DEFINING CULTURE IN GOVERNMENT:
SUBCULTURES WITHIN THE BC MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT

by

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Abstract

A strong and effective organizational culture is critical for the success of an organization. This project is intended to facilitate and support a cultural transition within the Ministry of Environment towards its goal of becoming a High-Performing, Flexible and Resilient Organization. In order to accomplish this, the existing culture within the organization must be defined.

The initial component of the project is a detailed literature review. The literature review is focused on the following three main areas: methods to determine organizational culture, culture in the public service, and organizational sub-cultures. The literature review is intended to support and provide rationale for defining the culture within the Ministry of Environment.

Based on information gleaned from the literature review, the project proceeds to define the culture within two work units of the Ministry of Environment. The project also defines the characteristics of a High-Performing, Flexible and Resilient Organization as a cultural assessment is of little value unless it is linked to an organizational problem or issue. The cultural model and assessment methodology chosen to define culture of two work units within the Environmental Protection division of the Ministry of Environment was based on the framework defined by Edgar H. Schein. Schein's cultural model has three levels: artifacts, espoused values, and shared assumptions.

Based on the high degree of similarity in the results from the two focus groups, four cultural themes were identified within the Ministry of Environment. These themes are intricately linked through underlying elements such as passion, and communication; therefore the themes reflect a cultural continuum as opposed to singular stand alone components. The four cultural
themes identified include: Clan Mentality, Bureaucracy and Organizational Goals, Organizational Passion, and Communication. The alignment of the cultural themes between the focus groups precludes the designation of independent geographical sub-cultures but is indicative of a larger hierarchical sub-culture that resonates throughout the organization.

The attributes of the four cultural themes were compared against the defining characteristics of a High-Performing, Flexible and Resilient Organization. Although there are some opportunities to leverage similarities, there is a general misalignment between the existing culture and the desired state. To address the misalignment several mitigative recommendations are proposed, these include: leveraging the organizational passion; focusing on effective communication, understanding issues, understanding organizational culture and alternate assumptions, improving overall accountability, addressing the sense of entitlement and expectations of all staff, and understanding external pressures.

None of the recommendations will work in isolation rather they should be incorporated in a strategic nature. One pervasive component of the mitigative recommendations is the use of ‘organizational leaders’ from within the organization to support and facilitate the cultural transition within the Ministry of Environment. These leaders must be passionate and practical individuals who are well respected and are effective communicators.
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Introduction

Over recent years, the benefit of a strong and positive organizational culture has become increasingly recognized as a critical component for the success of an organization. It is commonly acknowledged that organizational culture impacts the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization’s management system and that management decisions which are made in isolation from the organizations culture may lead to unanticipated and undesirable consequences (Schein 1999). It is also documented that organizational change that does not take the culture into account is fraught with peril (Wilkins 1983). Literature demonstrates that a strong and effective organizational culture can enable positive consequences that include enhanced decision making, increased employee cooperation and commitment, improved job performance, and overall organizational efficiencies (Langan-Fox and Tan 1997).

A goal for the BC Ministry of Environment is to transition the existing organizational culture to one that supports and demonstrates the characteristics of a High-Performing Flexible and Resilient Organization (HPFRO). Defining the characteristics of a HPFRO for the Ministry of Environment is critical as a cultural assessment is of little value unless it is linked to an organizational problem or issue (Schein 1999).

This project is focused on how to support a cultural transition within the Ministry of Environment to facilitate it becoming a HPFRO. In order to accomplish this, the existing culture within the organization must be defined and as such, a component of this project is focused on defining the culture within two work units of the Ministry of Environment. The
project also defines the characteristics of a HPFRO such that they may be compared with the existing cultural themes of the Ministry of Environment.

Comparison of the cultural themes with the desired conditions that promote a HPFRO will identify synergies and also areas of conflict. This will form the basis for recommendations that will be developed to leverage the positive synergies and also provide direction on how to mitigate for discrepancies and areas of conflict.

This project is supported by a focused literature review that was performed to aid in defining culture and determining an appropriate cultural assessment methodology. The literature review also examined organization culture within other public jurisdictions as well as organizational sub-cultures.

Context

The British Columbia Ministry of Environment (MoE) is a large organization; therefore, it is difficult to meaningfully define the culture of the organization in such a fashion that it resonates with all staff. Due to the hierarchical, divisional and geographic structuring of the Ministry, it is commonly accepted that there are numerous sub-cultures that have formed. Ensuring effective and efficient communication between these various sub-culture units is critical to allow MoE to become a High-Performing, Flexible and Resilient Organization (HPFRO).

In the winter of 2010, MoE was comprised of several different divisions and work units. The Environmental Protection Division (EP) is one of the larger organizational units of MoE and was the Division in which this project was based. The organizational structure
of EP is portioned into headquarters (HQ) and regional operations\(^1\) which are subsequently arranged in a branch structure based on programs/areas of expertise (Appendix 1).

Resultant of the EP organizational structure, numerous work unit sub-cultures are believed to exist. The presence of the sub-cultures creates difficulties for effective and efficient dialogue between the respective work units. These communication difficulties create organization problems that cannot be addressed constructively. This is due to the cultural misunderstandings resultant from dialogue and communication failures that often create barriers which stand in the way of defining a problem in a common way (Schein 1993). Schein (1999) argues that dialogue is a critical vehicle to understanding cultures and sub-cultures within an organization.

**Literature Review**

Typically the first question that arises when discussing organization culture is: What is organizational culture? This occurs because there is a plethora of preferred definitions of the term based on personal perceptions and ideologies. Regardless of the numerous definitions, an underlying theme based on beliefs, values and assumptions typically prevails. Two commonly accepted definitions of organizational culture are (Schein 1999):

1. Organization culture is commonly defined as the basic pattern of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs considered being the correct way of thinking about and acting on problems and opportunities facing an organization.

\(^1\) Approximately 9 regional offices are located throughout the province.
2. The shared tacit assumptions that a group has learned throughout its history and on which people base their daily behaviour. These assumptions came from past group successes.

As is apparent based on the two aforementioned definitions, a common theme is that organizational culture refers to deeply held underlying beliefs and assumptions. Regardless of the definition chosen, organizational culture is difficult to discern as it tends to be submerged and as such it is difficult to completely and accurately define. Geert Hofstede (1998) notes that culture is characteristic of the organization, not of individuals, and that it is manifested in and measured from the behaviour and dialogue of individuals that is then aggregated to the appropriate level of their organizational unit.

**Methods to Determine Organizational Culture**

The determination of culture within an organization can occur through several different means and there is no general consensus among researchers as to which is the 'best way'. A common theme of identifying shared perceptions and/or employee values resonates across most of the cultural assessment processes regardless of the specific techniques or methods used to define the culture within an organization. Alternate techniques exist based on the typical research types: qualitative (i.e., focus groups or direct interviews) or quantitative (i.e., surveys or questionnaires). The following selection is not comprehensive rather is intended to demonstrate the plethora of options available to determine organizational culture.
Edgar H. Schein is a lead supporter of using a qualitative approach to determining culture as he believes that it exists at several levels (Schein 1999). Schein believes that in order to truly define culture an understanding of the deeper levels is required. The three levels of culture as defined by Schein include artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions. Additional information on the three levels is provided in the subsequent methodology section.

Schein advocates that the best way to assess culture is through the use of group interviews or focus groups (Schein 1999). Schein is opposed to assessing culture through the use of surveys or questionnaires as he argues that survey responses can be viewed as reflections of an organization’s climate but that they do not provide an accurate assessment of the deeper values or shared assumptions that are prevalent throughout an organization. Schein argues that observing culture is critical to understanding it as opposed to simply measuring it (Schein 1996). Schein’s model is described in additional detail in the methodology section of this project report.

Alan L. Wilkins is another well respected proponent for using an audit methodology as a tool for understanding the culture within organizations. Wilkins states that if organizational culture is to be a meaningful concept for managers, they need to take care in defining and using it (Wilkins 1983).

Richard Seel also argues that participative forms of cultural inquiry are considerably more valuable than diagnostic questionnaires (Seel 2008). Seel believes ‘describing culture’ does not precede change; rather that it is part of the cultural change process. Seel argues that as an organization’s culture is made explicit to its members, it will inevitably start to change,
and that the more people involved in the process of discovery and description, the faster and more effective the cultural change will become (Seel 2008).

Rather than using a focus group assessment tool to define organizational culture, some researchers use complex system analyses that incorporate the social-psychological principles of balance and information into models of influence and selection (Frank and Fahrbach 1999). Through the use of tools of dynamic systems, the researchers are able to demonstrate how their models generate a wide range of equilibria of complex systems and further, how their system analysis responds to exogenous effects (Frank and Fahrbach 1999). Inductive research has also been used to investigate the potential existence and formation of sub-cultures within organizations (Sackmann 1992).

A common quantitative approach to defining culture is through the use of surveys or questionnaires. This approach attempts to collect information about what a participant’s general sentiment is toward a certain topic as well as what they are thinking or feeling (Hofstede 1998). A critical issue with the use of cultural surveys is interpreting the data without introducing bias by a researcher (Hofstede 1998). Another common critique of using a survey methodology is that the questions are inherently leading and may actually be more reflective of a researcher’s perspective relative to culture as opposed to the respondents.

Based on the differing opinions regarding cultural assessment, an option commonly used is the incorporation of both qualitative and quantitative measurements. Examples of incorporating both measurements have been conducted by researchers at both the University of Melbourne (Langan-Fox and Tan 1997) and Cornell University (Hofstede, et al. 1990).
Culture in the Public Service

Scientific literature on organization culture within the public service is less extensive as compared to private industry / publicly traded companies. Regardless, lessons learned from the scientific studies are relevant.

Within the British Columbia Public Service, the Ministry of Forests and Range (MoFR) has conducted a cultural audit. The MoFR audit was based on a proprietary methodology developed by Denison Consulting, LLC (Organizational Culture and Leadership Surveys n.d.). The Denison Culture Model compares questionnaire data against a benchmark data set consisting of information from approximately nine hundred organizations with 350,000 respondents. MoFR information inputted into the Denison model was gleaned from the 2007 and 2008 Workplace Engagement Surveys. Model outputs indicate that MoFR lags behind the global benchmark in all of the culture traits, especially mission. Model outputs also indicate that the perceptions vary significantly and that the following segments demonstrate the most positive view of the MoFR culture: females, employees 30 years old or younger, employees with fewer than 3 years of service, and employees that are excluded from the union agreements (Peterson, et al. n.d.).

The City of Winnipeg Property Assessment Department (WPAD) developed a culture that embraced quality management (Ntungo 2007). WPAD developed the Pursuit of Excellence Quality Management System (PEQMS) that aligned with strategic business needs as well as staff and customer needs. The development of the PEQMS, in conjunction with the use of business mapping became a cornerstone of the WPAD organizational culture. A key component supporting the development of a successful culture within WPAD was the commitment to accountability, performance measurement and continual improvements.
Nationally, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RMCP) developed a Source Book with a component relevant to its organization culture (Sopow and Morley 2009). The authors of the RCMP Source book determined that the cultural assessment of the RMCP should be comprehensive, able to differentiate between culture systems and climate, and also reflect the impact of external environments on the organizations culture. Albeit the cultural audit methodology chosen was unique, it was based in principle on the Schein methodology. The key findings regarding the RCMP culture are as follows (Sopow and Morley 2009):

1. The actual RCMP culture does not fully reflect the RCMP core values and is significantly different from the culture that the employees, including senior leaders desire to have.
2. The actual culture is heavily weighted toward technical / tactical and operational skills and behaviours. In contrast, the RCMP core values and what employee’s desire is more weighted to emotional needs and competencies. This misaligned culture causes employee-supervisor conflict, stress, and modern leadership needs.
3. There is recognition that some cultural practices need to change.
4. There are actually 2 primary cultures – the policing culture and the bureaucratic culture. Often the centralized model of federal public administration is at odds with the needs of operational policing.
5. The current situation of competing and clashing twin corporate cultures creates significant human resources and financial costs. The RCMP will have significantly improved levels of workplace engagement and employee
wellness if the desired culture is able to flourish and replace the existing culture.

‘Creating a Corporate Culture: Lessons from the Canadian Federal Government’ is an article written by Bourgault, Dion and Lemay (1993). The article examines how the Canadian Federal Government’s performance appraisal system promoted a corporate culture among senior level managers. The authors note that a shared corporate culture amongst Deputy Ministers was established as they perceived it to be important because of the ranking’s consequences for their careers, reputations, and also performance bonuses (Bourgault, Dion and Lemay 1993).

A study of organization culture within the local government of Victoria, Australia, found that despite undertaking a detailed change process, the organizational culture of the public sector was not focused on competitive practices (Kloot and Martin 2007). The Kloot and Martin (2007) study was based on a questionnaire survey method that was distributed to executives and senior management. As an introduction to their research paper, Kloot and Martin (2007) noted that there have been numerous changes to the public service in Victoria over the last 20 years. They also noted that these changes aligned with the trend of global adjustments in the public service that was focused on transitioning towards a New Public Management (NPM) paradigm. The foundation of the NPM paradigm is that the private sector utilizes effective management practices and by focusing on generating profit, the cost of services is driven down. Basically, cost reduction is a driving force.

Kloot and Martin (2007) noted that although Victorian state governments had forced a large number of reforms on local government over the last 20 years to transition the
internal culture from one identified as clan-based towards a market-orientated culture, the transition failed. The following three reasons are suggestions as to why the cultural transition failed:

1. The managers in local government had been local government employees for extended periods of time. This is despite the attempts to broaden the experience base of such managers by hiring from the private sector.

2. The culture was familiar. Maintenance of the clan culture provided comfort that there was some vestige of the familiar that remains.

3. Members of clans looked after each other, and they looked after their communities. The communities in this sense were both internal (the employees) and external (the community in which the local government operates).

Research conducted by Kloot and Martin (2007) suggested that a clan-based cultural orientation is inconsistent with the changes that are forced upon local government and as such there is a ‘disconnect’ between the cultural orientation of local government managers and the environment in which they operate. Kloot and Martin (2007) identified that the requirement to report on agreed performance measures in an open and transparent process is a critical element necessary to aid in cultural change within the public sector.

**Sub culture discussion**

Numerous cultural audits or assessments have occurred in organizations and there is a litany of scientific literature available. However, the bulk of the scientific literature on
Corporate culture refers to the culture of the organization as a single entity or generalized culture, as opposed to discussing the sub-cultures within an organization.

Traditionally it appears that organizational cultural audits occur to define the umbrella culture of an organization. Definition of culture at this level is primarily driven by the leadership and executive of the organization. Often understated in importance is the existence and power of smaller cultural subsets that are pervasive throughout an organization. These cultural subsets are often at odds with the organization's umbrella culture as the cultural subsets are driven by operational staff as opposed to the leaders/executive within an organization. In order for an organization to become or maintain status as a HPFRO, effective and efficient communication must occur readily between the cultural subunits.

It is generally accepted that sub-cultures often are prevalent throughout an organization. Sub-cultures can be both beneficial and/or detrimental to an organization. Two standard functions of organizational sub-cultures are providing surveillance and critique of other cultures (sub-cultures) and acting as a source of new and emerging values or dissenting perspectives (Schein 1999).

Edgar H. Schein argues that the role of dialogue in relation to culture and sub-culture is of utmost significance (Schein 1993). Schein believes that people operate as cultural carriers and are cognizant of their memberships within certain sub-cultures. Schein believes that people are emotionally committed to their culturally learned categories of thought and that they value and protect their sub-culture as an aspect of their group identity. Schein
pursuits that sub-cultures tend to form around the following organizational attributes (Schein 1993):

- Stable social units
  - Relative stability of membership
  - Vividness and potency of leadership
- Functional elements
- Geographical elements
- Hierarchical organizational structure

Schein notes that although hierarchical sub-cultures can be difficult to detect, their effects can be most devastating to an organization. Schein argues that organizational integration, coordination, and learning are most hindered by different hierarchical sub-cultures due to the myth that “all management speaks the same language” (Schein 1993).

Alan L. Wilkins stresses that it is critical to consider how representative a culture audit’s findings are considering the size and diversity of many organizations (Wilkins 1983). Wilkins also identifies that large organizations are likely to have numerous sub-cultures and that organizational leaders need to be diligent in seeking to discover all relevant groups in an organization and in taking sample readings from all groups so that organizational leaders can gain some perspective on the (Wilkins 1983).

Guy Saffold suggests that rather than asking how an organization’s generalized culture affects performance, it may often be more informative to study how its multiple sub-cultures interact to influence outcomes (Saffold 1988). It is critical to note that the presence
of multiple sub-cultures does not imply a weak generalized culture (Langan-Fox and Tan 1997).

Sackmann (1992) has conducted one of several studies focused specifically on sub-cultures. The study investigated the potential existence and formation of sub-cultures within organizations using an inductive research methodology. Sackmann (1992) found that often a number of cultural sub-groupings were found to exist in conjunction with an organization-wide cultural overlay.

**Methodology**

The cultural assessment methodology defined by Schein (1999) was the framework chosen to define two sub-cultures within the EP division of the Ministry of Environment. Schein (1999) promotes the use of focus groups to determine culture as he believes that survey instruments and questionnaires only unearth some of the artifacts, espoused values and maybe one or two underlying assumptions - ultimately, they do not reach the tacit shared assumptions that are likely of importance within the organization. Using focus groups to conduct a culture study allows open discussion of values and shared assumptions within an organization.

Two – one day focus groups were conducted. Additional details on the specifics of the methods used are discussed forthwith.
Culture Assessment Framework

According to Schein, the first step in understanding culture is to not oversimplify it. To facilitate developing an understanding of culture, Schein developed a model of culture that has three levels (Schein 1999):

1. Level 1: Artifacts
   - visible organizational structures and processes
2. Level 2: Espoused values
   - strategies, goals, philosophies
3. Level 3: Basic underlying assumptions
   - Unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings

Schein purports that the first level demonstrates the visible tangibles of an organizations culture whereas the following layers are deeper and are more difficult to qualify.

Schein’s first level is visible artifacts. Schein describes these as the things that you see, feel and hear when you are observing the on goings within an organization. The artifacts are the way that organizations present themselves and the approach that people use when dealing with each other. Examples of artifacts include items such as start time, dress code, behaviour patterns, and workspace design.

Schein’s second level is espoused values. Schein describes these as values that are meant to create an image of the organization. Examples of espoused values include strategic statements such as vision and mission statements, operational statements describing ethics and principles, as well as workplace ‘sayings’.
Schein's final level in his culture model is shared tacit assumptions. Schein describes these as the beliefs, values and assumptions of an organization that are formed over time. These are the shared assumptions that an organization's staff make about their work environment in the context of both internal and external pressures. Shared assumptions are often taken for granted and Schein argues that it is not uncommon for organizational staffs to be unaware of assumptions and values that underlie how their organization operates.

**Focus Group Determination**

The work units chosen were the Victoria Headquarters Branch and the Omineca Branch of the MOE-EP. These work units were chosen as representative samples of the existing regional management organizational structure within MOE-EP. Within the work units, Section Heads and operational staff were defined as potential participants. Managers and other supervisory positions were excluded from the focus groups to minimize exposure of potential negative consequences such as limiting candid conversations of participants. The two focus groups consisted of eight and ten participants that represented a cross section of the respective business unit (i.e., technicians thru management) that was representative of all MoE divisions. The volunteer participant lists for the two focus groups were identified through the use of a random stratified selection process that was designed to capture a representative sample across the entire work unit. The initial information set was the entire staff complement within the two business units chosen. Information included within the data set was: name, position, and years of service\(^2\) (gender was inferred based on name).

\(^2\) Years of service was based on the CHIPS database.
Staffs at MoE offices chosen for the project were contacted by the lead researcher. Information on the project, including the project proposal was provided to ensure all staff understood the rationale for the project (Appendix 2). All staffs were informed that the lead researcher may contact them to participate in the focus groups on a voluntary basis.

**Measuring Culture**

The culture of the respective work unit focus groups was assessed using Schein's 'Deciphering your Company's Cultures Exercise' (Schein 1999). As per Schein's recommendation, a neutral facilitator who was familiar with the Schein model of corporate culture and who understood the data collection process facilitated the focus groups. Additionally, the focus groups were held in separate locations from where the participants work (i.e., meeting rooms in separate buildings from where the participants work).

Appendices 3 and 4 contain the Expectations of the Facilitator and the Facilitators notes respectfully. Appendix 5 contains the Facilitator's Comments (post-focus group).

The following is a summary of Schein's four hour culture assessment methodology that was used (Schein 1999):

1. Defined the "Business Problem"

   o The business problem for the focus groups centered on the new strategic intent of MoE which is to become a high-performing, flexible and resilient organization (HPFRO).

   o Establishing a common definition of HPFRO was the first task of the focus groups
2. Reviewed the concept of culture
   - A conversation on the concept of culture was led by the facilitator to ensure that all the focus group members understand Schein’s cultural model.

3. Identified artifacts
   - The focus group identified the artifacts that characterize MoE. These included visible organizational structures and processes.

4. Identified espoused values
   - The facilitator led a session designed to identify what MoE values.

5. Compared values with artifacts.
   - A comparison of espoused values and artifacts was undertaken. Care was taken to identify consistencies, and inconsistencies and conflicts between the artifacts and values. This process uncovered several of the basic underlying assumptions that are the foundation of the respective work unit’s culture.

6. Assessed shared assumptions
   - The groups assessed the shared assumptions against the identified business problem. This focused on identifying the assumptions that can help MoE achieve the goal of becoming a HPFRO. The groups also identified the existing barriers to transitioning MoE to a HPFRO.
Results

The aggregate information compiled from notes taken during the focus group sessions is available in the following Appendices:

- Appendix 6 – Qualities of a High Performing Flexible and Resilient Organization
- Appendix 7 – Artifact themes
- Appendix 8 – Espoused values
- Appendix 9 – Shared assumptions

Comparison of the categorical results from the two focus groups demonstrates that there are several significant similarities. This was expected by the lead researcher as despite the geographical component the focus group composition was similar taking into account the participant's age, gender, technical expertise and years of service. Similarities between the respective focus groups results were especially evident in the descriptors of the HPFRO and the espoused values. The similarities of the HPFRO descriptors are likely the result of using an analogy exercise to generate discussion. It is believed that the use of the analogy focused the discussion by clearly defining visible and tangible characteristics of a high-performing race car. These characteristics were then transcribed to be reflective of key descriptors for a HPFRO. The high degree of similarities of the HPFRO is also likely the result of a general consensus prevalent in organizational leadership literature on the key characteristics that underlie high-performing organizations. The high degree of similarity of basic espoused values between groups was anticipated as several of the values noted in both focus groups were based on MoE strategic direction statements. This is not unexpected because the statements were intended to be applicable across the entire Ministry. The function of
different geographic locations did result in some different values that are likely attributable to local sayings or perceptions.

Several of the shared assumptions identified were captured during the dialogue rather than through a comparison of artifacts and espoused values. These assumptions often became evident during dialogue when participants commented on how or why they performed a certain task or personal function in a particular manner. Two key messages continued to surface through the dialogue in both focus groups as key assumptions:

1. A key to the successes to date is the interpersonal working relationships within the respective work units.
2. A sense of discouragement exists regarding the disconnect between executive and line staff. The disconnect is resultant of several issues including: communication, direction, and accountability.

Discussion

Due to the high degree of similarity in the results from the two focus groups, the forthcoming discussion will focus on the analogous shared and underlying assumptions between the two focus groups. This will be accomplished through examining the shared and underlying assumptions. These assumptions were identified by comparing artifacts and espoused values and also through the dialogue of the participants. All of the assumptions provide the conceptual platform on which the cultural themes are based. In addition to discussing the analogous shared assumptions, several group specific results will also be discussed when deemed relevant.
Once the cultural themes have been defined they will be compared against the desired conditions that promote a HPFRO to identify synergies and also areas of conflict. This will form the basis for recommendations that will be developed to leverage the positive synergies and also provide direction on how to mitigate for discrepancies and areas of conflict.

**Defining Cultural Themes**

The shared assumptions gleaned from the focus groups demonstrates a high degree of passion; some positive, some cynical, and some negative. None of the detailed assumptions by themselves stand out solely as a cultural theme, but when a strategic lens is applied and the assumptions are grouped together, the cultural themes of the focus group become more evident. It is important to note that these themes are intricately linked as opposed to singular stand alone components.

1. **Clan Mentality**

The underlying shared assumptions that lead to defining a clan mentality theme are focused on the importance of the people within the work unit. Supporting themes for a clan mentality amongst the shared assumptions include: people first, importance of relationships within work units, and the importance of family and wellness. Artifacts such as employee wellness programs, casual dress codes and personalized work spaces align positively with values such as a respectful workplace, employee engagement and working together and supporting each other. Further, through the dialogue in both focus groups participants demonstrated a deep commitment to each other and commented repeatedly on the willingness to provide peer support and to help each other. It is working cohesively that
allows the work unit to take pride in their work and to set the bar high. Through dialogue it also became apparent that participants believed that taking pride in their work and their work mates contributed more to setting the bar high and creating and effective organization as opposed to lofty goals.

The proverbial double-edge sword is an effective visual portrayal of an organizational sub-culture with a clan mentality theme. This is because there is a very fine line between when the clan mentality themes are effective at contributing to the goal of becoming a High Performing Flexible and Resilient Organization as opposed to when they become the Achilles heel for the organization. Within the Achilles' heel analogy, the passionate staff represents the strength of the organization but the passion also represents its weakness. This brings us back to the double edged sword analogy:

- The thin line represents when the passion aligns with the corporate vision and the clan mentality helps contribute to the goal of becoming a HPFRO but sway from this and risk exposure to
- A passionate workforce that is misaligned with the corporate vision which is the underpinnings of organizational mistrust and cynicism.

One interesting difference between focus groups was that Prince George participants identified a sense of geographical separation from EP headquarters through comments such as "We are able to control our own destiny due to the distance from Victoria". Comments such as this also support a clan mentality, both in a hierarchical and also geographical context. The comment also identifies that possessing a sense of control is critical to
employee engagement as opposed to a lack of control which can create significant stress and
discontent.

This type of cultural theme can be problematic from a leadership perspective as was identified in Kloot and Martin (2007). A problem with a clan mentality or structure is that it is often associated with the perceived notion of “us versus them”.

The clan mentality cultural theme can both help and hinder the organizations transition to becoming a HPFRO. Leveraging the positive aspects such employee wellness programs, employee engagement and a respectful work environment can promote the positive qualities of the work environment to help develop a strong and motivated workforce which supports the transition to becoming a HPFRO. A clan mentality can also be used to counter corporate discourse around corporate values, innovation, efficiencies etc. This can be perceived as a positive as it demonstrates that employees are seeking leadership rather than corporate rhetoric. Realistically a clan mentality can also negatively impact the organizations transition to becoming a HPFRO. This is evident when leadership or corporate direction does not align well with the values of the work unit sub-culture. Misalignment is often due to issues such as communication, accountability, and strategic or operational direction.

2. Bureaucracy and Organizational Goals

The commonalities amongst the underlying shared assumptions that lead to defining a cultural theme titled 'bureaucracy and organizational goals' is the strategic focus and direction statements as well as the organizational leadership. Key references in the shared assumptions that support this theme include: lofty goals, corporate vision, economic and
political drivers. Within this cultural theme there is a predominance of cynicism and negativity; however, there also a component of positivity that must be recognized. These components of will be discussed in the following sections.

Several underlying shared assumptions identified portray a sense of cynicism and negativity. These seem to be based on the perception that several of the espoused values such as guiding strategic statements are very lofty and are not achievable. Additional shared assumptions reveal a perception that the organization often does not take into account the true time required to complete certain tasks and that there is a lack of management accountability within the organization. These incongruities with the exposed values are further complicated by the perception that economic and political drivers do not adequately take into account environmental values and as such some environmental standards or codes of conduct may become compromised. A key source underlying the bureaucratic scepticism identified is resourcing deficiencies. This finding is supported by the identification of artifacts from the Prince George focus group such as a sense of zero money for operational needs and dated equipment. A key point of contention was that there is a perception that line staff are assigned duties but are not provided the necessary resources. Comparison of dialogue between the two focus group sessions identifies that the underlying sense of cynicism and negativity is elevated in Prince George. Through focus group dialogue it was apparent that the geographical separation and higher volume of field staff further expounds the cynicism and negative sentiments in the Prince George work unit.

Notwithstanding the high degree of cynicism, there are several shared assumptions that demonstrate a positive perspective. A shared assumption that the BC government will lead by example in the environmental field is demonstrated through the alignment of the
artifact of the BC public service tracking and offsetting green house gas emissions with espoused values such as environmental protection and stewardship recognition. Additionally, recognition that MoE-EP does have several legislative tools such as Invasive Plant Management demonstrates a commitment to utilizing available legislation, as well as drafting new legislation, to protect environmental values. These examples align well with the espoused values that are gleaned from the MoE-EP strategic documents which include vision statements and other strategic direction statements such as organizational goals. Espoused values that support the positive component of the 'bureaucracy and organizational goals' theme include examples such as: 'Best Place on Earth', 'Best Air Quality', and 'BC Pollution Free'.

Interestingly, the Prince George focus group identified that front line staff appreciate that they are granted the ability to assign some fiscal resources to address local issues as opposed to having no input into resource allocation. This positive assumption deserves recognition as it is indicative of how delegation of authority may be utilized to leverage further positive cultural components in the future. It is also important to note that a couple participants within the focus groups did embrace and feel empowered by the vision and goal statements such as 'BC Pollution Free'.

The 'bureaucracy and organizational goals' cultural theme can both aid and hamper the organizations transition to becoming a HPFRO. Leveraging the positive aspects such as MoE-EP leading by example in 'green' initiatives and utilizing environmental legislation to protect the environment can assist in nurturing a strong and motivated work force which supports the transition to becoming a HPFRO. Unfortunately, misalignment of the negative component of the 'bureaucracy and organizational goals' theme with the desired
characteristics of a HPFRO impedes the organization's transition to becoming a HPFRO. As with the clan mentality theme, barriers to the transition include poor alignment with leadership or corporate direction and the values of the work unit sub-culture. Misalignment is often due to issues such as communication, accountability, and strategic or operational direction.

3. Organizational Passion

Without question, the participants of the focus group are dedicated and passionate individuals. This is apparent through the identification of artifacts such as an expectation of professionalism, importance of office and social atmosphere, and the desire to control their own environments. The organizational passion is also pervasive through the identification of espoused values such as trust, accountability, respect, valuing people, valuing learning, and the plethora of espoused values regarding the value and preservation of the environment. Common messages identified within the shared assumptions that support the cultural theme of organizational passion include the concern that lofty goals are not attainable, worries that true cost of accounting critical tasks is incorrect, staff work beyond hours of work agreements with no recognition whether financial or moral, there is a desire to do more, and that there are expectations to do more with less.

An issue with high levels of organizational passion is that it can become the organization's Achilles' heel especially when it inadvertently contributes to organizational apathy or indifference to organizational rules or structure. An example of this is the frequency in which individuals work beyond their scheduled hours for no payment or recognition. Based on dialogue within the focus groups, working above and beyond...
scheduled work time is the norm as opposed to being a 'one-off' situation. This is a regular occurrence because staff are passionate and committed to their work. Based on dialogue from the focus group sessions, when the extra work and effort is not recognized a feeling of contempt is created. This also facilitates a perception that working beyond regular working hours is expected - doing more with less as opposed to the message that is being sent of working within a zero based budgeting model - doing less with less. This creates an issue as there is the perception that poor accounting of operational resources does not facilitate realistic job expectations. This example demonstrates how organizational passion can unfortunately turn to organizational apathy. It is important to note that although the sense of apathy is directed both at the leadership and management within the organization; the staff realizes they are also accountable. For example, staff know that it is not reasonable for them to work for free, but they do so regardless due to their passion for the work they do. Focus group dialogue indicated that staff work the extra hours because they feel it is necessary, regardless if they want to or not. Employee burn out was also identified during focus group discussions. Unfortunately this is a very real concern for the majority of the focus group participants. One participant actually made a reference to the analogy used in the HPFRO discussion - "can't change the oil while the car is running full out". The comment served to imply that poor accounting of human resources does not allow for maintenance and that what may be acceptable over the short term is not sustainable over the long term.

An additional contributor to organizational apathy is the uncertainty associated with how information that is provided 'up the chain' is used. Focus group dialogue identified that staff respond to requests for information but are unsure if the information they provide is used or considered in any decisions or management rationale. Because staff do not have a
sense if the information they provide is valuable, they simply become apathetic and no longer respond to information requests. This reflects that shared assumption that ineffective communication leads to a lack of trust both ways.

The goal to transition MoE-EP to a HPFRO can be both supported and negated by the cultural theme of organizational passion. The key to utilizing the organization passion in supporting a transition to an HPFRO is focusing on the positive components and minimizing organizational apathy. This can be accomplished by developing an understanding of the drivers for passion within the organization. When possible these should be supported to help develop a positive environment. When passions are identified that cannot be supported (i.e., working extra hours) due to external constraints such as a fiscal situation or union agreements, effective communication must be initiated such that a sound rationale is provided in a transparent and accountable manner.

4. Communication

Schein (1993) identifies that dialogue across sub-cultural boundaries, especially hierarchical ones, is important if an organization is to be successful. Schein (1993) also notes the myth that “all management speaks the same language” is a significant barrier that hinders organizational integration and communication.

Quality not quantity. Issues with effective communication are an underlying premise that was pervasive through the dialogue regarding issues facing the organization. Communication issues are also apparent in the shared assumptions through terms such as disconnect, ineffective, linkage, and expectations. These terms are important as they demonstrate a disconnect and uncertainty related to how the organization should work.
towards achieving its strategic direction statements that were reflected during this project as espoused values. Examples of espoused values include BC Pollution Free and Best Air Quality. Through focus group dialogue it was apparent that the communication issue is that line staff feel some organizational values are lofty and are not achievable and that direction and support has not been effectively communicated or otherwise provided to the staffs to achieve the goals and milestones that are established.

Staffs recognize that communication volume has increased in an attempt to raise organizational moral and effectiveness. Regardless of the increased volume, questions remain on how effective the communication is/was. Recognition is required that often the intent of communication is lost in transcription and as such, the message that was intended may not necessarily be the message that was received.

Clear and effective communication is a critical necessity for an organization to become a HPFRO. Unfounded and inconsistent assumptions present a large barrier to transitioning towards a HPFRO; however, assumptions can be minimized through the use of effective communication. Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of communication within the organization is the penultimate task required to transform the cultural theme of assumptions prevail to understanding abounds.

**Sub-culture Definition**

Based on the analysis of the results it is the opinion of the lead researcher that the cultures of the two focus groups are well aligned to a considerable extent. This alignment precludes the designation of independent geographical sub-cultures but is indicative of a larger hierarchical sub-culture that resonates throughout the organization.
The identification of a hierarchical sub-culture as evident from the focus groups is not unexpected. Recent workplace engagement surveys support the existence of a hierarchical sub-culture as is evidenced by a significant disconnect between executive and operational staff. The fundamental issue appears to be an apparent lack of trust and or effective communication with executive and senior management. Ineffective communication amongst peers is another contributing factor.

Hierarchical sub-culture paradigms appear to prevail within the public service. Similar examples of hierarchical sub-cultures are evident in other government agencies including those that are municipal, provincial, national and also international. A good example of an organizational issue resultant of hierarchical sub-culture in a municipal government office is described by Kloot and Martin (2007). Although the term 'clan-based cultural orientation' is used by Kloot and Martin (2007), it is obvious that there is a cultural difference within the hierarchical structure of the organization that resulted in a disconnect between the respective work units. The conclusion of the Kloot and Martin (2007) article resonates as analogous to the situation the EP is currently facing. The Victorian public sector was under pressure to reform to the New Public Management paradigm to address the driving force of cost reduction. This driving force of cost reduction is also facing the BC public service, including EP.

Further supporting evidence of hierarchical sub-cultures within the public service are evident from both the MoFR and RCMP cultural assessments which indicate that sub-cultures exist. Within both organizations there is a common theme of an underlying disconnect between the cultures of senior management or the bureaucracy as opposed to the
operational staff. This is likely due to issues related to strategic direction and incongruence between espoused values and actual artifacts.

**Advantage and Limitations of the Study Methods**

At the initiation of both focus groups, a sense of wariness was evident amongst participants. This was attributed to the heavy workloads that most participants face as a result of both fiscal and human resource capacity constraints. The sense of wariness was also attributed to the uncertainty regarding the terminology, process and intent of the focus groups. It is the lead researcher's opinion that the participants committed time to participate in the focus group sessions because of their dedication to their work units and their desire to provide input into a process that is focused on initiating and supporting change within their organization. The sense of wariness was lessened through informing the participants of the intent of the focus groups and also by engaging them in dialogue in an open and confidential fashion. The facilitator's incorporation of interactive work arrangements in small groups, in addition to the use of defining analogies and scenario analysis assisted in encouraging engagement and also participant buy-in to the focus group process.

Dialogue generated throughout the focus groups is undoubtedly the greatest value of using a focus group methodology to define the culture as opposed to using a survey or questionnaire. This became overwhelmingly evident once analysis began. The dialogue and conversations that occurred between the participants essentially defined the culture within the focus groups.

In casting back to the focus group sessions, it is apparent that the value of the Schein methodology for defining culture was not defining an organization's culture as an 'end
product rather the value of the focus group methodology is that it allowed for and generated dialogue amongst participants in a safe environment. The focus group methodology allowed participants to gain value from ongoing dialogue during the journey towards understanding their organizations culture. Continuing with the analogy of the journey as it relates to Schein's cultural assessment methodology, the journey markers or milestones are Schein's three levels of culture. It is imperative to realize that these markers add the structure and the direction though ultimately participation in the focus group is completely voluntary. This hereby demonstrates the value of having a facilitator be involved in the process.

Another benefit of using the Schein cultural assessment methodology over a survey or questionnaire based approach is the ability to capture the culture of a work unit as opposed to defining the culture of an individual and then rolling the information up into user groups. Work units are reflective of real heterogeneous operational conditions as opposed to defined user groups that are amalgamated together in an unrealistic homogeneous fashion based on easily quantifiable elements such as age, gender, or years of service. This said, one benefit of identifying homogeneous user groups with similar positive values is the development of a recruitment pool that could be used as change agents within an organization. Alternatively, groups that are identified to be more prone to experiencing negative values can be targeted with special incentives to help transition them towards a more positive culture.

Comparison of the cultural themes of the focus groups with the desired conditions that would promote the transition towards becoming a HPFRO identifies alignment in a couple areas but otherwise some significant discrepancies. Recommendations on how to support the transition to a HPFRO are discussed in the subsequent recommendation section.
Recommendations

Understanding the cultural complexities with an organization is critical to success. Leveraging positive cultural elements provides excellent opportunities to breed success from success. Alternatively, identifying barriers impeding success within an organization is critical such that the barriers can be removed and or mitigated. The following recommendations are focussed on leveraging the positive cultural elements and mitigating the discrepancies between the cultural themes and the desired conditions that would promote the transition towards becoming a High-Performing, Flexible and Resilient Organization. These recommendations are not meant as standalone items rather the intent is to provide a sense of the available opportunities or tools that would be useful to all members of an organization.

In order for any cultural transition to occur, all participants must realize the importance of engagement. Assigning blame or deferring responsibility to other participants are sure fire methods to undermine the transition process.

1. Utilize the Organizational Passion

Developing a deeper understanding of the drivers of the organizational passion of operational staff at the supervisory and executive levels is important to demonstrate that the organizations leaders are 'in touch' with front line staff. This would also allow the leadership to leverage the positive cultural aspects such as employee engagement and a respectful work environment to aid and support the transition to becoming a HPFRO.
2. Focus on Effective Communication

Effective communication is vital to understanding cultures and sub-cultures within an organization. Communication failures and cultural misunderstandings often create barriers that stand in the way of defining a problem in a common way and as such, the problem cannot be addressed constructively (Schein 1993).

Undoubtedly ineffective communication is the crux of the cynicism, apathy and negativity that is prevalent throughout MoE. This is compounded by the perception of a lack of resources, lofty and conflicting goals as well as risk-averse decision makers. A key element of effective communication is that it typically is not solely in a singular direction. For communication to be effective it should be successful in conveying a message or information and it should evoke an understanding upon receipt. This is the crux - information is often conveyed, but less often understood.

Ensuring that the intent of a message is successfully delivered is a key to effective communication. Another key is recognizing that information has been received and ensuring that the understanding and comprehension of the message aligns with the intent. This obviously does not have to occur for every single piece of correspondence but it should occur if there seems to be uncertainty or if the message or information being communicated is sensitive in any shape, form or manner.

Engaging in effective communication is critical to the development of trust within the organization whereas ineffective communication leads to uncertainty which breeds contempt, the antithesis of trust. Recognizing this is the first step.

The second step is to establish a means to ensure that messages sent are messages received. One option would be to identify staffs throughout the
organizational hierarchy who are deemed to be 'organizational leaders'. To qualify as organizational leaders these staff would be well respected by their peers, supervisors, subordinates etc. and also committed to leading organizational change - otherwise known as change champions. These individuals would be responsible for ensuring that consistent messaging is occurring throughout the organization. Organizational leaders could also be used as a communication conduit as often news received by peers is more easily understood than from someone perceived to be in a position of power.

A key task is ensuring that a consistent message is sent out to the organization that communication is everyone’s responsibility. Effective communication cannot be assigned but it can be recognized. Recognizing effective communication when it occurs can be supported by management as this will likely assist with developing a culture in which effective communication is the norm.

Another option to support improving the communication within the organization is conducting a literature review on additional options to support the implementation of effective communication. Literature abounds on the subject of effective communication. Providing alternative options to facilitate effective communication are important as communication is a very dynamic interchange and employees must not feel forced into any one technique.

3. Understand issues, culture and alternate assumptions

The identification of organizational issues or topics of concern is of paramount importance. Simply going to staff and asking the question may be one means but another means that would be more effective would be to conduct a series of cultural assessments similar to the one that this project is based on. As with this project, issue
identification would likely occur during general dialogue and also when artifacts are being discussed. Examples of key issues identified that should be resolved to improve the culture of the organization include:

- uncertainty on staff retention
- staff succession opportunities
- socially consistent rewards

These issues could be resolved through updating and revising a corporate HR plan.

In the context of the broader system, the cultural complexity of an organization needs to be recognized. A component of recognition is the acceptance and appreciation that other sub-cultures have values and assumptions that may differ yet they contribute to the broader system.

A ‘real culture study’ can be used to see why employee values are not being met and what has to change in the culture for this to occur (Seel 2008). Seel believes 'describing culture' does not precede change, rather that it is part of the cultural change process. Seel purports that as an organization's culture is made explicit to its members, it will inevitably start to change, and that the more people involved in the process of discovery and description, the faster and more effective the cultural change will become (Seel 2008). Building on Seel's logic, the better an understanding and recognition of all the sub-cultures within an organization, the easier it would be to leverage similarities and to work to address divergent assumptions. Schein recommends that organizations sub-cultures engage in proactive pragmatism which is to reprioritize the shared assumptions that conflict with other shared assumptions (Schein 1995). Suitable candidates to participate in or
facilitate these sessions would be the organizational leaders that were defined in the preceding recommendation.

4. Improve overall accountability

A requirement for performance management, accountability and transparency is an underlying theme that was prevalent in the literature review section on culture in the public service. This is especially evident in the research paper by Kloot and Martin (2007).

A culture of accountability was one of four critical components identified by Wriston (2007) as being necessary to create a high-performance culture. Wriston (2007) identified three characteristics that define a culture of accountability:

- Clear expectations around personal performance and behaviour
- Exceptional performance is recognized, reinforced and appropriately rewarded
- Performance problems, including the failure to meet one's commitments, are addressed fairly and quickly

MoE currently has tools such as the employee professional development program (EPDP) that are in place to assist with managing accountability within government but unfortunately such tools are not used consistently across the organization. In order for such tools to be effective, they need to be utilized effectively and efficiently by management throughout the organization. All staff including supervisors, managers and organizational leaders should be tasked with ensuring they use EPDPs.
A second option to improve accountability within the organization is to request a formal audit be performed of the existing accountability system. This should be a transparent process conducted by a third party.

A third option is to develop an internal Ombudsman position that is tasked with monitoring accountability within the organization. Staffs that are witness to individuals whom are not being held accountable by their supervisors or whom have issues with accountability practices could contact the Ombudsman in a confidential manner. Albeit the responsibility for holding individuals accountable is their supervisor, often this does not occur. The creation of an Ombudsman would allow a venue for such issues to be discussed without the threat of retribution, alienation or sense of internal 'whistle-blowing'.

Ultimately, managers, supervisors and decision makers need to make decisions and to be held accountable for those decisions. The decision making process must be accountable, clear, and transparent.

5. Address sense of entitlement and expectations of all staff

Recognition of grassroots input to assist with developing ownership of management decisions has increased significantly over recent times. Unfortunately this trend has seemingly fostered a sense of entitlement in that some individuals feel that their input should be incorporated in every decision. This is not, and should not be the case. Clarity needs to be provided to all staff that albeit grassroots information is important, it is only one input of many that need to be considered when making a management decision. All staff need to understand that come the end of the day, a
decision will be made and the decision maker will be held accountable to it. This should occur through a transparent process such that rationale is provided as to why the decision was made.

A key issue is the understanding that the entire problem does not lie with executive. If there is a request for a decision to be made, the decision should be respected provided it was made in a clear and transparent fashion. What often seems to occur is that the decision is not liked and it creates a sense of negativity. In these situations, staffs need to realize the importance that a decision was actually made and that there is a demonstration of accountability. Decision makers need to be supported to make decisions – some of the decisions are not easy, especially in the light of the poor economic conditions, regardless, when a decision is made it should be reported and a rationale provided.

6. Understand pressures

Another issue is taking external and internal pressures into consideration. A good example of this is the policy and procedures of the union. Often staff's frustration with union conditions is directed towards senior management when this is not warranted. This is another example of taking ownership in the issues and working with the appropriate parties to find solutions. Organizational leaders should play a critical role in ensuring that all staff are aware of what existing and perceived barriers are such that they can work collaboratively to mitigate any issues.

Political will and influence is another critical pressure that impacts both the strategic and operational components of staff within the public service. Political decisions can have immediate impacts on items such as internal resource allocation (i.e., FTE and fiscal), government initiatives and direction and government priorities.
Economic pressures also need to be understood. Typically when the economy is doing well, environmental services and issues are well addressed. Unfortunately, during economic downturns, resources are less often assigned to resource agencies such as the Ministry of Environment.

Summary

As clearly identified from this project, a hierarchical sub-culture exists within the Environmental Protection Division of the BC Ministry of Environment. This conclusion is based on the strikingly similar results that were gleaned from two independent work units located in different geographical locations.

The similar results from the respective work units demonstrate aligned cultural themes and as such it was concluded that a common culture is pervasive across the organization regardless of the geographical separation. The common culture identified was further qualified as a larger hierarchical sub-culture that resonates throughout the organization. The fundamental cultural themes identified were a clan mentality, bureaucracy and organizational goals, organizational passion and communication. Although difficult to put to text, the hierarchical sub-culture could be described as:

A culture which resonates passion for environmental values and also commitment to work mates. A culture that struggles with bureaucracy and assumptions that prevail due to issues with effective communication.
The culture identified does not align well with the government’s intention to transition to becoming a High Performing Flexible and Resilient organization; however, there are several options which include:

- Utilize the organizational passion
- Focus on effective communication
- Understand issues, culture and alternate assumptions
- Improve overall accountability
- Address sense of entitlement and expectations of all staff.
- Understand pressures

None of the recommendations will work in isolation and a common underlying theme or component of them all is the use of ‘organizational leaders’ from within the organization. These leaders must be passionate and practical individuals who are well respected and are effective communicators.
Environmental Protection Division
Environmental Quality Branch - Chart 4
February 2010
Environmental Protection Division
Environmental Quality Branch - Chart 1
February 2010

Mgr, Water & Air Monitoring & Reporting
Thomas White
RL 00078940

Section Head, Network Management
Mark Graham
STO N30 00093106

Section Head, Data and Systems Management
Ernie Tradewell
STO N57 00093107

Senior Provincial Laboratory Specialist
Steve Harvath
Laboratory/OHS Science Of R30 00093061

Senior Quality Management Analyst
Vacant
STO N24 00080773

Groundwater Network Analyst
Cecil Lee
STO R21 00039901

Water Data Interpretation Specialist
Rodney Zimmerman
LBO 3 00038895

Quality Assurance Officer
Sharon Covert
STO N13 00038694

Air Quality Data Interpretation Specialist
Rob Gibson
STO N24 00038676

Network Analyst
A/ Jaret Strun, Vacant
STO N24 00038774

Air Quality Data Management Technician
Jennifer Chudak
STO 21 00092599

Water Quality Monitoring Specialist
Tarik Desouki
STO R27 00038740

Air Quality Data Management Technician
Jennifer Chudak
STO 21 00092599

Water Quality Officer
Cherie Bekle
STO R21 00092596

Air Audit Technician (Vancouver)
Norman Jang
STO N24 00038343

Climate Network Coordinator
Ted Weick
STO R27 00067124

Air Audit Technician (Vancouver)
Mark Kuhns
STO R27 00067124

Air Audit Technician (Vancouver)
Ted Weick
STO N21 00068460
Environmental Protection Division
Environmental Quality Branch - Chart 3
February 2010

Manager, Air Emissions
Chris Jenkins
BL
00069800

Section Head, Industrial Emissions
Tony Wakelin
LSO 4
00093191

Environmental Management Officer
Julie-Anne Bathory-Frota
LSO 3
00092212

Environmental Management Analyst
Meegan Armstrong
STO N24
00040352

Environmental Management Officer
Bob Konkin
LSO 3
00038387

Environmental Management Officer
Christine Woodhouse
STO N24
00097862
Environmental Protection Division  
Environmental Quality Branch - Chart 2  
February 2010

Manager, Community Waste Reduction  
Kristine Ord  
BL  
00052712

Program Secretary  
Jawant Carignan  
CS R9  
00037770

Section Head, Industry Product Stewardship  
David Lawes  
STO N20  
00092553

Section Head, Municipal Solid & Liquid Waste  
Jack Bryden  
LSO 4  
0009325

Environmental Management Analyst  
Lyn Smirl  
STO N24  
5052609

Environmental Management Analyst  
Teresa Conner  
STO 24  
00094734

Environmental Management Analyst  
Greg Tyson  
STO 24  
00094733

Environmental Management Analyst  
Bob Paul  
STO N24  
00039545

Environmental Management Analyst  
Natalia Kukleva  
LSO 3  
00039451

Environmental Management Officer  
Maryam Mofid-Poor  
LSO 3  
00095863

Environmental Management Analyst  
Jenn Wilson  
STO 24  
00088549

Environmental Management Analyst  
Jesse Monets  
STO N24  
00095387
Environmental Protection Division
Environmental Management Branch- Chart 3
September 2009

- **IPM Manager**
  - Daphne Dolhaine
  - BL
  - 00075396

- **Administrative Assistant**
  - Melanie Critchley
  - CS R9
  - 00039540

- **Pesticides Licence Officer**
  - Bob Lucy
  - BIO N24
  - 00038598

- **Pesticides Management Officer**
  - Jon Mullan
  - LSO 3
  - 00039944

- **Environmental Management Analyst**
  - Bruce Holms
  - STO N24
  - 00039368
Appendix 2 - Introductory and Information Letter

UNBC MBA Project Title: Defining Culture in Government

Thank you for agreeing to assist me in a research project entitled Defining Culture in Government. The purpose of this research project is to collect information that can be used to define the cultures of two work units within the British Columbian Ministry of Environment - Environmental Protection Division (MoE). Once the cultures have been defined, I will develop and propose strategies that can be used to strengthen the positive cultural components of the respective work units. I will also compare the cultures of the respective work units to determine how communication and dialogue between them can be improved upon or enhanced. The ultimate goal is that the information you and the other participants provide can be used to help transition MoE into becoming a high-performance organization. There are no risks to you or other participants. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can choose to withdraw at any time.

Determination of the corporate culture for each work unit will occur during a one day facilitated focus group that will consist of between 10-15 people that I have randomly selected to ensure a representative cross section of your work unit. The meeting will be facilitated by a trained facilitator who is familiar with the model of corporate culture on which this project is based.

Due to the nature of a focus group setting, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Regardless, every effort will be made to establish a confidential setting by ensuring all of the information collected will be communal and no information will be collected that could be used to identify you from any of the contributions that are offered during the focus group. Additionally, the facilitator of the focus groups will be required to sign a confidentiality
agreement. None of the raw data (i.e., notes on flip charts, information on comment cards) from the focus groups will be shared; rather the information will be aggregated (i.e., facilitators notes, summaries of flip charts and comment cards) and then used in the project analysis and write up. All of the data will be securely stored in a private and locked file cabinet. Once the final write up is complete and approved, all the raw focus group data will be destroyed (April 2010).

If you have any questions, you are welcome to call me at 250-561-5622 or through e-mail at mike.peterson@gov.bc.ca. If you should have any complaints about this study, they should be directed to the Office of Research, UNBC, 250-960-5650. Final copies detailing the results of the study will be shared with all of the participants, and other interested colleagues including management. Results of this study should be available about six months after collection of the data. I will contact you by phone or e-mail when the report is complete to offer you a copy of the final project report.

As noted earlier, your participation is completely voluntary and you can choose to leave and withdraw your information at any time. No contributions are trivial, rather all of the discussion points can help identify some of the buried assumptions that are often taken for granted. Different contributions and perspectives are expected as all of the participants are unique.

Please keep this letter for future reference.

Mike Peterson

MBA student - University of Northern British Columbia
Appendix 3 - Expectations of the Facilitator

The facilitator will be responsible for establishing a comfortable setting for the participants. The culture of the work units being studied will be assessed using a methodology that is suggested by Edgar Schein (Corporate Culture Survival Guide 1999). The facilitator will have a good understanding of the concept of culture as defined by Schein. Schein defines culture as the sum total of all the shared, taken-for-granted assumptions that a group has learned throughout its history. Schein's model of culture has three levels:

1. artifacts: visible organizational structures and processes
2. espoused values: strategies, goals, philosophies
3. basic underlying assumptions: unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings

The facilitator will lead the focus groups through Schein's 'Deciphering your Company's Cultures Exercise'. The following provides operational context to the assessment methodology and includes types of questions the facilitator will use to keep the focus group moving forward:

1. Definition of the “Business Problem”
   a. The business problem for the focus groups will center on the new strategic intent of MoE which is to become a high-performing, flexible and resilient organization (HPFRO).
   b. Establishing a common definition of HPFRO will be the first task of the focus groups
**Example questions:**

What characteristics define a HPFRO?

How would you define a HPFRO?

2. **Review the concept of culture**

   a. A conversation on the concept of culture will be led by the facilitator to ensure that all the focus group members understand Schein's cultural model (artifacts, espoused values, basic underlying assumptions)

3. **Identification of artifacts**

   a. The focus group will identify the artifacts that characterize MoE. These will include visible organizational structures and processes; the way the work unit goes about its business.

   b. Schein provides the following examples of categories for identifying artifacts: dress code, level of formality in authority relationships, working hours, meetings (how often, timing, etc.), how decisions are made, communications, jargon, conflict resolution, and work life balance.

   **Example questions:**

   What is it like to go to work?

   What artifacts do you notice at work?

   What is the primary source of communication within your office?
4. **Identification of espoused values**

   a. The facilitator will lead a session designed to glean what MoE values.

   **Example questions:**
   
   What are some of the espoused values the work unit holds?

   What is the work unit’s vision?

   What is the work unit’s mission statement?

   What are examples of other values that are brought into the work place? - i.e. innovation is encouraged, or safety is paramount

5. **Comparison of values with artifacts.**

   a. A comparison of espoused values and artifacts will occur. Care will be taken to identify consistencies, and inconsistencies and conflicts between the artifacts and values. This is anticipated to uncover the basic underlying assumptions that are the foundation of the respective work unit’s culture.

6. **Assessment of shared assumptions**

   a. Assessing the shared assumptions against the identified business problem will occur. This will focus on identifying the assumptions that can help MoE achieve the goal of becoming a HPFRO. Identification of barriers that exist to transitioning MoE to a HPFRO will also occur.
Appendix 4 - Facilitators Notes

9:30 Introduction: (10 minutes)

Katia welcomes the group

- She introduces herself: works at the Fish and Wildlife Branch; interested in workplace culture; currently working on a Master’s thesis – doing a critical discourse analysis of employee engagement at the BC Public Service Agency (BCPSA)

Mike introduces himself: he tells the group where he works and why he is doing this research; he ensures everyone understands that the participants’ confidentiality is protected; there are no wrong responses, etc

9:40 Icebreaker: (20 minutes)

The Magic Wand

You have just found a magic wand that allows you to change one thing about your workplace. You can change anything you want. How would you change yourself, your job, an important project, etc? When you get the wand, can you please tell us your name, what your job is, and one thing you would change?

10:00 Business Problem Exercise: (45 minutes)

Mike briefly talks about the Schein model: he explains why we are following this model; he also tells the group what business problem he selected and why? (10 minutes)

Katia explains the exercise:
Together, the group will develop a list of qualities that define a **high-performing, flexible and resilient organization**. To help us come up with a definition, I thought we could use a metaphor. I propose the rally car as a metaphor for a high-performing, flexible and resilient organization.

A rally car is an all-terrain race car. It can make sharp turns and can handle really rough terrain as well as all kinds of road surfaces such as dirt, mud, gravel and snow. The car has both a pilot and co-pilot. The co-pilot’s job is to give directions. The winner of the race is the car that completes all the stages of the race in the fastest time and fewest penalties. (5 min)

I would like participants to break out into small groups of three or four people. Together, please think of qualities that a winning rally car must have and write down your ideas on sticky notes. When you’re done, I’d like one person from each group to read the sticky notes out loud and place them on the ‘car’. (10 minutes)

I would now like the group to translate these car qualities into human qualities. (20 minutes)

**10:45 Break (15 minutes)**

**11:00 Concept of culture: (15 minutes)**

Katia gives a mini lecture on Edgar Schein’s cultural model. Mike is the content expert and can help answer questions.

According to Edgar Schein, the first step in understanding culture is to not oversimplify it. He sees culture as made up of layers – some layers are visible and others are
deeper and more difficult to make out. Schein identifies three levels of culture: level 1, visible artifacts; level 2, espoused values; and level 3, shared assumptions.

Visible artifacts are the things that you see, feel and hear when you are observing what’s happening in an organization. They are the way that organizations present themselves and the approach that people use when dealing with each other. They are things like start time, dress code, behaviour patterns, and workspace design.

Espoused values are those values that are supposed to create an image of the organization. They are the official statements that the organization makes about how they intend to do their work. They include vision and mission statements, ethics and principles, as well as workplace ‘sayings’. Espoused values are often found in pamphlets and other documents.

Shared tacit assumptions are the beliefs, values and assumptions of an organization that are developed over time. They are the assumptions we make about the nature of the world and how to succeed in this world. Shared assumptions are often taken for granted; it’s not uncommon for people not to be aware of assumptions and values that underlie how we do our work.

11:15 Identification of Artifacts: (60 minutes)

Imagine that you are walking into your workplace for the first time. What do you see, hear and feel? Please write down the things you notice on separate sticky notes. To help you think of more artifacts, I invite you to consider what a coworker might notice when entering the workplace for the first time. It can be someone from the focus group, someone who works in the same area as you or on the same floor. When everyone is done, I will ask you to
read out loud the artifacts you thought of and place them on the wall? If you see artifacts that are very similar to yours, can you can you group them?

Katia goes through the stickies. Participants are free to add artifacts, re-group artifacts, etc. When there are no more ideas, Katia works with the group to come up with general statements of artifacts for each group of stickies.

12:15 Lunch (I think 45 min should be enough given that you don't want people to go anywhere)

1:00 Identification of Espoused Values: (30 minutes)

Katia asks participants to identify the espoused values of the organization. (I understand the organization to be nested - the BCBCA at the top, then the MOE, the division, and the branch. It might be useful to ask participants to first think about the BCPSA values, then the MOE’s values, and possibly the EPD’s values.)

You have been hired to produce three different brochures designed to attract new employees to the government. Each brochure lists those values that create an image of the organization. The first brochure talks about the BC Public Service. The second brochure is about the Ministry of Environment. The third brochure describes the Environmental protection Division.

Katia writes down the espoused values on flip charts, one for each organizational level. (Free form activity.)
1:30 Comparison of Values with Artifacts (60 minutes)

Katia leads the group through an exercise where participants compare the espoused values against the artifacts. Participants are asked to move the artifacts and stick them to the related espoused values on the flip charts. Artifacts that have anywhere to go (no related values) may indicate an inconsistency or gap. Artifacts that are joined with a related value point to values that are supported in the organization. The participants discuss what they see/notice as we move things around.

2:30 Break (15 minutes)

2:30 Assessment of Shared Assumptions (45 minutes)

Katia leads the group through an assessment of shared assumptions as they relate to the business problem. The participants examine the inconsistent or supporting elements that were identified in the previous exercise and put forward their thoughts regarding the shared assumptions that underlie these elements. The group evaluates each assumption’s capacity to help or hinder the goal of becoming a high-performing, flexible and resilient organization.

3:15 Closing Remarks
Appendix 5 - Facilitator’s Comments

Facilitating the focus groups sessions has been a very rewarding experience for me. It provided me an opportunity to exercise my facilitating skills, from developing agendas to leading group discussions.

There were about ten people in each focus group session, which was a good size. There were enough participants to generate lots of ideas, but not so many that the quieter folks were not properly heard.

I think the participants enjoyed certain aspects of the focus group sessions more than others. A fun activity was the ‘rally car’ exercise, where participants had to define what a high-performing, flexible and resilient organization looks like. This was done by first thinking about the qualities of a winning rally car, then translating these into organizational qualities. For fun, the participants got to stick their sticky notes on a funny picture of a rally car.

Participants also seemed to enjoy working in smaller groups. This gave them a chance to brainstorm ideas in a more intimate setting as well as getting to know each other better. Working with multiple small groups also allowed for the generation of different ideas, as each group took its own approach to thinking about the workplace.

A less fun exercise was to assess the shared assumptions. Participants (and the facilitator) were getting tired by this point, and the goal of the exercise was vague. The participants were asked to examine the values and artifacts of their workplace and look for shared assumptions underlying these values and artifacts. The group was then tasked with
evaluating each assumption's capacity to help or hinder the goal of becoming a high-performing, flexible and resilient organization.

I think the goal of the focus groups was met – several important insights into workplace culture emerged. Clearly, the participants are passionate about their work. They also clearly work very hard. What is also clear is that they negotiate competing priorities on a daily basis. On the one hand, resources are shrinking; on the other hand, the to-do list is forever growing. They are also faced with organizational goals that are far removed from the everyday realities on the ground.

Thanks for inviting me into this process, Mike. Good luck! ~K
Appendix 6 - Qualities of a High Performing Flexible and Resilient Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Prince George</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Budget and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>Health and wellness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Support systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good design</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit crew</td>
<td>Adjusting to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road maps</td>
<td>Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diverse team of qualified people</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Successional opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear direction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7 - Artifact themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Prince George</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workspace</td>
<td>Individuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellness</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social atmosphere</td>
<td>Artificial barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress code</td>
<td>Dress code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalization of workspace</td>
<td>Cubicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open door policy</td>
<td>Poor filing and organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family oriented</td>
<td>No control over surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established groups</td>
<td>Lack of comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
<td>Lack of succession planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation of professionalism</td>
<td>Option to have interior plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots of paper and documents</td>
<td>Maze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not equal pay for equal work</td>
<td>Long walk way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open door policy</td>
<td>Expert staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt counting GHG emissions and offsetting</td>
<td>Name plaques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interior physical features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palpable chemistry / office atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demographics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dated equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of space for personal leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outdoor security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Updated desks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of zero money for operational needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8 - Espoused values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Prince George</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best place on earth</td>
<td>Best air quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC pollution free</td>
<td>Best place on earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three “R”s (reduce, reuse, recycle)</td>
<td>BC pollution free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a respectful workplace</td>
<td>Supernatural BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breathe deeply</td>
<td>Facilitate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliance on qualified professional expertise</td>
<td>Don’t stand on the track when the train is coming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out the Ministry</td>
<td>Transformation change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take care of yourself and each other</td>
<td>The only thing that is constant is change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency of decisions</td>
<td>Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results based</td>
<td>(Don’t) be a tall poppy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes of practice</td>
<td>Results based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best land, air and water quality bar none</td>
<td>We value our people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared stewardship</td>
<td>Codes of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Environmental protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Employee engagement is important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work together and support each other</td>
<td>Work together and support each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We value learning</td>
<td>We value learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Results based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional reliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adaptive management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do more with less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need to break the silos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 9 - Shared assumptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Prince George</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization does not take true account of time to complete tasks</td>
<td>MoE has 2 visions - one for public (sugar coated) and one for real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people work extra time and don’t take time off</td>
<td>Corporate vision - nice to know but not attainable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting unachievable goals discourages engagement. People don’t try to</td>
<td>It’s not about the people, it’s about the corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>find ways to achieve them if they are not achievable</td>
<td>Regardless of good intentions of those trying to drive - the system is driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If lofty goals do not have achievable milestones and are disconnected</td>
<td>to economics and politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people are not attached to the goals</td>
<td>Ineffective communication leads to lack of trust - both ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs to be a link between culture and goals</td>
<td>Able to control destiny due to distance from Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People are the glue of the ministry</td>
<td>Recognized disconnect btw regions and HQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and wellness comes first</td>
<td>Everyone assumes everyone else understands their assumptions and what they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense that we are managing for the business, not the environment</td>
<td>are doing - this is a poor assumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lofty goals to protect the environment, decisions made to protect the</td>
<td>Assume initiatives are working even though they are not - i.e. Results Based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economy</td>
<td>Relationships within work unit are critical to success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromised standards - industry has excessive influence and access to</td>
<td>Short term decisions - no management succession plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more resources than government</td>
<td>Desire to do more but not resourced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We say less with less - it means expectations of more with less</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government will lead by example</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoE will use legislation to protect values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Works Cited


