

**A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO CAPACITY BUILDING:
FOR PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES**

By

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Abstract

The history of Education in Canada has been systemically and generational destructive to Aboriginal people and culture. This history of destruction has caused systemic racism throughout our school systems resulting in lower graduation rates and a lack of equity in achievement within education resulting in gaps in social-economic disparity for Aboriginal People in Canada (Archibald & Hare, 2017). This research project aims to address a gap in the education of educators in regard to closing the gap and working together for reconciliation. This project provides a framework for a holistic understanding of how to approach working within First Nations communities within the education system or across systems. The result of this project is a guidebook and PowerPoint presentation for professional development. The project provides educational professionals with some tools and knowledge to improve inclusive and culturally sensitive practice. The project delivers a common goal framework conceptualized by the researcher and adapted from a generalized, personal, and interpretative understanding of the *Aboriginal Medicine Wheel*. The four-part conceptual framework includes *leadership, holistic approach, capacity building, and ethical considerations* with the common goal in the center. The project brings together the concepts important to achieving the common goal of improving professional capacity when working with Aboriginal People and First Nations communities.

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Definition of Terms

The following words are defined to create an improved understanding of terms that are not commonly used outside of academia or the education field. Each definition will include a description and explanation of the word as it is used for the purpose of this project.

Aboriginal, First Nations, Indigenous – “being the first or earliest known of its kind present in a region” I use terms such as “First Nations,” “Aboriginal,” and “Indigenous” interchangeably for the purpose of this project. “All terms are meant to include all Aboriginal people” (Archibald & Hare, 2017, p. xi). The Constitution Act (1982) defines Aboriginal people as including the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada. I never use the word *Indian* unless the term is derived from the research, as this is considered derogatory to most people today. I tend to use First Nations when I am speaking about communities or a specific group of people. I usually reference *Aboriginal* only when talking about systems or organizations. I lean towards the term *Indigenous* as the term for the people of this land. The United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous people (UNDRIP) politically defines Indigenous as descendants of a distinct group in a territory at the time when another group of different cultures or ethnic groups arrived in that territory (United Nations, 2011). A group of people that have preserved intact customs and traditions of their ancestors and that have distinct knowledge, language, social and cultural characteristics (Belanger, 2010). Most of my learning and perspective comes from the peoples of Northern BC when I speak about First Nations, Aboriginal, and Indigenous from my personal experience, more specifically the Dakelh People of this area. However, the Métis culture has had a strong influence on my epistemology as well. My knowledge and understanding comes from a weaving of the Metis and Dekelh

teachings I have received in my life and career in addition to my research. The research indicates the term Aboriginal or Indigenous can include people from other lands such as Australia.

Aboriginal Education – “Indigenous education specifically focuses on teaching Indigenous knowledge, models, methods, and content within formal or non-formal educational systems”. As is explained in the literature, “The growing recognition and use of Indigenous education methods can be a response to the erosion and loss of Indigenous knowledge through the processes of colonialism, globalization, and modernity” (May & Aikman, 2003, p. 139). Public K-12 Educational institutions in Canada are provincially funded to make education accessible and relevant to Aboriginal people. The intent of Aboriginal Education in schools is to engage students, create an environment of inclusive learning, and battle systemic racism within the education system. Cultural education creates a sense of belonging and connection to learning and where students fit within the education system. In knowledge we create a relational relationship to how we know what we know, axiology, our values, principles, protocols, beliefs, practices, and methodology, the approach that an individual or collective will take when they exploring the depth of that research such as, Indigenous methodology – adopting or adapting qualitative, narrative inquiry. Indigenous peoples have their own approach to learning that connects knowledge to the world around us and in turn connects a student to that knowledge.

Authentic Leadership – Authentic Leadership is an approach to leadership that emphasizes building leaders through honest relationships with constituents who value their leaders’ input and is built on an ethical foundation (Northouse, 2016). Being genuine and real creates an environment of trust. Trust is significant to the relational nature of

Indigenous relations. Authentic leaders are those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/oral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths, moreover, aware of the context in which they operate, and are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character (Northouse, 2016).

Autoethnography – Autoethnography is a form of qualitative research in which an author uses self-reflection and/or personal experience in order to understand cultural experiences (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 1). The basis for this research project is my experiences in Aboriginal education and my passion for teaching and reconciliation. My perspective and personal lived experiences help guide what I believe is essential for people to know when beginning the journey into cultural awareness is why an autoethnography fits in well for this research.

Axiology – Wilson (2008) defines axiology as “the ethics or morals that guide the search for knowledge and judge which information is worthy of searching for” (p. 34). Axiology are the values and ethics that guide and assists you in judging what is earnest knowledge. This research project is an example of my axiology in the way I choose or not choose to present the information. Your axiology will define how you receive the data presented.

Colonialism – In an encyclopedia titled Colonialism, colonialism is defined as one society seeking to dominate another, extending political economic and sometimes even social power over another group of people. This pattern of settlement and domination or assertion of control over another human group was often achieved by trickery and usually involving illegitimate means (Page, Eugene, & Sonnenburg, 2003). Colonialism has impacted Indigenous people around the world by forcing the disconnection from their

land, culture, community, and traditional forms of knowledge. In the world today, we see this disconnection has created health, economic, and social-emotional inequities.

Colonialistic – Relating to colonialism in thought or action. I refer to a colonialistic way of doing things or seeing the world. Colonialistic is the *mainstream* or Eurocentric way our society teaches the way things should be by the western settlers to Canada.

Decolonization – The definition of decolonization is defined in the Oxford dictionary (2010) as “the action or process of a state withdrawing from a former colony, leaving it independent” (Oxford English dictionary, 2010). Battiste (2013) in *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit* explains decolonization as a transformation of how we think about knowledge and learning. The colonization and forced assimilation of Indigenous people in Canada attempted to remove traditional forms of learning and traditional knowledge transfer. To decolonize would mean to undo the damage done to traditional knowledge systems and rebuild a new model of education with preservation of knowledge systems and inclusion at the four front (Battiste, 2013).

Epistemology – Wilson (2008) defines epistemology as “the study of the nature of thinking or knowing. It involves the theory of how we come to have knowledge, or how we know that we know something” (p. 33). My epistemology comes from an Indigenous perspective. How I have come to know the knowledge contained in this project comes from the knowledge gained through traditional knowledge transfer from my Elders, from my research, and my life and career experience.

Epistemicide – Refers to the destruction of existing knowledge systems (Hall & Tandon, 2017). Indigenous knowledge systems are spiritual, experiential, and land-based, but these diverse knowledge systems are excluded from most mainstream education. Land-

based has a deeper meaning to just learning on the land. It holds the protocols, prayers, incantations, songs, dances, ceremonies etc.

Equality – “The state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities”

(Oxford English dictionary, 2010). Equality suggests that everyone is at the same level and has an equal opportunity for achievement if everything is equally distributed.

However, with equality, the outcomes for people would be much different coming from different backgrounds. For example, children from higher-income families will perform better at school, which will create more opportunities than for those from more impoverished circumstances (Berk, 2013).

Equity – Equity refers to the qualities of fairness impartiality and justness in the outcomes. For example, children's performance in school and on standardized tests is strongly correlated with family income and maternal education (Berk, 2013). Thus, it is not reasonable to treat everyone like they have the same opportunities or are equal to one another as this causes inequities. Inequities are a lack of fairness, justice, opportunity, and equality.

Eurocentric – is a worldview that is centered on Western civilization or a biased view that favors it over non-western civilizations (Hobson, 2012). With this project, I am challenging the Eurocentric ideas of professional development as well as challenging others to see education or any business that must be conducted, from another world view and perspective.

Indigenist – Wilson (2008) explains the definition of Indigenist as a philosophical standpoint or research paradigm, not referring to Indigeneity. I consider myself an

Indigenist as my blood quantum is not Aboriginal. However, my world view, perspective, research paradigm, and pedagogy are Indigenous.

Indigenous Method(s) – Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) explains Indigenous methods as “a way for Indigenous researchers to give validity to Indigenous knowledge, language, and culture in their research” (p. 86). Indigenous Methods bring Indigenous knowledge, thought, and perspective from my personal experiences into my research.

Methodology – “Methodology refers to the theory of how knowledge is gained, or in other words, the science of finding things out. Your view for what reality is, and how you know this reality” (Wilson, 2008, p. 34). My way of examining this reality is through my story, my experiences blended with the knowledge of our ancestors. Mayan (2009) explains research as a conversation with our ancestors.

Métis – “An Indigenous nation of Canada that has combined Native American and European culture. The first Métis were the children of Indigenous women and European fur traders in the Red River area of the province of Manitoba. They had a distinctive way of life; their culture, clothing, artwork, music, and dance, are characterized as unique” (Britannica, 2008). This project includes Métis people in all reference to Indigenous or Aboriginal.

Ontology – Wilson (2008) explains ontology as “the theory of the nature of existence, or the nature of reality...this depending on the viewpoint of the observer. Asking, what is real?” (Wilson, 2008, p. 33). My approach to inquiry is that I believe I can make change in the world around me, and this project is a way to make change towards a more holistic approach to learning for educators. I believe you can make change for a more equitable future.

Research Paradigm(s) – paradigms are labels that are used to identify sets of underlying beliefs or assumptions upon which research is based (Wilson, 2008, p. 33). I challenge the set of rules which western paradigms set for how we should learn. I present an Indigenous paradigm or model for a way of knowing, learning, and teaching as my research paradigm.

Pedagogy – Pedagogy is most commonly understood as the approach to teaching. Pedagogy, taken as an academic discipline, is the study of how knowledge and skills are imparted in an educational context, and it considers the interactions that take place during learning (Li, 2012). An Indigenous pedagogy is holistic in nature, seeing the learner and learning as reciprocal, including all aspects of mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional development for the creation of knowledge.

Racism – Hoyt Jr. (2012) defines racism as the belief that all members of a purported race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or other races. Racism is a particular form of prejudice defined by preconceived erroneous beliefs about race and members of racial groups (Hoyt, 2012, p. 225). Racism is defined for a better understanding of systemic racism below.

Reciprocal – Archibald (2008) writes about the reciprocal nature or reciprocity of relationship. For me, reciprocal is best described as circular, no end, and no beginning a give and take in relationship or collaboration. Little Bear (2009) explains the revisiting of knowledge. Learning happens in a cyclical or circular nature, always returning to the original knowledge to see if it is still valid or needs revisiting. In this way, learning is

never-ending, reciprocal teaching includes learning and so on back and forth, round and round. I call this the Journey.

Reconciliation – Canada defines reconciliation as a dialogue and transformative legislation that revitalizes the relationships among Indigenous peoples and all Canadians. Building a new relationship between Aboriginal people and all Canadians is based on acknowledging the past and its present-day impacts, reconciliation, and healing for past injustices, and moving forward toward a better future for all (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2012).

Systemic Racism – Systemic racism is defined as the racism that exists within systems, either consciously or unconsciously. Most systems or organizations are built upon a Eurocentric paradigm. Racism is rooted in all levels of society. Racism is the result of the inherent biases and prejudices of the policies and practices of social and political organizations, groups, or institutions (Battiste, 2013).

Dedication

I dedicate this project to my children, Ashton and Tristan Parisian. You are two of the most beautiful things that have ever happen in my life. You have taught me more than you will ever realize about what is important in life. You have supported me during lots of late nights and long hours in my office while I was working on this project and for the last three years of working on achieving my Master of Education. My passion for Aboriginal Education and change within the school system comes from my drive to change the world for you, boys. Every time I talk about Aboriginal students in the school system, I see your faces and struggles. You make me want to be the best version of myself. I love you, my little Métis boys, this would not be possible without you. Keep striving to be the best versions of yourselves. Thank you ~ Love Mom

I would also like to dedicate this project to my late husband, Gerry (Sonny) Parisian. While I was finishing this project, my husband passed away tragically a week before Christmas. We were married for almost 19 years and had the two beautiful boys mentioned above. To be honest, I was not sure if I could continue with the completion of this project. Sonny was my biggest fan, he believed in me, motivated me, and supported me both emotionally, financially, being present for the kids when I could not, and making dinners, through every step of my educational journey. What got me motivated again was the fact that he would never want me to give up, he would want me to finish, he would be so upset if I got this far and did not finish. Sadly, he cannot be here to see the completion of my Master of Education, but it certainly would not have been possible without his love, patience, and support. I have chosen to leave the project in the present tense, as when I originally wrote it because, to me, it is all still true, I am a wife, and we grew and learned together, and I would not have been able to do this without him. So, I honour him by sharing with you that this project has only been possible because of the support of

my late husband and our children. To my love ~ I thank you. I feel you guiding me, motivating me, rooting for me, I miss you. This project is for you and our strong, beautiful Métis boys...thank you for our Journey.

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I would like to acknowledge the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation whose lands I have had the privilege to learn and grow on. I have had the privilege to live my whole life in the Lheidli T'enneh territory in Prince George, B.C. The acceptance of the Aboriginal community, being invited to be a part of both informal and formal conversations and cared for by Indigenous Elders here in Prince George is an honour. I would not be able to do the work I do without your support. As a non-Indigenous person, it is important to me that I acknowledge how honored I am to be able to do this research and work in Aboriginal Education.

I would like to acknowledge my Elders and knowledge holders that have taught me so much along this long journey. I would not be the person I am today without you. I have been blessed with many people to teach me about my connection to the creator, culture, and traditional knowledge.

To my committee, it has been a long journey to get here. Thank you for walking alongside me as I navigated both personal and academic struggles. I would like to express my thanks to Māori Scholar Dr. Tina Frasor, Gwen Budskin, and Dr. Catherine Whalen for all the guidance and support along the way and countless hours of teaching such deep, and meaningful conversations.

To my very best friend (almost), Dr. Shelly Niemi. I say almost because she is completing her doctorate this year. We have both been on quite the educational journey. Shelly is my soul sister, my very best friend, my biggest cheerleader, and my coach for the last 20 plus years. I am so fortunate to have a friend like Shelly in my life. She was the one who has always believed I could be more, do more than I ever imagined. She was the one that encouraged me to work in Aboriginal Education when I thought I had no place; she was the one that pushed me to apply to

the Master of Education program. Shelly is the one I call when I need encouragement to push forward. Shelly has been with me through all the ups and downs of my life and educational journey. I am so blessed to have this amazing, smart, and driven woman in my life.

I would like to acknowledge a man that would never acknowledge himself. Mr. Scotty Raitt was my alternate education teacher. Yes, I was an alternative education student, not because I could not do the work, but because my life as a teen was difficult. I wonder if most people can identify the moments or people that can profoundly change the trajectory of their lives. This man would never admit this, but because of his encouragement of me and belief that education is the key to life success, he changed the direction my life was going in. With his words, I continued to strive for success in my education and work today because I know just one person believing in a student can change their lives. I once tried to tell him that his influence was a direct result of my success in life. He said to me, “I didn’t do that, you did” and walked away. I will never forget to be humble because of him, but I do hope that he knows how his life as an educator was genuinely influential.

There are many more people in my life that have contributed to my educational journey. These mentors and guides have given me guidance as a researcher and scholar. Because of my lived experience, I will continue to grow into my identity with the strength I need to keep moving forward in my Journey.

Chapter One: Research Background and Conceptual Framework

This project focuses on building a guidebook and PowerPoint to support professional capacity in successfully working with local urban and on-reserve Indigenous communities. Local, being the First Nations from the land in which the work is happening. Urban, being the other Indigenous nations within that Indigenous nation's traditional territory usually within a city center. The project explores a common goal framework, conceptualized by the researcher, and adapted from my Metis understanding of the Aboriginal *Medicine Wheel*. This project explores a holistic approach to capacity building, providing educational non-Indigenous professionals with tools to improve inclusive and culturally sensitive practice. Culturally sensitive practice refers to being aware of cultural differences in addition to the similarities that exist within cultures. Some people are accustomed to certain cultural norms and may struggle to understand and respect differences within other cultures. Developing culturally sensitive practice allows for a productive and respectful working relationship. The focus of this project is on educational practice and improving student educational outcomes. However, the framework can be used in any setting or organization to professionally develop a deeper understanding of working with First Nations communities and or students. This project is my research, from my perspective, based on my experience and exploration of academic research. Through my experience and research exploration, I believe that this project can provide an authentic way of achieving a common goal when working with First Nations communities.

The project conceptual framework has four parts; leadership, capacity building, ethics, and holistic perspective; all centered on the common goal. The project aims to bring together the concepts necessary to achieving the common goal of improving professional capacity when working with First Nations communities. How do we build capacity for inclusion among non-

Indigenous professionals? How do we build capacity for non-Indigenous professionals working with First Nations communities to achieve a common goal? These are some of the questions this project will explore, culminating in a guide to professional practice when working with First Nations communities.

Chapter One of this project will cover the rationale, background, researcher context, and overview of the conceptual framework. *Chapter Two* will review the current literature informing each quadrant of the framework. *Chapter Three* will explain the methodology and project plan. The project is a guidebook and PowerPoint for professional development. The project will provide a professional development package used to build capacity among non-Indigenous or possibly culturally curious professionals working with First Nations communities. The framework is general enough to possibly apply to various Indigenous communities and professions but also from my experience working with local Dakeelh and Metis nations in Northern British Columbia. Professionals are often being asked to collaborate or achieve work together with Indigenous peoples or communities for Reconciliation and a more equitable future in Canada. Part of Reconciliation in Canada requires that all professionals seek opportunities to align education, health, and economics with First Nations cultural values and community goals. Non-Indigenous professionals may not feel confident in working with First Nations communities because of the fear of not approaching the culture appropriately or whatever the apprehension may be. This project is to help these professionals feel more confident in their understanding and approach when working with First Nations communities to achieve authentic, collaborative partnerships.

Extensive quotes are found throughout this project because I found it uncomfortable to paraphrase the words of the scholars that have informed my research journey. The learning came

from a conversation about long quotes with someone I admire. Why do I, as a researcher, struggle with paraphrasing? She sent this quote with permission. “I see the words of those who I have learned from as part of their story, a part of their journey. It is hard to honour the teachings and learnings of my Ancestors, Elders, co-researchers, and other scholars if I try to distill or shorten their words” (Edōsdi/Thompson, 2012). I feel as though I am not true to the words or stories by changing them. I allow the authors to speak for themselves through keeping the quotes intact. Fyre Jean Graveline (2000) speaks to her Indigenous research methodology and struggle to paraphrase in academic writing:

“Rule Three: BREVITY

I am told: “This quote is too long

has too much text in it.

Break it up.

Comment on the content.

Theorize: What do You think They mean?”

Create Bridges it is called.

I am stunned.

In Circle Talk

when a speaker has the Stone

She or he talks as long as they want.

Making their Own connections

between Self and others in Circle

Self and topic

Self and Communities.

My task is to Shrink stories.

Cut huge chunks of now named “extraneous” material.

As I struggle to Insert my own comments

Intruding into Other’s stories

I become self-consciously Aware.

Editing: a polite code word
 for Actions viewed Disrespectful
 Unacceptable
 in Traditional Circles” (Graveline, 2000, pp. 367-368).

Indigenous research methods, world views and perspectives in addition to autoethnographic methodology inform my research, my work, my passion. The research is relational, and the framework is reciprocal. Atalay (2012) suggests that “braiding knowledge,” the process of braiding together different epistemologies or ways of knowing about the world, contributes to a greater understanding of the subject. The framework and this project are a braiding of research, my professional and personal experience to provide a generalized understanding of Indigenous and non-Indigenous research to explain non-western ideas of a holistic approach or understanding of a working relationship.

This project is for my children, for your children, to heal the wrongs of the past and create the opportunity for a brighter future. I want to listen and learn from my predecessors to create that future where everyone can achieve success without systemic, historical, or racial barriers. This project will create a tool for non-Indigenous professionals that may have apprehension but willingness to find a starting point for their understanding, an approach for their learning. Many educators and professionals during my career have said to me that they want to do the authentic work that is needed but have no idea where to start. This project is the beginning of the journey to building capacity within one’s own approach.

Significance of the Project

How do we build capacity for inclusion among professionals? Professional development for educators is essential. “*Teacher quality* is the single most important school variable influencing student achievement” (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013, p. 320). Inclusive systems are

essential in education today. “A critical imperative for the development of inclusive school systems is the capacity to nurture and develop teachers who have the understanding, skills, critical sensibilities and contextual awareness to provide quality educational access, participation, and outcomes for all students” (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013, p. 320). The research framework is meant to assist with professional development and improve education outcomes for students or organizations looking to improve their holistic capacity. “One must be aware of the historical experience of Aboriginal people...The impact of education is intergenerational, meaning that the education experience and attitudes of the parents and prior generations impact upon the students of today, the current generation” (Faries, 2009, p. 1). Faries and other scholars suggest that education was the primary assault on Indigenous people and knowledge systems. The research suggested that education is also the movement towards transformative systemic change and social justice.

Understanding the history of First Nations people is critical to understanding why we need to move towards reconciliation in Canada today. This history is important because people must identify with the atrocities of the past to understand the current conditions of today. Gaining a more in-depth understanding helps people to identify why we need healing in our nation and why we need to all work together to make right the wrongs of the past. “A lack of teacher awareness of the cultural and historical background of Aboriginal students has long been recognized as a major causative factor in the failure of schools to fully engage Aboriginal students and deliver equitable educational outcomes for them” (Burgess & Cavanagh, 2015, p. 49). Burgess and Cavanagh explain that there is a lack of teacher awareness because teachers did not learn about the true history of residential schools or the governments forbidding of knowledge transfer in Indigenous culture. Teachers were not made aware in postsecondary

because of the hidden history of the relations between the Canada and its Indigenous people. I believe teaching about the attempted destruction of Indigenous people allows a responsibility to be accountable and part of reconciliation in Canada and ensure this history is not repeated. When I refer to history, I do not mean ancient history as the generational and systemic effects of this epistemicide are alive and well today, considering the last residential school closed in 1996 (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2012). However, Indigenous people are resilient and continue to advocate for rights, equity, and achievement for all Indigenous people in Canada. Culturally responsive and inclusive schools is one way to be a part of the movement towards reconciliation.

Culturally responsive and inclusive school leadership, in addition to professional development, is responsible for the promotion of an inclusive school community (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016, p. 1274). Culturally responsive and inclusive school leadership is being aware of cultural differences and varying needs within those cultures. A current climate of awareness can create an inclusive environment. Denial that there are differences amongst cultures rejects a need for change (Louie, 2017). “Studies define inclusive education as an ongoing and systemic process of changing school culture” (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013, p. 326). Changing the culture and the climate of a school can provide a more equitable and safer place to learn for all students and provide an environment that is more collaborative and conducive to learning. “Teacher professional learning that develops deep knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal students, families and local communities is identified in the research as an important area to address” (Burgess & Cavanagh, 2015, p. 49). Professional learning is an essential aspect of this project and framework which is explored more in this project as an essential component of any system.

The significance of this project is providing awareness and a more in-depth understanding of ways for working with Indigenous communities through professional development, inclusive leadership, and developing more culturally aware practice. “Educators need to identify with the situation so that they can understand why and how they can help Aboriginal students” (Faries, 2009, p. 1). Professionals need to work towards cultural safety which encompasses cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity and cultural responsiveness.

Background and Rationale for the Project

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) released findings on investigation into the history and legacy of Canada’s Residential School System (RSS). With that investigation the commission released 94 recommendations urging all levels of government to make changes toward repairing the epistemicide caused by the Residential School System and move toward reconciliation. The *calls to action* are divided into two parts: legacy and reconciliation. Legacy refers to repairing the current damage caused by the RSS. Reconciliation refers to recommendations on how to move forward with healing for Indigenous people and our nation. Legacy includes calls for change to child welfare, education, health, and justice. Reconciliation calls for action towards honouring the rights and acknowledging the damage caused to Indigenous people (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

Historically since European contact, Aboriginal people have been deprived of learning about their own culture, history, and language in the education systems. In its attempts to eradicate Aboriginal culture and language, schools were used to assimilate children so that future generations would not pass on Aboriginal teachings. Foreign-imposed education systems were used as a way to *Europeanize* the Aboriginal people, and the children were seen as the easiest targets to ensure that future generations would no longer relate to their culture, language, and identity of their ancestors. Residential schools were set up to destroy culture and language, and the impacts of this school system can still be

felt today among Aboriginal individuals, families, communities, and nations. (Faries, 2009, p. 1).

In Marie Battiste's book, *The Circle Unfolds*, she quotes Eber Hampton as saying "It must be straightforwardly realized that education, as currently practiced, is cultural genocide. It seeks to brainwash the Native child, substituting non-Native knowledge, values and identity" (Battiste & Barman, 1995, p. 35). There is a great deal of research and literature around the government's systemic and purposeful destruction of Aboriginal people in Canada. Battiste (2013) explains Canadian history has a dark past when it comes to the historical relationship with Indigenous people. The government uses "education as the manipulative agent with various intended outcomes, some well-intended, some not, but all strategic" (Battiste, 2013, p. 17). Faries (2009) explains, through the government's use of education as a strategic method of destruction, they have created the environment of disparity in education we see today. Aboriginal students have been impacted by the education system either through their own experiences or generationally. These negative experiences have garnered a lack of interest in education, with education not being valued within the family. "Aboriginal students need parental encouragement, positive role models, and Aboriginal content in order to succeed academically" (Faries, 2009, p. 1).

Faries, Battiste, and many other academic scholars provide an understanding of the historical context and advocate for the need to repair the damage of the past. An awareness of the past allows for a connection to historical damage, the need for reconciliation, and healing in our nation. I believe we must understand the past histories to move forward into the future.

The National Indian Brotherhood fought for the right to "Indian control of Indian education," meaning that Aboriginal peoples should have a say in all aspects of educating their

children (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, p. iii). Further reinforced by the United Nations Declaration (UNDRIP) on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). An online article written by James Wilt (2017) states that the declaration is a document that lays out the basic rights Indigenous peoples that should be afforded around the world. It outlines the obligations of the nations to Indigenous peoples and their land. However, there are varied seemingly purposeful interpretations by the government of what UNDRIP means. At the same time, some Indigenous scholars have a very different interpretation of what the declaration truly means for Indigenous rights. “The federal government isn’t prepared to fully face the implications of UNDRIP and how it could challenge Canada’s current frameworks” (Wilt, 2017, p. np). UNDRIP is a significant document that reviews the rights of Aboriginal people. The document clearly states clauses in Article 14, an inherent right to education, free from discrimination, that reflects their language and culture where possible, and in a manner appropriate to cultural methods of teaching and learning. Indigenous people have the right to establish and control their educational system (United Nations, 2011, p. 7). Calling upon the federal government to eliminate the inequities in the education of First Nations students (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 2). Archibald and Hare (2017) stated “among the 94 Calls to Action are a series of recommendations, that all educators take courses dealing with Aboriginal history, the legacy of residential school, Aboriginal rights and Indigenous teachings, practices, and worldviews” (p. np).

This project seeks to provide non-Indigenous professionals with the *teachings and practice* to move towards reconciliation effectively. The recommended 94 Calls to Action covers a large number of concerns that will need to be addressed. For this project, I plan to focus on

education, but the framework and tools are not limited to education and also cover the health aspects of wellness, collaboration, responsibility, and the rights of Indigenous Canadians.

Why would we need a guidebook on working with First Nations communities? People in positions of leadership and professionals within all facets of the community, business, government, health, and education are collaborating with First Nations for increased success of Indigenous communities. Collaboration and involvement of Indigenous voice is an essential part of the calls to action for reconciliation. More professionals are increasingly being required to collaborate with First Nations communities, whether they are culturally aware or not. Not meaning that professionals do not have the best intentions; however, they may not have the skills and knowledge to do so. Collaborative work must be successful if change and reconciliation are going to happen. This project will provide professionals with an increased awareness of how to achieve a collaborative and successful working relationship as a professional development tool.

Personal Location

It is vital to begin by acknowledging that “it would not be fair of me to ask you to go on a journey that I am not willing to go on myself” (Smith M. G., 2017, p. 16). I am going to share my journey and how I have come to believe I should do this work.

I am a wife, a mother, a culturally responsive researcher, a professional, entrepreneur, and leader for change. I am a dynamic individual with many passions in life and leadership. I have discovered that I work best from an authentic approach to leadership thru the exploration of my own skills. "Authentic leadership is leaders that have a genuine desire to serve others, they know themselves and lead from a place of core understanding and values" (Northouse, 2016).

I have a genuine desire to "be the change I wish to see in the world" (Gandhi as cited in Gore, 2013). I model for others through my authenticity and passion for creating change. I am

dedicated to enhancing the awareness, ways of knowing, learning, teaching, and training, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, student, teacher, or community. I believe cultural sensitivity and education serves to promote healing in our nation. The focus of most of my academic work has been within the area of Indigenous pedagogy.

I am busy, motivated, and driven to do the most I can to live life to the fullest and strive to make change in my community. My avid interest in entrepreneurship, leadership, and Aboriginal Education originates with my practical work experience, dynamic life experience, and an inherent need to be a part of shaping the future. I have worked in leadership in Aboriginal Education for ten years and have learned a lot on this journey.

I struggled for a long time with the concept that I am non-Indigenous to Canada. Historically my family descendants were white settlers. I acknowledge my privileged position and credit my Aboriginal family and colleagues who have taught me much about working as an *Indigenist* scholar (Wilson, 2008). Wilson (2008) explains the definition of *Indigenist* as a philosophical standpoint or research paradigm, not referring to Indigeneity. I am committed to unpacking and challenging the colonial relations and logics that endure in much academic research and Indigenous work (Donald, Glanfield, & Sterenberg, 2012). I did not always know I was non-Indigenous. I was told most of my life that I was Métis. This exploration into my belonging became complicated because my mother and father passed at an early age. I struggled for years and searched for answers to my identity. Who am I to do this work when I do not know if I am Indigenous or not? Belonging and acceptance by my *chosen* family and community are where I found peace. I was raised with the belief system and Indigenous pedagogy by knowledge holders and Elders that help guide my life journey. My Elders accepted me, never questioning who I am or where I belong, and yet I still did. My husband and children are Aboriginal and I

have been a part of an extended Aboriginal family most of my life. The Indigenous community is where I find my family, friends, comfort, and home., My realization is that as long as I understand my privilege and acknowledge my position as an ally, through numerous conversations with my Elders and mentors, I can be a strong leader and advocate for Indigenous rights and pedagogy. This is who I am and what I am meant to do, my path, my journey. I realized no one questioned me because everyone knows regardless of my blood quantum, Indigenous ways are all I have ever known. Just recently, I sent off for a DNA test to once and for all know my blood quantum. The results are that I am not Indigenous to Canada; my family was Scottish settlers. Scottish settlers in Canada are not the same as those who colonized. Indigenous people, too, had their identity, language, cultural practices taken away from them. Maybe this is where my connection to the people and culture of this land originates. For example, the connection to the land and the relational nature of knowledge was very similar. I know who I am today and where I belong regardless of my blood quantum but also acknowledging my *privilege* (Louie, 2017). I choose to be a part of reconciliation in Canada and work towards an equitable future for my children and yours.

This research framework is an attempt at passing along what I have learned about working with and being a part of First Nations communities. I, in no way imply, that I can ever fully understand an Indigenous perspective as a non-Indigenous person, just that this framework is how I found success in teaching others and working with First Nations communities. “These understandings about my histories, my socio-political context, and myself makes it even more important that I work in ethically informed, relational ways when working in the field of Indigenous education” (McGregor, 2014, p. 91). I cannot speak about being Aboriginal, as I am not, I do not speak about what I do not know, because I cannot, but I can challenge widely held

Eurocentric notions and empower others to do the same (Graveline, 2000). Thank you for joining me on my journey as I transition to Chapter two the research literature review.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

How do we build capacity regarding non-Indigenous professionals who work with First Nations people and communities to achieve a common goal? I believe that holistic capacity building can happen through the teachings in this project's conceptual framework of the *Medicine Wheel* that illuminates essential aspects of working with First Nations communities.

The *Medicine Wheel* conceptual framework built for this project is presented to highlight the teaching of the Aboriginal *Medicine Wheel*. The Cree peoples' *Medicine Wheel*, in particular, is the basis for this research project for which I present an understanding of the construct of this framework. The Cree people are one of the largest groups of First Nations in Canada where most originate from James Bay, Ontario, but are now one of the largest and widely distributed populations of Indigenous people in Canada (Oxford English dictionary, 2010). The *Medicine Wheel* has become a widely recognized representation of Aboriginal holistic views. The *Medicine Wheel* teachings are a representation of a holistic and reciprocal understanding. A reciprocal understanding shows the connectedness of each of the components of the framework. One quadrant in the wheel is not more important than the other; however, each quadrant is intertwined or braided together to work in perfect balance and harmony (Niemi, 2016).

The conceptual framework presented in this particular research project is a result of the experience I gained while working in Aboriginal Education in the K-12 school system. I questioned the following in my capacity of working with Aboriginal colleagues: How do I support educators and professionals to work authentically with First Nations communities?; and, How do I build capacity among the educators to do my part for reconciliation in Canada? Validation for my questions are presented in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that calls for identifying teacher-training needs relating to building capacity for intercultural

understanding, empathy, and mutual respect (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 7). Healing from the horrific history of our nation starts with identity; our youth need to be taught self-exploration. Aboriginal histories, perspectives, and pedagogies serve to validate the identity and knowledge traditions of Aboriginal learners and enrich the learning experience for all students and yet Eurocentric forms of teaching and learning dominate the classroom (Archibald & Hare, 2017). I found that educators seek professional development whenever they feel they do not have the capacity to do what's being asked of them when I was working as an ally in Indigenous education. My experience of working in Indigenous educational environments is that educators seek a very structured understanding of whatever they are trying to learn.

The *Medicine Wheel* conceptual framework started with a visual drawing; a blend of Eurocentric learning and an Indigenous understanding of reciprocity and teaching. First Nations pedagogy is quite different from a Eurocentric understanding of learning as will be explained throughout this project. I know that if a professional development project, workshop, resource, were going to be successful in the education system, it would have to include elements of both Indigenous pedagogy and a Eurocentric understanding of professional learning. I attempted to envision the best visualization I could use for a Eurocentric understanding of First Nations pedagogical teaching? The *Medicine Wheel* has become a universal symbolic understanding of holistic learning within the education system teaching connection, reciprocity, and balance (Pewewardy, 1999). The provision of a deeper understanding of the elements of the *Wheel* and connecting those elements to Indigenous teachings is relevant to building capacity as an educator in the realm of working with Indigenous communities. There is an expectation with no real direction that educators know how to work with First Nations people. There are two different forms to look at authenticity in terms of being an ally. An ally is the ability to work within the

construct of a group or organization while an authentic ally is one who believes that people have endured colonialism and the discourses that occurred for which the Holocaust, Residential Schools, and/or the cold war are exemplars to represent authentic ally.

Educators have asked me in my capacity of working in an Indigenous education environment: *How do I do this work as a non-Indigenous person? What do I need to know? To do this work is an expectation of me and I want to do it right, but I am scared to approach it wrong or to offend.* I see that there is a need for a fundamental understanding of blending the two worlds of academia and Indigenous methodologies or pedagogies. I began the conceptual framework composition as a visual person and an artist. I physically stuck big sticky notes all over my wall and started to write and draw and scribble. I came up with a four-quadrant *Medicine Wheel* (See Appendix A) blended with the teachings I believe are essential to developing when working with Indigenous peoples. The four quadrants display four specific direction or location with reference to the specific colours on the wheel which are labeled as: 1) North/White; 2) East/Red; 3) South/Yellow; and 4) West/Black. The four directional and coloured quadrants represent in the respective order of the aforementioned quadrants as: 1) Capacity Building; 2) Leadership; 3) Ethics; and, 4) Holistic Perspective. The quadrants are a broad spectrum of understanding, trajectory, or a place to start to understand how to authentically and effectively work with Indigenous communities through the following areas in each quadrant: 1) Professional Development; 2) Climate, Culture and Community; and, 3) Communication, Collaboration and Decision Making. Each of these quadrants and their teachings are presented in greater detail throughout this chapter.

The Medicine Wheel: A Conceptual Research Framework

There are a variety of *Medicine Wheels* used by different Indigenous people for different purposes. Bell (2004) stated what Indigenous people call the *Medicine Wheel* is a universal symbol of wholeness. The wheel represents the circle of life. The *Circle of Life* is a basic principle of First Peoples worldview. Everything within the circle has a purpose and all things and beings depend on all others for survival and balance (Bell, 2014). The *Medicine Wheel* includes all races; all life including two- legged, four- legged, winged things, plants; and, medicines (Dapice, 2006). All aspects of the teachings are considered sacred, equal, balanced is related to the phrase that comes from a Lakota prayer, which translated means, “All my relations” or “We are all related” (Tinker, 1996, p. 158). The *Medicine Wheel* includes all directions and the four aspects of mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual states. The wheel includes cycles, seasons, and passages and assumes that change can and will occur. The *Medicine Wheel* teaches us that if we become stuck in the mental, emotional, physical, or the spiritual state that we lack wholeness in all aspects. The reason this object is called the *Medicine Wheel* is due to the strong spiritual healing present when all the representative symbols are in balance and are united.

The *Medicine Wheel* varies with each interpretation or application throughout Canada and the different Indigenous nations. There are many descriptions of the meanings within each quadrant. The *Medicine Wheel* contains many traditional teachings while representing balance and connection with self and the world around us for personal or professional development. I have personally grown within myself with a connected idea of life balance. During the writing of this project it was difficult to find the balance between the mental and physical aspects of myself. I found myself being stiff, sore and restless because the physical aspect of my wheel is not

balanced. All my energy was going into the mental aspect, this is necessary at times, but awareness of these teachings lets me know I need to make time to get fresh air and exercise. An example of professional balance is the equality and reciprocation within the teachings of the *Medicine Wheel*. We should always be aware of the power imbalances that exist in our everyday lives if we are to be aware that all things should equal and respected. Being aware of this teaching allows me to be a better leader. I am always aware of the innate power imbalance my position holds and ensure that I am respectful of that imbalance. Being aware of the language you use during communication as to not increase that imbalance as we tend to use systemic language others may not be aware of. The *Medicine Wheel* acts as a guide towards a more holistic understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

The *Medicine Wheel* is further explained in detail throughout this chapter as a circle divided into four coloured quadrants (Appendix A). The number four has significance in most Aboriginal cultures. The four quadrants have been expressed as the four directions, the four teachings, the four winds, the four clans, and many other associations in sets of four in Aboriginal cultures. Dumont (1989) explained the *Medicine Wheel* teachings as “a process of how life evolves, how the natural world grows and works together, how all things are connected, and how all things move toward their destiny” (p. 6). The black, white, red, and yellow colours in the *Medicine Wheel* signify different attributes such as intellectual, physical, spiritual, and emotional awareness. The *Medicine Wheel* is interpreted uniquely by each culture and nation. The order and colours can vary in each culture along with the attributes. The colour green may represent mother earth, while blue may indicate the higher being as the sky father or the ocean, while the red may show fire and black for the underworld. The four different colours can also represent the four directions north, south, east, and west. The circle is the primary influence and

represents how Aboriginal peoples view the world. “Aboriginal peoples see and respond to the world in a circular fashion and are influenced by circles of creation in the environment” (Dumont, 1989, p. 6). Working from a holistic perspective would include this cyclical understanding.

The *Medicine Wheel* exemplifies a holistic perspective. The basic teachings of the *Medicine Wheel* are widely known and can be shared with others. The most significant teaching is “that we are all made up of four areas: our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual selves and it is believed that you must be balanced in all four of these areas to be truly healthy, happy, fulfilled and balanced” (Gray, 2011, p. 216). The *Medicine Wheel* is the basis for this research conceptual framework because of the representation of an Indigenous, holistic, interconnected, and balanced teaching perspective. Calliou (1995) reminded readers that “*Medicine Wheels* can be pedagogical tools for teaching, learning, contemplating, and understanding our human journeys at individual, band/community, nation, global, and even cosmic levels” (p. 51). Moving from a linear understanding to a cyclical understanding is the first step in moving towards an understanding of Aboriginal pedagogy and why the *Medicine Wheel* is the basis for this framework and the teachings presented within the wheel. The *Medicine Wheel* framework will represent the following for the purpose of this research project: North/White represents Capacity Building; East/Red represents Holistic Approach; South/Yellow represents Ethics; and, West/ represents Leadership within my research *Medicine Wheel* framework. Each of the four quadrants explore teachings through three foci areas of: professional development, climate, culture and community, and communication, collaboration and decision making.

North/White Quadrant: Capacity Building

The white quadrant of the *Medicine Wheel* is North which is represented as gray for white background visualization. North is said to represent the mental part of our being. Learning, wisdom, movement towards another way of knowing is where our respect derives. Learning in this quadrant is strongly tied to language. Battiste, Archibald, Smith and many academic scholars would agree that language is the key to Indigenous connection and learning. Language is a carrier of culture. Language is the most important quality of Indigenous culture is apparent in Archibald's statement (2008), "Telling stories is how we pass on the history and teachings of our ancestors" (p. 29).

I believe that education and awareness of the world around us is how we move towards deeper respect and understanding of the world around us as a lifelong learner. Learning from a different perspective is how we grow and build capacity within ourselves. Bell (2013) explained this quadrant as the *do it* part of the *Medicine Wheel*. "Moving into the *doing* phase of the north requires taking the knowledge gained from all the directions and enacting that knowledge" (Bell, 2014, p. 2). People have a responsibility to do something once they are aware of injustices whether that be growth within ourselves as a person or making change in the world around us when we see inequities.

White or gray capacity building would include community and professional development, communication, collaboration, decision making, and inclusion to assist in understanding capacity building for professionals. Identifying and nurturing skills from within, building on the knowledge and capacity that already exists among members, building confidence and comfort among members to motivate, achieve and advocate are also imperative. I believe achievement motivation towards having that capacity to authentically work with Indigenous communities

comes from within systems and self. A sense of urgency and understanding that would come from learning about the history and reconciliation both within self and from leadership in a system. It can be a daunting task to change *systems thinking* if a person is not able to make systemic change. However, being an example or a model for change can start the seeds of change as well.

Being true to an Indigenous method and understanding of the pedagogies, the *Medicine Wheel* is how, I the researcher and the scholars chosen to support this work, chose to relay the teachings of how professionals can build capacity among themselves and others. Teaching about the true history of colonialism and residential schools will increase awareness of the destruction that this caused and also teach about the resiliency of Indigenous people and the reasons for reconciliation in Canada.

Capacity Building

Exploring the current literature regarding community and professional development, communication, collaboration, decision making, and inclusion assists with understanding capacity building for professionals. Building on the knowledge and capacity that already exists among members and building confidence and comfort among members to motivate, achieve and advocate are strategies that encourage respect for each community's unique body of knowledge.

Most professional organizations talk about *Capacity Building* which sometimes seems like it is the latest catchphrase term. The term capacity building is usually used in the context of, *we need to build capacity*. Capacity building can be used as an excuse for inaction like *they do not have the capacity* (BC Teachers Council Conference, 2008). I have heard many times the phrase *they do not have the capacity* while working in the education system. The research suggested that traditional Indigenous knowledge systems are highly complex and valid, but this

knowledge has never been honored by the education system. Bellringer (2015) stated the current realities in schooling creates barriers to learning with systemic racism resulting in low expectations for Indigenous learners and marginalizes Indigenous knowledge. Battiste (2013) stated that we need to honour traditional knowledge transfer and traditional forms of teaching and learning to decolonize the education system. The initiative to build capacity within teachers and the education system is to help people understand that traditional knowledge is a valid and essential part of learning for Indigenous people.

Trying to define capacity building is a challenging concept, yet, the concept has endurance. I now pose the questions regarding the *what* is capacity building and the *why* are we building capacity? The characteristics of capacity building are not necessarily inadequate (BC Teachers Council Conference, 2008). Stoll (1999) explained that capacity is a generic and holistic concept, “the power to engage in and sustain continuous learning of teachers and the school itself for the purpose of enhancing student learning, influenced by individual teachers within a school; the school's social and structural learning context; and the external context” (p. 116). Capacity has been further defined into three mutually influencing and interdependent categories: personal, interpersonal and organizational (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009). Capacity building is a multifaceted and complex undertaking (Fullan, 2011). Capacity building involves both internal and external systemic and inter-relational change. Building capacity by creating and maintaining the necessary conditions, culture and structures in addition to facilitating learning experiences and opportunities as well as ensuring all parts work together in synergy (Stoll, 2009). This research project framework focused on capacity building for non-Indigenous professionals. The associated guidebook and PowerPoint are ultimately professional development tools for a more holistic understanding of how to approach working with First

Nations communities. This research project challenges us to look at capacity building from another perspective, looking within self and others through learning, leadership, and modeling. Act as a guide in achieving, what Battiste (2013) referred to as the blending the Eurocentric systems and the Indigenous capacity already alive and well in communities. The capacity building referred to in this North/White quadrant of the *Medicine Wheel* represents changing perspectives and building capacity within self, leadership, the community, and the organization you represent. Aboriginal Education employees build capacity through professional development workshops that focus on cultural safety. Professional capacity is built through teaching and learning while provide the history, context and concrete skills for change. Planting seeds of awareness is sometimes enough to spark change in teaching pedagogy, other times building capacity takes modeling, being the example and constructing respectful conversations towards a responsibility for change.

Professional development. “Euro-centric forms of teaching and learning that dominate the classrooms, systemic racism that results in low expectations for Aboriginal learners and the marginalization of Indigenous knowledges” creates barriers to learning (Archibald & Hare, 2017, p. Intro). Exploring current literature regarding community and professional development, communication, collaboration, and inclusion will assist in understanding building capacity. Leadership and the culture of a school are important for Indigenous students because schools do not always reflect the diversity and values of students and teachers (Cherkowski, 2010). Leadership that models and reflects diversity and inclusion are essential to moving a system towards creating a climate or culture of schools conducive to removing the barriers to learning.

Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux and Brian Calliou (2010) reviewed *Best Practices in Aboriginal Community Development* which includes a literature review and wise practices

approach. The journal article is an overview of the research regarding capacity building and the reasons for relying on each community's unique body of knowledge and build Aboriginal leadership from within the community. Wesley-Esquimaux and Calliou stated, "In spite of multiple obstacles, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples have been moving rapidly on the path to reclaim and invigorate their leadership, languages, cultures, teaching and community practices" (p. 3). The research also noted professional development is directly tied to capacity building and creating an inclusive climate within systems. The Wesley-Esquimaux and Calliou article is a prime example of the importance of acting as a guide, respecting the knowledge that exists, and helping the community with reclaiming and blending practices. A study based out of New Zealand concludes that there is a strong relationship between professional development, which changes educators' practice and improvement in Indigenous student outcomes (Bishop, Berryman, Wearmouth, Peter, & Clapham, 2012). Professional development for all educators, teachers and school leaders is vital in the development of culturally responsive practice, which leads to improved school community and outcomes for Aboriginal students. The learning journey through continual professional and personal reflection and development is an essential part of systems change.

Climate, culture and community. School culture is a social construct that occurs as members engage with each other as they interact, make meaning, and create organizational narratives (Douglas, 1986). These narratives make up the culture of the school community. Marie Battiste (2004) argued that decolonization can be seen as a process of "deconstruction and reconstruction" (p. 10). It is essential for Aboriginal student success that the school culture reflects Indigenous perspectives because "Cultural discontinuity arises for students when their personal values clash with the ideals that shape their school system" (Wiesner, 2006, p. 6).

Community building is thought of in much the same way; the culture of a school must be constructed. Constructed with the understanding and respect of diversity and group values or the culture of a school is likely to continue to reflect the dominant culture (Cherkowski, 2010). Cherkowski noted community building in schools seeks change and growth and the construction of new narratives and leadership that reflects Indigenous perspectives.

Communication, collaboration and decision making. Effective communication in organizations is part of the foundation of leadership in schools and can lead to improved school culture. According to Hall (1992) there is difficulty in communication between high context and low context cultures. High-context cultures rely less on spoken word and more on the context and non-verbal and relational information. Low-context cultures rely highly on verbal communication and the messages in the conversation. Battiste and Barman (1995) explained that traditional Canadian Indigenous culture is a high-context culture while Euro-Canadian culture relies on low-context communication. There can be cultural communication barriers between Aboriginal students, families and the school. The authors explained that some student communication processing time may be longer than educators expect and teachers may see this as procrastination or non-participation, but the student may need more time to process the learning and instructions. There may be little to no communication between the school and an Aboriginal student's family because of physical or psychological barriers (Battiste & Barman, 1995). Communication barriers can be removed by taking into consideration a traditional form of knowledge transfer and understanding the cultural differences in communication. Battiste's (1995) research identified that poor communication between the school and the Indigenous community, in addition to lower expectations, contributed to the high dropout and low educational success rates. Battiste (2018) continues her research today into the inequities for

Indigenous students that still prevalent today in Canada almost 25 years later in *Reconciling Indigenous Knowledge in Education: Promises, Possibilities and Imperatives*. Najafbagy (2008) explained that poor schools are often set within neighborhoods of lower social-economic background and within these neighborhoods there exists an environment of lower expectations. Communicating and respecting the cultural differences within a community, not lowering expectations, would allow for a school that is more connected and welcoming to the community. “Effective cross-cultural communication creates a new understanding of communication through understanding, reciprocity, and successful cooperation between the school and the Indigenous student, family, and community” (Najafbagy, 2008, p. 150).

Effective school collaboration is an essential element in strengthening school culture and community. Collaborative work culture is explained by Mitchell and Sackney (2009) as coming together to discuss issues, sort out challenges, plan new learning opportunities, and discuss new instruction ideas. These authors reveal this extensive collaboration develops distributed knowledge and expands the professional capacity of the entire team. Teacher collaboration with the First Nations community will build Indigenous understanding among the entire team. “Recognizing that teachers are essential learners within the community provides the space for conceiving of professional communities in which teachers can come together to grow and learn” (Cherkowski, 2010, p. 25).

Collaboration among teachers is essential to building school culture and just as important is the collaboration with Indigenous communities regarding the education of their children.. The call for local education agreements is a prime example of collaboration between a school district and the First Nations communities. Local education agreements are legal agreements stating the collaboration that will happen between the First Nations community and the schools to improve

Aboriginal student success (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2017). Not only is it a legal obligation to collaborate with the First Nations communities on the education of their students, but it is also good leadership practice to build relationship, reciprocal understanding, and shared responsibility within the community. The Alberta education system is advocating for parental and community empowerment in the following statement, “Aboriginal people, especially parents, Elders and community leaders need to be empowered to take ownership of and responsibility for the education of their children” (Alberta Education, 2012, p. 6). This shared responsibility between First Nations and education coming down to shared leadership, collaboration, and decision making.

In summary, exploring the current literature regarding community and professional development, communication, collaboration, decision making, and inclusion will assist in understanding capacity building for professionals. The following practice in addition to teaching aspect of respecting each community’s unique body of knowledge such as: identifying and nurturing skills from within, building on the knowledge and capacity that already exists among members, building confidence and comfort among members to motivate, achieve and advocate is effective collaboration and capacity building. The research suggested that capacity building is achieved through modeling and reflecting inclusive leadership and blending ways of knowing and teaching. When building capacity within the teachers in the school district I worked for I observed them being learners. I would teach them with the same respect and understanding of the lack of knowledge to allow for a safe space to ask questions and explore their own understanding while modeling respectful and humble conversations with everyone, especially elders. Teachers would take the lead from how I interacted with them and others. I respect traditional forms of teaching and knowledge and would look for ways to blend that with the current education

system. Professionals cannot feel shamed or blamed and must be provided a safe place to learn. Look for ways to *walk in two worlds*, a blending of worldviews and perspectives. This gentle approach combined with authentic teaching and leadership goes a long way to changing a system attached to Eurocentric ideas of learning.

East/Red Quadrant: Holistic Approach

The red quadrant of the *Medicine Wheel* represents the east. The east direction is said to embody the spiritual aspect of one's being. This wholeness, vision, and a way of seeing things from a spiritual perspective is a different concept of learning from a Eurocentric understanding, but an essential and wholly connected part of learning from an Indigenous perspective. Spiritual teaching in schools tends to be a controversial topic. Battiste (2009) explained that the fundamental principles of Aboriginal learning come from the land, spirit, and language and respects diverse learning styles based on a holistic understanding of their spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical connectedness. Learning must have all aspects of this reciprocal connected understanding including the spiritual connection to learning. Students needed to learn to walk with spirit, they needed to see themselves reflected in the education system to feel a true connection to education and learning (Battiste, 2002). Dr. Battiste has relayed this message to me numerous times during our conversations over the years. I have been blessed to have connections and amazing conversations with many scholars and advocates for change such as Dr. Battiste, Dr. Blackstock, Linda Gray, Monique Gray Smith, Dr. Jo-ann Achibald, Marie Clements, Richard Vancamp and many more as a grounding to my research and passion for Indigenous education. These mentioned people have guided my inquiry, pedagogy, Indigenous perspective, and journey into what I share with you in this project through those direct conversations and researching their work.

Learning from a spiritual understanding is how we gain a holistic perspective. Bell (2014) explained this as the *see it* part of the *Medicine Wheel*. Bell stated, “Visioning allows to engage in the hopeful thinking necessary for radical transformation. Each person then has the responsibility to do the work required to fulfill the vision” (p. 2). We may *see it* or envision a different way of learning within a system when connected to a spiritual understanding. People have a responsibility for change once you *see it* from a different perspective.

A holistic approach or perspective includes culturally appropriate protocol, considerable consultation, the four quadrants of balanced understanding, and honouring Indigenous knowledges. As discussed above, a holistic approach is relational, experiential, oral, and cyclical in respecting Aboriginal axiology. Capacity building as a holistic approach in the context of increasing the ability of non-Indigenous teachers or other professionals to work with Indigenous communities will include following Indigenous pedagogy of trust, relationship, authenticity, narrative, and personal connection. A holistic approach is a way of seeing collaboration as a spiritual, connected, and a relational experience.

Holistic Approach

A Holistic Framework for Aboriginal Policy Research (Kenny, Faries, Fiske, & Voyageur, 2004) as a means to outline why research demands considerable consultation and culturally appropriate protocol and provided a framework for holistic research based on the teachings behind the four quadrants of the Aboriginal *Medicine Wheel*. The article content was intended to guide the reader through the challenges of a holistic framework in Aboriginal policy research. The research included questions regarding the *intrusion* of outside researchers and stresses the importance of building trust, relying on the experts of the traditional knowledge in the community, thus building capacity within the community. The article stated the following:

In general, a framework for holistic research would include: honouring past, present, and future in interpretive and analytical research processes including historical references and intergenerational discourse; honoring the interconnectedness of all of life and the multi-dimensional aspects of life on the Earth and in the community in research design and implementation; and honouring the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental aspects of the person and the community in research protocols, methodologies, and analyses.

(Kenny, Faries, Fiske, & Voyageur, 2004, p. 2).

Professional development. The movement towards reconciliation and the addition of the Indigenous content in the curriculum through the newly revised British Columbia K-12 curriculum is movement towards reconciliation (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2018). However, one oversight that is becoming evident is the lack of understanding about what it means to honour and embed Indigenous knowledge and pedagogies. Teachers are not prepared nor did they receive the education to approach the addition of Indigenous content into the curriculum (Battiste, 2018). Stiffarm (1998) suggested the Indigenous ways of knowing are foundational to interconnectedness, relationship, and a holistic ways of presenting the art of teaching. Stiffarm advocated for the modeling of Indigenous teaching pedagogy and the inclusion of Aboriginal pedagogy into the structures of the education system. Battiste (2005) later noted Indigenous teachings should be presented to every child regardless of how unique in his or her learning capacities, learning styles, and knowledge bases as foundational pedagogy. “Never stop modeling Indigenous teaching pedagogy and the inclusion of Aboriginal pedagogy into the structures of the education system” (Stiffarm, 1998, p. 77). These researchers noted the importance of modeling knowledge and striving to learn more Aboriginal teachings and pedagogies. Learning is a journey, and there is no expectation of being an expert but walk with

integrity and be humble about your learning journey. Battiste (2002) explored the importance of Aboriginal pedagogy in the education system in a literature review, titled *Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy in First Nations Education: A Literature Review with Recommendations*. Battiste asked the question, “What is Indigenous knowledge?” (p. 3). She suggested that the greatest challenge in answering the question is to find a respectful way to compare Eurocentric and Indigenous ways of knowing and include both into contemporary modern education, she continues this challenge to educators today (Battiste, 2018).

Climate, culture and community. The ideas and knowledge explored by Battiste and the scholars included in the literature review are essential to moving forward into the future of the education system. “Indigenous knowledge is a growing field of inquiry, both nationally and internationally, particularly for those interested in educational innovation” (Battiste, 2002, p. 3). Educational innovation is required if real systemic change of our education system is to happen. Moving forward with an inclusive lens that blends, acknowledges, and respects all forms of teaching and learning to see all students achieve success. This blending of the knowledge systems must occur not only in the education system but also within all systems and organizations to truly see the change reconciliation requires.

Communication, collaboration and decision making. Aboriginal pedagogy and Indigenous knowledge are difficult to initiate and prescribe in a way that educators expect. Little Bear (2009) attempted to explain Indigenous knowledge as learning from place, the learning spirit including relationship and community, language, diverse learning systems including allowing stories and oral traditions, the pedagogy of the educators, and honouring diverse ways of learning. His statement, “Naturalizing Indigenous knowledge can begin to neutralize racism, colonialism, and assumptions of the inferiority of Aboriginal peoples” (Little Bear, 2009, p. 24).

Naturalizing Indigenous knowledge requires comfort with the knowledge and the pedagogies. The knowledge and pedagogies becoming part of everyday professional practice can only come from continual learning, modeling, and awareness of the importance of systems change in addition to making space for and honouring Indigenous knowledge keepers.

In summary, this research suggests that a holistic approach would include culturally appropriate protocol, considerable consultation, four quadrants of the *Medicine Wheel* for honouring Indigenous knowledges. A holistic approach is relational, experiential, oral, and cyclical while respecting Aboriginal axiology and following Indigenous pedagogy through: trust, relationship, authenticity, narrative, and personal application. A solid understanding of a holistic perspective is essential to working with First Nations communities. The journey of learning would include the awareness of moving systems towards reconciliation, an exploration of how to blend this understanding into practice and model that practice for others.

South/Yellow Quadrant: Ethics

The yellow quadrant of the *Medicine Wheel* represents the south. South represents the physical aspect of self, time, the land, and inter-relational understanding. Understanding of how we belong in the world around us and connecting to the land and others is a fundamental teaching within Indigenous cultures. Learning from a physical understanding is how we relate to the world. Bell (2014), explains this as the *relate to it* part of the *Medicine Wheel* (Bell, 2014, p. 2). Relating to the teachings provides an understanding of the importance of that learning and change. Relating to the ethics, history, or reason for decolonization and reconciliation provides the basis for understanding why any work with First Nation communities needs to be done responsibly, authentically and with their collaboration.

Yellow ethical research practice includes: honouring protocol, informed consent, respecting the history and inequality of the current systems, working for the communities benefit not systemic agenda, acting as a guide to the community's desired direction, community defines the direction, and you help to guide the action. Ethical research practice would include respecting the community's vision, the community goals, work towards having a collaborative relationship, and a sharing of power. Ensure you are providing the opportunity for informed consent and voluntary participation, privacy and confidentiality. Respecting intellectual property rights is a must to avoid cultural appropriation. Paradigms and protocols are important when following Indigenous methodologies and a Holistic approach to research/teachings.

Ethics

Adherence to an ethical protocol for work or research is an essential part of professional practice. The *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* - TCPS (2018) is the leading ethical standards for practice document in Canada. The TCPS document stated "The search for knowledge about ourselves and the world around us is a fundamental human endeavor. Research is a natural extension of this desire to understand and to improve the world in which we live" (p. 5). Respect is the underlying premise behind TCPS. "Respect for human dignity requires that research involving humans be conducted in a manner that is sensitive to the inherent worth of all human beings and the respect and consideration that they are due" (Government of Canada, Interagency Advisory Panel on Research, 2017, p. 4). Ethical practice when working with Indigenous communities is a fundamental responsibility. Researcher must ensure that you are well educated in not only the community and their expectations but in Indigenous community work in your area and the history of that work.

Professional development. Adhering to ethics is essential to professional practice as well as academic research. Chapter 9 of the TCPS (2018) covers research involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Chapter 9 emphasizes the importance of establishing ethical space for dialogue on common interests and points of difference between researchers and Aboriginal communities engaged in research.

Research involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada has been defined and carried out primarily by non-Aboriginal researchers. The approaches used have not generally reflected Aboriginal world views, and the research has not necessarily benefited Aboriginal peoples or communities. As a result, Aboriginal peoples continue to regard research, particularly research originating outside their communities, with a certain apprehension or mistrust. (Government of Canada, Interagency Advisory Panel on Research, 2017, p. 6)

Achieving the common goal of a project is based on respect and that the community trusts the project. The project is collaborative and aligns with the community's world views and direction is presented in the TCPS.

Climate, culture and community. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is an advocacy organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada that the National Indian Brotherhood originally established (Assembly of First Nations, 2009). The AFN has released several documents regarding working with First Nations communities. The AFN document *Ethics in First Nations Research* (2009) provides an ethical base for respecting Indigenous people when working or researching within communities. "There are fundamental flaws in research conducted to date with First Nations. Solutions to these flaws include well designed, ethically conducted research, which would include protocols and codes of ethics (Assembly of First Nations, 2009, p. 3). First Nations people have been used as research *subjects*; these are the *flaws* the AFN document referred to. The work or research regarding First Nations people has not been

“grounded in respectful relationships” and did not “incorporate culturally appropriate ethical standards” (Assembly of First Nations, 2009, p. 4). The Assembly stated that Aboriginal people must be consulted and informed; they should maintain ownership of the information provided and established as “collaborators and co-investors” in all projects conducted (Assembly of First Nations, 2009, p. 4). The AFN document describes a collaborative relationship as a sharing of power, informed consent and voluntary participation, privacy and confidentiality, and respecting intellectual property rights and avoiding cultural appropriation. Ethical practice includes following Indigenous methodologies, paradigms, and protocols. Most First Nations communities have a document outlining the community’s protocols.

Communication, collaboration and decision making. The Gottschall (2016) *Lheidli T'enneh Research Ethics and Protocol* provides researchers with protocol and ethical practice when working within the community. The document introduces the purpose of having a protocol, the community vision, the community goals, research and ethical values of the community, informed consent, along with how the Lheidli T'enneh community would like research conducted. Most communities have these protocols available publicly as a part of their collaboration with external systems.

Smith (2012) challenged western paradigms and ways of knowing and called for decolonization of research that requires a positioning that does not exploit Indigenous people but instead embraces a partnership in research. This positioning is crucial to Indigenous research practices, ethics, and systemic or community change. Smith believes that words like *research* or *ethics* are “probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary” (p. 1). Be aware of the language used. Avoid the creation of a power differential. Professionals and researchers need “methodological approaches to research that respects Indigenous cultural

knowing” (Kovach, 2010, p. 10). Respecting how Indigenous people and communities have come to know the approaches is also important. Archibald (2008) teaches her readers that storytelling is a form of research and respecting the teachings from the stories comes learning and each community culturally appropriate pedagogies.

Wilson (2008) suggested ethical standards themselves can create a divide as the standard can be an externally imposed code of ethics that does not fit within Indigenous knowledge. Wilson described this issue as having to “adhere to two different standards” (Wilson, 2008, p. 130). Many Indigenous scholars such as Smith (2012), Kovach (2010), Wilson (2008), and Archibald (2008) believed that a cultural approach must be used to understand prior research, protocol and ethical practice through an Indigenous methodology.

In summary, Indigenous methodologies support the understanding that ethical practice would include, honouring protocol, informed consent, respecting the history and inequality of the current systems, working for the communities benefit not systemic agenda, acting as a guide to the communities desired direction, only the community can define the direction of work for the community. Professionals within systems only help to guide the work and bridge the gap towards the common goal.

West/Black Quadrant: Leadership

The black quadrant of the *Medicine Wheel* represents the west. This section of the *Medicine Wheel* is also sometimes blue instead of black. Black in many First Nations represents death or mourning. So, the colour blue is used to represent the west. I have chosen to use black as it is a universal understanding of the colours. West is our emotional connection; it is personal and generational, it is where reason, knowledge, or purpose is derived. West represents our interconnectedness, the head, and the heart of knowing. Bell (2014) explained this part of the

Medicine Wheel as the *figure it out* section. Using the gift of reason allows us to figure out where we belong, who we are connected to, where we come from, who we are, and why we learn.

Working as an ally in Indigenous Education we echoed Dr. Marie Battiste's research statements that students needed to be connected and find a sense of personal connection and interconnectedness to stay in school. Students need to feel a part of the school culture, and leadership is what creates the culture and climate of a system.

Black leadership must be relational and authentic. Leadership is one important aspect of this research framework for capacity building it is closely intertwined and connected to each of the other sections of the framework. The conclusion from exploring the research literature regarding leadership and capacity building is that authenticity, relationship, trust, value, community rapport, cyclical learning, and reflective practice are essential aspects of leadership. To be a relational and authentic leader one must building capacity in self and others, be open to community feedback and the community teachings, acting as a guide toward the common goal, collaborate, and have purposeful, honest, and genuine communication. Effective leadership is an important aspect of moving any system towards a common goal.

Leadership

The concept of leadership has been an enduring topic of research as we try to understand how to create the changes we desire in our world (Senge, 2008). "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2016, p. 6). Leadership means many things to many people. Ideas about leadership have been the subject of great debate by philosophers throughout the ages, by scholars in organization leadership research literature (Northouse, 2016). Understanding how to lead and creating change with the freedom to make the change is a challenge for any leader. "Schools do not always reflect

the diverse cultural reality of our global societies. Leadership is an essential component of establishing school culture” (Cherkowski, 2010, p. 23). According to the research explored in this chapter shaping school culture requires leaders to guide an environment of inclusion, shared moral purpose, decision making, and professional growth. Educational leadership is the perspective of this project, but the content is adaptable to any organizational system.

Professional development. Diversity and inclusion are often thought of as approaches for children with exceptionalities. However, there is a broader understanding of inclusive education. The understanding that education should be free from social exclusion, whether that be ethnicity, gender, social class, religion, ability and so on (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). This idea of social inclusion is the broader understanding of inclusion that connects to Indigenous education.

When inclusion becomes a way of life in the classroom and school, teachers and students regularly engage in the challenging work of facing honestly the incidences of injustice, racism, discrimination in their school and embracing their responsibility for constructing school cultures that respect, support, and sustain diversity as a welcomed aspect of school life (Cherkowski, 2010, p. 24).

The research literature tied diversity and inclusion to leadership and the values of a leader. Walker and Shuangye (2007) stated effective leadership and inclusion require authentic leadership and an understanding of lifelong learning. The article provided many concrete ideas to implement modeling, reciprocal learning, reframing thinking, seeing culture from other perspectives, and reflecting within the practice of leadership, combining these qualities to make an authentic leader (Walker & Shuangye, 2007).

Northouse (2016) explained the term authentic leaderships as an approach to leadership that emphasizes building leaders through honest relationships with constituents who value their

leaders' input and is built on an ethical foundation. Being genuine and real creates an environment of trust. The statement supports previous statements throughout this literature review of trust being significant to the relational nature of Indigenous relations.

Authentic leaders are those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/oral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths, moreover, aware of the context in which they operate, and are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character (Northouse, 2016, p. 321).

Avolio and Gardner (2005) researched the components of authentic leadership compared to other types of leadership and proposed that authentic leadership can lead to a positive form of leadership and can lead to positive organizational climate.

Authentic leadership can make a fundamental difference in organizations by helping people find meaning and connection at work through greater self-awareness; by restoring and building optimism, confidence and hope; by promoting transparent relationships and decision making that builds trust and commitment among followers; and by fostering inclusive structures and positive ethical climates (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 331).

Authentic leadership is just one leadership style. Leadership approach and development are a personal choice with inherent traits and ways of being and choosing to be. This is not to say that there are not systemic structural restraints to leadership. Authentic leadership is often dismissed or devalued within a system. Louie (2017) advocated for examining one's own bias and being aware of it so we can work towards those biases not controlling our actions. In my experience and through this research project, the focus of leadership must be relational and authentic. Relational and authentic leadership leads to trust. Focusing on relational and authentic leadership means being real, having real conversations, being a real part of the change, being aware of inequities, and working to overcome them. In my opinion it is equally important to be

humble, remove *power over* or *ego* moments from a conversation and treating the conversations like tea with a best friend that would laugh if you tried to put on airs. Work towards removing or changing colonialistic or systemic language during conversations. Louie (2017) explained that this language is not necessary and only serves to intimidate. For example, during a work meeting I was whispered to by an attendee at the meeting, “Is there a reason they have to use language no one can understand?” The research literature informs us that when working with Indigenous communities these conversations are personal and relational and that these conversations matter and are important to First Nations communities. The conversations are about the future generation or a personal connection to the land, not just a paid responsibility, never treat these conversations like a business transaction. Leadership is one important aspect of the framework for capacity building, closely intertwined and connected to each of the other sections of this research project *A Holistic Approach to Capacity Building*.

Climate, culture and community. Cherkowskis’ (2010) article *Leadership for Diversity, Inclusion, and Sustainability* outlined leadership practices to build culture and community exploring inclusion and diversity. The Cherkowski quoted:

Inclusion is not a favor we do for students with disabilities, any more than a commitment to multicultural education benefits only students of color. Inclusion is a gift we give, the gift of understanding, the gift of knowing that we are all members of the human race and that joy comes in building genuine relationships with a wide range of other people (Sapon-Shevin, 2008, p. 51).

The gift of an inclusive environment is our responsibility and is a necessary step towards righting some of the education systems past wrongs. However, it is also our responsibility to teach the future generations not to repeat the mistakes of the past and build respectful and

authentic relationships with all human beings. These inclusive leadership practices also encompass those in which the leader leads while giving the gift of trust and shared leadership.

Leadership Theory and Practice by Northouse (2016) presented an explanation of a variety of leadership practices and the different approaches to leadership. Trust and relationship are the attributes of Authentic Leadership. Authenticity, relationship, and trust are essential to working with First Nations communities. “Indigenous knowledge is relationship-based” (Little Bear, 2009, p. 24). Indigenous people and cultures around the globe understand the world in terms of relationships as indicated through my research and in my own teachings. Trust is the basis for relationships. Building trust and relationships should be the priority when working with First Nations communities.

All four quadrants of the *Medicine Wheel* framework embed the concepts of trust and relationship. Lencioni (2006) explained that trust is the foundation of any functional team and without trust as the base of a team you will have dysfunction. Authenticity breeds trust and with trust relationship building which these aspects in play creates a sense of shared purpose when working with Indigenous communities.

Communication, collaboration and decision making. Decision making and shared leadership is considered an essential part leading a healthy culture or climate of a school or working environment. An over-arching theme when researching leadership in the context of working with Indigenous communities was the inclusion of the people from that land in decision making. The decisions made during conversations about the land or the people should be made with the people. Government documents such as the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* – UNDRIP (2011) stated that it is the right of Indigenous people to be included in decisions made about or for the land, people, or communities in which they are

involved. However, inclusion of the Indigenous voice is not always happening or being conducted authentically and equitably. First Nations people are still fighting for the right to be included in the decision-making process and it is the law to consult with First Nations people on all matters regarding their people, communities, and land (United Nations, 2011). The people in First Nations communities should be asked how consultation and information sharing should happen. In an article by Frost (2019) titled *First Nations Sovereignty, Environmental Justice, and Degrowth in Northwest BC, Canada* he outlined how even this most basic consultation and information sharing is not happening even though it is policy. Frost stated even when there is a perception of consultation, there are inequities in the consultation process. For example, the non-Indigenous professionals are consulting the nation, but they continue to have power over the final decisions, or the nations are outnumbered at the table. This *power over situation* is not genuine consultation if decisions can always be vetoed or swayed it is a form of continued oppression (Frost, 2019).

The local Indigenous community is a potential source of leadership within the school culture. “An appointed leader is unlikely to exhibit all the leadership behaviors necessary, and the team’s performance may depend on shared decision making, the team itself is an important potential source of leadership” (Bergman, Rentsch, Small, Davenport, & Bergman, 2012, p. 18). An integral part of the collaboration with First Nations communities is finding leaderships within the team. Little Bear (2009) stated educational success requires community involvement in all aspects of the learning process. Role models and knowledge holders within the communities could be a significant source of leadership for students and foster a school culture of inclusivity. Little Bear explained that Aboriginal people understand the world in terms of relationships; the inclusion of the community in the learning process of Aboriginal people is fundamental. Little

Bear set out a ten-step understanding of Indigenous knowledge in schools. Step four, in particular, stated “community involvement is necessary because Indigenous knowledge is relationship-based” (Little Bear, 2009, p. 24). Including the community in decision making and leadership can be seen as community and relationship development. The research revealed relationships development is o the ethically responsible thing to do if we are to bring about real change.

The research literature indicated that authenticity, relationship, trust, value, community rapport, cyclical learning, and reflective practice are essential aspects of leadership. In addition to building capacity in self and others, leadership means the following: being open to community feedback, acting as a guide toward the common goal, collaboration, and communication that is purposeful, honest, and genuine. Leadership is an essential aspect of moving any system towards a common goal. Effective leadership is responsible for building the climate of any conversation or systemic structure.

The Common Goal

A sense of *moral purpose* or *shared occupational identity* gives direction to learning (Fullan, 2011). Fullan researches moral purpose and shared occupational identity and stateted these two concepts create unity when working towards a common goal. Goransson, Lindqvist, Klang, Magnusson, and Almqvist (2018) commented that *shared occupational identity* allows for the sharing of beliefs about the purpose and primary goals of the work being conducted. The work performed to meet a a common goal takes a deep understanding of all four quadrants of the holistic framework presented in this project. “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences’ a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2016, p. 6). The common goal is the outcome of this holistic framework project. This particular research project

aims to provide the tools necessary to work towards a common goal with Indigenous communities. A holistic perspective is essential. Respecting that Indigenous knowledge and understanding are relational and without relationship and trust there is no common goal. I have a strong belief in education and that through education you can build capacity within self and others. Awareness is the key to growth and change and for me education brings about awareness.

Each quadrant of the common goal the *Medicine Wheel* framework is overlapped and tied in a cyclical and interwoven way. Little Bear (2009) explained that we must revisit knowledge constantly in a reciprocal way to ensure the knowledge is still relevant because learning is always occurring and changing. The common goal framework conceptualized by this research will guide the research to achieve the goals set out when working with First Nations communities.

In summary, one must remember to always to ask and be a humble lifelong learner because each community's history, norms, culture, and expectations are different. Never assume you know the right way, be open to learning, be a guide, model through leadership, be aware of the language used, listen to the community's stories, and work together collaboratively towards the common goal. These are critical aspects to establishing building capacity, strong leadership, holistic approaches, and considerations for further research.

Summary

Many other teachings within the *Medicine Wheel* have not been discussed within this research project conceptual framework, but all are important. Some of these teachings that are not included are the: seasons (spring, summer, fall, winter), times of day (morning, afternoon, evening, night), stages of life (infant, youth, adult, elder), and life-givers (earth, sun, water, air). There are also many different understandings of these teachings from culture to culture. The

teachings within the *Medicine Wheel* are a lifelong journey with no end and no beginning. Bell (2014) suggests that movement towards change is only possible when the other components have been acknowledged. Calliou (1995) advocated that *Medicine Wheels* can be pedagogical tools for teaching, learning, contemplating, and understanding our human journeys at individual, band/community, nation, global, and even cosmic levels” (Calliou, 1995, p. 51).

“The process of the literature review is framed as a participation in a community, a dialogue with those who are part of the community now and with one’s ancestors (Montuori, 2005, p. 374). A large part of the research journey is having such *conversations with the ancestors*. The following chapter will draw upon the scholarly works of Indigenous and Aboriginal people or other relevant materials by scholars who may not necessarily be Indigenous, but have extensively researched and wrote about leadership, capacity building, and ethical practices. This *Chapter Two: The Literature Review* covered leading research in each quadrant of the *Medicine Wheel* framework. The topics covered will be leadership perspectives, holistic approaches, capacity building, ethics, and the common goal. The research culminated in an awareness of how each quadrant should be understood. Battiste (2002) stated that “conducting a literature review on Indigenous knowledge implies that Eurocentric research can reveal an understanding of Indigenous knowledge. The problem with this approach is that Indigenous knowledge does not mirror classic Eurocentric orders of life (p. 2)”. I acknowledge that the framework and literature are only attempting to explain a way of understanding from my experience and perspective with the assistance of the scholarly research found in the literature. I am in no way implying that this research could ever give a full understanding of the relational aspect of Indigenous knowledge, understanding, and pedagogy. This *Medicine Wheel* framework is an interpretation of my approach to working with First Nations communities and leading

others encounter in my work experience and research to understand the underpinnings of working with Indigenous peoples and communities.

Chapter Three

A Holistic Approach to Capacity Building is a Qualitative research project supported by Indigenous research methods, based on an ethnographic approach, narrated by my truth because of my life experience and my experience as a non-Indigenous ally in the field of Indigenous education. The project is a professional development workshop intended to assist non-indigenous educators, leaders, or professionals in building their cultural capacity. Reconstructing knowledge to allow room for Indigenous Knowledges. When exploring the *gaps* in the education system, one conversation kept coming up in my work in Indigenous education. Non-Indigenous teachers and leaders will ask how they are supposed to contribute to Aboriginal Education if they have no training, no understanding of the expectations. In my experience, most people authentically wanted to do their job well but expressed a lack of knowledge, understanding, and fear of doing or approaching things in the wrong way. There is an expectation that professionals go out to Indigenous communities. However, they may have little to no knowledge or understanding of Indigenous people or communities as it was purposefully left out of history books and their professional training. non-Indigenous professionals must have the tools to work authentically and be set up for success if there is to be a movement towards decolonization and the elimination of structural racism. It is important for people to get a sense of working with Indigenous people, place, and land. Most importantly, one must have a sense of their own belonging, research the historical events of Aboriginal and Indigenous people. This means that you go to the source to listen to the stories get a sense of the community and people with in that community Authenticity comes with a sense of belief, "If you believe that nothing happened, it would be best for professionals not to work with Aboriginal or Indigenous people. However, many times there is no choice given from within a system and it is expected that professionals within that system

work with Indigenous people regardless of their cultural awareness or safety. Leaders must be aware that without cultural safety, forcing collaboration can be highly damaging to relations and reconciliation and possibly have the opposite effect on the outcome of collaboration. Being exposed to the truth is the beginning of delving deeper into the journey of change. This research project intends to be one of those tools for understanding, growth and change within self thus building professional capacity to authentically work with Indigenous people.

Methodology

Qualitative methodology is said by Mayan (2009) to be less concerned with controlling variables and more interested in inviting context and complexity. A curiosity about the story behind the numbers. The story and understanding the story was what naturally led me to qualitative research. Indigenous methodology takes the story and weaves it into a research paradigm (Mayan, 2009). The methodology employed is symbolic, visual, and reciprocal. These worldviews shape the approach of the research, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and the epistemology, methodology, and ethics.

Indigenous Methods

My methodological option is Indigenous world views and perspectives, grounded in the teaching of the *Medicine Wheel*, woven with academic research, to inform educational leadership and professional development. The theoretical basis for this research is grounded in Indigenous knowledge from my perspective, from my years of experience in Indigenous education along with all of the learning experiences I've had personally and professionally. This grounding manifests itself in my everyday practice through a community-based approach. My research incorporates the values and beliefs of Indigenous communities in its design, methods, and analysis.

The pedagogy I present in this project is from my own experiences, teachings that come from my extended Metis family, Local elders, growing up in that Prince George community and collaborative work with Indigenous communities for nine years in Aboriginal Education. The framework I present worked for the collaborative work I did for many years. In no way do I suggest that there is one right way to teach working with Indigenous communities. I only present what worked for the collaboration of many local conversations, including being the lead the signing of the first Local Education agreement between two local nations and the school district.

Margaret Kovach (2010) poses the question of what is an Indigenous research methodology? Furthermore, answers with, Indigenous methodologies come from tribal knowledge. The Cree symbolism of the *Medicine Wheel* is tribal knowledge. Kovach explores Indigenous epistemologies, decolonizing theory, the story as the method, situating self and culture, Indigenous methods, protocol, meaning-making, community-based research, and ethics (Kovach, 2010). When situating myself, it was only natural to draw on my experiences. I almost feel there is an interconnectedness to Indigenous methodology and autoethnography because both are relational and tell a story.

Indigenous methodologies in academia are shaped by Indigenous paradigms, worldviews, and principles. We cannot talk about Indigenous methodologies without acknowledging the world views they come from and the paradigms and principals they rest on. Our understandings about the nature of our existence and our reality and how we come to know about our existence and reality make up a paradigm (Absolon, 2011, p. 53)

“Many times, such research bridges Western practices and Indigenous knowledges; however, bringing together these two worldviews can also present challenges” (Lavallée, 2009, p. 21). With this project I am attempting to blend western practices with Indigenous knowledge with the hopes that this knowledge may bridge the communication between these two world

views with the end goal of creating a more collaborative working relationship to benefit the future generation. The conceptual framework and teachings within the framework attempt to touch on the pedagogies within an Indigenous Methodology because I believe this is the most authentic way to show validity in an approach to working with Indigenous communities. “It is the very world-view within which the researcher becomes immersed that holds the key to knowing” (Bishop, 1998, p. 208) Bishop has published many books and articles expressing the importance of culturally specific research practices. So not only is Indigenous methodology my paradigm, but it would also be negligent of me as a researcher building a framework about working with Indigenous communities and not consider an Indigenous pedagogy for the proposed project.

Naturally, the project took on a relational aspect as an Indigenous perspective is relational. I found that in my work the only way to collaborate was to first build relationship and to take the time for that relationship to be authentic. If there was no relationship there was mistrust and misunderstanding.

I take an auto ethnographical approach in this project because it is about my perspective, based on my paradigm, from my experience backed by research. My journey of working in Aboriginal Education, how I have come to this knowledge through my research, is my methodology. *A Holistic Approach to Capacity Building* is a research project based on my professional perspective on battling systemic racism, academic research, and my passion for *being the change I wish to see in the world*. Autoethnography is an intriguing and promising qualitative method that offers a way of giving voice to personal experience for the purpose of extending sociological understanding (Sparks, 2000, p. 21).

Autoethnography

“Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 273). Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) go on to state that the researcher uses autobiography and ethnography to research in an autoethnographic way.

Autobiography being personal experience and ethnography being cultural experience.

Combining the two, the method of autoethnography is both the process and the product.

Naturally, with my positioning being an Indigenous perspective because of my worldview and perspective, the project would take on a narrative analysis with an autobiographic approach because my paradigm is because of my cultural experiences in life and my career. As a research method, autoethnography allows for the research to be embedded in personal ways of knowing and being and personal subjectivities to be a part of the research. These subjectivities allow for a personal indigenous and experiential standpoint in the research project.

My journey of working in Aboriginal Education, and how I have come to understand this knowledge through my research, is my methodology. *A Holistic Approach to Capacity Building* is a research project based on my professional perspective on battling systemic racism and a way I see to *be the change I wish to see in the world*. Autoethnography is an intriguing and promising qualitative method that offers a way of giving voice to personal experience for the purpose of extending sociological understanding (Sparks, 2000, p. 21).

Chapter Four

The project is a research-informed guidebook and PowerPoint resource intended to provide professional development on holistic and inclusion informed practice. The guidebook is a succinct graphically pleasing manual overviewing the *Medicine Wheel* framework for working with First Nations communities. The guidebook is titled *A Holistic Approach to Capacity Building*. Each section of the framework has a separate page and provides an overview of the conclusions in each section of the literature review. A reference to the scholarly works will be provided through reference pages. As it is crucial to provide a link to the *conversations with the ancestors* (Montuori, 2005, p. 374) . Each page will contain a resonating quote from sections of the literature review as well as the main conclusions from this project. The guidebook is to be used in conjunction with the PowerPoint and informed by this project. Together the guidebook and PowerPoint can be used for professional development workshops. The facilitator should be knowledgeable about the information contained in this project. Appendix A, B, and C provide a brief visual of the intended project and the framework. All the pictures and graphics in the guidebook and PowerPoint will be original photos and graphics by the researcher.

The guidebook will consist of a brief overview and description of a *Medicine Wheel* and the four quadrants of the framework.

Red, a holistic approach or perspective, would include culturally appropriate protocol, considerable consultation, balancing the four quadrants of the *Medicine Wheel*, and honouring Indigenous knowledges. It would be Relational, experiential, oral, and cyclical, respecting Aboriginal axiology. For example, strive for a strong understanding of the peoples' beliefs, values, customs, and protocols. Strive to follow Indigenous pedagogy that embraces: Trust, relationship, authenticity, and the personal narrative.

Black, leadership must be relational and authentic. Leadership is one important aspect of the framework for capacity building, closely intertwined and connected to each of the other sections of the framework. In exploring the research, the conclusion is that authenticity, relationship, trust, value, community rapport, cyclical learning, and reflective practice are important aspects of leadership. It is also building capacity for self and others, being open to community feedback, acting as a guide, collaboration, and communication that is purposeful, honest, and genuine. Effective leadership is an essential aspect of moving any system towards a common goal.

Yellow, ethical practice would include, honouring protocol, informed consent, respecting the history and inequality of the current systems, working for the communities benefit not systemic agenda, acting as a guide to the communities desired direction, only the community can define the direction you help to guide the action. Respecting the community's vision, ancestral knowledge, the community goals, having a collaborative relationship, a sharing of power, informed consent and voluntary participation, privacy and confidentiality, and respecting intellectual property rights and avoiding cultural appropriation. In addition to following Indigenous methodologies, paradigms, and protocols.

White or gray, as shown in the framework, capacity building would include community and professional development, communication, collaboration, decision making, and inclusion will assist in understanding capacity building for non-Indigenous professionals. In addition to respecting each community's unique body of knowledge, identifying and nurturing skills from within, building on the knowledge and capacity that already exists among members, building confidence and comfort among members to motivate, achieve and advocate.

Concluding the guidebook would be the final framework explaining how all the concepts come together to inform practice when working towards a common goal and a brief description of the purpose of the project and *about the author* section.

Project Summary

This project attempts to provide a holistic understanding of how to approach working within First Nations communities resulting in a guidebook to provide non-Indigenous educational professionals with educational professional development based on knowledge and research from leading Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars to improve inclusive and culturally sensitive practice. The project explores a common goal framework adapted from the Cree *Medicine Wheel*. Conceptualized by the researcher from years of experience in Indigenous education and my personal family and community experiences. This project and the research it contains is from my perspective from my teachings and subject to my bias. The project is a sharing of knowledge from me to you on what worked for me and my district from my experiences. The framework consists of four parts, leadership, capacity building, ethics, and holistic approach, all centered on the common goal. The project works to bring together the concepts important to achieving the common goal of improving professional capacity when attempting to work with First Nations Communities.

Conclusion

This project focused on informing the building of a guidebook to support non-Indigenous professionals to work with First Nations communities successfully. I believe that this tool can be used for educational professionals as well as cross sectorial. The project explored a common goal framework, conceptualized by the researcher, and adapted from the Cree *Medicine Wheel*. The project explored a holistic approach to capacity building, providing educational professionals

with the tools to improve inclusive and culturally sensitive practice. The focus of this project was towards educational practice. However, the framework can benefit any professional setting. The framework contains four parts; leadership, capacity building, ethics, and holistic perspective, centered on the common goal. The project works to bring together the concepts necessary to achieve the common goal of improving professional capacity when working with First Nations Communities. How do we build capacity for inclusion among non-Indigenous professionals? Why build capacity for non-Indigenous professionals working with First Nations communities to achieve a common goal? These are the questions this project will explore, culminating in a guide to professional practice when working with First Nations communities.

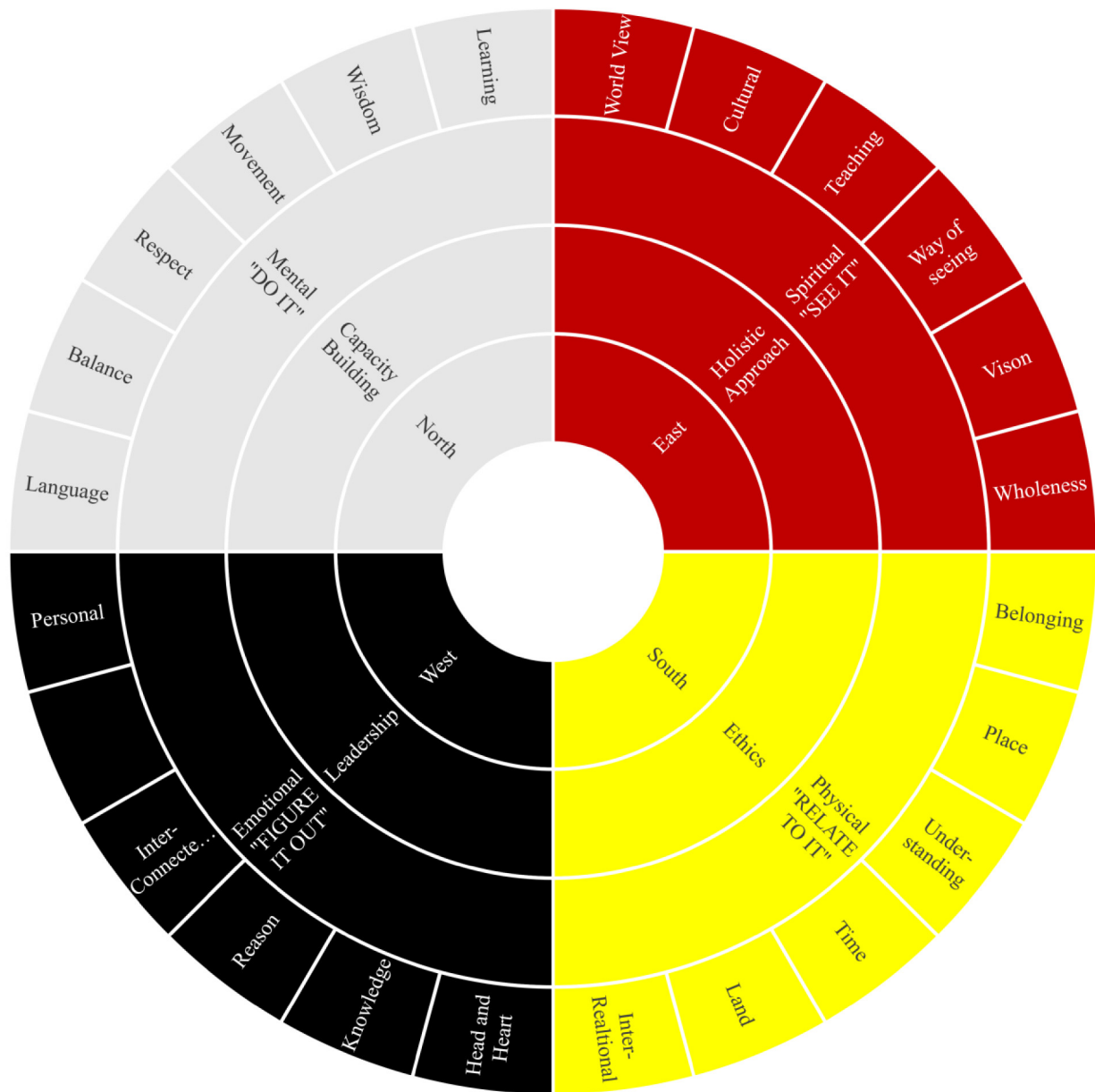
Chapter one covered the significance, rationale, and background, researcher context, and overview of the conceptual framework. Chapter two reviewed the current literature that informs each quadrant of the framework. Chapter three describes the project, the guidebook, and PowerPoint for professional development. This project, when completed, will provide a complete professional development package to build capacity among professionals working with First Nations communities.

This project is for my children, for your children, the *Medicine Wheel* represents healing, to heal the wrongs of the past, and create the opportunity for a brighter future. I want to listen and learn from my predecessors to create that future where everyone has the opportunity to achieve success without systemic, historical, or racial barriers. This project will create a tool for non-Indigenous professionals that may have apprehension but willingness to find a starting point for their understanding, an approach for their learning. Many educators and professionals during my career have said to me that they want to do the authentic work that is needed but have no idea where to start. This project is the beginning of the journey to building capacity within one's

approach. My hope is that through this research, the teachings, the learning, and the professional development opportunity this project provides, that this future can be a reality. “Be the change you wish to see in the world” (Gandhi as cited in Gore, 2013).

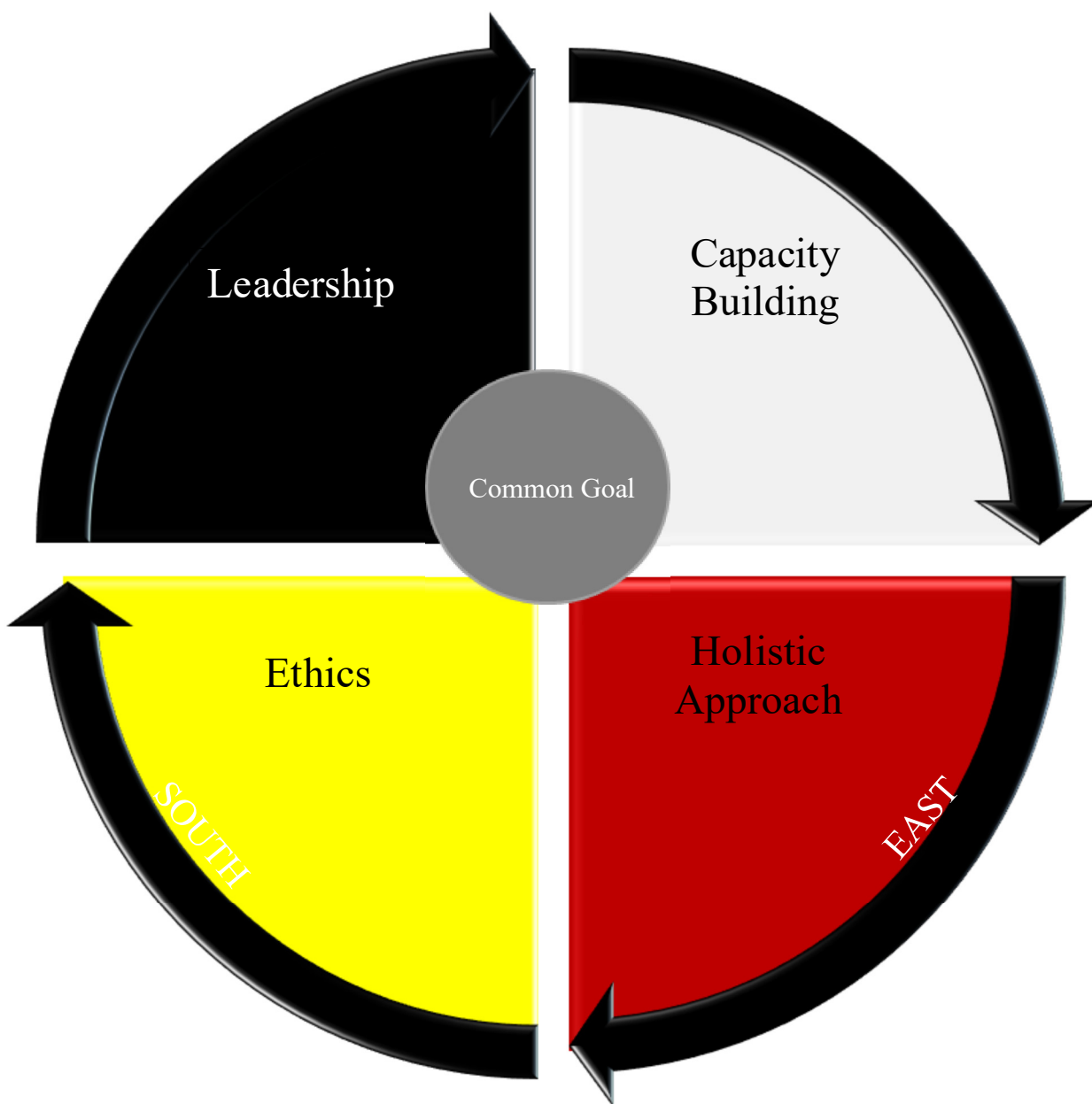
Appendix A – The Medicine Wheel

Figure 1



Appendix B – The Framework

Figure 2



Appendix C – The Guidebook

Figure 3



Handbook Final Project - Jennifer Pa

Double Click link or it is included in the file

Appendix D – The Powerpoint

Figure 4



Powerpoint Final Project - Jennifer Pa

Double Click link or it is included in the file

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A Holistic Approach to Capacity Building



A Framework for Working with Indigenous Communities

by Jennifer Parisian



PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTERS OF EDUCATION

IN

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

A Holistic Approach to Capacity Building

By Jennifer Parisian

This guide explores a holistic understanding of how to approach working within First Nations communities providing educational professionals with tools to improve inclusive and culturally sensitive practice. This guide offers a common goal framework, conceptualized by the researcher and adapted from the Aboriginal medicine wheel.

The holistic framework is made up of four parts, leadership, capacity building, ethics and holistic perspective all centered on the common goal. The project works to bring together the concepts important to achieving the common goal of improving professional capacity when working with First Nations Communities.



“Be the change
in which you
wish to see in
the world” -
Gandhi

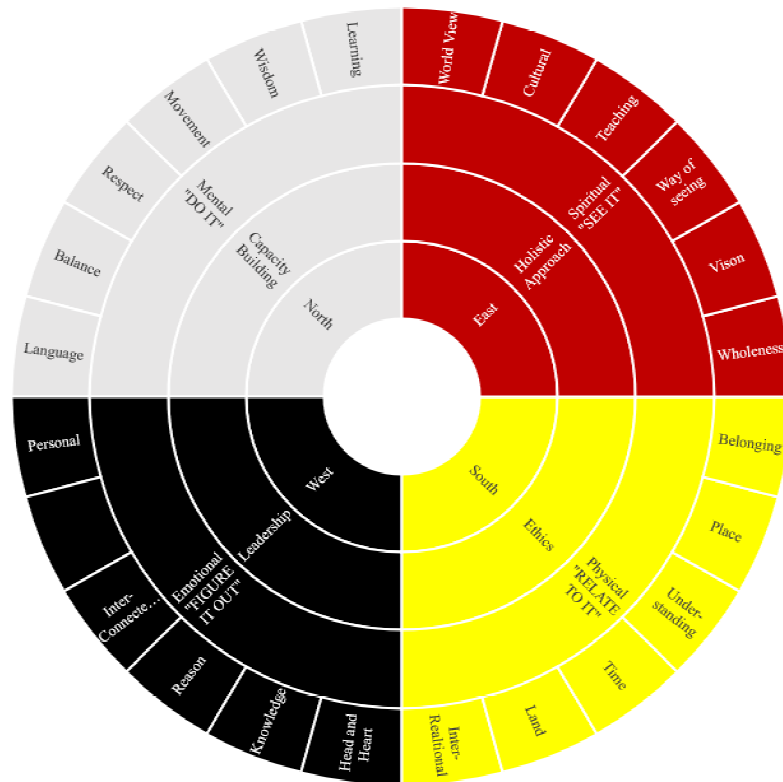


The Medicine Wheel




The medicine wheel varies with each interpretation or application. There are many descriptions of the meanings within each quadrant. The medicine wheel contains many traditional teachings, representing balance and connection with self and the world around us; therefore, it can be used for personal or professional development. The medicine wheel is a circle divided into four coloured quadrants. The number four has significance in most Aboriginal cultures. The four quadrants have been expressed as the four directions, the four teachings, the four winds, the four clans, and many other associations in sets of four. Dumont (1989) explains the medicine wheel teachings as “a process of how life evolves, how the natural world grows and works together, how all things are connected, and how all things move toward their destiny” (Dumont, 1989, p. 6). The black, white, red, and yellow colors in the medicine wheel signify different attributes such as intellectual, physical, spiritual, and emotional awareness. The medicine wheel is interpreted uniquely in each culture and nation. The order and colours can vary in each culture, along with the attributes. For example, green may represent mother earth, blue may indicate the higher being as the sky father, or the ocean, while the red may show fire and black for the underworld. The four different colors can also represent the four directions north, south, east, west. However, the circle is the

primary influence and represents how Aboriginal peoples view the world. “Aboriginal peoples see and respond to the world in a circular fashion and are influenced by circles of creation in the environment” (Dumont, 1989, p. 6). Working from a holistic perspective would include this cyclical understanding.



The medicine wheel exemplifies a holistic perspective. The basic teachings of the medicine wheel are widely known and can be shared. The most significant teaching is “that we are all made up of four areas: our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual selves. It is believed that you must be balanced in all four of these areas to be truly healthy, happy, fulfilled, and balanced” (Gray, 2011, p. 216). The medicine wheel is the basis for the framework because of the representation of an Indigenous, holistic, interconnected, and balanced teaching perspective. Calliou reminds us that “Medicine Wheels can be pedagogical tools for teaching, learning, contemplating, and understanding our human journeys at individual, band/community, nation, global, and even cosmic levels” (Calliou, 1995, p. 51). Moving from a linear understanding to a cyclical understanding is the first step in moving towards an understanding of Aboriginal pedagogy and why the medicine wheel is the basis for this framework and teachings it contains.

Capacity Building



Community and professional development, communication, collaboration, decision making and inclusion will assist in understanding capacity building for professionals. In addition to, respecting each community unique body of knowledge, identifying and nurturing skills from within, building on the knowledge and capacity that already exists among members, building confidence and comfort among members to motivate, achieve and advocate.

The white quadrant of the medicine wheel is North, represented as gray for white background visualization. North, is said to represent the mental part of our being. Learning, wisdom, movement towards another way of knowing is where our respect derives. Learning in this quadrant is strongly tied to language. Most Indigenous academic scholars would agree that language is the key to Indigenous connection and learning. Language is a carrier of culture. Language is the most important quality of Indigenous culture. “Telling stories is how we pass on the history and teachings of our ancestors” (Archibald, 2008, p. 29).

Education and awareness of the world around us is how we move towards deeper respect and understanding of the world around us. Learning from a different perspective is how we grow and build capacity within ourselves. Bell (2013), explains this quadrant as the “do it” part of the medicine wheel. “Moving into the *doing* phase of the north requires taking the knowledge gained from all the directions and enacting that knowledge” (Bell, 2014, p. 2). Once we are aware, we have a responsibility to do something about it, whether that be growth within ourselves as a person or making change in the world when we see inequities.

White or gray, as shown in the framework, capacity building would include community and professional development, communication, collaboration, decision making, and inclusion will assist in understanding capacity building for professionals. In addition to respecting each community’s unique body of knowledge, identifying and nurturing skills from within, building on the knowledge and capacity that already exists among members, building confidence and comfort among members to motivate, achieve and advocate.

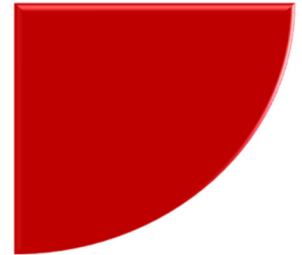
Exploring the current literature regarding community and professional development, communication, collaboration, decision making, and inclusion will assist in understanding capacity building for professionals. In addition to respecting each community’s unique body of knowledge, identifying and nurturing skills from within, building on the knowledge and capacity that already exists among members, building confidence and comfort among members to motivate, achieve and advocate. In my opinion, capacity building is achieved through modeling and reflecting inclusive leadership and blending ways of knowing and teaching.

“Recognizing that teachers are essential learners within the community provides the space for conceiving of professional communities in which teachers can come together to grow and learn” (Cherkowski, 2010, p. 25).

Holistic Approach



Culturally appropriate protocol, considerable consultation, the four quadrants of balanced understanding, honouring Indigenous knowledges. Its relational, experiential, oral, and cyclical, respecting Aboriginal axiology. Following Indigenous pedagogy: trust, relationship, authenticity, narrative, and personal. Collaboration is a spiritual, connected, relational experience.



The red quadrant of the medicine wheel represents the east. East is said to embody the spiritual aspect of one's being. Wholeness, vision, and a way of seeing things from a spiritual perspective is a very different concept of learning from a Eurocentric understanding but an essential and wholly connected part of learning from an Indigenous perspective. Battiste (2004) explains that the fundamental principals of aboriginal learning come from the land, spirit, and language and respects diverse learning styles based on a holistic understanding of their spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical connectedness. Learning must be reciprocal connected understanding, including the spiritual connection to learning. Students needed to learn to walk with spirit, they needed to see themselves reflected in the education system to feel connected to learning.


Learning from a spiritual understanding is how we grow a holistic perspective. Bell (2014), explains this as the “see it” part of the medicine wheel. “Visioning allows to engage in the hopeful thinking necessary for radical transformation. Each person then has the responsibility to do the work required to fulfill the vision’ (Bell, 2014, p. 2). In connecting to a spiritual understanding, we may “see it” or envision a very different way of learning within a system. You have a responsibility for change once you “see it” from a different perspective.

A holistic approach would include culturally appropriate protocol, considerable consultation, the four quadrants of the Medicine Wheel, as mentioned earlier, honouring Indigenous knowledges. It would be Relational, experiential, oral, and cyclical, respecting Aboriginal axiology, following Indigenous pedagogy: Trust, relationship, authenticity, narrative, and personal. A solid understanding of a holistic perspective is essential to working with First Nations communities. The journey of learning would include the awareness of moving systems towards reconciliation, an exploration of how to blend this understanding into practice, and model that practice for others.

In general, a framework for holistic research would include: honouring past, present and future in interpretive and analytical research processes including historical references and intergenerational discourse; honoring the interconnectedness of all of life and the multi-dimensional aspects of life on the Earth and in the community in research design and implementation; and honouring the spiritual, physical, emotional and mental aspects of the person and the community in research protocols, methodologies and analyses. (Kenny, Faries, Fiske, & Voyageur, 2004, p. 2)

“Naturalizing Indigenous knowledge can begin to neutralize racism, colonialism, and assumptions of the inferiority of Aboriginal peoples” (Little Bear, 2009, p. 24).

Ethics



Ethical practice, honouring protocol, informed consent, respecting the history and inequality of the current systems, working for the communities benefit not systemic agenda, acting as a guide to the communities desired direction, only the community can define the direction you help to guide the action.

The yellow quadrant of the medicine wheel represents the south. South represents the physical aspect self, time, the land, and inter-relational understanding. Understanding of how we belong in the world around us and connect to the land and others is a fundamental teaching within Indigenous cultures. Learning from a physical understanding is how we relate to the world. Bell (2014), explains this as the “relate to it” part of the medicine wheel. (Bell, 2014, p. 2). Relating to the teachings provides an understanding of the importance of that learning and change. Relating to the ethics, history, or reason for decolonization and reconciliation provides and the basis for understanding why any work with first nation communities needs to be done responsibly and authentically.

“Research involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada has been defined and carried out primarily by non-Aboriginal researchers. The approaches used have not generally reflected Aboriginal world views, and the research has not necessarily benefited Aboriginal peoples or communities. As a result, Aboriginal peoples continue to regard research, particularly research originating outside their communities, with a certain apprehension or mistrust. (Government of Canada, Interagency Advisory Panel on Research, 2017, Ch 9)

Yellow, ethical practice would include; honouring protocol, informed consent, respecting the history and inequality of the current systems, working for the communities benefit not systemic agenda, acting as a guide to the community's desired direction, community defines the direction, you help to guide the action. Respecting the community's vision, the community goals, having a collaborative relationship, a sharing of power, informed consent and voluntary participation, privacy and confidentiality, and respecting intellectual property rights and avoiding cultural appropriation. In addition to following Indigenous methodologies, paradigms, and protocols are equally important

A cultural approach must be used to understand prior research, protocol and ethical practice through an Indigenous methodology. Indigenous methodologies support the understanding that ethical practice would include, honouring protocol, informed consent, respecting the history and inequality of the current systems, working for the communities benefit not systemic agenda, acting as a guide to the communities desired direction, only the community can define the direction of work for the community. Professionals within systems only help to guide the work and bridge the gap towards the common goal.

Aboriginal people must be consulted and informed; they should maintain ownership of the information provided and established as “collaborators and co-investors” in all projects conducted (Assembly of First Nations, 2009, p. 4).

Leadership



Authenticity, relationship, trust, value, community rapport, cyclical learning and reflective practice are important aspects of leadership. In addition to building capacity in self and others, being open to community feedback, acting as a guide toward the common goal, collaboration and communication that is purposeful, honest and genuine.



The black quadrant of the medicine wheel represents the west. This section of the medicine wheel is also sometimes blue instead of black. Black in many first nations represents death or mourning, so blue is used to represent the west. However, I have chosen to use black as it is a universal understanding of the colours. West is our emotional connection; it is personal, generational, where reason, knowledge, or purpose derives. West represents our interconnectedness, the head, and the heart of knowing.

Bell (2014), explains this part of the medicine wheel as the “figure it out” section. Using the gift of reason to “figure out” where we belong, who we are connected to, where we come from, who we are, and why we learn. When working as an indigenous educator, we always said that students needed to be connected and find a sense of personal connection and interconnectedness to stay in school. Students need to feel a part of the school culture, and leadership is what creates the culture and climate of a system.

Leadership is an essential aspect of moving any system towards a common goal. Moreover, leadership has a great responsibility in building the climate of any conversation or systemic structure.

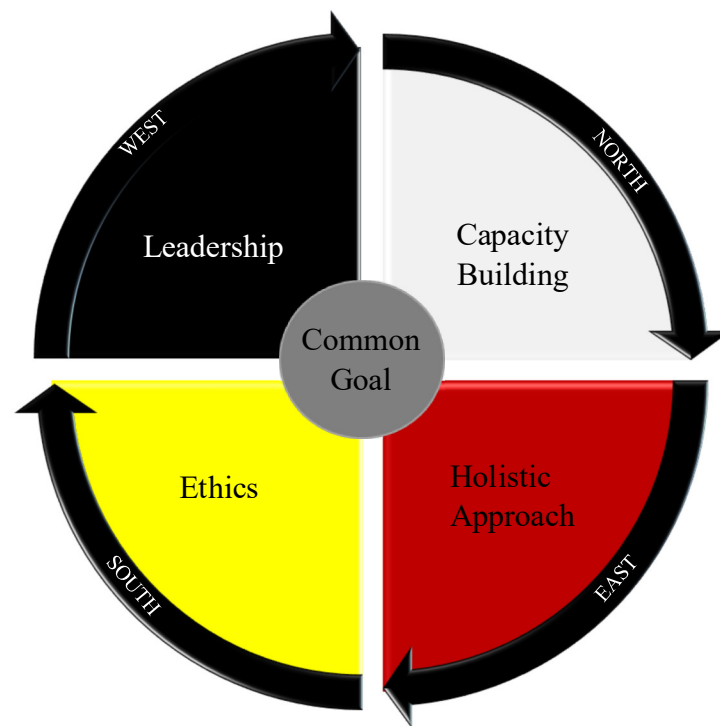
Black, leadership must be relational and authentic. Leadership is one important aspect of the framework for capacity building, closely intertwined, and connected to each of the other sections of the framework. In exploring the research, the conclusion is that authenticity, relationship, trust, value, community rapport, cyclical learning, and reflective practice are essential aspects of leadership. In addition to building capacity in self and others, being open to community feedback, acting as a guide toward the common goal, collaboration, and communication that is purposeful, honest, and genuine. Effective leadership is an important aspect of moving any system towards a common goal.

The concept of leadership is an enduring topic as we try to understand how to create the changes, we desire in our world (Senge, 2008). Understanding how to lead creating change and being allowed the freedom to make the change is a challenge for any leader. “Schools do not always reflect the diverse cultural reality of our global societies. Leadership is an essential component of establishing school culture” (Cherkowski, 2010, p. 23). Shaping School culture requires leaders to guide an environment of inclusion, shared moral purpose, decision making, and professional growth.

Effective leadership and inclusion require authentic leadership and understanding of lifelong learning (Walker & Shuangye, 2007)



Common Goal Framework



This resource provides a holistic understanding of how to approach working within *First Nations* communities resulting in a guidebook to provide educational professionals with educational professional development based on knowledge and research from leading Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars to improve inclusive and culturally sensitive practice. The project explores a common goal framework, conceptualized by the researcher and adapted from the Aboriginal medicine wheel. The framework consists of four parts, leadership, capacity building, ethics, and holistic approach, all centered on the common goal. The project works to bring together the concepts important to achieving the common goal of improving professional capacity when attempting to work with First Nations Communities. Each quadrant of the framework is overlapped and tied in a cyclical and interwoven way. Dr. Leroy Little Bear (2009) explains that we must revisit knowledge constantly in a reciprocal way to ensure the knowledge is still relevant because learning is always occurring and changing

Remember always to ask and be a humble lifelong learner because each community's history, norms, culture, and expectations are different. Never assume you know the right way, act as a friend, be a helpful guide, model through leadership, be aware of the language used, listen to the community's stories and work together collaboratively towards the common goal. These are critical aspects to establishing building capacity, strong leadership, holistic approaches, and considerations for further research.

This is just the beginning of your learning journey not the end ...



About the author and project:

This framework is an attempt at passing along what I have learned about working with and being a part of First Nations communities and I in no way imply that I can ever fully understand an Indigenous perspective as a non-Indigenous person, just that this framework is how I found success in teaching other and working with First Nations communities. “These understandings about my histories, my socio-political context, and myself makes it even more important that I work in ethically informed, relational ways when working in the field of Indigenous education” (McGregor, 2014, p. 91). I cannot speak about being Aboriginal, as I am not, I do not speak about what I do not know, because I cannot, but I can challenge widely held Eurocentric notions and empower others to do the same (Graveline, 2000). Thank you for joining me on my Journey.

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Note: This project is meant to be a professional development workshop with accompanying PowerPoint and research paper.

This research would not be possible without my teachers, my knowledge holders and mentors.