families moving into tFF community, many of our staff have been concerned with the students' welfare and wellbeing at school as well as in the community. Therefore, I believe that incorporating Indigenous epistemology into school and classroom culture will also be accepted as long as the teachers and community members are involved in the change process and that change is done in a sensitive way that doesn't directly challenge local ideologies, but instead blends the two cultures together.

### **Organizational Change Readiness of RPS**

When determining the overall organizational change readiness, all stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, administration, and the community at large, must be taken into account. Using the Change Readiness Scorecard created by Shorter (2017), I will determine the



organizational change readiness of RPS to integrate Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into lessons and classroom practice on a more regular basis beyond the single additive lesson plan approach per course that is currently in place.

**Table 2**

*Summary of Determining the Readiness of RPS to Integrate Indigenous Perspectives Into Classes Found in Appendix C*

Readiness Impact	Assessment Scale 1 (high) to 5 (low)
1. Degree of leadership consensus on change vision	2
2. Degree of leadership consensus on need for change	1
3. Degree of stakeholder consensus on need for change	3
4. Stakeholder commitment	4
5. Stakeholder's understanding of the standards/expectations that accompany the change	4
6. Understand of need by <i>users</i>	4
7. Number of competing change initiatives	4
8. Resources allocated to project	4
Average score	3.3

*Note.* Table 2 adapted from Shorter (2017). *Change complexity and readiness scorecards.*

Harvard University Information Technology Confluence.

After completing Shorter's (2017) readiness scorecard, the complexity rating of RPS was calculated to be 3.3. Therefore, some structure is in place to support this OIP, but additional activities and/or structures are needed to ensure that Indigenous knowledge and epistemology

will be incorporated into classes on a more regular basis going forward. This leads the reader into the next section, where strategies are identified to specifically address my PoP.

### **Potential Solutions for this PoP**

In this section, three potential solutions will be assessed, including twinning with schools on an Indigenous reserve, connecting with Indigenous Elders via video conferencing platforms, and engaging teachers in traditional Indigenous on-land activities. After comparing the perspective solutions, one solution will be selected and will be used to frame the next chapter of this OIP.

#### **Twinning with Schools on an Indigenous Reserve**

One example of Twinning, described by the British Columbia Ministry of Education (2020), is when a local Provincial school in Canada pairs with an offshore school offering the same provincial curriculum in a foreign country. The Ministry of Education (MOE) of British Columbia (BC) encourages twinning of BC offshore schools with schools located in the province as a way to promote cultural understanding and expand professional learning opportunities (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2020). This is done by providing student-to-student and/or class-to-class interaction, sharing of cultural performances and cultural interests from each group, and in providing collaborative approaches to pedagogy and/or professional development between teachers teaching in the host country and those teaching at a local provincial school (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2020).

Angelova and Zhao (2014) confirm the benefits for both foreign and domestic groups in developing cross-cultural awareness, and with that in mind, creating a partnership between RPS and a school situated on an Indigenous reserve does seem to be a plausible way for non-Indigenous teachers at RPS to integrate Indigenous content into their classes as a regular part of

the knowledge content of their courses. This potential solution would not only connect non-Indigenous students to Indigenous students, but also give teachers the opportunity to connect and learn how teachers, in other districts, are adapting the same provincial curriculum to meet the local learning and cultural needs of their students.

With respect to schools situated within an Indigenous community, there is an emphasis on creating locally developed courses that promote on-land and cultural learning and to integrate traditional Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into core classes to better facilitate student learning (Blakesley, 2012). As such, when non-Indigenous teachers connect with teachers teaching in Indigenous communities, they will also be exposed to the cultural norms and ways of knowing of the Indigenous culture of the partner school. The BC MoE (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2020) recognizes that this process could be further enhanced if partner teachers were teaching the same curricula and could collaborate on approaches to pedagogy by creating joint projects for students and/or teachers to work on.

Bartlett et al. (2012) recognize that this potential solution can be further improved upon if the partner teacher were an Indigenous teacher as the non-Indigenous teacher will receive authentic cultural guidance in conjunction with learning contextual curricular content (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2020). Unfortunately, most of the teachers teaching in these Indigenous communities, especially in the higher grades, are White descendants of European ancestry who were born and raised in the *south* and might not be as adept at connecting learning to the nuances of Indigenous culture as an Indigenous Elder would be (Bartlett et al., 2012; Personal experiences teaching in Indigenous schools, 2001, 2005, 2010).

## **Connecting with Indigenous Elders Through Video Conferencing Technologies**

Taking into consideration the distance of RPS from the nearest Indigenous reserve, the fact that Statistics Canada (2019) recognizes that there are no Indigenous people living in the community, and that the self-identified Indigenous students may be unwilling or unable to share their traditional Indigenous knowledge and/or culture with the school during one of our monthly cultural days, it is very important that any new Indigenous knowledge be represented and taught by a traditional knowledge keeper or Elder to ensure that proper form and function have been adhered to (Government of Alberta, 2023b; Alberta School Councils' Association, 2023). This would ensure that an Indigenous culture is not being culturally appropriated, and that learning is more authentic as the meaning of the lesson/ceremony has not been misinterpreted by a non-Indigenous teacher in relation to their own culture (Aveling, 2013).

With this approach, both teachers and students will receive authentic knowledge and guidance from an Indigenous Elder. By interacting with the Elder and by asking questions and having these questions answered, teachers and students will not only develop a positive relationship with the Elder, but they will also start developing respect and empathy for Indigenous cultures in general (Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, 2015; Datta, 2018).

Connecting with an Indigenous Elder through a video conferencing platform could easily be extended to connect with multiple Elders of the same Indigenous group. Doing so would enable students and teachers to view aspects of the same Indigenous culture from different perspectives and therefore gain a better and deeper understanding of the Indigenous culture being explored. Likewise, this extension could be used to connect with Elders from other Indigenous

groups, thereby providing students and teachers with a more holistic learning opportunity to learn about a range of Indigenous cultures (Krutka & Carano, 2016).

Approaching learning from a multiple perspective approach reflects the uniqueness of each Indigenous culture, an understanding that there is no one Indigenous perspective, and that each Indigenous culture has a knowledge system that connects to the land and is reflective of their own cultural context. Operating in this postmodern paradigm, students will learn that there is more than just one Indigenous group, each with their own distinct culture and identity, and therefore students will begin to develop respect and appreciation for all Indigenous people and Indigenous cultures in general (Scott & Gani, 2018; Krutka & Carano, 2016).

Even though connecting with Indigenous Elders through a video conferencing platform is feasible and potentially sustainable, as travel costs are eliminated, caution needs to be exercised at this transformational stage: it is possible that a teacher connecting with an Indigenous Elder via video conferencing in class might be interpreted by some as having fulfilled the FNMI requirement of the TQS (Alberta Education, 2020c). This additive approach towards learning about Indigenous cultures is a step in the right direction, but it is not enough to fulfill the goal of this OIP where Indigenous epistemology is incorporated into classes as a regular part of the knowledge content and knowledge creation taught in courses (Banks, 2014).

Another matter of concern which might arise when accessing the knowledge and wisdom of an Indigenous Elder through a video conferencing platform, is that some non-Indigenous teachers could shift the responsibility of teaching foundational FNMI knowledge to the Indigenous Elder to fulfill. This scenario is very plausible as teachers have already expressed the belief that Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing can and should only be taught by an Indigenous person (Scott & Gani, 2018; RPS staff, personal conversations, 2017 – 2019). If this

is the case, then connecting with the Elder would reflect more of an add-on approach to course content and could be interpreted to mean that Indigenous knowledge is only important to Indigenous people as the leader in the class, the teacher, has not made an authentic attempt to connect with or reference Indigenous knowledge structures themselves (Banks, 2014; Scott & Gani, 2018).

### **Participate in Traditional On-Land Activities**

Of all of the professional development (PD) opportunities that I have participated in over the last 20 years, the most impactful PD was when I participated in on-land activities with the students, staff, and community Elders of the various Inuit, Dene, and Cree communities that I have lived and taught in. Engaging in these on-land activities not only enabled me to learn from Indigenous students and Elders alike, but afforded me an opportunity to learn in an authentic cultural context where I could ask questions, develop and refine my own skills, and better understand the culture of the community that I was living in (Ljubicic et al., 2022).

Not only did these cultural experiences help me better understand how my Indigenous students learned, by framing learning in a cultural context that my Indigenous students readily understood, but I also improved my relationship with my students, the Elders, and the whole community by showing that I valued Indigenous epistemology by demonstrating a willingness to learn and participate in cultural skill-building activities. These cultural development opportunities helped shape my own worldview as I operated within the postmodern-constructivist paradigm, that reflected a multiple truths perspective, and came to recognize that there are different ways of thinking, knowing, and doing (Gregg, 2000).

This awareness is crucial when working to establish equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within a school: recognizing that the alternative knowledge systems of both students and staff

form the foundation for intercultural learning in the classroom (Tange & Kastberg, 2013).

Hopefully, a similar paradigm shift will occur when non-Indigenous teachers at RPS engage in Indigenous cultural activities: they will not only begin to recognize the value of Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of knowing, but will also actively begin to connect these experiences to course content for the benefit of all students.

### **Investigating the Path Forward**

This section compares the three potential solutions: twinning with a school on an Indigenous reserve, connecting with Indigenous Elders via Zoom, and engaging teachers in traditional Indigenous on-land activities so that the principal will be able to make an informed decision as to which solution should be implemented to facilitate the incorporation and sustained implementation of Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into classes and school culture.

Table 3 provides an easy comparison of these three potential solutions.

**Table 3**

#### *Comparing Potential Solutions*

	Twinning with a school on an Indigenous Reserve	Video conferencing with Indigenous Elder	Participate in Traditional On-Land Activities
Costs and Funding	Low to Moderate	High	Very High
Quality of Information	Low to Moderate	Moderate to High	Low to High
Need for Technology	High	High	Low
Human resources	Moderate	Moderate	High
Time	Low to High	Low to Moderate	Moderate to High
Possibility of Cultural appropriation	Low to Moderate	Low	Low to High

*Note.* Table 3 considers the expertise of the individuals involved, the resources needed, and the quality of information garnered when considering potential solutions to the PoP. For a detailed explanation of the table above please refer to Appendix D.

Taking into consideration that twinning will require students and/or the teachers at each school to work within the cultural context in which the curricula was initially developed, it will be necessary to create cooperative learning opportunities to engage student learning that are specific to each course. Otherwise, I believe that only minimal connections with Indigenous perspectives will be explored unless teachers from both cultural perspectives specify that learning about each other's culture is as important as learning the course content.

Further limiting the impact that a twinning endeavor will have on the intercultural learning experience for both groups is the impact that the residential schools, the 60s scoop, and the government's overt attempt to assimilate Indigenous people into the Euro-settler culture and mindset has created an intergenerational divide between Indigenous Elders and their respective descendants (Claes & Clifton, 1998). This divide has disrupted the Indigenous ways of knowing which were traditionally passed on to the next generation by listening to the stories that the Elders told and by watching an Elder perform a traditional skill that the student then mimicked (Lew-Levy et al., 2017).

With residential schools enforcing an English-only environment and restricting Indigenous cultural activities and dress, students attending these schools did not receive instruction on the traditional skills they needed to survive in their home communities (Claes & Clifton, 1998). Therefore, when an Indigenous student returned home from a residential school, they might not have the skills to live off the land nor the language skills to communicate and learn from the Elders, as these skills were not taught at the residential school (Claes & Clifton, 1998). This resulted in traditional Indigenous knowledge not being passed down to the next generation, and has resulted in the loss of culture, language, and skills not being passed on to the next generation of Indigenous children (Claes & Clifton, 1998).



As a result, Indigenous students of a twinning project might not have the knowledge or proficiency to share traditional wisdom or knowledge with the non-Indigenous students in the partner school, as they too might be in the infancy stage of learning themselves. As such, the twinning of classes or schools is not the optimal solution to help non-Indigenous teachers learn foundational Indigenous knowledge or to help them overcome their struggle to incorporate Indigenous epistemology into classes as a regular part of the knowledge content of their courses.

Unfortunately, implementing only the video conferencing option with an Indigenous Elder will not solve this problem either. Maimaiti et al. (2021) recognize that students become easily disengaged in web-based video conferencing since online learning was forced upon students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Bailenson (2021) further supports this finding as learning through a video conferencing platform such as Zoom and the forced long stretches of direct eye contact, multiple people staring at you, and the closeness that one is to another's face induces a *fight or flight* response in people.

Indigenous Elders might also have difficulty engaging with students and teachers in this online platform, especially without any prior relationship building between the groups, as some Indigenous groups consider direct eye contact to be rude and disrespectful (Northwestern Ontario Regional Stroke Network, 2012). I found this to be the case when working with the Inuit in Nunavut, as my students did not hold direct eye contact with me until they got to know me and mutual respect was established (Personal communication with Inuit students, 2001).

Another issue with the video conferencing option is that the Indigenous Elder will teach Indigenous content within the cultural context of the Land where they live. This poses an issue as to the relevance of the content taught as there are no Indigenous people living in the FF community (Statistics Canada, 2019), and to date we have not connected with an Indigenous

Elder who was born and raised in this part of southern Alberta. I could easily connect with Inuit, Cree or Dene Elders of the communities that I have worked with, but many of the prairie students at RPS would be unfamiliar with walking in a forest or having experienced living by the ocean and therefore would have a difficult time connecting with the culture, stories, and lessons that these Indigenous Elders would be able to teach and share.

Operating within a constructivist paradigm and extracting meaning and developing personal connections by engaging in hands-on learning through on-land experiences does help bring learning into a more local, useful, and applicable context (Cridlin, 2007; First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2019). However, if these on-land activities are not taught by an Indigenous Elder, or a non-Indigenous teacher who has been trained by an Indigenous Elder, the accuracy of these learning experiences will be challenged, especially with respect to authenticity and cultural appropriation (College of Alberta School Superintendents, 2023). The goal for participating in on-land activities is not to perfect an Indigenous skill, especially if it is taught by a non-Indigenous person, but to gain exposure to the skill and learn why the skill is important to a specific Indigenous culture.

A twinning process which joins an Indigenous class with a class at RPS might not share any authentic Indigenous knowledge, as some Indigenous students, due to the generational divide, will have limited knowledge about Indigenous culture (Elliott et al., 2012). It is, therefore, the least attractive of all the potential solutions. Video conferencing, on the other hand, with an Indigenous Elder provides an authentic learning opportunity for both teachers and students, while engaging in on-land activities puts learning into a local context that students and teachers can relate to.

Implementing a hybrid model that employs both video conferencing and on-land opportunities to learn about Indigenous knowledge, culture, and ways of knowing will help facilitate teachers' ability to incorporate Indigenous epistemology in their classes as a regular part of the knowledge content and knowledge creation in their courses (Krutka & Carano, 2016; First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2019; College of Alberta School Superintendents, 2023).

### **Conclusion**

This hybrid approach to my PoP will enable me, as the principal, to restructure the funding that is allocated to us for our FNMI students as well as the funding that I am currently using from our school budget to better support the incorporation of Indigenous epistemology into school and classroom culture. Offering Indigenous land-based activities enables students and staff an opportunity to develop their relationship with an Indigenous Elder over a three-year cycle, while engaging in video conferencing with Elders periodically over the course of the cycle, will not only save money and make the endeavor more sustainable, but it will also reduce teacher fatigue of participating in Indigenous cultural trips, especially if there are only a few cultural activities that can be done within the context of FF and surrounding area.

In the next chapter I will continue to describe my change implementation plan as teachers move from the knowledge domain of the Medicine Wheel, established by participating in this hybrid solution model above, and proceed to the wisdom domain where what they learned is integrated and taught in classes to facilitate a multiple perspective or postmodern inclusive view that Indigenous knowledge can better help a student understand the curricula they are learning as well as how their world works and where they fit in.

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

When teachers recognize the need for change and feel confident and competent about implementing a change, there is a higher chance that they will implement and maintain the change instead of reverting back to the old ways of thinking and doing (Zimmerman, 2006). In order for non-Indigenous teachers to feel comfortable and confident integrating Indigenous epistemology into their classes as a regular part of the knowledge content of their courses, my change implementation plan must engage each teacher individually; target small groups of teachers to build capacity not only in the classes, but also within the school; and target a whole-school approach towards integrating Indigenous epistemology into the organizational culture of the school (Whelan-Berry et al., 2003).

The hybrid solution of connecting with Indigenous Elders from different Indigenous groups via Zoom, in conjunction with participating in on-land cultural experiences and the three-pronged approach described above, will give teachers exposure to Indigenous knowledge, customs and cultures so that they have personal experiences that they can connect with and incorporate into their teaching. As these cultural experiences and connections with authentic Indigenous Elders lead teachers to develop and share their own stories, as they work within a postmodern-constructivist paradigm, I believe that Indigenous knowledge will begin to become valued as a separate but valid knowledge system that is applicable to course content and useful for life, especially in a rural agricultural community (McDrury & Alterio, 2003).

In the following section I will detail my change implementation plan (CIP); examine potential issues and challenges that might arise; and explore the short, medium and long-term goals of the CIP to ensure that the change being implemented is sustainable and long lasting.

## **Change Implementation Plan**

Using the adapted Medicine Wheel from Chapter Two as a guide to facilitate the transformational shift in thinking, knowing, and doing, my CIP is broken down into three stages: pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation phase of the hybrid solutions model briefly described above. As reflected in Appendix E, each stage of the CIP facilitates a transformational change in a person, whether this be spiritually, physically, emotionally, or mentally (Bell, 2014). As each person's individual journey around the Medicine Wheel connects them with traditional Indigenous epistemology, ontology, and pedagogy, non-Indigenous teachers will become more receptive to learning about Indigenous customs, cultures, and ways of knowing and will therefore be able to integrate some of this knowledge into their courses, into their teachings, and hopefully into their own personal lives (Stachowski et al., 2008).

### **Pre-implementation Plan**

In the pre-implementation stage of this CIP, I focus on enlisting Indigenous Elders to ensure that what we are learning is culturally authentic and accurate; building a shared instructional leadership opportunity through the development of an equity, diversity, and inclusion committee to facilitate change; challenging Indigenous stereotypes to change the attitudes and minds of our non-Indigenous staff (Ly & Crowshoe, 2015); and engaging in Indigenous protocol and cultural sensitivity training so that non-Indigenous teachers are familiar with how to respectfully engage with, and ask direction from, the Elders that they will be working with and learning from (Council on Aboriginal Initiatives, 2012).

### ***Enlisting Indigenous Elders***

I will connect with Elders from the various Indigenous groups that have been recognized by our Division's Land Acknowledgement statement to ensure that non-Indigenous teachers at

RPS are learning authentic traditional Indigenous epistemology, ontology, and pedagogy (Southern Alberta School Division, Land Acknowledgement, 2019). Based on my personal experiences of living in different Indigenous communities, I have learned that not every elderly Indigenous person is acknowledged by the community as being an Elder. The Council on Aboriginal Initiatives at the University of Alberta (2012) acknowledges this fact and has recognized fifteen qualities that an Elder should reflect—as expressed by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2005, p. 70 - 71) (see Appendix F). For the purposes of this organizational improvement plan (OIP), an Elder only needs to be recognized as being an Elder by their community, as I believe that neither a non-Indigenous person like myself nor a Eurocentric institution is in a position to evaluate a different culture and deem whether someone is worthy or not of being a legitimate knowledge keeper of that culture.

As a school leader, I am seeking to develop a long-lasting relationship with Indigenous Elder(s) based on a mentorship and guidance approach that will enable our students and staff to explore the Elder's Indigenous culture at a greater depth and breadth. Over time, I am hoping that our teachers will gain enough knowledge and experience about a particular skill that the Elder will give permission for the teacher to teach the skill without the direct supervision of the Elder being present (Calgary Board of Education, 2022). This is a possibility, according to Elder Brenda Francoeur (2023), but will require time and a shift in teacher thinking in how one perceives the world and how it works. Therefore, having a community recognized Elder, that is willing to lead and mentor teachers on their learning journey, is imperative for this OIP to succeed.

### ***Establishment of an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) Committee***

This volunteer school committee, composed of teachers and administrators, will be

dedicated to integrating Indigenous epistemology into school and classroom culture by leveraging a shared instructional leadership model that gives teachers leadership opportunity in developing policy and practice at RPS. From revising our school's vision to meet our change in philosophy and perspective; researching and sharing Indigenous pedagogy, concepts, and ways of knowing to be shared with the committee as well as with all staff during our biweekly staff meetings; and in setting the requirements for all teachers to abide by in order to satisfy the First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) requirements of the Teacher Quality Standards (TQS) at RPS ensures that teachers, throughout the organization, are active participants and leaders in the change process (Alberta Education, 2020c).

### ***Stereotypes***

Historically, Indigenous people were portrayed by the media as being either victims who were often lazy, drunk, and a burden on society or as noble environmentalists who obstruct large capital projects which continue to negatively impact the jobs and economy of local communities (Harding, 2005; Donald, 2009). Over time, the media's negative influence and portrayal of Indigenous people was integrated into the beliefs system of many rural *White* communities (Wellburn, 2009; Ly & Crowshoe, 2015; and Eason et al., 2021). In the case of the community of Farmers Fields (FF), this negative media image framed how locals thought about Indigenous people and with no Indigenous people residing in the community (Statistics Canada, 2019), there were no Indigenous people to refute or challenge the negative image and stereotypes being perpetuated.

Crisp and Turner (2011), Nieto (2006), and Thomas et al. (2017) all recognize that the key aspect in challenging negative stereotypes is for a person to engage with people from the stereotyped culture. For me, the stereotype of Indigenous people being lazy was challenged when

having to cut firewood to heat my house in the Northwest Territories; going hunting with a dogteam in Nunavut, which required running with the dogs and jumping on and off the sled to give the dogs a rest; or even something simple like needing to use a washroom, on the frozen tundra, at -40 C, when there are no trees or anything to hide behind. Participating in these traditional cultural activities required stamina, endurance, a lot of hard work, and a bit of creative engineering—we built an igloo washroom next to the igloo we were sleeping.

In the context of this OIP, a teacher's negative perception of Indigenous people would ultimately be challenged as they engage and interact with an Elder, in both online and in face-to-face forums, as Indigenous Elders usually require the person who is listening and observing to demonstrate their knowledge of what was taught (Fine Arts Council, 2018-2019). Teachers, especially in face-to-face traditional skill building activities, will not only gain knowledge, but will gain an understanding and develop an appreciation for the time, attention to detail, and effort it takes to perform a traditional Indigenous cultural skill at a level that the skill would be useful in an Indigenous community (Personal communication with Indigenous Elders and other teacher interns during my teaching practicum, 2001).

### ***Indigenous Protocol and Sensitivity Training***

The last aspect of the pre-implementation stage is providing opportunities for teachers to become culturally aware of the protocols required when asking an Indigenous Elder to share their knowledge and wisdom (Council on Aboriginal Initiatives, 2012). Involving all staff in Indigenous Elder protocol and reflexive cultural sensitivity training is crucial for the integration of Indigenous epistemology into classes to succeed, as doing so could prevent a cultural miscommunication such as that experienced by a former administrator of RPS.

This administrator recounted feeling resentful after paying for an Indigenous group's



presentation at the school, transportation, and food, where the Indigenous group then *demand*ed a gifting of tobacco at the end. The administrator felt forced to purchase a carton of cigarettes from the local store, and I firmly believe that if this administrator had been exposed to Indigenous protocols before interacting with this Indigenous group, that the cultural experience for both parties would have been very different. Understanding the significance of tobacco, and that pouch tobacco, not cigarettes, is traditionally given to the Elder to share their knowledge and that the Elder would then burn the tobacco as an offering to the Creator instead of being misconstrued as something the Elder would smoke at their leisure, I believe would have helped build respect and appreciation between these two cultural groups (Council on Aboriginal Initiatives, 2012; Alberta Health Services, 2020). SASD also recognizes the importance of this protocol and has since instructed all administrators to give a pouch of tobacco to Indigenous Elders who are sharing their knowledge (Leadership meeting, 2021).

### **Implementation of Solution**

The second stage in the CIP looks to the actual implementation of my solutions by connecting with Elders during School Improvement (SI) days and encouraging teachers to connect with Indigenous Elders via online communication platforms such as Zoom, either individually or as part of a class. These two activities enable teachers to develop the knowledge about Indigenous cultures, customs, and ways of knowing that they can then relate to and integrate into their teachings.

### ***Grandfather Teachings***

Di Lallo et al. (2021) recognize the seven Grandfather teachings of Love, Respect, Bravery, Truth, Honesty, Humility, and Wisdom as fundamental to all the Indigenous cultures in Alberta. Therefore, these Grandfather teachings need to be integrated into our monthly

assemblies to institute a whole-school approach towards challenging Indigenous stereotypes while also incorporating Indigenous pedagogy into school culture. Doing so, reflects the values and qualities of a good citizen that both the Grandfather teachings and the school promote (Verbos & Humphries, 2013; Birhan et al., 2021).

This step in the CIP ensures that aspects of Indigenous culture will be present and promoted throughout the school year, and by creating a parallel between Indigenous education and the qualities of being a good citizen, the negative image about Indigenous people is challenged as both educational systems are working towards the same goal for the purposes of raising good citizens who will be positive and active contributors in their home communities.

### ***On-land Activities***

Due to the lack of available funding and the distance from the nearest Indigenous reserve, it is not feasible to bring in Indigenous Elders to share their knowledge on a routine basis using a face-to-face forum multiple times within a year. In order to be cost effective, my CIP looks to organize on-land activities in a three-year cycle. In the first year, costs will be high as five on-land activities will be organized. The first excursion will be with staff during an SI day at the beginning of the year where it is required that all teachers participate. This will be followed by one excursion for all students divided into four divisions: grades 1-3, grades 4-6, grades 7-9, and grades 10-12. At this point, both staff and students have limited knowledge and understanding about Indigenous knowledge, customs, and culture and will begin their learning journey at the infancy stage where they build their awareness about Indigenous cultures as they listen to stories, participate in ceremonies, and engage in on-land learning activities.

As explained in Chapter 2, one's engagement in on-land activities with Elders not only helps build relationships and respect, but also enables those participating in these activities to

develop their own stories, about their shared and lived experiences, that connect each person to the land on which they live (Archibald, 2021; National Centre for Collaboration in Indigenous Education, 2020; Cherpako, 2019; Bowra et al., 2020). At this stage, the teachers and students are at the youth stage of their individual learning journeys. As these lived experiences are told by students and staff over the course of the year, both students and teachers will enter the adulthood stage of their learning journey as both refer back to these shared experiences when connecting with the curriculum in class over the next three years.

With each division participating in a different on-land activity, only four on-land excursions need to be planned over a student's 12 years of schooling. This will enable the organizer to develop and refine the activity over the course of several years, and give students something to look forward to as they progress to the next divisional level.

In the second year, only teachers will experience an on-land activity during an SI day, and in the third year, there will be no on-land activities for either students or teachers to minimize the costs to the school and to stay within budget. After three years, the process will be repeated, with new students entering each division. Spacing out these on-land activities helps ensure that students and teachers do not experience field trip exhaustion, where students and staff get tired of participating in the same on-land activity multiple times. Field trip exhaustion is similar to when a teacher teaches a course so often that they lose their spark to teach the content (Suslu, 2006).

Also, each subsequent activity will presumably be more successful than the previous as teachers, who are in the adult phase of learning, become more comfortable with the content and move towards the elder stage, where they can start to help guide students in the cultural activity while on the land and hopefully share the same process and/or learning connections with staff as part of a shared instructional leadership activity back at school.

As this plan reflects a three-year cycle, it is very possible that with teacher turnover new teachers to RPS will not have had the opportunity to participate in an on-land learning experience with an Indigenous Elder (Milanowski & Odden, 2007). If there is a large staff turnover, then I would have to look at doing a full staff on-land activity lead by an Elder if the turnover happened in year three. Otherwise, any teacher new to RPS would have an on-land experience at some time during the first two years of the cycle. If there was only one or two teachers who had not had this experience, during year three of the cycle, they would be connected with the Elder, through a video conferencing medium, and learn how the previous teacher integrated the Elder into class discussions and course content, as they too begin to build connections with the Indigenous Elder. After this conversation, I would debrief with the teacher and ask how he/she would integrate the Elder into their courses and classes going forward.

### **Post-Implementation Plan**

At the conclusion of each cultural activity, it is important to bring all teachers back together to share what they learned. This step is very important to my problem of practice (PoP) as some teachers will share their new *wisdom* by sharing tips about how they developed or improved their on-land skills, while others will share their personal experiences and stories about the trip. This sharing process not only demonstrates teachers connecting with Indigenous content, but the process of telling anecdotal stories about the trip reflects Indigenous pedagogy in that it is through stories, and participating in on-land activities, that traditional Indigenous knowledge was passed on from generation to generation (Ledoux, 2006).

### ***Reflect***

After a cultural experience, it is crucial for teachers to reflect on what they learned, so time must be given during the same SI day for teachers to record their thoughts about the

experience they just had, either through writing or through a video recording platform such as Flipgrid. This reflexive process is key to a transformational change in one's thinking as teachers will experience cognitive dissonance that will challenge their beliefs about Indigenous people, the world, and how it works (Mitchell & Paras, 2018). As the reflection process is very personal, some teachers will be reluctant to share their thoughts and feelings with others, especially with administrators, as it may illustrate their own biases and negative attitudes towards and about Indigenous people.

As RPS promotes a safe, caring, and inclusive environment for all students and staff, I will share my own personal reflection and open the floor for teachers to share theirs during the next biweekly staff meeting following any cultural experience. Sharing will not be mandatory nor will teachers have to demonstrate that they are keeping a reflexive journal as I respect where each person is on their personal and professional learning journeys.

### ***Connect***

As part of a teacher's reflexive practice, each teacher will connect their cultural experience with the content of each of the courses they teach. This is essentially the essence of my problem of practice (PoP), where teachers will then incorporate these connections into their own classes. I believe that with teachers understanding that one of the objectives of participating in a cultural experience is to find these connections, teachers will be more vigilant in finding these connections when engaging in a cultural activity. For example, when I lived in a Cree community, I found connections in math that related to patterning in beadwork and the different lengths and the significance of each pole in constructing a teepee. These were a few of the connections that I made and have used in classes over the course of my career, and I know that other teachers will do the same once they start finding their own connections between these

cultural experiences and the course content that they teach.

### ***Professional Learning Community (PLC)***

Once teachers have had time to contemplate, reflect, and make connections between their cultural Indigenous experiences and their own course content, teachers will engage with other teachers in the same subject area in a professional learning committee (PLC) that will occur once every 2 months. Cormier and Olivier (2009) recognize PLCs as a way to establish a shared vision, foster collective learning that promotes capacity building, and professional accountability within a shared leadership context. Therefore, it is during these bimonthly PLC meetings that teachers will be exposed to connections that other teachers, teaching similar content, have made between Indigenous epistemology and the curricular discipline they are teaching.

As these PLCs would engage several teachers at the same time, the principal could attend the PLC meetings to ensure that teachers are on the right track and provide guidance and support where needed, as well as being a co-learner themselves (Eisenbach & Greathouse, 2018). This constant monitoring is essential at PLC meetings to ensure that all teachers are on track and making connections with Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing and in doing so encourages teachers who are resistant to the change initiative to comply as part of their professional teaching practice.

### ***Watch-Others-Work (WOW) Program***

With teachers assuming a shared instructional leadership role as participants in PLCs, teachers who have bought into the change initiative will become the mentors and change agents of incorporating Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into classes. For those who are still resistant, the principal could implement a watch-others-work (WOW) program where teachers could be given a block of time out of their regular teaching schedule to see how another teacher

integrates Indigenous content into a similar course that the struggling teacher teaches. In this way, both the struggling teacher and the principal will be able to view how Indigenous content is being taught in classrooms.

During a classroom observation, the struggling teacher can ask questions and seek guidance, while the principal has the opportunity to give critical feedback on lesson content and to see Indigenous content being actually integrated into the curriculum and taught in classes. This shared instructional leadership approach can be further expanded by having all teachers participate in the WOW program, both as presenters and as participants, thereby building a professional support community to further support Indigenous knowledge being integrated into classrooms across all grades and disciplines.

This process completes the final step of reinforcement in the ADKAR model and completes the wisdom requirement of sharing knowledge and passing the knowledge down to the next generation of teachers that will share their learned knowledge with their students. This step completes one full revolution of the Medicine Wheel and brings all teachers back to the first step of awareness where teachers will continue to explore Indigenous content integration at a deeper level. This process is very similar to a spiral of inquiry where the change process is reflected and refined over time to successfully integrate the new change initiative into the cultural fabric of the school (Stoll & Temperley, 2015).

### **Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and the Change Process**

In the next section, I will address how I am going to build awareness of the need for change within the organization, identify my knowledge mobilization plan, and explain how I am going to disseminate the path of change to influence students, staff, parents and community members in embracing a multiple perspective education using an Indigenous framework

perspective.

### **Building Awareness for Change**

In order to build awareness for change among all stakeholders, the first stage in the ADKAR change model, I first must conduct a survey—using google forms—of students, teachers, and parents to create a baseline of stakeholder understanding, perception, and interest in and about Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing. For teachers, the survey will be administered at the end of each semester, twice in a year, and for parents and students the survey will be administered once at the end of each year.

The survey will be a compilation of questions modified from the Canadian Teachers' Federation Survey on teachers' perspectives on Aboriginal education in public schools in Canada (2015), refer to Appendix G, in conjunction with a modified Franklin Covey's Bias self-assessment (2021), refer to Appendix H, which explores a person's potential biases towards people from other cultures.

The purpose for this survey is to create an evidence-informed measurable data set that future survey data will be measured against in order to evaluate whether Indigenous knowledge usage in classes has increased; whether the negative rural perspective towards Indigenous people is shifting; whether the people participating in the survey are broadening their global perspectives to incorporate views and knowledge from other cultures, specifically Indigenous cultures, into their own world view; and whether people are aware of their own biases as this is an underlying factor that will influence whether or not Indigenous perspectives are actually being incorporated into classes and school culture (Kanu, 2005). By administering the survey through a Google form, I am able to easily collect and analyze data to identify areas of concern and implement a change in message, content, or practice to fill any gaps impeding the progression of



this change initiative.

Further evidence supporting a change in teacher mindset and attitude towards the integration of Indigenous epistemology into classes could be collected by analysing teachers' professional growth plans and determining what percentage of staff are focused on improving their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous cultures. In a similar fashion, the number of teachers signing up for Indigenous professional development at the annual Teachers' Convention—South Eastern Alberta Teacher Convention or the South Western Alberta Teacher Convention—could indicate staff commitment and interest towards the change initiative, much the same as would the number of teachers who volunteer for the school's EDI committee which focuses on modifying the school's policy and practice to ensure the inclusion of all students through a multiple perspective lens. As such, one of the undertakings that the EDI committee will be tasked with will be to establish the specific requirements teachers must meet in order to fulfill the FNMI competency requirement at RPS.

By analysing the quantitative data collected from surveys and participation rates in conjunction with the qualitative data collected from formal conversations with the principal about how change has affected the learning environment and informal conversations about the change initiative being talked about in the staffroom or during staff meetings, will help inform the principal of how the change initiative is impacting stakeholders: students, teachers, and parents. It is through the analysis of these evidence-informed processes that the principal will be able to recognize areas that need to be targeted for improvement at each stakeholder level to ensure that students, parents, and teachers are aligning with the new direction in which the school is moving.

I recognize that collecting the data is important, but what one does with the data is

equally important. As such, after data has been collected through the google survey form, it is critical that this information is relayed back to the respective stakeholders. As Lavis et al. (2003) acknowledge, not all information is pertinent to all stakeholders, and therefore my knowledge mobilization plan needs to target what information will be released to students, parents, and staff, individually as well as collectively, to ensure that the incorporation of Indigenous epistemology into classroom and school culture is both sustainable and reflective of curricular goals and practice.

Pounder (2006), Hess (2005), and Stein (2020) recognize that teachers are the leaders in their own classrooms, and as such, teachers are ultimately the decision makers who determine if Indigenous epistemology will actually be taught in classes. As such, the principal would be a credible messenger, according to Lavis et al. (2003), to disseminate the analysis and findings of the quantitative and qualitative data to all teachers at respective EDI committee meetings and at biweekly staff meetings to ensure that all teachers are informed of the results and the areas that the school will need to target for future improvement.

In order for teachers to have a full understanding of the impact that this data has on the future decision-making process at RPS, teachers must become aware of student, parent, and teacher responses to ensure that all teachers are aware of both the support and the resistance people are expressing towards integrating Indigenous epistemology into classes and school culture at the micro, meso, and macro levels.

As teachers explore the compiled data of student, teacher, and parent surveys, they will start to identify trends in the data which will enable them to understand where each stakeholder group stands, with respect to the group's attitude towards Indigenous people; their value of Indigenous knowledge; and the group's advocacy or resistance towards integrating Indigenous

epistemology into classes. Any areas of concern can then be targeted during staff professional development days, parent council meetings, or during monthly school assemblies to communicate and change the narrative being told and to build skills to ensure that this change initiative is implemented and sustainable. In the next section, my knowledge mobilization plan will be revealed, respective milestones will be identified, and potential obstacles will be noted that will need to be addressed prior to further engaging teachers in incorporating Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into their classes.

### **Knowledge Mobilization Plan**

The University of Calgary (2023) and Levin (2008) both contend that a successful knowledge mobilization plan will stimulate people's desire to engage—the second stage in the ADKAR change model—and build their capacity to participate, and ultimately produce knowledge that can be used to drive change in policy and practice within an organization. As Levin (2008) acknowledges, both knowledge and practice are social in nature and are established through a range of norms including customs, cultures, and habits. Information alone is insufficient to change practice as merely informing people of research findings and advising them to alter their behaviour has proven ineffective (Levin, 2008). Levin (2008), in conjunction with both Herek (2007) and Mari van Loon et al. (2015), further contend that personal contact and interaction remain the most successful technique for changing mindsets and putting evidence into practice.

Therefore, within the context of this OIP, there needs to be actionable items within the knowledge mobilization plan where students, parents, and teachers can interact with each other and contribute to structures already in place, such as our mission, vision, and school goals; interact with each other during the learning process as we all learn about Indigenous

epistemology and the importance of a multicultural/multiple perspective approach towards education; and build capacity as we share our knowledge, experiences, and new understanding of Indigenous epistemology and its application to curricular course content and sustainable land practices.

In the knowledge mobilization plan, explored in Appendix I and summarized in J, successes such as students participating in an on-land activity or participating in the school's cultural fair will be showcased in our monthly newsletter and on the school's social media platforms. The University of Calgary (2023) recognizes the importance that building awareness and publicizing discoveries has in moving initiatives forward; therefore, any milestones achieved will be recognized in staff meetings and school assemblies. They will also be presented at School Council meetings, posted on the school's website, and sent out via our newsletter and social media options to promote these accomplishments and our school.

One of the major milestones that would be a huge accomplishment for teachers to achieve would be when a teacher has participated in the same on-land activity multiple times and has demonstrated a firm understanding of the rationale behind the process as well as the knowledge and ability to perform a skill or conduct a ceremony to a level that the Indigenous Elder deems to be a level of mastery; then the Indigenous Elder could give the teacher permission to teach this particular skill or ceremony to others without being under the direct supervision of the Elder. At this point, according to both Elder Brenda and Elder Doug, the teacher would gain "Elder" status for this specific teaching, which would be respected by all members of the Indigenous Nation (Elder Brenda Francoeur, personal communication, 2023; Elder Doug Johnson, personal communication, 2023). These successes and milestones will later be compiled into a presentation that I will present to our Board, as a demonstration of how the students and staff are meeting the

FNMI competency requirements of their respective TQS and LQS; and if interested, District and Board members would be invited to accompany us on our next Indigenous on-land expedition.

One of the issues that I am anticipating as a result of incorporating Indigenous perspectives into classroom and school culture is that members of our Mennonite community, the second largest group represented at our school, may take issue with teachers teaching the pedagogy of a non-Christian group at school (Sawatsky, 1991). This could easily result in Mennonite students being withdrawn from school to be homeschooled or being bussed to neighbouring church-run Mennonite schools.

If students were withdrawn, this would drastically impact our funding and likewise our staffing and programming options at RPS. To mitigate the potential exodus of our Mennonite students, it is crucial that Mennonite students and their parents understand that the Indigenous culture is inclusive of all peoples and all religions, according to Elder Brenda Francoeur (Personal communication, 2023), and that when an Indigenous Elder references paying respect to the Creator, they are meaning for each person to pay respect to their respective Creators/Gods, which in the context of our Mennonite population is Jesus Christ (Elder Brenda Francoeur, personal communication, 2023; Sawatsky, 2019). To ensure that this message is clearly communicated to our Mennonite community, I would have to hold a Mennonite meeting, separate from our parent council meeting, where we could have a discussion and answer any questions about Indigenous content being taught at RPS.

The next section will revisit elements implemented as part of the change initiative as well as identify other key performance indicators (KPI) as I track change, gauge progress, and assess the depth and breadth to which Indigenous epistemology is being implemented into classes and school culture.

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

This OIP is built as a perpetual feedback loop that is reviewed every two months, is embedded within the Medicine Wheel framework, and is structured to help non-Indigenous teachers learn about Indigenous epistemology, challenge their world view, and integrate Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into regular class content to facilitate the learning of all students. As the Medicine Wheel framework is a circle, and therefore never ending, it signifies that one's learning journey, as well as the implementation of my change initiative, will continue not only because of the mandatory FNMI competency requirements of the TQS, but because teachers will begin to see the value of connecting course content with the experiences and stories that students and teachers now share.

As a teacher continues to engage in Indigenous land-based activities the teacher will continue to improve their own technical skills and understanding of how and why things are done the way they are. A prime example of this would be after an Inuit person shoots their first kill, they will give that kill to an Elder(s) in the community and not take any of the kill for themselves. This was communicated to me by an Inuit Elder (Personal communication with Elders during my teaching practicum, 2001), and the reason that a hunter's first kill was given away to an Elder was to show respect for the Elders and the knowledge, wisdom, and skills that the Elders of the community imparted on the young hunter. This act was also done to teach the value of sharing and show respect for the animal in that the animal has given up its life not for the hunter as an individual, but for the community to benefit and that each person within an Inuit community is secondary to the community they live (Personal communication with Inuit Elders, 2001; Encyclopedia.com, 2019; The Canadian Press, 2018).

As a teacher engages in on-land cultural expeditions they may also be exposed to various

Indigenous ceremonies that an Elder deems appropriate such as a smudging ceremony to cleanse one's spirit or the burning of tobacco as an offering to the Creator (Government of Alberta, 2020). As a teacher witnesses' Indigenous ceremonies and learns not only the ceremony, but develops an understanding and respect for why the ceremony is important, the teacher will begin to move from a place where they are passively observing the ceremony to a place where they, if they are willing and are invited, are active participants who are engaging in the ceremony. As such, teachers move from the infant stage to the youth stage on the Medicine Wheel, and likewise begin to move from a position of cultural appropriation to a position of cultural appreciation, where the essence of the ceremony is communicated along with the ceremonial activity. Once a teacher has reached the point where they themselves can communicate both the why and the how, the teacher will be at the adult stage transitioning to the *Elder* stage where they will then share their knowledge and understanding with their students by sharing their own on-land stories and experiences in engaging with these ceremonies.

Measuring teachers' attitudes and abilities to integrate Indigenous epistemology into classes will be identified by KPIs such as: the number of teachers keeping a reflexive journal; the results of analysing individual questions from compiled survey data; as well as the volunteer and participation rates of how many teachers openly share their findings, including what worked and what did not, when integrating Indigenous concepts into class structure and course content. Each of these KPIs give quantitative data that can be analyzed and later compared in order to determine the progression or regression of teacher attitude, ability, and application to integrate Indigenous epistemology into teachers' classes.

Monitoring the number of teachers which are actively contributing to discussions during our bimonthly staff meetings and during structured PLCs, where time is specifically allocated to

discussing the connections teachers are making between course content and Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, can help the principal gain a holistic perspective and specifically determine who is incorporating Indigenous knowledge into classes, and the frequency at which they are doing so. This will also help identify teachers who may be good candidates to participate in either the Watch others Work (WoW) program or engage in a co-teaching venture that would help struggling or resistant teachers to overcome barriers and integrate Indigenous pedagogy and ontology into their own classes.

From past experience I have found that if teachers have input into a change initiative, understand required expectations prior to implementing a change, and are informed of the accountability measures that will be incorporated into the change implementation process that teachers—through the ethic of profession that promotes a multiple-perspective approach to foster deeper learning and the ethic of care that promotes empathy and relationships and supports the wellbeing of all students—will strive to meet, and many will exceed, the school’s expectations that will be put into place (Mathur & Corley, 2014).

With respect to this OIP, teachers will be professionally motivated to seek meaningful connections to Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing instead of having to be directed to do so. This in turn will help reduce teacher resistance and non-compliance, promote a shared instructional leadership approach towards learning and engagement, and help ensure that Indigenous epistemology will be implemented and sustainable in all classes taught at RPS going forward.

Additional KPIs that could be incorporated into the change monitoring process include identifying the number of teachers that incorporate questions about Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing onto tests and exams; engaging teachers in one-on-one professional



conversations with the principal; developing focus groups, which is the essence of the “new” EDI committee; and readministering a change readiness assessment as recognized in the Change Management Toolkit from the University of California, Berkley (n.d.).

The incorporation of Indigenous knowledge questions on tests and exams is an easily quantifiable measure that will not only illustrate that Indigenous content is important to learn, as it will have an effect on student marks, but that our staff is fully committed to embracing a multicultural perspective towards teaching and learning. Over time, I would encourage teachers to develop open-ended questions where the student could describe their understanding of Indigenous perspectives and whether they agree or disagree with an explanation as to why. This style of questioning will bridge cultural barriers and successfully integrate Indigenous content into course content and classroom culture.

Engaging teachers in focus groups, such as our EDI committee, as well as engaging teachers in one-on-one professional conversations with the principal provides each teacher the opportunity to explain how they are meeting the school’s FNMI competency requirements and their next steps in digging deeper into Indigenous ontology and pedagogy as they continue on their respective learning journey around the Medicine Wheel.

Revisiting the change readiness assessment, as acknowledged by the University of California, Berkeley (n.d.), reflects each stakeholder’s readiness to implement the change within an organization. As the focus of this OIP is to get teachers to integrate Indigenous epistemology into classroom culture and course content on a more regular basis, and having used a similar change readiness assessment in Chapter 2 looking specifically at the teachers’ readiness for change, I have applied Berkeley’s (n.d.) Change Readiness Assessment, which already integrates the ADKAR change model (Hiatt, 2006) into the assessment, to determine teacher readiness once

all of the different facets of this OIP have been in place and once the standards and expectations have been communicated to my teaching staff.

Appendix K reflects a modified Berkley's (n.d.) Change Readiness Assessment in conjunction with an embedded Likert scale where yes is allocated a value of 1, partial is allocated a value of 3, and no is allocated a value of 5. On the Berkley (n.d.) Change Readiness Assessment, the total points garnered would be 44 with an average score of 1.83.

Using Shorter's (2017) original change readiness assessment framework to determine the new change readiness of teachers, once expectations and frameworks have been established, is reflected in Appendix L, a summary of which is found in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Recalculation Summary of Determining the "New" Readiness of RPS to Integrate Indigenous Perspectives Into Classes Once Expectations and Frameworks Have Been Established*

Readiness Impact	Assessment Scale 1 (high) to 5 (low)
1. Degree of leadership consensus on change vision	2
2. Degree of leadership consensus on need for change	1
3. Degree of stakeholder consensus on need for change	2
4. Stakeholder commitment	3
5. Stakeholder's understanding of the standards/expectations that accompany the change	2
6. Understand of need by "users"	2
7. Number of competing change initiatives	2
8. Resources allocated to project	3
Average score	2.125

*Note.* Table 4 is adapted from Shorter (2017). *Change complexity and readiness scorecards.*

Harvard University Information Technology Confluence.

Whether using Berkley's (n.d.) or Shorter's (2017) change readiness assessment, the reader will recognize that the results for either assessment are now fairly low. Reassessing using Shorter's (2017) complexity rating showed a drop from 3.3, in the original change readiness assessment, determined in Chapter 2, to a score of approximately 2 when all structures to support the change initiative are in place. This drop in the OIP's change readiness score, and the low Berkley (n.d.) score, indicate that this OIP has moved from having some structure in place to support the project to having a great deal of structure in place to support the change initiative and will hopefully result in more teachers integrating Indigenous perspectives into classes on a more regular basis as they now have the knowledge and ability to do so without culturally appropriating an Indigenous culture in the process.

### **Refining the Implementation Plan in Response to the Results of Monitoring and Evaluation**

The implementation plan will continue to be refined depending on the feedback the school receives from formal surveys and suggestions put into our suggestion box from students, staff, parents, and community members. This gives all stakeholders a voice and allows them to voice their support or resistance towards the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives at school events, in classroom activities, and as part of the classroom learning. This data will inform the principal, as well as teachers, about any resistance that people are feeling so measures can be implemented to reduce resistance and overcome these potential obstacles as they arise.

### **Next Steps and Future Considerations**

Now that the non-Indigenous teachers at RPS have had some exposure to Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, have experimented with how to integrate Indigenous knowledge into course content as they strive to meet the new FNMI competency requirements set by the school, have witnessed the benefits that a multicultural education has for all students

as well as observing a reduction in teacher anxiety and resistance towards incorporating Indigenous epistemology into classes and school culture, it is time to take this OIP to the next level.

With a solid framework in place on which to build, and the OIP being sustainable going forward, with the budget that I have in place, the next steps for this OIP will be to get teachers to focus back on individual student development and how each student is being supported at the spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental domains (Bell, 2014) within their classrooms and in the school. By focusing on these four domains, all students will feel more included within the classroom and teachers will be able to identify where individual students are struggling, either academically, socially, or emotionally and put supports in place so that each student feels valued and equipped with the skills to succeed at school and in life.

Building on this premise, and the idea that a multicultural perspective promotes understanding and inclusion, RPS could now extend what was learned and practiced in this OIP to reflect other cultures found in the school. As the Mennonite culture is the second largest student population at RPS (RPS, Education Plan, 2017 – 2020), educating teachers about Mennonite culture, values and traditions will help build an understanding and respect for the Mennonite culture. As teachers, parents, and presumably the community at large are now in a state of mind that learning about other cultures benefits all students, staff will begin to seek connections to incorporate Mennonite knowledge and ways of knowing into their classes. By doing this, the Mennonite community will acknowledge that their culture is being respected by the school, especially if a low-German language class or a Plattdeutsch catechism class could be offered as an elective or club. The integration of Mennonite epistemology into classes could entice homeschooled Mennonite children to enrol at RPS, which would have a positive impact

on school funding, course options, and our school's reputation within the division and the greater FF community.

### **Conclusion**

Approaching the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit competency requirement of the Teacher Quality Standards from a multicultural perspective, I believe will be accepted by more people and implemented by more non-Indigenous teachers than a decolonization approach would. It is by framing learning within a multiple perspective context that engages students and teachers alike to consider other cultural approaches, that curricular objectives will be explored at a deeper level and for a deeper level of understanding.

I believe that if this organizational improvement plan was implemented through a decolonization lens, especially when the dominant population in both the community and the school are descendants of the White Euro-settlers, that there will be increased resistance from both teachers and the community. I also believe that this resistance will be magnified if it is perceived that I am trying to Indigenize the school, by rejecting White knowledge systems and culture, and embracing and promoting Indigenous ways of thinking and doing. Therefore, the message I send out to engage students, teachers, parents, and the community at large, must be *soft* and inclusive of the dominant culture as well so that people will open their minds and be receptive towards the change, instead of approaching change from a decolonization perspective where one's White ancestors were historically wrong and the people implementing the change are already being put on the defensive (Aitken & Radford, 2018).

With respect to Call # 62 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015), this OIP reflects a culturally respectful approach to incorporating Indigenous perspectives in a Western educational paradigm. It is by recognizing that each cultural

perspective is distinct but equally valid that Indigenous culture and perspectives will be taught in classes to facilitate the deeper exploration and learning of course curricula.

It is by not directly accepting the dominant Western cultural knowledge system and rejecting the Indigenous knowledge system, or visa versa, that all people will be more open to exploring diverse ways of thinking, knowing and doing. This in turn will allow Indigenous epistemology to be incorporated into course content and knowledge creation which will effectively lead to true reconciliation by using a lens that respects and reflects a multicultural perspective which is integrated into all courses and classes, and frames the school culture found at RPS.

Very similar to how the reader is integrated into this organizational improvement plan, one must feel included if a person is going to be open minded and supportive of a change. I believe that it is through creating our own stories, by engaging in other cultures, that students and teachers alike will naturally begin to integrate cultural knowledge from other cultures into school and classroom learning; which, in turn, will benefit all of our students as they will all be better prepared to work with people from other cultures as they enter the workforce or pursue a post-secondary education.

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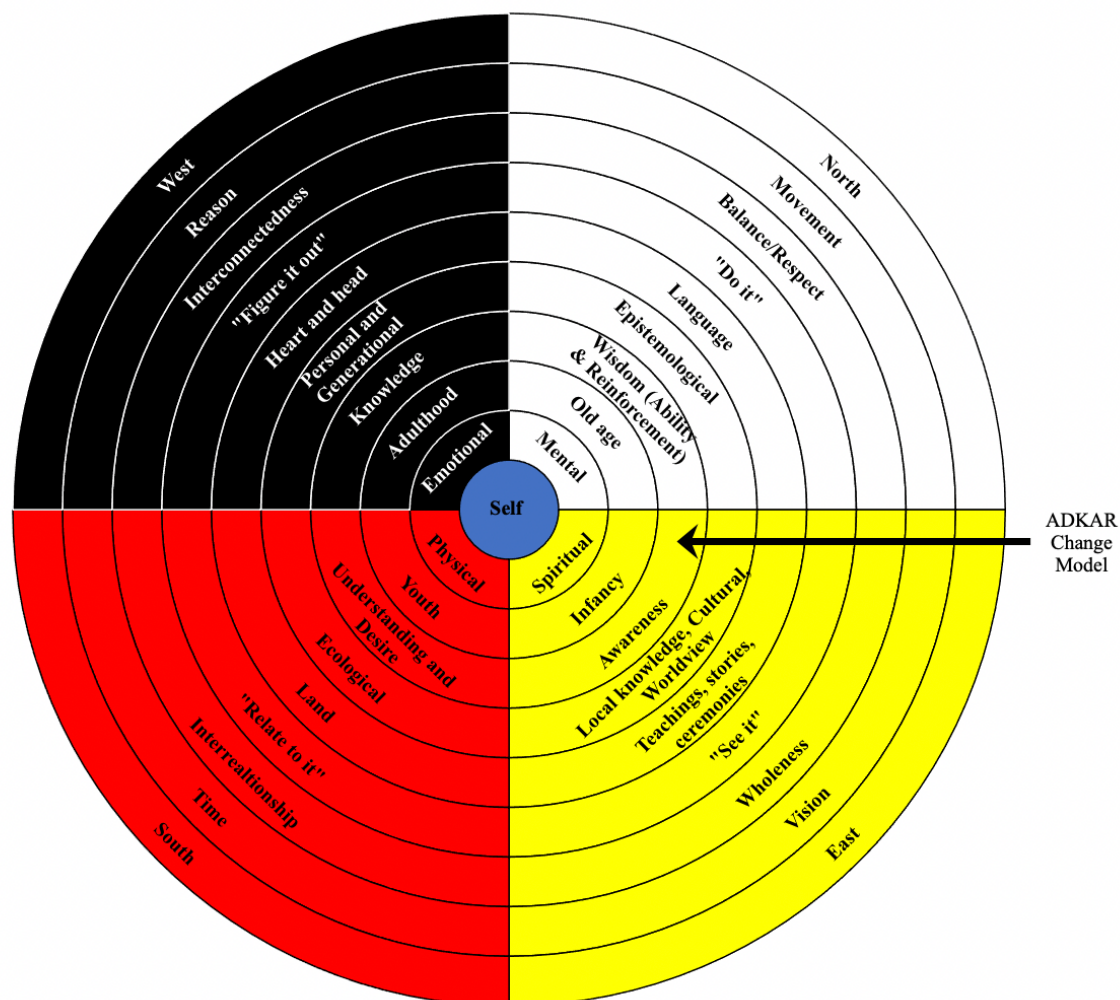
## Appendices

### Appendix A: Kotter's 8-step Change Model




*Note.* Kotter's 8-step change model. From *Change management tools: Kotter's 8-step process*, by P. Every, 2022, Solitaire Consulting Ltd. (<https://www.solitaireconsulting.com/2021/07/change-management-tools-kotters-8-step-process/>).

## Appendix B: Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel with the ADKAR Change Model




*Note.* Anishinaabe Medicine Wheel with the ADKAR Change Model Embedded. Adapted from *Teaching by the medicine wheel: An Anishinaabe framework for Indigenous education*, by N. Bell, 2014, EdCan Network. (<https://www.edcan.ca/articles/teaching-by-the-medicine-wheel>).

### Appendix C: Determining the Readiness of RPS to Integrate Indigenous Perspectives into Classes

Readiness Impact	Assessment Scale <i>1</i> ←  <i>5</i>						Readiness Rating = 3.3
1. Degree of leadership consensus on change vision	High		X			Low	Vice principal believes that structuring teachers to connect to Indigenous content and ways of knowing once or twice over the course of the year fulfills the TQS requirements. The vice principal, to a certain degree, supports the principal's vision that Indigenous epistemology should be reflected in classes on a more regular basis by connecting with land, community, ceremony and stories and that having a broader view and respect for other cultures is important for our students to obtain (Vice Principal, personal communication, 2018 -2020).
2. Degree of leadership consensus on need for change	High	X				Low	Both the principal and vice principal recognize the importance that incorporating FNMI perspectives into school and classroom culture to support reconciliation, fulfill the TQS and LQS requirements, and structures students for success when living and working with people from other cultures when they move to an urban city center for work or study (Vice Principal, personal communication, 2018 -2020).
3. Degree of stakeholder consensus on need for change	High			X		Low	Teachers at RPS understand that they are mandated to teach foundational Indigenous knowledge, but many do not support teaching Indigenous concepts in their classes. This is reflective of 43% of teachers in Manitoba feeling uncomfortable to neutral in integrating Indigenous perspectives into their classes, 66% of teachers in Ontario rarely to occasionally teach Indigenous content, and 83% of preservice teachers enrolled in a Teacher Education program in Ontario feel that they are not ready to being somewhat ready to teach Indigenous content in

								the initial survey prior to implementing change and exposure is reflective of the attitudes and voiced opinion some teachers at RPS have shared in the staff room and in our biweekly meetings (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2015; Survey on Indigenous Teachers Manitoba, 2017; Nardozi et al., 2014; RPS teachers, personal communication, 2018 - 2020). There has also been a shift in attitude since the finding of mass graves at residential schools (French, 2021). As such, teachers and community members seem to be a bit more open to the idea of talking about Indigenous people in the spirit of reconciliation and in recognizing injustices done in the past (RPS staff and FF community members, personal communication, 2018 - 2020). Parents and community members believe that teaching Indigenous content for the most part is not important as Indigenous people did not contribute to the establishment or success of the community, the negative stereotypes about Indigenous people historically portrayed in the media are reflected in the attitudes and beliefs of the students, parents, and community at large, and the verbal communication with staff and parents that we should not be reading a land acknowledgement at the beginning of assemblies and public meetings (Beaudoin and Thorson, 2004; RPS staff and FF community members, personal communication, 2018 - 2020).
4. Stakeholder commitment	High				X		Low	Apart from the teachers needing to demonstrate how they are integrating foundational Indigenous knowledge into their classes, a few teachers, in some subject areas, have begun making connections to Indigenous content and sharing these with the whole staff during staff meetings.
5. Stakeholder's understanding of the standards/ expectations that accompany the	High				X		Low	Other than the general requirements of broad topics that fulfill the FNMI requirements of the TQS and the school wide goal of incorporating Indigenous perspectives into classes and requiring teachers to find and teach one connection with Indigenous content in each class, there have been no other

change								standards laid out by government, division, or the school as to what constitutes meeting the FNMI competency requirements or fulfilling our Indigenous school goal, yet.
6. Understand of need by "users"	High				X		Low	Teachers understand the FNMI competency requirement of the TQS and understand the need for reconciliation, even if they might not support teaching Indigenous concepts in their classes.
7. Number of competing change initiatives	Few				X		Many	The incorporation of Indigenous content into classes contributes toward the cultural awareness school goal and possibly to the deeper learning school goal but competes with our school goals of improving literacy and writing across all subject areas. As these are all either new school goals, or new to teachers who have not historically assessed or corrected student grammar, a lot of scaffolding has to occur to support our teachers in each of these school goals (School X education plan, 2020).
8. Resources allocated to project	Extensive				X		Limited	So far there has been time allotted during the week dedicated of SI days for teachers to research Indigenous concepts and to share what they have found at staff meetings. Any funding provided by division for our few Indigenous students has been allocated to the cause to bring in an FNMI leader once a year as this is what our budget allows, and \$500 has been allocated to purchase Indigenous books and resources.
<i>Positive (1)</i>								<i>Negative (5)</i>

<b>Change Readiness Rating</b>		
Use your responses to the questions to identify the average readiness rating by adding up all of the responses and dividing it by 8. This will determine the readiness rating. Once you have the readiness rating use the scale below to better understand the meaning of the rating and actions that may be needed.		
<b>Complexity Rating</b>	<b>Generic Meaning</b>	<b>Actions Required</b>
1	Full structure exists to support project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A low readiness score shows that the project has focused on aligning leaders, gaining stakeholder commitment and consensus, as well as re-mediating risks associated with the project.</li> <li>• Projects with a score in this range should focus on maintaining it position and continuing to deliver against a developed change management plan</li> </ul>
2	Great deal of structure exists to support project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project indicates that it has a structure outlined to support the change management associated with the project</li> <li>• Project should meet with the HUIT Change Management resources to review the change management plan and identify if other activities are needed</li> </ul>
3	Some structure exists to support project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A median change management readiness score indicates that the project has done some activities to prepare the organization for the project but there are additional activities that can and should be completed in order to ensure success of the project</li> <li>• Project should meet with the HUIT Change Management resources to review the change management plan, identify if other activities are needed, and/ or additional resources</li> </ul>

		are required to support the project
4	Minimal structure evident to support project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A project with this score has done minimal amounts of change management to create a structure that supports the project</li> <li>• Additional steps and/or activities are required in order to ensure the success of the project</li> <li>• If a Change Management Lead is not aligned to this project, a resource needs to be secured</li> <li>• Other change management roles may be necessary for this project as well in order to effectively deliver change management</li> <li>• The project will need to align leadership and users to the desired future state of the organization in order to successfully implement change</li> </ul>
5	No structure evident to support the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The high readiness scores identifies that the project needs to focus on change management activities to propel the project</li> <li>• If a Change Management Lead is not aligned to this project, a resource needs to be secured</li> <li>• Other change management roles may be necessary for this project as well in order to effectively deliver change management</li> <li>• The project will need to align leadership and users to the desired future state of the organization in order to successfully implement change</li> </ul>

*Note.* Change Readiness Scorecard for RPS. Adapted from *Change complexity and readiness scorecards*, by T. Shorter, 2017, Harvard University Information Technology Confluence.

(<https://confluence.huit.harvard.edu/display/HCMPC/Change+Complexity+and+Readiness+Scorecards>)

**Appendix D: Table Comparing Potential Solutions**

	Twining with a school on an Indigenous Reserve	Video conferencing with Indigenous Elder	Participate in Traditional On-Land Activities
Costs and Funding	Low to moderate - If each school has their own space and access to technology that enables students and teachers to readily connect with each other the costs of working collaboratively on projects and the cost of interacting and learning from one another are fairly low. Costs increase as technology needs to be purchased to facilitate this learning platform.	High costs of connecting with an Elder in multiple classes.	Very high - Having teachers learn by participating in hands-on cultural activities can require travel for multiple people, substantial materials and resources, as well as external permits and licenses for activities such as fishing and hunting. Costs increase if these cultural activities are extended for students to participate and learn.
Authenticity of Information	Low to moderate - The authenticity of information ultimately depends on the amount of experience that the Indigenous students have had in developing their own on-land skills, their willingness to share this information with their non-Indigenous peers, and the teacher's ability to verify that the information being conveyed is culturally accurate.	High - Information is authentic and accurate as it comes from the primary source of an Indigenous Elder and knowledge keeper.	Low to high - Depending on whether an Indigenous Elder is present on-site and the ratio of Indigenous Elders to non-Indigenous students (the non-Indigenous teacher is included as a student) ultimately determines the authentic accuracy of engaging in an on-land activity. Learning directly from an Elder and having a low student to Elder ratio will help improve the accuracy, authenticity, and impact that this cultural experience will have on staff and students.
Technology	High - Stable high-speed internet is required especially if multiple students and their teachers are going to converse over video conferencing platforms.	High- As video conferencing is required, technology usage is high. Also, some Indigenous Elders might not be able to	Low - Little digital technology except for a Global Positioning System (GPS) will be needed for most on-land activities.



		use the technology, and this should be taken into account when considering this possible solution.	
Human resources	Low to high - Twinning can be done between two teachers, between individual classes, or as a holistic intercultural learning platform where multiple classes and/or the whole school is involved.	Moderate - The teacher works with an Indigenous Elder to talk about key points in the curriculum.	High - Arranging a field trip with multiple teachers, possibly with many students, and preferably with at least one Indigenous Elder requires substantial human resources.
Time	Low to high depending on why teachers are connecting. If this is just to establish a basic connection and gain a brief overview of an Indigenous perspective then the time allotment could be minimal, but if teachers are connecting and establishing large cooperative learning projects then the time required can be quite considerable.	Low to moderate - Connecting with the Elder prior to the Elder presenting to a class to ensure there is suitable content being presented that matches the audience and the topic being explored.	Moderate to high - The coordination of finding an Indigenous Elder willing to travel and share their traditional knowledge and wisdom, physically travelling to a site location where all people will engage in an on-land activity, and the amount of time required in working with external organizations and obtain the perspective permissions and licenses prior to engaging in these cultural on-land activities requires a substantial amount of time and effort.
Benefits	Students connecting with students and teachers connecting with teachers can help develop a mutually beneficial learning relationship in which empathy and respect for the other culture can build and develop.	Authentic learning from a primary source. Teacher and students learn together.	All people participating in this cultural experience will learn something new, develop their own connections with students and staff as they engage each other in unstructured learning, which leads the way for each person to develop their own story from this traditional learning experience thereby connecting the student with the land and with each other.

<p>Possibility of cultural appropriation</p>	<p>Low to moderate - As both groups of students and teachers engage each other in learning about a worldview/curricular objective that was developed within the Western context, little if any Indigenous knowledge and culture might be shared. As such, no cultural appropriation will occur as the focus is on learning Western content which further dominates and colonizes Indigenous cultures. If, on the other hand, a large amount of Indigenous connections were integrated into the cultural context of the learning objective, little if any cultural appropriation might be found as students living in southern Alberta do not have access to the same plants, animals, and geography that Indigenous students living farther north have experience with in their local environment. As such, the cultural activities might not be readily reproduced in a different context.</p>	<p>Low - As an Indigenous knowledge keeper is sharing their knowledge and wisdom.</p>	<p>Low to high - This depends on the process that the teacher is exposed to when engaging in on-land activity. If the teacher is taught the reason for the ceremony, participates in the ceremony, and is given permission to now share this ceremony with others, the potential to culturally appropriate this part of Indigenous culture is significantly reduced. Without receiving specific instruction from an Indigenous Elder and without being given permission to share the traditional cultural knowledge with others, the potential of a non-Indigenous teacher culturally appropriating an Indigenous culture is greatly increased as the teacher tries to replicate and/or teach the Indigenous content to his/her students.</p>
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### Appendix E: Change Implementation Plan

ADKAR's Change Model	Actions	Challenges	Timeline	Domain of growth on Medicine Wheel
Awareness	Principal enlists Indigenous Elders from each Indigenous group recognized by the District's Land Acknowledgement	Finding authentic and willing Indigenous Elders  Distance, internet connectivity, and funding  Increased time commitment	Present - August	Spiritual
Awareness	Develop a volunteer committee of teachers passionate about incorporating Indigenous epistemology into classes and school culture as one way to integrate equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into our school.  This committee will develop an Indigenous schoolwide goal and pose potential ways to accomplish this goal; set school requirements needed to fulfill the First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) requirements of the Teacher Quality Standards (TQS); and modify our school's vision to better align with the change in philosophy and perspective of the school	Only a few teachers have voiced support for the Indigenous competency requirement and may not sign up to be part of the committee  Increased time commitment  Supporting teachers may have pressure from other teachers and community members to not participate  Sustaining the new normal of what is required of teachers in meeting their FNMI competency requirements	August	Spiritual Emotional
Awareness	Identify and challenge negative	In identifying stereotypes	August and	Spiritual

	Indigenous stereotypes	<p>teachers may not only agree with what is being voiced, but provide supporting anecdotal evidence that further supports these negative stereotypes and possibly unites teachers</p> <p>Teachers have to challenge their own biases, beliefs and thinking which is difficult because it forces a person to be critical of themselves and the way they view and engage with others</p>	September	Emotional Mental
Awareness	Indigenous protocol and cultural sensitivity training	<p>Adaptive challenges towards teacher resistance in following protocol</p> <p>Funding for tobacco gifts</p>	August and September	Spiritual Emotional Mental
Awareness	Explore the differences between Eurocentric education systems and Indigenous education systems to gain an understanding of how each will contribute to a student's education, their wellbeing, and their path in life	<p>Conflicting views about how and why each culture educates their children could be viewed by some as being not important to learn for success in school, the community, or in getting a job</p> <p>Increased time commitment</p>	September to December	Spiritual Emotional Mental
Awareness	Incorporate each of the Grandfather Teachings each as a monthly theme into assemblies and to drive a focus for schoolwide citizenship over the	Increased time commitment	September to June	Spiritual Physical Emotional Mental

	course of the year			
Awareness	Explore the differences between Eurocentric education systems and Indigenous education systems to gain an in-depth understanding	Conflicting views of how and why each culture educates their children could be viewed by some as being not important to learn for success in school, the community, or in getting a job	September to October	Spiritual Emotional Mental
Desire	Explore the similarities between Indigenous cultures and rural agricultural communities with respect to community	Increased time commitment	September to December	Spiritual Emotional Mental
Knowledge	This is the solutions part of my OIP where teachers develop their own knowledge about Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing by engaging with Elders during school improvement (SI) days, class zoom meetings, and when participating in on-land activities.  Teachers keep personal reflective journal of what they learned (Not shared with anyone)	Increased time commitment  Increased cost especially if students participate in on-land activities  Teacher resistance to increased workload	Mid-October going forward	Spiritual Physical Emotional Mental
Ability	Same subject personal learning community (PLC) once a month to learn about how others are making connections between their course content and what they learned by engaging with	Increased time commitment	After first on-land cultural experience in October	Spiritual Physical Emotional Mental

	Elders			
Ability	Teachers share the Indigenous connections they made with whole staff once a month during one of our bimonthly staff meetings	Increased time commitment	Starting in November and going forward	Spiritual Emotional Mental
Reinforcement	Watch others work (WOW) program where teachers are given time to watch other teachers teach Indigenous content in subject specific disciplines	Increased time commitment  Increased costs for substitute coverage if not available using current staff  Some teachers will be resistant in being viewed by colleagues, especially those who can be overcritical	Starting in October and going forward	Spiritual Emotional Mental

### **Appendix F: The Fifteen Qualities of an Elder**

1. Disciplined and committed to a lifetime of learning;
2. Knows traditional teachings and is committed to helping people within this framework;
3. Physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually healthy;
4. Born with, or seeks, the gift of healing in apprenticeship with a traditional healer;
5. Walks his or her talk, i.e., lives a healthy lifestyle within the parameters of traditional values;
6. Provides help when asked, although may not provide this immediately [sometimes will refer to another Elder with particular expertise];
7. Able to bring traditional values and life ways into contemporary urban life and living in a practical way;
8. Treats his or her family, spouse, children, parents, Elders and other traditional healers in a respectful and caring manner [all people];
9. Is a positive role model for Aboriginal people;
10. Able to teach and correct behavior with kindness and respect without humiliating the individual;
11. Always hopeful of people and able to see the goodness in people;
12. Does not use alcohol or drugs or engage in other destructive addictive behavior;
13. Does not set a fee for their healing service or request gifts in payment;
14. Knows the medicines and ceremonies [has experience and participated in ceremonies], and;
15. [Demonstrated] evidence of his or her success exists among the [Aboriginal] people and the [Aboriginal] communities (Aboriginal Healing Foundation 2005, pp. 70-71).”

*Note.* The Fifteen Qualities of an Elder. From Reclaiming connections: Understanding residential school trauma among aboriginal people: A resource manual, by Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2005. (<https://www.ahf.ca/downloads/healing-trauma-web-eng.pdf>).



**Appendix G: Reproduction of the Canadian Teachers' Federation Survey on Teachers' Perspectives on Aboriginal Education  
in Public Schools in Canada (2015)**

Directions: Circle your response for each question below.

Question					
Are you aware of any issues, content or perspectives being taught at your school that are related to Aboriginal people?	Yes	No	I Don't Know		
In your current teaching practice, do you incorporate any issues, content or perspectives that are related to Indigenous people?	Yes	No	Not Applicable		
How frequently do you teach Indigenous content?	Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely		
Indicate the extent to which you feel Aboriginal culture is represented in your school curriculum.	Significantly	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all	Don't know
Which of the following methods are used in your school to provide or include the	Indigenous cultural	Indigenous languages	Indigenous education	Indigenous lands	Indigenous spirituality

following aspects of Aboriginal culture and knowledge? (check all that apply)	activities				
Please indicate how sufficient you believe each of the following resources in your school is as it pertains to integrating Aboriginal content and perspectives into the curriculum:					
1. Funding allocated to Aboriginal education	Entirely sufficient	Barely sufficient	Insufficient	Not Applicable	Don't know
2. Resource and reading materials and books	Entirely sufficient	Barely sufficient	Insufficient	Not Applicable	Don't know
3. Professional development and training	Entirely sufficient	Barely sufficient	Insufficient	Not Applicable	Don't know
4. Support provided by Indigenous teachers/elders	Entirely sufficient	Barely sufficient	Insufficient	Not Applicable	Don't know
Rate your level of knowledge with respect to the history, local culture and communities, and current issues, of each of the following Aboriginal groups:					
First Nations	Strong	Adequate	Limited	No knowledge at all	
Metis	Strong	Adequate	Limited	No knowledge at all	
Inuit	Strong	Adequate	Limited	No knowledge at all	

Indicate the extent of your knowledge about the following issues as they pertain to Aboriginal people, and report whether you have any personal interest or work-related need for more knowledge on these issues.				
1. Treaties and land claims	Confident in my knowledge	Would like more personal knowledge	Need more knowledge as it applies to my teaching	Not Applicable
2. Residential schools	Confident in my knowledge	Would like more personal knowledge	Need more knowledge as it applies to my teaching	Not Applicable
3. Funding allocated to Aboriginal education resources in your school	Confident in my knowledge	Would like more personal knowledge	Need more knowledge as it applies to my teaching	Not Applicable
4. Access to basic resources (health, food, housing)	Confident in my knowledge	Would like more personal knowledge	Need more knowledge as it applies to my teaching	Not Applicable
5. Human rights	Confident in my knowledge	Would like more personal knowledge	Need more knowledge as it applies to my teaching	Not Applicable
6. Incorporating Aboriginal content and perspectives into the curriculum	Confident in my knowledge	Would like more personal knowledge	Need more knowledge as it applies to my teaching	Not Applicable
7. Instructional approaches	Confident in my knowledge	Would like more personal knowledge	Need more knowledge as it applies to my teaching	Not Applicable

8. Strategies for addressing students' concerns related to challenges faced by Aboriginal Peoples	Confident in my knowledge	Would like more personal knowledge	Need more knowledge as it applies to my teaching	Not Applicable	
To what extent do you feel confident that you would have the knowledge base to implement curriculum expectations regarding Indigenous content if you were required to do so?	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not confident at all	Don't know	
Which of the following forms of learning or training have you used in the past to improve your knowledge of Indigenous people? (Check all that apply)	Post-secondary courses	Webinars	Videos	Workshops	Conferences
	On-line report/article	Hard copy books/lesson plan	Oral traditions (e.g. Elders or Knowledge keepers)	Other Please specify:	None of the above
Among the forms of learning or training that you indicated	Webinars	Videos	Workshops	Conferences	On-line reports/articles

having used in the past, indicate how effective they were in improving your knowledge of Indigenous People.	Hard copy books/lesson plans	Oral traditions (Elders / Knowledge keepers)	Other Please specify:	None of the above	
Please indicate the extent to which each of the following have supported your knowledge of current issues pertaining to Indigenous people.					
1. Newspapers	Significantly	Somewhat	Not at all/Not applicable		
2. Websites	Significantly	Somewhat	Not at all/Not applicable		
3. Colleagues	Significantly	Somewhat	Not at all/Not applicable		
4. Personal contact (family, friends)	Significantly	Somewhat	Not at all/Not applicable		
5. Social media	Significantly	Somewhat	Not at all/Not applicable		
6. Other	Significantly	Somewhat	Not at all/Not applicable		
Have you participated in any professional development activities to develop/enhance your knowledge and/or skills pertaining to First Nation, Métis, or Inuit history, cultural perspectives or contemporary issues?	Yes	No			

Who provided the professional development you received? (Check all that apply)	Ministry/Department of Education	University or college	Teacher Organization	School Community	
	School board	Indigenous organizations	Other		
What type(s) of professional development, related to Indigenous people, have you participated in? (Check all that apply)	Cultural teachings by an Elder Knowledge keeper – could be a school visit	Workshop on historical perspectives	In-service on new curriculum materials	Integrating Aboriginal content into various subjects across the curriculum	Other
Please rate how satisfied you were that each type of professional development activity you indicated having participated in has met your needs.					
1. Cultural teachings/school visit by an Elder/Knowledge keeper	Very Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not satisfied at all		
2. Workshop on historical perspectives	Very Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not satisfied at all		
3. In-service on new curriculum materials	Very Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not satisfied at all		

4. Integrating Aboriginal content into various subjects across the curriculum	Very Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not satisfied at all		
5. Other Please specify	Very Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not satisfied at all		
Please indicate how important it would be to you to acquire additional knowledge or skills training for each of the following issues related to Aboriginal people in Canada:					
1. Human rights	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important at all		
2. Treaties and land claims	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important at all		
3. Environmental stewardship	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important at all		
4. The legacy of residential schools	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important at all		
5. Incorporating Aboriginal content into the curriculum	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important at all		

6. Instructional approaches including age-appropriate methods for teaching about Aboriginal history and other issues	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important at all		
7. Strategies for addressing student's concerns related to challenges faced by Aboriginal Peoples	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important at all		
In general, over the last 5 years, do you believe that the level of racial prejudice in your community toward Indigenous people has:	Increased	Remained the same	Decreased	Don't know	
Over the last 5 years, have you ever witnessed what you consider to be an example of racism against an Indigenous person in your class or school?	Yes	No			
What form(s) of racism did you witness? (check all that apply)	Verbal abuse	Physical abuse	Social exclusion	Negative stereotyping	Other



What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the teaching of Aboriginal education in Canada?	Short answer question -
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*Note.* CTF Survey on Teachers' Perspectives on Aboriginal Education in Public Schools in Canada. Adapted from Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2015. (<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED602836.pdf>).

### Appendix H: Franklin Covey’s Unconscious Bias Self-Assessment

Selecting the number nearest a right or left statement means that statement strongly represents you. Selecting the circle in the middle means both statements may be representative of you equally.

WHAT IS BIAS?		
Everyone has the same opportunities.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	There are a variety of factors, such as race, gender, socioeconomics, education, and sexual orientation (to name a few) that can have a tremendous impact on the opportunities afforded to us throughout our professional lives.
I don't think I've ever really demonstrated a bias.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I know we all have opportunities to improve, and there are several times I could have been more sensitive or thoughtful before taking action.
Working on the topic of bias and inclusion is a nice to have, but not critical.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Working on this topic will allow everyone at our organization to contribute their very best.
<b>SECTION SCORE:</b>		<b>0</b>

BIAS AND IDENTITY		
I don't get along well with everyone on my team.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I've gone out of my way to get to know my colleagues, even if we have different opinions or interests.
We shouldn't really be talking about issues of diversity at work. It's too political.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Who we are as individuals is not separate from work.
My life experiences don't impact my decisions or personal interactions.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	My identity—such as education, family, where I live, and my personality—could cause me to act in a biased way, either positive or negative, toward someone else.
<b>SECTION SCORE:</b>		<b>0</b>

BIAS AND THE BRAIN		
Only bigoted, racist, or sexist individuals are biased.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Bias is a natural part of the human condition and how all our brains operate.
I'm often in a rush and so I typically make quick decisions, even about big personal or professional issues.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I try to get input from friends, colleagues, or leaders before making critical decisions.
I often go with my gut feeling or belief on important decisions.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I notice when I have an emotional reaction or impulse, and I don't act until I'm able to more objectively assess the situation or get input.
<b>SECTION SCORE:</b>		<b>0</b>

CULTIVATE CONNECTION: CONNECT TO MITIGATE BIAS		
I can fix my biases on my own.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I need the support and input of others to be able to see past my own biases and assumptions.
I usually lead most conversations and meetings at work.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I want to be sure everyone gets a chance to lead and have their voices heard.
I don't ask for feedback or input from my friends, leaders, or peers.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I regularly ask others for feedback on my perspectives, performance, or decisions.
<b>SECTION SCORE:</b>		<b>0</b>

EMPATHY AND CURIOSITY		
I try to avoid unfamiliar people or situations, since that's often uncomfortable.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I can recognize when a new or different situation or person makes me uncomfortable, and I try to learn or better understand as a result of the encounter.
It can be hard for me to empathize with or understand other people's point of view.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I try hard to empathize with and understand others, even when I disagree.
If a topic—such as race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or gender identity—makes me uncomfortable, I'll try to avoid it.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	If a topic makes me uncomfortable, I'll actively work to better understand it by researching or asking thoughtful questions.
<b>SECTION SCORE:</b>		<b>0</b>

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS		
I don't really see the business value of creating an inclusive team.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I know that an inclusive team can result in higher performance, improve collaboration, and facilitate better decision making.
I don't see a need to expand my network of colleagues.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I regularly examine my frequent connections and consider whether I could diversify the perspective and experiences of those around me.
I don't spend time with, or actively avoid, people who challenge my opinions or decisions.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Even when it's difficult to hear, I value dissenting opinions and friends or colleagues who challenge me.
<b>SECTION SCORE:</b>		<b>0</b>

CHOOSE COURAGE: EFFECTIVE COURAGE		
If I confront bias, it will cause more trouble or conflict.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Addressing or confronting bias is the only way we make progress and create an environment where everyone is valued.
Since I'm not very senior at our organization, my opinion isn't always valid.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I know my worth, and dissenting, unconventional, or outside perspectives are often what jumpstart innovation.
I've been in personally uncomfortable or damaging situations, but it wasn't appropriate to speak up.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	Even in a difficult situation, I'm able to advocate for myself or others.
<b>SECTION SCORE:</b>		<b>0</b>

FOUR WAYS TO ACT WITH COURAGE		
I put work first.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I prioritize my self care because I know this improves my overall performance as well as my ability to mitigate bias.
I have a few favorite things—such as political perspectives, reading genres, or hobbies—that I like, and I stick to those.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I like to challenge myself with new points of view or opinions from podcasts, new authors or documentaries, or new hobbies in order to constantly learn and expand my perspective.
I don't know how to get involved in allyship or advocacy at our organization or in my community.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	I know, or am already a part of, a mentor program, employee resource group, community organization, or club.
<b>SECTION SCORE:</b>		<b>0</b>

WHAT IS BIAS	0	<b>1</b> Which of the areas is your strongest?
BIAS AND IDENTITY	0	
BIAS AND THE BRAIN	0	<b>2</b> Which of the areas is your weakest?
CONNECT TO MITIGATE BIAS	0	
EMPATHY AND CURIOSITY	0	
MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS	0	<b>3</b> Which of the areas will you focus on in the coming weeks and beyond?
EFFECTIVE COURAGE	0	
FOUR WAYS TO ACT	0	
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>0 /120</b>	

**If you scored between 100 and 120**, you have high self awareness, curiosity, and courage. But this is not a topic you ever master. You should continue your journey in this area by examining where you still have room for improvement based on 1 or 2 of the 8 areas of unconscious bias where you scored the lowest.

**If your score is between 75 and 99**, you've made some progress in this area but still have room to grow. You should continue your journey by examining where you have room for improvement based on 2 or 3 of the 8 areas of unconscious bias where you scored the lowest.

**If you scored 74 or below**, you have significant room for improvement. This doesn't mean you should be disappointed with yourself because we all have room for improvement in this area. You should continue your journey by examining where you have room for improvement based on 3 or 4 of the 8 areas of unconscious bias where you scored the lowest.

*Note.* Copied from *Bias self-assessment*, by F. Covey, 2021, Franklin Covey Co. (<https://www.franklincovey.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FranklinCovey-Unconscious-Bias-Self-Assessment.pdf>)

### Appendix I: Knowledge Mobilization Plan

Audience	Strategy	Focus	Budget and resources	Timeline / Milestones	Evaluation and feedback
Who are you trying to reach? Is there a tailored message for this audience?	How will you get your message(s) across? What strategies will work best for this audience? Consider how each strategy links to your overall goal.	How many conferences and workshops do you want to deliver? How many users do you want to reach?	E.g. honoraria, information technology, materials, meeting expenses, personnel or human resources, timing, travel, volunteers, etc.	When do you anticipate executing your strategies?	What impact are you trying to achieve? How will you know if you have achieved your goals?
Teachers	Teachers will edit the mission and vision of RPS to ensure that both support multicultural perspectives. Teachers will build on the work that the EDI committee is doing and commit to the standards that have now been set to meet the FNMI competency requirements of the TQS. Teachers will be exposed to the compiled data for each of the survey groups as well as the communal data to identify areas to	Editing the school's mission, vision, and school goals and the analysis of surveys data will focus on areas to improve. How teachers are integrating Indigenous epistemology will be shared with teachers during staff meetings and our bimonthly PLC.	Minimal costs will be required apart from the blanket ceremony exercise which will require materials, trained supervisors from SASD who are qualified to teach the exercise and travel.	By the end of August - our mission, vision, and school goals will be edited and established. By the end of September teachers will understand what all teachers are required to do to meet the FNMI competency requirement at RPS. Survey analysis will happen at the end of each semester (January and June respectively). The Blanket ceremony will happen on an SI day by the end of December and	Direct feedback from teachers in the depth, breadth, and frequency of integrating Indigenous perspectives into classes through one-on-one discussion with the principal. The survey and data will be analyzed, areas for improvement will be identified and subsequently

Audience	Strategy	Focus	Budget and resources	Timeline / Milestones	Evaluation and feedback
	<p>improve. Teachers will communicate with staff during staff meetings and bimonthly PLC meetings on how they are integrating Indigenous knowledge into classes. Teachers will engage in the Blanket exercise in order to develop an Indigenous perspective of what happened to Indigenous people throughout Canadian history. Teachers will post on the school's social media how they are incorporating Indigenous epistemology into their classes with the knowledge that these examples will be collected and communicated later to our Board.</p>			<p>teachers will share how they are incorporating Indigenous epistemology every two months during a staff meeting as well as during our bimonthly PLC meetings.</p>	<p>communicated to each teacher.</p>
Students	1. Cultural Posters	Students will	1. Elder, honorarium	1. The Cultural	The impact that



Audience	Strategy	Focus	Budget and resources	Timeline / Milestones	Evaluation and feedback
	<p>with a focus on Indigenous content including residential schools, treaties, and the various Indigenous groups that live in our area. 2. Cultural fair that explores the various cultures that are at our school as well as the Indigenous groups that are mentioned in our Land Acknowledgement. 3. Using each of the Grandfather teachings to characterise the attributes of a good global citizen and frame the monthly theme of our assemblies. Also, our monthly newsletters will inform students about the work our teachers are doing incorporating Indigenous epistemology into classes.</p>	<p>receive instruction from connecting with Elders during classes and by participating in on the land activities where each student will have opportunity to ask questions and get their questions answered.</p>	<p>and tobacco offering. 2. Computers, whiteboard with projectors, camera and stable internet connection to engage with Elders through an online forum. 2. Tools for on the land activity 3. Travel expenses and parental chaperones for on- land activities</p>	<p>Posters could be put around the school at the beginning of the year and changed up/rotated half way through the year. The cultural fair could be once a year around spring break so that students could understand the concept and have the time to work on a project that will be showcased to the general public. 2. Assemblies and newsletters will happen on a monthly basis with the short months of December and January being combined into one month and no newsletter or grandfather teaching to be used in the month of June.</p>	<p>I am trying to achieve is for students to become aware of the different cultural groups recognized in our school, and to realize that there are different ways of thinking, knowing and doing. As for teaching the Grandfather teachings, this aspect has been integrated into school culture to illustrate aspects of being a good global citizen and the importance that doing so will have on building one's positive character. Further</p>

Audience	Strategy	Focus	Budget and resources	Timeline / Milestones	Evaluation and feedback
					evaluation will be reflected in biannual surveys and our focused areas for improvement.
Parents	1. Reading our Land Acknowledgement at the beginning of each assembly and School Council Meeting 2. Message sent out to all parents and students in news letters as to how teachers are incorporating Indigenous epistemology into classes. 3. Teachers sending out notifications and posts on the school's social media platforms informing parents of the cultural and/or land connections they are making in class. 3.Engaging parents in	Having parents contribute to our school's "new" Land Acknowledgement will help parents feel that they have had input on what we are reading and are reflected in our statement that recognizes the contributions of both Indigenous and Settlers in the spirit of reconciliation and treaty acknowledgement. Up until now we have used the Land Acknowledgement developed by SASD which, up until now, has only been communicated to	Minimal costs will be occurred as the parental contribution towards our Land Acknowledgement will occur during monthly School Council meetings and no to low additional costs will be required for parents to engage as chaperones during on-land activities. Survey results could be communicated to parents during School Council meetings as well as in newsletters.	The land acknowledgement will be read at all assemblies and the opening of School Council meetings starting in September. The reading of our Land acknowledgement will be reserved only for these specific times so as to not overuse this process and diminish its meaning.	Parental feedback collected during School Council meetings, in conversations with the principal, and in parents withdrawing students during cultural activities will indicate if parents are supporting or resisting the integration of Indigenous content in classes.

Audience	Strategy	Focus	Budget and resources	Timeline / Milestones	Evaluation and feedback
	<p>the Blanket exercise will help them develop a different perspective of the impact that treaties and legislation have had on many Indigenous groups across Canada. 4. I would also ask the parents to contribute to a new Land Acknowledgement which reflects all members of the respective treaty area. 5. Communicate the cumulative survey results for both the Indigenous content survey and the bias survey.</p>	<p>the students, teachers, and community members. Having parent volunteers participate in student on-land excursions will help facilitate respect for Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous cultures. This event will occur once every 3 years, but will be applicable to multiple grades, and therefore the message will be sent to more parents. The respective cumulative results of the surveys will be communicated to parents to illustrate areas we need to target for improvement.</p>			
Division and Board	Presentation to the Board of SASD as part of RPS annual	One presentation per year using Power point/Prezi.	Travel to Division office	Division office will schedule the presentation to the	Board and Division feedback at the

Audience	Strategy	Focus	Budget and resources	Timeline / Milestones	Evaluation and feedback
	school presentation	The slides for this section will illustrate how Indigenous content is being integrated into courses and school culture. This will include on-land activities, classroom activities, and our cultural exhibition. Members of the Division and the Board would also be invited to view our cultural exhibition at RPS.		Board. Our presentation will include cultural activities and classroom integration to date as well as future prospects we are working on.	end of the presentation.

*Note.* Knowledge mobilization plan. Adapted from *Knowledge mobilization toolkit: Doing more with what you know*, Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health, 2019. (<http://www.kmbtoolkit.ca/the-toolkit>).

**Appendix J: Summary of the Main Points of the Knowledge Mobilization Plan**

Audience	Actionable Items	Interaction	Building Capacity
Teacher	Editing mission, vision, and school goals, and establishing the school's FNMI competency standards.	With other teachers and the principal	Teachers understand that Indigenous perspectives will be integrated into classroom and school culture.
	Survey analysis of student, teacher, and parent surveys	With teachers and the principal	Teachers will identify areas in need of improvement to integrate Indigenous epistemology into course disciplines as well as identify areas to target to challenge biases and negative stereotypes
	Blanket exercise	With all staff	Teachers will gain a new perspective of how legislation and land rights have impacted Indigenous groups throughout Canada
	Sharing of Indigenous connections during staff and PLC meetings	With teachers	Teachers gain insight into connections that others have made and establishes a mentor capacity where struggling teachers can find support and guidance on how they can apply Indigenous content in their own classes
Student	Cultural fair	With students, teachers, parents, and the community	Students present on cultural groups mentioned in our land acknowledgement

Student	In class presentations and on-land experiences	Students, teachers, parents, and Indigenous Elders	Students learn knowledge firsthand from a recognized Indigenous Elder.
Parent	Blanket Exercise and on-land cultural activities	Students, teachers, parents, and Elders	Gain an understanding of the impact treaties and legislation have had on Indigenous history. Understand that Indigenous cultures have knowledge that is valuable and can be applied to curricular objectives as well as sustainable land management
Parent	Rewriting of our Land Acknowledgement and contributing to the mission and vision statements of the school	Parents, teachers, and the principal	Recognizing that we share responsibility for the land with those people who were here before us as a step towards reconciliation. The parents' input on our mission and vision statements will help inform all parents of the direction that the school is moving and create a buy-in opportunity for those who participate.
Board	Presentation to the Board	Principal, Division, and Board members	SASD will understand how teachers are integrating Indigenous epistemology into school culture and course content.

*Note.* Summarized Knowledge mobilization plan. Adapted from *Knowledge mobilization toolkit: Doing more with what you know*, Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health, 2019. (<http://www.kmbtoolkit.ca/the-toolkit>). The original template reflects much of the way that I currently communicate change and solicit buy-in from all stakeholders who will be impacted by a change initiative at RPS.

**Appendix K: Determining Teacher Readiness To Implement Change Once Expectations And Frameworks Have Been Clearly Communicated And Established**

Questions to Assess Change Readiness	Yes (1)	Partial (3)	No (5)
(Awareness) Do teachers understand...			
1. that this change is mandated by the TQS and LQS	X		
2. the consequences if change doesn't happen?		X	
3. what is trying to be achieved?	X		
4. how things will be better?	X		
5. how the change will impact their area of work?	X		
6. what their role will be in the future state?	X		
(Desire) Do teachers ...			
1. know that management is aligned with the change efforts?	X		
2. feel their concerns, questions, and needs are being heard?	X		
3. feel hopeful about the future?	X		
4. see value in the change?		X	
5. believe a well thought out strategy is being put in place to achieve the	X		

change?			
(Knowledge) Do teachers ... (skills, informational, training)			
1. have the necessary information, knowledge and skills to successfully fulfill their role?		X	
2. know where to go for additional information about the change?		X	
3. know what resources are available to support the personal side of change?		X	
4. know what success looks like?		X	
5. have a plan to achieve success?	X		
6. know which behaviors will need to change?			X
(Ability) Do teachers ... infrastructure (systems, tools)			
1. believe that the organization has provided appropriate resources (time, staff, information, etc.) to support the anticipated change?	X		
2. have the necessary systems, processes, and policies in place?		X	
3. have the ability to execute the new behaviors required for the change?		X	
4. know how to perform the required tasks?	X		




(Reinforcement) Do teachers...			
1. view management as a resource for removing/overcoming barriers?	X		
2. have mechanisms in place to reinforce the required behaviors?	X		
3. have metrics in place to assess the ongoing effectiveness of the change?	X		

*Note.* Change Readiness Assessment. Adapted from *Change management toolkit*, by University of California, Berkeley. (n.d.).

([https://hr.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/change\\_management\\_toolkit.pdf](https://hr.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/change_management_toolkit.pdf)).

**Appendix L: Redetermining the Readiness of RPS to Integrate Indigenous Perspectives into Classes Once Expectations and Frameworks Have Been Established**

Readiness Impact	Assessment Scale <i>1</i> ← → <i>5</i>						Readiness Rating = 2.125
1. Degree of leadership consensus on change vision	High		X			Low	The vice principal now believes that structuring teachers to connect to Indigenous content and ways of knowing once or twice over the course of the year fulfills the TQS requirements but acknowledges that more connections will be better. The vice principal now fully supports the principal's vision that Indigenous epistemology should be reflected in classes on a more regular basis by connecting with land, community, and stories and that having a broader view and respect for other cultures is vital for our students to obtain.
2. Degree of leadership consensus on need for change	High	X				Low	Both the principal and vice principal now recognize the importance of incorporating FNMI perspectives into the school and classroom culture to fulfill the TQS and LQS requirements. Doing so structures students for success when living and working with people from other cultures, a critical skill if and when they move to an urban city center for work or study (Vice Principal, personal communication, 2018 -2020).
3. Degree of stakeholder consensus on need for change	High		X			Low	Teachers at RPS understand that they are mandated to teach foundational Indigenous knowledge, but now have some experience working with Indigenous people, have knowledge about Indigenous cultures, and have seen the positive impact that incorporating Indigenous perspectives into classes has had on expanding the student's world view and investigating course topics at a greater depth.
4. Stakeholder commitment	High			X		Low	Teachers are starting to find relevant and meaningful connections between their shared on-land experiences and the course content

								they need to teach. As teachers see and hear about other teachers connecting with Indigenous epistemology, and the positive effects it has on connecting students to the curriculum, I believe that more teachers will come on board.
5. Stakeholder's understanding of the standards/ expectations that accompany the change	High		X				Low	With the EDI committee establishing the FNMI competency requirements for all teachers to meet at RPS, in conjunction with discussions of integrating Indigenous epistemology into classes during PLC times, and teachers participating in the Watch Others Work program to learn from and mentor other teachers on Indigenous connections and integration, I believe that there will be a high standard created to ensure that all teachers are integrating Indigenous perspectives into their classes.
6. Understand of need by "users"	High		X				Low	Teachers understand the FNMI competency requirement of the TQS and can now see that connecting learning to the land has a positive impact on our rural agricultural students and their ability to explore curricular objectives at a deeper level.
7. Number of competing change initiatives	Few		X				Many	The incorporation of Indigenous content into classes is reflected in our literacy and numeracy goals by using these goals to further explore the on-land adventures and the traditional Indigenous knowledge the Elders share when telling stories.
8. Resources allocated to project	Extensive			X			Limited	Additional money will be allocated from the school budget to fund the on-land expeditions, pay an honorarium to connect with Indigenous Elders via Zoom, and provide all Elders with packets of tobacco as we seek guidance in exploring Indigenous cultures at a greater depth.
<i>Positive (1)</i>								<i>Negative (5)</i>

### Change Readiness Rating

Use your responses to the questions to identify the average readiness rating by adding up all of the responses and dividing it by 8. This will determine the readiness rating. Once you have the readiness rating use the scale below to better understand the meaning of the rating and actions that may be needed.

Complexity Rating	Generic Meaning	Actions Required
1	Full structure exists to support project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A low readiness score shows that the project has focused on aligning leaders, gaining stakeholder commitment and consensus, as well as re-mediating risks associated with the project.</li> <li>• Projects with a score in this range should focus on maintaining it position and continuing to deliver against a developed change management plan</li> </ul>
2	Great deal of structure exists to support project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project indicates that it has a structure outlined to support the change management associated with the project</li> <li>• Project should meet with the HUIT Change Management resources to review the change management plan and identify if other activities are needed</li> </ul>
3	Some structure exists to support project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A median change management readiness score indicates that the project has done some activities to prepare the organization for the project but there are additional activities that can and should be completed in order to ensure success of the project</li> <li>• Project should meet with the HUIT Change Management resources to review the change management plan, identify if other activities are needed, and/ or additional resources are</li> </ul>

		required to support the project
4	Minimal structure evident to support project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A project with this score has done minimal amounts of change management to create a structure that supports the project</li> <li>• Additional steps and/or activities are required in order to ensure the success of the project</li> <li>• If a Change Management Lead is not aligned to this project, a resource needs to be secured</li> <li>• Other change management roles may be necessary for this project as well in order to effectively deliver change management</li> <li>• The project will need to align leadership and users to the desired future state of the organization in order to successfully implement change</li> </ul>
5	No structure evident to support the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The high readiness scores identifies that the project needs to focus on change management activities to propel the project</li> <li>• If a Change Management Lead is not aligned to this project, a resource needs to be secured</li> <li>• Other change management roles may be necessary for this project as well in order to effectively deliver change management</li> <li>• The project will need to align leadership and users to the desired future state of the organization in order to successfully implement change</li> </ul>

*Note.* Change Readiness Scorecard for RPS. Adapted from *Change complexity and readiness scorecards*, by T. Shorter, 2017, Harvard University Information Technology Confluence.

(<https://confluence.huit.harvard.edu/display/HCMPC/Change+Complexity+and+Readiness+Scorecards>).