

COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES AT TILLICUM LELUM ABORIGINAL
FRIENDSHIP CENTRE

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis answers the question “how can Tillicum Lelum establish internal collaborative approaches?” This was explored with action research included employees and management team members at Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre through a qualitative sequential priority multimethods approach with a focus group followed by a world café. With adherence to Royal Roads University Ethics Policy as well as traditional Indigenous culture, this thesis presents a systems analysis, literature review, and outline of methodology used to explore collaboration at Tillicum Lelum. Culture, team building, communication, and staff member accountability surfaced as key findings in the data analysis. Utilizing action research principles, specific strategies relevant to the feedback of those working within the organization and the approval of the organizational sponsor are presented in the recommendations section. Recommendations allow Tillicum Lelum staff members to implement collaboration strategies in current settings.

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CHAPTER ONE: FOCUS AND FRAMING

Friendship centres have been serving Aboriginal¹ people in off-reserve (urban) settings for over 50 years. “For many Aboriginal people, Friendship Centres are the first point of contact to obtain referrals to cultural based socio-economic programs and services” (National Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, 2012, para. 2). Friendship centres across Canada were developed to serve urban Aboriginal people, as most bands or tribes throughout Canada allocate their funding to only those living on traditional territory. This section outlines the ecological (i.e., contextual) factors for Tillicum Lelum’s collaboration initiative.

Friendship Centres are part of the National Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, which then breaks down into provincial associations (National Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, 2012, para. 6). The Program Manager, Inga Cooper explained that Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre is primarily contracted serve urban Aboriginal people in Nanaimo, BC. Tillicum Lelum offers many human services for infants, children, youth, and families including hospital support, prison liaison, careers, counseling, and education. Programs are offered through seven Tillicum Lelum locations within the community (I. Cooper, personal communication, August 16, 2013).² Friendship Centres are not entitled to the funding that Indian Affairs grants to First Nations Bands. Contracts are granted from external funders such as

¹ The word “Aboriginal” rather than “Indigenous” or “First Nations” is used with direction from the organization’s title: Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre, part of the National Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres.

² All personal communications have been reviewed and approved to use in this document by I. Cooper.

provincial and federal government ministries, and community organizations or charities.

Internally, Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre is a hierarchical system consisting of a board of directors, executive director, management team, program coordinators, and employees.

Evidentially, the overall system within which Tillicum Lelum operates is one of complexity.

The program manager at Tillicum Lelum outlined three major challenges experienced by the organization. First, programs and services are currently dispersed across many locations. However, the organization owns a five-acre piece of land and hopes to provide services meeting many needs at one location in order to better meet the needs of the targeted population. Second, the organization is constantly struggling to find sustainable funding to build and operate programs. Third, Tillicum Lelum had been the only off-reserve Aboriginal service provider in Nanaimo for 50 years. However, in 2013, another urban Aboriginal agency was introduced into the community, thereby increasing the existing number of organizations to compete with for program funding. Forth and finally, Tillicum Lelum also experienced an organization-wide intervention including a file review and newly assigned probationary periods for some of the senior employees. As a result, many employees chose to leave the organization. Consequently, new staff had been hired, and the turnover rate increased significantly. This was explained to both positively and negatively impact the programming and client base (I. Cooper, personal communication, August 16, 2013).

Considering these changes, the opportunity for action within the organization was to enhance collaboration during this period of program development and organizational transitions (I. Cooper, personal communication, August 16, 2013). “Problems proliferate as practitioners

struggle to cope with escalating crisis that result from failure of programs and services to cater to client needs” (Stringer, 2007, p. 35). It is hoped that if the employees can collaborate, they can create space for dialogue about vision, while ensuring their needs are articulated and diverse perspectives are considered. This can ultimately create a more productive working environment, which can impact stakeholders (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Oshrey, 2007; Stringer, 2007). To narrow the scope of this inquiry, the focus was at an internal level, establishing collaborative approaches to program development and organizational transitions.

My role³ in the organization is as one of the many front line employees, specifically, working with at-risk families in locating healthy family connections. My responsibilities include front line work with clients, reporting, group facilitation, staff supervision, and program development. As the researcher, my role was to “engage people directly in formulating solutions to problems they confront in their community and organizational lives” (Stringer, 2007, p. 34). Throughout this process of inquiry, my role was to seek internal stakeholders and to facilitate a change or shift based on Tillicum Lelum’s internal desire to promote collaboration. Reviewing Ricks, Charlesworth, Bellefeuille and Field’s (1999) work suggested that my approach “need[ed] to be made to embrace equality, information sharing, and collective strength and power” (p. 71). Thus, as an inside researcher, and in light of the chosen methodology of action research, my experience within the organization was valid and necessarily for mobilizing this collective strength. However, based on the dual role I had as a researcher and front-line employee, I acknowledge that I was immersed and had influence in the change process. I was conscious of

³ I will provide more information on my heritage and position in the organization in the section on ethics in chapter three.

maintaining a level of trustworthiness in the study and therefore worked to balance myself between my particular biases and worldviews and endeavoured to move beyond a superficial study of the organization (Stringer, 2007, p. 57). I monitored my assumptions through reflexivity as well as through conversations with my academic supervisor and inquiry team, and through the diverse perspectives drawn out in the research process. My research is only a part of the complex system at Tillicum Lelum and, recognizing the interconnectivity within systems, I worked to maintain the integrity of this one piece as I knew the ripple effects would affect the whole.

The action research question for this inquiry was: How can Tillicum Lelum establish internal collaborative approaches? The subquestions included:

1. What methods of collaboration are currently working at Tillicum Lelum?
2. How can collaborative approaches be effectively incorporated into Tillicum Lelum?
3. What are the current barriers to collaboration at Tillicum Lelum?
4. Who needs to carry out the collaboration initiative?

Significance of the Inquiry

The intent of working at an organizational level spoke to the greater impact internal stakeholders can have on the greater system. Coast Salish traditional teachings outline the impact that an individual has on the greater system. Essentially, the belief fits into an ecological model (T. Wylie, personal communication, March 26, 2014) as defined by Senge (2006): “Herein lies a secret of systems worldview. The system is not out there, it is in here (p. 348). Those who are actually providing the service have opportunity to make changes (Mayhew, 2012, p. 115). As I was preparing to undertake this study, I considered that if Tillicum Lelum could establish a

method of collaboration, perhaps they could also broaden external stakeholders' understanding of Aboriginal Human Services. Considering the traditional and academic support of ecological perspectives, an internal focus was an effective approach to impacting the systemic challenges Tillicum Lelum was experiencing.

Exploring subquestions with all levels of Tillicum Lelum offered diverse perspectives on collaboration and the impact collaborating could have on local Aboriginal human services. "By sharing their diverse knowledge and experience – expert, professional, and lay –stakeholders can create solutions to their problems and, in the process improve the quality of their community life" (Stinger, 2007, p. 11). Specific benefits to new methods of collaboration were intended to build the capacity of funders and community members, therefore improving the services to Nanaimo's urban Aboriginal people. As stated by Ricks, et al. (1999), "People who collaborate can learn from each other; this builds human capital and synergy, both of which drive social capital" (p. 84). The establishment of a method of collaboration across the organization through conducting this study was additionally intended to benefit new employees' understanding of vision and values at Tillicum Lelum.

Action research is inclusive of as many stakeholders who are affected by the issue as is possible (Stringer, 2007, p. 11). The systems analysis considered all levels of Tillicum Lelum's structure, community and partnering agencies, and influential government ministries affecting Tillicum Lelum's clients. This inquiry was intended to enhance the method of collaboration used to identify local needs, and therefore improve services; however, the action research was based on the internal stakeholders at Tillicum Lelum rather than clients and therefore can be identified

more specifically as organizational action research. The consideration of all stakeholders built momentum toward a shared vision while the emphasis on internal collaboration was intended to holistically address the challenges that Tillicum Lelum faced.

“Given that the urban Aboriginal population is the fastest growing segment of the Canadian Aboriginal population (54% in 2006) the value of Canada’s most significant network of Aboriginal service delivery providers will continue to grow” (National Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, 2012, Aboriginal Friendship Centres. para 4). Systems often avoid accountability by looking at the flaws of external parties (Ricks, et al., 1999, pp. 22-25). In terms of the significance of this inquiry, if Tillicum Lelum were not looking to establish a way to collaborate in order to meet the comprehensive needs of local Aboriginal people, there would be little opportunity for change or to increase external stakeholders’ capacity around local needs simply because the greater system might remain unaware of the gaps in service.

Organizational Context

Tillicum Lelum was established in 1965 as a coffee drop-in for urban Aboriginal people. It has evolved into one of the larger Friendship Centres in British Columbia, employing between 70-140 people depending on the number of contracted human service programs. Although national and provincial offices distribute contracts to individual friendship centres, Tillicum Lelum is also independently contracted through community and government agencies aside from the upper-tiered associations’ contracts. Because of the volume and diversity of human services delivered, Tillicum Lelum provides services from seven sites based out of Nanaimo (I. Cooper, personal communication, August 16, 2013).

Tillicum Lelum consists of a hierarchical structure of staff and people in the community holding individual membership, eight community members on a board of directors, one executive director, three people on the management team, program coordinators, employees, practicum students, and volunteers (see Appendix A for an organizational chart).

Tillicum Lelum focused their strategic plan around the structure and fluidity of the current and upcoming services. The overarching vision requires partnerships within the community while maintaining and implementing cultural competencies, and requiring holistic and traditional teachings by their mandate. As mentioned above, plans for the organization are to continue expanding at one site already owned by Tillicum Lelum in which all support services for urban Aboriginal people can be accessed. A common barrier to working in communities where there is minority representation is that they are “marginalized, especially in terms of power and decision making in structures of society” (Bordas, 2007, p. 108). Despite the challenges, the site intends to be similar to a traditional village. Because of Tillicum’s position in the community as a bridge between First Nations culture and Euro-centric programming, the quality of work can create a precedence for Aboriginal services within the greater system. The organization plans to involve other community services in the village; however, there are inquiries around how to ensure the cultural sensitivity will be implemented throughout the entire site. Tillicum Lelum’s Organizational Goal states:

Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre strives to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal people living in an urban environment. Our Friendship Centre uses Aboriginal teachings as a guideline in our work as Helpers. Our goal is to provide

services which are holistic in nature and address the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of not only our clients, but also our employees. We work together as a team both internally and externally with other community partners. At Tillicum Lelum we also believe that through modeling healthy lifestyles and creating balance, we can establish an environment of trust and respect for those who access our services.

(Tillicum Lelum, n.d., Our Goals, para. 3)

Through the emergence of traditional culture and innovative human service provision Tillicum Lelum can continue to align their overarching vision with the preservation of cultural competencies with Aboriginal people and their holistic wellness.

Implementing the new strategic plan triggered positive social media attention including Facebook, Twitter, and Linked-in groups, to fundraise, promote, and seek partnerships within the community. Furthermore, interest from the school district, ministries, and health authority has attracted local publicity through community newspapers and news networks. Despite the modern technology attention, the vision of the overall plan emphasizes the preservation of underlying culture and tradition of Aboriginal human services.

The poorest people of British Columbia are Aboriginal people. As such, there is a deep level of healing required in urban Aboriginal communities is directly related to poverty, low level of life-skills, and generational effects of colonization (British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, 2009, p. 11). Federal and Provincial statistics have proven alarming increases in the need for public services based on rising number of Aboriginal child apprehensions, criminal activity, school drop-out rates, and homelessness (National Council of

Welfare Reports, 2007). Addressing this need, the holistic values and ecological approach to human services promote wellness in the urban Aboriginal community. Enhancing collaborative practices at an internal level has value in meeting the clients' needs for healing and wellness. Based on the vision of Tillicum Lelum to better meet the comprehensive needs for clients, an established approach to collaboration intends to ripple out into the greater community and build bridges for traditional practices in the Aboriginal human services field.

Systems Analysis of the Inquiry

Senge (2006) defined systems thinking as “a shift of mind from seeing parts to seeing wholes, from seeing people as helpless reactors to seeing them as active participants in shaping their reality, from reacting to the present to creating the future” (p. 69). Mirroring this definition, Tillicum Lelum is a part of a greater system of Aboriginal human services. In Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework for human development, each level of the system profoundly impacts the other (p. 3). Although the model is over 30 years old, few changes have been made

and it is still being used in human service literature (Ricks & Charlesworth, 2003, p. 116).

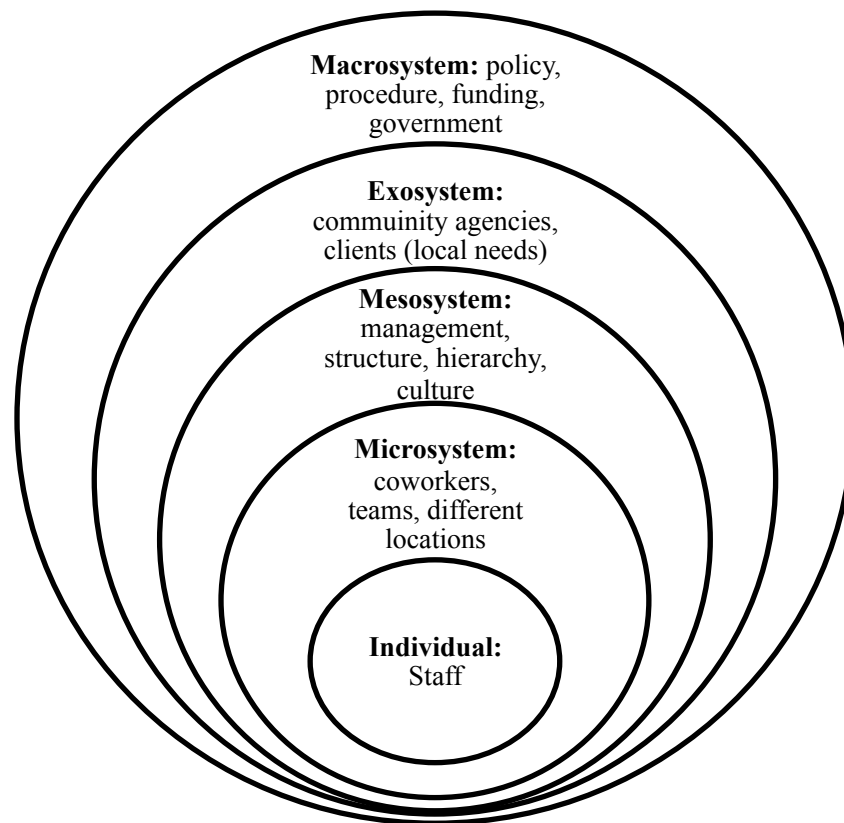


Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Model applied to Tillcum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre's internal stakeholders' impact on the external stakeholders in the Aboriginal human services field.

Internal systems include the 'individual', 'micro', and 'meso' systems: those within the organizations structure. This includes the board of directors, management team, coordinators, staff, volunteers, students and the overall culture of the organization. External systems are identified as the 'exo' and 'macro' systems, including community agencies, clients, government and policies. Although those at an individual level may never enter direct contact with the external layers, occurrences at all levels directly impact each other (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 9).

When considering that all of the systems are interconnected, the impact of internal systems to the whole becomes clear and thus creates a map of how to implement change based on establishing a method of collaboration at an employee level.

Drawing from an ecological approach to the system's complexities, this inquiry focuses on internal strengths in order to affect the larger whole: "By seeing wholes we learn to foster health" (Senge, 2006, p. 69). Witnessing complexities can often create judgements that solutions are too complex, or that an individual cannot create change (p. 69). Perhaps this is because "many shared visions are extrinsic – that is, they focus on achieving something relative to an outsider, such as a competitor" (p. 207). Although the intent is to advocate for local and organizational needs, it is individual attitude toward change that has a greater impact on systemic change (Choi & Ruona, 2011, p. 49). Thus, if individuals at an internal level can collaborate to inspire a shared vision, the articulation of local and organizational needs is clear and meaningful as it ripples into the external layers of the ecological model.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have described how Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre is part of a greater and complex system. Considering external stakeholders, local needs, and widespread statistics related to Aboriginal peoples, I have suggested that the inquiry around internal collaboration strategies has an ecological impact on the greater system.

The remainder of this document is organized as follows: Chapter two is a review of literature supporting the upcoming concepts within the study. Chapter three outlines the inquiry approach and methodology used to study collaborative approaches at Tillicum Lelum. Chapters

four and five will then outline the project findings and conclusions, and the implications of the inquiry. Having introduced the context of this study, I turn now to a review of literature of key concepts.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

While the culture of an organization is primarily reliant on internal factors, external influences also play a significant role. In light of the ecological model outlined in chapter one, collaboration can be directed by personal beliefs and behaviours of employees, which then affect the rest of the system. Employee accountability can also be considered critical for successful collaboration. Thus, employees' performance on a personal level naturally influences organizational culture; whether it enables or disables the organization's ability to collaborate is based on employee engagement and accountability. This chapter outlines scholarly literature regarding collaboration, culture, and accountability.

Collaboration

As suggested above, for a system to work in unity, it is helpful when people's perspectives are oriented toward collaboration as a foundation. As such, collaborative action at a personal level will impact the organization's ability to collaborate, which can then influence interorganizational collaboration. Therefore, understanding individual perspectives is critical to successful collaboration. This section explores the personal, organizational, and interorganizational factors around collaboration.

Personal Influences on Collaboration

Several authors support the idea that collaboration starts at a personal level and that each individual must possess interpersonal qualities that enable them to go beyond individual successes (Buss & Morse, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Golman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Linden, 2003; MacLeod & Clarke, 2010; Raelin, 2011; Secretan, 1997). When building foundational

skills to collaborate, leaders must consider relationships within the organization and how individual strengths can be shared to benefit others. Raelin (2011) stated that workers and service providers are becoming more independent in their roles, determining outputs like communication, production, and most importantly, their personal quality of work (p. 200). Further, individual successes as well as a sense of self and personal accomplishments positively impact organizational success (MacLeod & Clarke, 2010, p. 27). However, there is risk in focusing only on personal success as such an inward focus may fuel competition: “Competition creates personal stress, weakens physical and mental health, causes low self-esteem, demotivates, toxifies organizations, damages personal relationships, and is an ineffective way to build teams” (Secretan, 1997, p. 139). Individuals must consider more than personal successes; consideration of interpersonal skills and how they impact each other and the greater system are also critical parts of collaboration and successful work environments.

Interpersonal qualities of collaboration include an ability to trust, an optimistic outlook toward one’s job, and considering individuals’ interdependence with all parts of the system rather than personal or departmental performance (Buss & Morse, 2008, p. 86). When employees embrace interpersonal relationships, not only do their personal successes increase, but individuals surrounding them also flourish. Appraisal, high expectations and using the heart to recognize success are useful tactics in interpersonal success: “Learning to understand and see things from another’s perspective — to walk in their shoes — is absolutely crucial to building trusting relations and career success” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 329). Although celebration of individual successes make for effective workers, employees’ abilities to interact with one another will not only foster their own success, but others’ ability to be successful as well.

Although leadership was once considered an authoritarian term, scholars argue that leadership can now be defined as a collaborative term (Linden, 2003; Raelin, 2011).

Traditionally, leadership could be defined in relation to one person: a dictatorship. Collaborative leadership, however, puts emphasis on sharing power and mutual learning (Buss & Morse, 2008, pp. 82-83). Linden (2003) defined collaborative leadership as “the art of pulling people together from different units or organizations to accomplish a task that none of them could accomplish — at all or as well — individually” (p. 42). In essence, all individuals in an organization can be considered leaders.

Considering the increasingly accepted *collective* role of leadership, interpersonal skills, including emotional intelligence, are becoming exceptionally important. Goleman (1995) defined emotional intelligence as “abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one’s moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope” (p. 34). Whether leaders are positive or negative, they are highly infectious to others. Those leaders who model emotional intelligence and positive emotions are proven to maintain healthier and more productive work environments (Golman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002, pp. 11-14). The way leaders handle themselves and others has a significant impact on others. Therefore, perspective and behaviour at a personal level has an impact on greater calibers of collaboration, not only within a small department, but also in the organization and community.

Organizational Collaboration

In order to implement meaningful change within an organization, all parties should be included in the change process. By comparing, contrasting and bridging perspectives, a deeper understanding of organizational needs are developed, and change initiatives can be more powerful than if only upper management were included (Stringer, 2007, p. 36). Employees at different levels maintain different contexts of the organization's overall function (Oshrey, 2007). Oshrey categorized three general levels of a hierarchy: tops, middles, and bottoms. Although the organization can operate as one unit, the parts within the system are complex and differ significantly from one another (pp. 15-20). Raelin (2005) stated "in order to include all levels of employees, leaders must be willing to coach them in self-development to promote responsibility and accountability to the larger goal" (p. 27). Therefore, beyond day-to-day tasks of employees, efforts need to be put into relationship building (Mayhew, 2012, p. 116). When all parts of the system are considered, and individuals are willing to draw out the strengths within diverse perspectives, true collaboration can occur.

Perspectives may differ between levels of a hierarchy (Oshrey, 2007; Stringer, 2007). For example, challenges at the front line differ significantly than the federal or administrative line (Mayhew, 2012, p. 125). Thus, the depth of the organizational action is based on the diversity of internal stakeholders involved.

In mainstream and common systems we do not tend to see ourselves as in relationships, and therefore it is "our *internal* blindness – our inability to see ourselves and the actions we take, without awareness or choice, that lead us out of the possibilities of partnership and into relationships of opposition, antagonism, disappointment and warfare" (Oshrey, 2007, p. 61). In a

hierarchical system, roles, responsibilities, and issues change at each tier. Therefore, in alignment with Senge (2006), relationships throughout an organization will collectively address the needs of the entire system in the most effective way possible. Conversely, without interdepartmental relationships, significant pieces may be missing in order to solve problems (Mayhew, 2012, p. 113).

While Mayhew defined the term “hallow state” as the degree of separation between levels in multitiered systems (p. 111), Raelin (2011), argued that collaborative practice within hierarchical systems works as if there is not one leader, but the entire organization makes up a leadership practice on its own (p. 204). Raelin (2005) further articulated a change in management styles: in traditionally organizational settings, managers may have been expected to transfer their skills and knowledge to those working for them. However, a supportive and fostering environment that encourages employees to take on tasks with their own skills is required for success in collaboration (p. 199). Oshry (2007) stressed that, in collaborative practices, people in top, bottom, and middle tiered positions cannot be responsible for problem solving, but for simply observing the problems through a holistic lens. Essentially, collaboration between hierarchical levels can contribute to the elimination of Mayhew’s concept of a hallow state.

Challenges surface when the common structure of hierarchy fogs the shared vision of an organization because “other parts of the system are, for the most part, invisible to us. We do not know what others are experiencing, what their worlds are like, what issues they are undergoing” (Oshrey, 2007, p. 1). Credentials, labels, and positions challenge employees’ ability to collaborate equally. Due to power dynamics, issues may arise when people working in lower tiers attempt to collaborate with upper-tiered employees (Oshrey, 2007, pp. 39-40).

Consequently, the biases or beliefs about other tiers or the structure of the overall organization can undermine collaboration throughout the entire system.

Each tier of the hierarchy, and employees within those tiers play a critical and specific role in the function of the organization. When those parts can work in collaboration with one another, pulling on unique strengths, the organizational values align. This alignment creates the opportunity for the organization to become a leader within the community.

Inter-organizational Collaboration

In light of the ecological perspective described above, external stakeholders operating in the macrosystem (e.g., government stakeholders that determine policy, procedures, funding, and so on) and in the exosystem (e.g., other community agencies and clients) greatly impact the parameters in which organizations operate. Levels of upstream accountability from local to federal agencies can be developed when top to bottom collaboration occurs. As a result, the meso system (management), micro system (staff and teams), and individual employees can be maintained because of service providers' understanding of their own influence and accountability to the system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Mayhew, 2012, pp. 127-128).

The current structure of the human services field in British Columbia has been unfortunately segregated, often implying a power differential based on the context of sectors (Ricks, et al., 1999, pp. 7-8). While some agencies are government-run, others are non-profit, both of which have Aboriginal specific areas of service. Ricks, et al. argued, "It's just turf?It seems obvious, however, that larger social issues require multiple perspectives,

making all social issues, problems, and solutions beyond anyone's turf. Without a perspective of the social problem, no viable overall solutions can be generated" (pp. 10-11). Traditional methods of top-tier, individualistic management or governance are being challenged by collaborative practices presenting in a horizontal style (Raelin, 2011; Raelin, 2005; Linden, 2003). However, rather than eroding a hierarchical system and changing it to become a horizontal structure, Mayhew (2012) suggested incorporating inter-organizational relationships into already existing structures (pp. 111-112):

Simply stated, much that feels personal is not personal. We are systems creatures. Our consciousness — how we experience ourselves, others, our systems, and other systems—is shaped by the structure and processes of the systems we are in. Our failure to recognize this fundamental connection comes at costs ranging from simple misunderstandings to severely diminished organizational effectiveness to horrendous human catastrophes. With system sight we have greater leverage for avoiding those costs and creating more sane social systems in which to live, grow, and contribute. (Oshrey, 2007, pp. 262-263)

Organizations can collaborate at a community level just as they would internally. Overall, meeting comprehensive needs of the community is an inter-organizational task and requires cooperation to look beyond 'turf'.

Because each stakeholder facilitates different duties to the system, all perspectives are required to create a thorough understanding of systemic issues. Effective leaders reach their desired outcome by entertaining and utilizing different perspectives (Linden, 2003, p. 44):

“Those engaged in the delivery of human services are most knowledgeable regarding the complexities involved with tackling interrelated social problems” (Mayhew, 2012, p. 125).

However, human services are often designed to meet the needs of the public as well as funders, in which case, positions, roles and responsibilities throughout multi-tiered organizations can vary greatly (p. 112-116). Therefore,

Efforts to cultivate the types of relationships that serve the different yet complimentary goals of a multi-tier system will facilitate human service delivery that takes advantage of local resources and knowledge while still remaining accountable to the larger public that supports it. (Mayhew, 2012, p. 127)

Individuals who approach situations with fixed ideas about areas of expertise or level of education are limited by what they think they know (pp. 12-13). Senge (2006) suggested balancing advocacy and inquiry to promote collaborative learning (p. 183). Balancing advocacy and inquiry means to maintain leadership skills that require direction and influence to others while balancing with the idea of using inquiry to draw out ideas and strengths from others (p. 183). The inclusion of each stakeholder’s perspective is a critical piece; however, the ability to move forward with curiosity into the unknown needs to be incorporated.

When seeing each other’s perspectives, staff can encourage and support an organizational shift. Suggested methods of collaborative practice include: developing a strategic plan which acknowledges all responsibilities within a system, or tackling the problem, rather than the person by approaching issues from a depersonalized perspective (Oshrey, 2007, p. 29). Because each level of a hierarchy plays a different role in meeting organizational and systemic needs, diverse perspectives and talents can thoroughly address the needs at each level of the greater system.

In summary, the interpersonal competencies of employees sit as a foundation of systemic change. Dependant on individuals is the system in which they work in: personal perspective around collaboration and support of one another directly impact the function of an organization and its ability to impact the greater system. Essentially, each individual is significantly interconnected to his or her entire system.

Culture

While culture is impacted by individual's beliefs and perceptions within an organization, external factors play a significant role in organizational culture also. This section outlines culture in the context of individual influences, systemic influences, and the influences that multiculturalism can have on organizational culture.

Individuals and organizational culture

Individuals and their experiences greatly impact organizational culture. Each person's perception of the world has been impacted based personal experiences. These experiences impact their (and our) decision-making and behaviour in day-to-day settings.

Many factors influence people's perceptions. Personal perceptions define behaviour, beliefs, and values, which subsequently impact how individuals interact with each other. Taken together, these factors create a culture: "Behavioral influence exists because individuals behave in ways that are consistent with their values, and organizational culture is a set of shared values" (Gregory, Harris, Armenakis, & Shook, 2009, p. 674). Past experiences and the perceptions of those experiences impact individuals' ways of being today (Kwantes & Boglarsky, 2007; Senge, 2006). Consequently, "when an employee engages in sense-making, he or she draws on the

knowledge and experiences that he or she has been exposed to, and comes up with perspectives and conclusions that may be uniquely related to the setting in which the individual operates” (Kwantes & Boglarsky, 2007, p. 207). Thus, organizational culture is shaped and formed by those who are present in the organization. Consequently, their perceptions, values and experiences also influence the function of an organization.

Since individuals play a critical role in the make-up of organizational culture, culture itself can be considered a living organism. Although it is influenced by its parts, organizational culture has a significant impact on the interpersonal relationships and overall performance and effectiveness of its parts (Shein, 2010; Stringer, 2007; Senge, 2006; Ricks, et al., 1999). Considering the impact that culture has on a human being, Lev Vygotsky developed a Sociocultural Theory. His work was primarily done in child-development (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2008, pp. 36-37). Nevertheless, “Vygotsky believed that human development occurs over time *within* the context of culture” (p. 302). This theory has been useful in looking at the impact ecological factors have on individuals. Although some argue that individuals can shape culture, others advocate that the culture defines those within it (Golman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Gregory, et al., 2009). Thus, culture is interdependent with its parts.

As culture is considered inclusive of both organizational and individual influences, it can be impacted in a number of ways. Dewitt and Van Muijen (1999) suggested, “organizational culture is a complex phenomenon” (p. 500) in that culture can be changed; however, it is dependent on the avenues considered. For example, although behaviours can be shifted based on intervention, the culture of the organization is not as easily changed because it is defined by the

personal values rooted at those behaviours (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 49). Therefore, some aspects of culture are not easy to change. Kwantes and Boglarsky (2007) explored many different lenses through which culture can be considered and whether they were from a personal or leadership foundation. Similarly, Schein (2010) stated “When we learn to see the world through cultural lenses, all kinds of things begin to make sense that initially were mysterious, frustrating, or seemingly stupid” (p. 2). Because organizational culture has been defined as complex, the literature covered in this section supports the idea that culture is truly interconnected between individual and organization.

Systemic impact on organizational culture

Although organizational culture is primarily developed and maintained by those within the organization, external systemic factors also impact the culture of the organization.

Schein (1990) defined culture as “what a group learns over a period of time as that group solves its problems of survival in an external environment and its problems of internal integration” (p. 111). Therefore, external factors organizations encounter impact aspects of organizational culture. Harris, et al. (2009) found that culture “has a direct effect on factors such as morale, commitment, and job satisfaction, and that these ‘intermediate’ factors then directly impact organizational effectiveness” (p. 675). Communities function in a bureaucratic system where sectors, jurisdiction, and job description define how the community is served. Programs delivered at an internal level are therefore impacted by how services are offered in the community (Ricks, et al., 1999, pp. 18-19). Thus, other programs or sectors in the external system influence organizational culture.

Culture can be impacted by the outcomes organizations are mandated to reach. Pinho, Rodrigues, and Dibb (2013) concluded that external pressures such as contracts or quality assurance have been proven to stress outputs at an organizational level, thereby creating stress in the work environment and culture (p. 392). Dewitt and Van Muijen (1999) concurred, “the different influencing factors, both in the broader and the more direct environment of the organization, are visualized as surrounding influences” (p. 499). Accordingly, the intensity of external pulls on the organization, such as funding perhaps, can challenge the culture (p. 500). As a result of the external pulls an organization experiences, many agencies, specifically non-profit agencies, hire based on established personal or professional relationships to ensure work will be done appropriately:

Nonprofits typically draw key managers from within their personal and professional networks. This isn't surprising, given the vital importance of fit and proven affinity for an organization's mission. Factor in the sector's fragmentation and the strong local roots of most nonprofits, and it is clear why organizations prefer to hire friends or friends of friends. (Tierny, 2010, p. 557)

Hiring can draw from a culture that has already been established historically or in social settings. The financial restraints, expectations of contracts, and overall mission statement of an organization can define how employees must act in their jobs therefore impacting the culture.

Based on the context of external impacts, organizational culture can be affected in different ways. Depending on the established culture of the organization, the response can be

either positive or negative. To summarize, external factors such as funding or contracts also play a strong role in an organization's overall culture.

Multicultural influences on organizational culture

Beyond personal, historical, or external impacts on culture, diversity in Indigenous heritage also has influence on organizational culture, especially in the context of Aboriginal Friendship Centres that both hire and serve people from a range of nations or cultural backgrounds. Different traditional values and beliefs will surface in an individual's work. Therefore, multicultural influences are to be considered one of the many complexities of working in collaboration and defining organizational culture.

Cultural heritage is deeply engrained in a person, and therefore often goes unrecognized as to how it affects day-to-day behaviour. Cotton (2013) suggested that since birth we have developed a perception of the world that is based on our environment, language we are exposed to, and values that are taught to us. When we come into contact with one another, many of these values are left unidentified. However, as human beings we are able to find common ground: our bodies, food, and shared space, all allow us to experience "cultural overlay" (pp. 3-6). Cultural overlay is what allows us to mesh together, often creating a new culture on its own (p. 5). Moreover, local culture may already play a significant role; therefore, another layer of the cultural overlay exists (p. 10): "Perceptual differences do not exist just between residents of different countries. Within a single national culture, regional and ethnic differences can create very different realities" (Adler, Rosenfeld, Proctor II, & Winder, 2006, pp. 80-81). As such, multicultural teams put special emphasis around teamwork because of how truly diverse they are

(Bordas, 2007, p. 81). From the perspective of leadership, multicultural teams have a social responsibility to represent our multicultural nation.

On a broader scope, individualistic cultures differ significantly from collectivist cultures (Bordas, p. 81). While some cultures hold high value around individualistic achievements, others consider individualism taboo, and prefer to relate achievements back to team or family as a whole, also known as collectivist cultures (p. 80). This is an important aspect to be considered when diverse cultures collide in an organizational setting.

Although many organizations have multicultural teams, some organizations use local culture as a foundational piece of their organization's function. As outlined in chapter one, many organizations in Canada are primarily Aboriginal, targeting Aboriginal people and are inclusive of traditional teachings: "To maintain their responsiveness agencies hire extensively, if not exclusively, from the local community" (Brown & Fraelich, 2011, p. 288). Therefore, when an organization has a specialized focus, hiring can be based on exposure to specific experiences and therefore deliberately fostering and maintaining an organizational culture privy to their particular community issues. Community members that have had direct or familial exposure to issues such as poverty, trauma or systemic racism are more suitable for such positions because of the quality of their exposure (p. 288). Martin and Yurkovich (2014) stated Native American identification of extended family branches out into the greater community; all community members are considered a relation. Community members that have had direct or familial exposure to issues such as poverty, trauma, or systemic racism are more suitable for such positions because of the quality of their exposure (p. 288). Martin and Yurkovich (2014) stated Native American

identification of extended family branches out into the greater community; all community members are considered a relation. With this sense of holistic interconnectedness, Martin and Yurkovich concluded that effective human services were directly correlated to the established relationship community members had to the organization and the target population (p. 62-65). Therefore, the connection to the local community is often a requirement to work in Aboriginal human service organizations.

While exposure to local issues is important for Aboriginal services, traditional knowledge also plays a significant role in why local people are best fit to work with Aboriginal communities. Brown and Fraelich (2011) confirmed that the sacred cultural knowledge community members hold directly impacts the context of work done with Aboriginal community members. Traditions passed from generation to generation are held within the community. There is seen to be of great value in how historical teachings influence Aboriginal public service. In the context of Brown and Fraelich's study, people believed that sacred knowledge should be shared with the greater community and, as a result, traditional teachings from the local community were held within the organization. However, with emphasis that sacred knowledge still belongs to the local people (pp. 288). Therefore, when considering who will work in Aboriginal organizations other avenues beyond mainstream hiring are to be considered:

Determining qualifications for employment among applicants to culture-based human services agencies includes not only an appreciation and understanding of formal education but also a highly sophisticated understanding of what cultural knowledge is, whose cultural knowledge it is, how it meshes with the requirements of the position, and

how it is validated. In the case of employment, a record of employment such as a written reference is typically used. (Brown & Fraelich, 2011, p. 299)

While mainstream society might hire on the basis of educational background and field experience, Aboriginal agencies tend to consider a holistic lens of experience including traditional knowledge and personal experience. Thus, those suitable for the job are often those who have established relationships within the organization.

Working from a local Aboriginal perspective holds unique qualities outside of mainstream organizations. Personal exposure to local issues, established personal or professional relationships in the community of service and sacred cultural knowledge are all considered desirable qualities for employees. While traditional knowledge is a significant quality in employees, there is a willingness to share the culture on the condition that it still belongs to the local people. Consequently, hiring is often based on referral or personal connection. The literature concluded uniqueness in the hiring practices of Aboriginal specific organizations.

Organizational culture is a synergy between individual and systemic influences in that the behaviours and values individuals possess directly impact culture; however, the established culture or external pulls can define how individuals perform. Therefore, organizational culture is interconnected between external and internal factors.

Self- Leadership

All members of an organization bring different strengths to the table. Depending on their role, they must apply their strengths to the position they work in. While there are parameters around which level of a hierarchy an individual can influence, organizations have been proven to

work more effectively when all members take initiative to apply their own strengths to the area in which they are working. Thus, those in leadership need to give space for employees to ignite their self-leadership qualities. When all parties are accountable for their contribution, the function of the organization can meet its highest potential. This section will outline the need for employees to be accountable in their positions and to identify their personal strengths as well as how leaders can foster self-leadership.

Self-leadership and accountability

It is virtually impossible to maintain every quality desirable to an employer. Employees and leaders need to be aware of their strengths and how to effectively apply them to their organization: “Self-observation fosters awareness of when certain behaviors occur and why they are chosen. This enhanced self-knowledge can provide information about behaviors that need to be strengthened, eliminated, or changed” (Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2011, p. 187). Scholarly literature stated that rather than applying skills based on orders from their superiors, those that apply their strengths independently are overall more successful (Dose & Kilmoski, 1995; Kupperschmidt, 2004; Rath & Conchie, 2008; Stewart, et al., 2011).

While traditionally, leadership roles are appointed to specific people in upper management, Oshrey (2007) argued that all employees must be leaders within their position. Rath and Conchie (2008) suggested each leader has a different style and perspective; those that try to simply lead like others face serious problems. Reflecting on historical team success emphasized the need for diversity in leadership styles; those that highlight their personal differences and apply their personal strengths to the team prove to be successful (pp. 10-11).

In the work place, when organization's leadership fails to focus on individuals' strengths, the odds of an employee being engaged are a dismal 1 in 11 (9%). But when an organization's leadership focuses on the strengths of its employees, the odds soar to almost 3 in 4 (73%). So that means when leaders focus on and invest in their employees' strengths, the odds of each person being engaged goes up *eightfold*. (Rath & Conchie, 2008, p. 2)

Organizational structure fostering individual strengths best supports overall function. Employees who feel empowered to implement their strengths are significantly more engaged. Thus, in addition to the cultural and systemic factors identified above, employees practicing self-awareness have the ability to identify their personal strengths and how they can align with organizational values and function.

Employees who feel responsible for applying their strengths to their job perform at a higher level in the workplace. Relative to Senge's (2006) concept of mental models under the section around culture, Stewart, et al. (2011) stated,

At the team level, research has established the importance of a shared mental model. A shared mental model should be particularly important for teams composed of self-leading individuals. Having a common purpose and clear understanding of who has what responsibilities is likely necessary for coordinating team member efforts when there is no formal leader. Self-leadership strategies such as self-talk, mental imagery, beliefs and assumptions, and thought patterns can be applied to conversations among team members

to help frame events positively and develop a sense of belonging and commitment to the team. (p. 204)

When individuals feel they are being managed to work in a specific style, they develop a dependence on their employer and therefore lose their sense of accountability. With consideration to personal strengths and external or systemic expectations, Stewart, et al. (2011) defined the concept of self-management as “individuals and teams determining primarily how to carry out tasks but *not* what the tasks are and why they should be done” (p. 190). Individuals who are not empowered or enabled to embrace personal strengths in their job create a culture of compliance. Compliant employees often work from a perspective of accommodation because they are being watched, rather than aligning their beliefs with the mandate or vision of the organization. This can result in dependency or trained incapacity of an employee and disregard for how personal strengths can be applied to the betterment of the agency. “People hold within themselves the power to rise above their circumstances” (Kupperschmidt, 2004, p. 115). Therefore, employees need to be aware of their own strengths and behaviours, and how they can work with the power they hold in their position (Dose & Kilmoski, 1995, pp. 37-38). Although managers hold the external accountabilities and function of an overall organization, self-managed employees are of higher value based on their holistic understanding of personal, team, and organizational needs, and how these can be met.

Although the idea of accountability has become something of a buzzword in the context of fiscally conservative government mandates, in the work place, the idea of personal accountability can be used as a connector between personal behaviour and organizational

outcomes. Those who feel accountable to the outcomes of their job perform from a higher level of “autonomy, confidence and meaningfulness in their work” (Kupperschmidt, 2004, p. 114). Reiterating the risk micromanagement has on employees’ value and capacity in their job, feeling accountable not only enables employees to feel connected to their work, but it also heightens their perception of self and the ability to achieve goals (Stewart, et al., 2011; Kupperschmidt, 2004; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Dose & Kimoski, 1995): “When responsible adults refuse to share accountability, it poisons human relationships, corrupts professions, and makes self-esteem impossible. Refusal to share accountability with responsible adults is morally corrupting, psychologically disempowering, and spiritually devaluing and dehumanizing” (Kupperschmidt, 2004, p. 115). Steinbauer, Renn, Taylor, and Njoroge (2014) defined ethical leadership as a personal perspective on accountability to others in relationship and how a leader’s behaviour aligns with organizational needs: “Ethical leaders will then influence their followers by acting as role models, holding their employees accountable, and teaching them self-leadership skills to improve their ethical judgment” (p. 388). Mittal and Dorfman (2012) broaden the scope of accountability, not only to the greater organization, but also to the external community that the organization sits in. They described “servant leadership” as “the ability to build community, both within and outside of the organization” (p. 557). Servant leadership is considerate of personal behaviour and relationships, highlighting the differences in others and the direct relation to the system at large (p. 557). Misguided organizations are those that are disempowered in their work based on their inability to embrace their role in their team, organization, and system. When employees feel accountable to the outcomes of their work, they are able to perform from a positive and empowering perspective.

Individuals who are enabled to rely solely on their management for direction and outcomes develop a sense of incapacity to do their job. When employees are supported in fostering a sense of self-management and the personal strengths they hold within their position, benefits ripple from a personal perspective out to the greater community.

Leaders' role in strengthening others

Leaders strengthen their employees by sharing power with them, creating space to share expertise, and allowing employees to have ownership in their jobs.

Kouzes and Posner (2002) outlined four essential factors to strengthen others: ensure self-leadership, provide choice, develop competence and confidence, and foster accountability (p. 279). In order to foster self-leadership, leaders must share their power to those they are leading (pp. 286-288):

When leaders share power with others, they're demonstrating profound trust in the respect for others' abilities. When leaders help others to grow and develop, that help is reciprocated. People who feel capable of influencing their leaders are more strongly attached to those leaders and more committed to effectively carrying out responsibilities.

They *own* their jobs. (p. 287)

Although making space for employees to grow and develop is a critical piece of self-leadership, leaders who provide initial clear direction empower employees to confidently do their job (Hackman, 1986, p. 774). Therefore, leaders must be clear in their vision for the organization as well as their expectations. From there, employees can excel in their positions and create

ownership in their work. Dose and Kilmoski (1995) suggested leaders must provide structure, feedback, and expectations in the workplace but avoid excessive management, as this can create a “rigid bureaucratic behaviour” (p. 40). In essence, leaders need to be transparent in their expectations, and then allow employees to flourish based on their strengths within their positions.

Beyond meeting the needs of the organization, those in leadership roles have a greater responsibility to the community. From a community perspective, an organization is accountable to the greater system. While employee’s self-leadership has proven to be a critical piece of successful performance, those who have been appointed leadership roles have the greatest accountability for the organization’s success. Often external stakeholders have a vested interest different than that of an internal employee. This can create a barrier to performance and priorities (Dose & Kilmoski, 1995, pp. 36-37). “Each level of accountability requires different accountability mechanisms, formal and informal; however, upward and downward accountability can be better achieved in the presence of strong lateral accountability mechanisms because ultimately, accountability should create a culture of trust between stakeholders” (Williams & Taylor, 2013, p. 569). Staff members in an organization need to be practising from a strengths-based perspective; however, “self-leadership should not be considered as a complete substitute for external leadership” (Stewart, et al. 2011, p. 213). Leaders must balance fostering employees’ strengths with their own requirement to facilitate successful organizational outcomes. When leaders successfully do so, not only are the employees more engaged, the organizational outputs increase, resulting in overall organizational growth (Rath & Conchie, 2008, p. 16-17). In

essence, self-leadership at an individual level is important; however, leaders have a responsibility in their role to facilitate how internal successes align with external stakeholder's needs.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the scholarly literature that will be connected to the findings and recommendations in chapters to come. Literature around inter-organizational and internal collaboration was explored. The organizational culture is unique to each organization and is influenced by both internal and external forces. Further, culture plays a foundational role in the complexities within an organization. To create a culture and environment that promotes organizational initiatives, such as the collaboration initiative at Tillicum Lelum, leaders must also foster an environment of self-leadership and accountability. Having reviewed the scholarly literature related to collaboration, chapter three will outline how I used an action research framework to study the collaboration initiative at Tillicum Lelum.

CHAPTER THREE: INQUIRY APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Inquiry Approach

The inquiry topic explored how Tillicum Lelum can establish internal collaborative approaches. The subquestions included:

1. What methods of collaboration are currently working at Tillicum Lelum?
2. How can collaborative approaches be effectively incorporated into Tillicum Lelum?
3. What are the current barriers to collaboration at Tillicum Lelum?
4. Who needs to carry out the collaboration initiative?

This project employed an action research methodological approach. The goal was to facilitate a collaborative change process. Action research is considered to be an interventional and developmental strategy. Action research is a partnership in broadening the understanding of and drawing out the issues an organization faces, often in a cyclical fashion. (Fuller-Rowell, 2009, p. 364). Rowe, Agger-Gupta, Harris, and Graf (2011) outlined the cyclical process of my action research project through Royal Roads University's School of Leadership Studies' Organizational Action Research model (OAR)⁴. Although this research project focuses on one cycle within the OAR, the intention is to create space for further collaborative action. Because this research project was specific to Tillicum Lelum and its collaboration initiative, action research was a well used method of research in that it was inclusive of the internal stakeholders throughout the process.

Addressing the human perspective specific to an organization holds value for Tillicum Lelum

⁴ See Royal Roads University's OAR Model in Appendix B

because the collaboration initiative rests on an interpersonal foundation. Further, “This particular qualitative research method is unique in the way it associates research and practice, so research informs practice and practice informs research synergistically” (p. 94). Traditional scientific research methods are often unsuccessful in application to social situations because each case is unique based on circumstances, timing, and relationships (Stringer, 2007, pp. 191-193). Although the findings that will be discussed in chapter four are in alignment with the literature presented in chapter two, it may be useful for readers to understand that they were not triangulated with other organizations. This research is specific to Tillicum Lelum and is not intended to be generalized to other organizations. However, readers might be able to adapt lessons to their own contexts.

Traditional or experimental research often seeks outcomes that can be generalized to a wider population. Research in the social sciences, however, tends to be more reliant on the values and perspectives of its subjects or participants. While physical sciences focus on avoiding personal perceptions and values within the study, social scientists acknowledge the value of “*individual, inter-personal and group levels of analysis* in solving problems” (Brown & Tandon, 1983, p. 281). Brown and Tandon further suggest that through action research comes a process of developmental change (p. 281). The value in action research is that it “focuses on research *in* action, rather than research *about* action” (Coughlan & Coughlan, 2002, p. 222). Researchers using this methodology should consider all members of the organization as co-researchers (p. 225). The ideology behind action research is to focus on collaboration and for participants to better understand the dynamics of the particular context, leading to interest and engagement in carrying out a collaborative action plan (Stringer, 2007, p. 1): “Action research seeks to develop

and maintain social and personal interactions that are nonexploitative and enhance the social and emotional lives of all people who participate” (p.27). Action research is based on accessing the voices of unheard or oppressed parties which otherwise may not be heard based on their position in the social system being studied.

There are many different types of research that sit under the umbrella of action research. While some action research projects are strictly focused on staff members within an organization, community action research projects focus on a number of different stakeholders, which could include clients (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Stringer, 2007). This particular project focused on Tillicum Lelum’s staff members, therefore making it organizational action research.

Stringer outlined four major principles of action research: relationships, communication, participation, and inclusion. The relational piece speaks to the importance of the general experience of the social research. Emphasis on conflict resolution, inclusion, and empathy, creates a positive work environment. Through effective communication strategies, action researchers can collect data in a respectful and effective way. Self-awareness in communication and reflexivity can allow researchers to monitor the potential for distortion within the research. Emphasis on participation and inclusion can deepen the understanding of the system in which the organization is working. The philosophy of action research is to avoid top-tier decision making and isolated decisions by empowering the entire organization – insofar as this is possible in any given setting – to make a collaborative change. Inclusion draws out marginalized voices within the organization and highlights many perspectives throughout the change process (pp. 28–36). Overall, action research puts emphasis on bridging self-awareness and personal sphere of

influence with the greater system and the stakeholders within the system.

Coghlan and Brannick (2010) described four cyclical phases of action research: constructing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action (p. 8). However, within each phase sits another cyclical process in the order of experiencing, understanding, judging, and taking action (p. 31). This action research project focused on the constructing phase. Through facilitated and meaningful discussions around collaborative practice, the intent was to create a foundation and collective understanding of the significance of collaboration while moving

Tillicum Lelum's organizational goal is based on holistic and traditional Aboriginal perspectives while highlighting the significance of teamwork (Tillicum Lelum, n.d., Our Goals, para. 3). As action research is a collaborative approach to organizational change, the culture and traditions of Tillicum Lelum appropriately aligned with the structure of action research. The strategic plan at the time of my research entailed relocating and restructuring programs. Based on the structure of the organization, engagement with all parties was critical in carrying out the strategic plan.

This project utilized a qualitative sequential multimethods approach through a focus group and world café. Neuman and Robson (2009) suggested "qualitative researchers see most areas and activities to social life as being intrinsically qualitative" (p. 85). This research project uses two methods of data collection, which will be more thoroughly outlined in the inquiry methods section. The purpose of a sequential multimethod approach was to use each of the two methods to ground the other at the conclusion of the project (Ivankova, Creswell, and Stick, 2006, p. 14). By using more than one type of qualitative data collection method, the themes

drawn out of the data were triangulated to support one another and then integrated into the findings (pp. 15-18). The two chosen methods of data collection, which will be described in greater depth below, were both interactive. Because action research is a social method of research, I chose collaborative and interactive data collection methods with the hope that I could engage other staff members as co-researchers.

Project Participants

Action research puts emphasis on collaboration and diversity; therefore, I was purposeful in who would participate in the study. This was to ensure the complexities within the organization were represented.

Neuman and Robson (2009) suggested purposive data selection as a good option for researchers exploring a particular population in order to develop an in-depth understanding of its uniqueness rather than focusing on generalizability (p.138). Participants were purposefully selected based on their position within the hierarchy. Purposive sampling means choosing participants specific to the criteria being studied (Neuman & Robson, 2009, pp. 136-138). Because my research was specific to Tillicum Lelum employees, I used purposive sampling in order to ensure as many perspectives as possible within the context of the organization. The hierarchical structure of the organization determined which of the two phases of data collection an individual was invited to attend. I invited upper management to the focus group while other employees were invited to participate in the world café. The focus group involved all upper management including the human resource worker and program technician, while the second phase consisted of only coordinating and front-line employees.

Each group of participants was asked to explore the above subquestions during the data collection method that they were assigned. Action research highlights the inclusion of those who are working with the complexities of a system and enables practitioners to articulate the issues directly related to them thereby broadening the scope of research (Avison, et al., 1999, p. 95). Stringer (2007) suggested that by including all levels of a hierarchy, the researcher “enables practitioners to broaden their focus from one that seeks the immediate resolution of specific problems to more encompassing perspectives that have the potential to alleviate many interconnected problems” (p. 36). Inclusion of all Tillicum Lelum staff members enabled pressing issues from all levels to be articulated.

Because the programs are delivered out of many sites in the city of Nanaimo, the world café facilitator⁵ was purposive in selecting those who were in different programs and sites in order to ensure a variety of perspectives.

The criteria for the focus group consisted of the management team and the executive director. I offered the focus group first in order to expose the upper management to the content the rest of the organization would experience at the world café. Those who were invited to participate in the world café consisted of employees and program coordinators. Because the programs are delivered out of many sites in the city of Nanaimo, the world café facilitator was purposive in selecting those who were in different programs and sites in order to ensure a variety of perspectives.

The upper management focus group involved a total of six participants: All upper management participants were able to attend. The world café consisted of 22 people from a

⁵ I used a neutral third party facilitator to conduct this method due to my power-over position with some employees in the organization. This will be described in more depth in the section on ethics below.

variety of programs. The proposal outlined the requirement for a minimum of 16 participants and a maximum of 24 in order to balance the need to draw perspectives from each of the seven locations while maintaining a comfortable space and realistic number of participants. The minimum world café number was based on the number of sub-questions being presented. Multiples of four were desired as there are four questions to be answered.

The final question (who needs to carry out the collaboration initiative?) was presented with intent to open up a discussion around the accountability and inclusion of all hierarchical levels. I hoped that inclusion of all parties throughout the hierarchy would create a deeper understanding of which collaborative practices could work and what the desired outcome would be. “The relationships and forms of communication that evolve [throughout an action research study] set the stage for the inclusive and participatory processes that are the basis for common unity and productive action” (Stinger, 2007, p. 62). Therefore, through the initiation of this discussion, participants were invited to explore the roles and responsibilities of many different roles within the organization. The findings through this dialogue are presented in the recommendations after the data analysis.

Inquiry Methods

This section will thoroughly outline my research strategies. The first subsection will outline the two inquiry methods used for information collection. The following subsection will outline how and with whom the study will be conducted. Finally, the third subsection will explain how concepts will be drawn out of the findings.

Data collection methods

Considering the collaborative nature of action research, the data collection methods used were ones that I thought fostered a collaborative environment. As described above, action research encourages participants to act as coresearchers because “People have different and conflicting objectives, perceptions, and attitudes. People change over time. And systems analysts have to address the fundamental human aspects of organizations” (Avison, et al., 1999, p. 95). Within this context, I chose qualitative data collection methods.

Due to the size of the management team, the focus group fostered an environment for meaningful and organic discussion, whereas individual interviews might have taken away from collaboration initiative.

The focus group setting allows for conversations that encourage elaborations, agreements, and disagreements among participants that reveal the range of responses to a specific issue. The moderator closely manages the focus group structure to ensure that pertinent information is obtained, while allowing naturalistic interactions to gather abundant data from multiple participants quickly. (Ryan, Ghandi, Culbertson & Carlson, 2013, p. 7)

As such, focus groups have the ability to collect data that otherwise might not be collected in other methods such as individual interviews (Ryan, et al., 2013, p. 3).

The world café is another useful method for drawing out information in a collaborative way. Jorgenson and Steier (2013) emphasized the symbolism behind world café. The

refreshments, table arrangements, and the playful aspect of the method can enable a sense of relaxation and create a community or neighbourhood feel (pp. 391-392). Traditionally, the consumption of food is a critical piece of community meeting and decision making in Aboriginal communities. The belief is that while eating food, participants are taking in and digesting the knowledge that is coming out of the conversation at the shared meal (G. Elliott-Nielsen, personal communication, January 1, 2014)⁶. Fouché and Light (2010) described the world café data collection method to be one of the most powerful in the human services field based on the collaborative dialogue that occurs:

The world café is a conversational process that helps groups to engage in constructive dialogue around critical questions, to build personal relationships, and to foster collaborative learning and is based on the assumption that knowledge and wisdom needed are already present. (p. 34)

This particular method holds value within action research with an appreciative stance because it upholds the knowledge that is already present within the organization as a foundational piece of the research.

Study conduct

Overall, I used different strategies to ensure integrity in my research and diverse perspectives.

The data collection methods listed above invite open dialogue and the participants were

⁶ All personal communications have been reviewed and approved to use in this document by G. Elliott-Nielsen.

encouraged to direct their own conversations, effectively creating space for participants to become coresearchers. For ethical reasons, I split the two groups in order to create a non-threatening work environment. Participants were asked to review and sign all ethical documentation for their protection and best interest. I asked my world café facilitators to choose participants that would best ensure diversity in the study of the organization on a first come first serve basis, meaning that if the first participants to sign up were all from the same department, the next to sign up from different departments would be more important to include. Fortunately, all participants that signed up were able to attend.

The initial inquiry was with the management team so they were aware of the questions that would later be presented to their staff. Within the same week, the staff then underwent the world café with facilitators that were two fellow employees. I chose to do the two data collection processes close together with hopes that the further discussions within the workplace could take place as closely together as possible.

The inquiry team consisted of a fellow Master of Arts in Leadership (MAL) student and one of the two program directors of the new location. My MAL peer was also a member of the board of directors. Although I asked for input about my research, my fellow student had no access to any data and was not present at the data collection methods. This was done in order to ensure confidentiality and avoid any biases or authority conflicts.

Contracts were signed with the sponsor of the organization as well as all participants in order to ensure confidentiality, and clarity around all avenues of the study (See Appendices C and E for samples of the invitation and information letters). The world café invitation and information letter had an optional check box for those who were willing to be a table facilitator. I

sent out focus group letters on my own. All invitations were handed out two weeks before stating the topics covered, disclosing the researcher, and indicating the facilitators. The other facilitators and me then followed up one day before to confirm numbers. On the day of each session, facilitators and me ensured all forms were signed at entry.

The data collected in the focus group and world café were originally locked in a filing cabinet and, once transcribed electronically, were password protected in my home computer at my place of residence. The focus group was voice recorded for reference during data analysis. The data received from the world café did not include any names attached to participants' statements and the transcript was therefore anonymous once I received it from the facilitators. In order to build momentum for change resulting from this study, the organizational sponsor was informed of findings and included in the process of developing the recommendations, which will be more thoroughly outlined in chapter five.

Data analysis

“In general, *data analysis* means a search for patterns in data – recurrent behaviours, [language,] objects, or body of knowledge. Once a pattern is identified, it is interpreted in terms of social theory or the setting of which it occurred” (Nueman & Robson, 2009, p. 342). While quantitative researchers apply numerical or variable coding to their data, qualitative researchers find much value in the borrowing of concepts from those sharing; this is referred to as data analysis through theming (Nueman & Robson, 2009, p. 85). The analysis process can start at the beginning of data collection in that the researcher will need to be conscious of threads or themes

throughout the data collection stage. Thus, data analysis is a “dimension of research stretched throughout across all stages” (p. 336).

In addition, including participants in the process of analyzing data aligns with the collaborative principles in action research: “Action researchers collaborate in data collection and analysis with organizations on the basis of common goals and use sanctions and resources provided by cooperative authorities. They emphasize mutual trust and iterative data collection analysis to develop a shared diagnoses” (Brown & Tandon, 1983, p. 286). Because action research depends on the participation of those working within the organization, I asked that Tillicum Lelum employees in the world café draw their own themes from their conversations as a starting point for my analysis. Overall, the reciprocity between participants and me was critical in analyzing the data.

Neuman and Robson (2009) refer to a process of analysis called conceptualization, which is a critical part of organization qualitative data (pp. 336-337). By summarizing and paraphrasing during the focus group, I was able to start data conceptualization immediately. After all participants went around the room to answer the questions asked, I then summarized my understanding of their key points and asked if there was anything I missed or if there were any points they might want to emphasize or deemphasize.

Reiterating that action research is a collaborative method, Creswell and Miller (2000) outlined the significance of member checking during the process of analysis. Checking with members seeks approval from those offering the information, creating validity in the conclusions (p. 127):

Credible data also come from close collaboration with participants throughout the process of research. Collaboration means that the participants are involved in the study as co-researchers or in less formal arrangements. This validity lens is one of building the participants' view into the study. It belongs to a critical paradigm perspective because the intent of the process is to respect and support participants in a study, not further marginalize them. When asking for feedback and clarity during the focus group, and then asking another staff to analyze data with me, I intended to align with the collaborative and diverse nature of action research. (p. 128)

The decisions to ask for feedback and clarity during the focus group, and then ask another staff member to analyze data with me had intent to align with the collaborative and diverse nature of action research.

The world café provided flip chart paper and pens to the table facilitators for recording discussions. The room was also set up with paper tablecloths and crayons to record any ideas or diagrams during the discussion. The facilitators offered 15 minutes at the end of the world café for the table facilitators to categorize and theme their discussions, thus beginning the process of analysis. The table hosts of the world café recorded bullet points throughout the conversations and divided the tables into simple headings "question 1, question 2, question 3, question 4." The facilitators gave me the flip chart paper as raw data and, like the focus group analyzing process, we themed and applied concepts.

Although themes were emerging through the interactive data collection methods, the participants' words were transcribed so that I could return to them later for a more thorough process of analysis. After the focus group had been transcribed, together with a fellow colleague

who was one of my inquiry team members, I began to categorize the raw data into thematic groups by highlighting any frequent statements. We then applied concepts to the data by consolidating the themes into broader statements, turning the original themes into subthemes, thus completing the process of conceptualization. Quotes and points were divided into the four themes: culture, team building, communication, and accountability. Quotes were coded with either FG (focus group) or WC (world café). The world café codes were followed with numbers one through four to represent the table numbers. The focus group code was followed with numbers one through six to differentiate each participant. The four findings are further outlined in chapter four.

In summary, the data analysis started at the time of the collaborative conversations at Tillicum Lelum. The nature of the data collection methods enabled me to develop themes as I communicated in the focus group. Staff members were encouraged to define their own themes in the world café, highlighting the inclusiveness of action research. I was then able to do deeper analysis with another staff member. Overall, the analyzing process was inclusive of participants at Tillicum Lelum.

Ethical issues

The ethical considerations in this study were based on the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. This research was conducted in the context of an Aboriginal Friendship Centre where I also work. I am the grand-daughter of the Executive Director and daughter of a member of the management team. I am aware that in most contexts, this would present a conflict of interest. However, in many Aboriginal contexts, it is common for

family members to work closely in communities and organizations. Further, my power-over position affected my study.

Aboriginal Context

My Aboriginal ancestry comes from Chemainus First Nation; however, I have lived on Nanaimo territory and worked in the urban Aboriginal community for most of my life. All members of Tillicum Lelum are very much aware of my familial connections within the organization. Many clients and community members are aware of these affiliations as well.

Based on the Aboriginal context, the established professional and familial connection to the organization can strengthen the contents of the information shared. Martin and Yurkovich (2014) concluded that Native American communities identified “family” to have both biological and community meaning; the definition of family speaks to those that are trusted and contribute to the community whether it be blood relative or community support workers (pp. 59-61). Furthermore, Native American families in Martin and Yurkovich’s research identified barriers in working with outside sources of the community and found the overall experiences to be negative (p.65). To mitigate this challenge, as I went forward in the study, I identified my familial connection in the invitation and information letter for full transparency with potential participants. Thus, the family connection within the organization aligns with the Tri-Council’s requirement to establish a connection with Aboriginal communities, while literature has supported the unique definition of family and community relations.

With regard to Aboriginal populations in Canadian research, the Tri-Council Policy suggests,

Engagement between the community involved and researchers, initiated prior to recruiting participants and maintained over the course of the research, can enhance ethical practice and the quality of research. Taking time to establish a relationship can promote mutual trust and communication, identify mutually beneficial research goals, define appropriate research collaborations or partnerships, and ensure that the conduct of research adheres to the core principles of Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare – which in this context includes welfare of the collective, as understood by all parties involved – and Justice. (p. 109-110)

Because I work with an Aboriginal population, ethical considerations include the relational aspect of the research. I was already a part of the community being studied, and therefore had an established relationship with the population being studied (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, et al., 2010, p. 108). The interactive data collection methods took into consideration the ethical guidelines governing research with Aboriginal people in that the data presented is based on open dialogue and community voice (p. 121). The organization in question is not on Aboriginal or reserve land (p. 111). There were no ethical considerations beyond the Tri-Council ethics based on the organization I researched. In order to strengthen the research capacity, it is suggested that the researcher work collaboratively with the Aboriginal population. Therefore action research principles align with the ethics of research with Aboriginal communities (p. 125)

Tri-Council Context

The development and undergoing of this project was bound by the “respect for human dignity [, which] require[d] that research involving humans be conducted in a manner that is sensitive to the inherent worth of all human beings and the respect and consideration that they are due” (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, et al., 2010, p. 8). There was a possibility that participants could feel threatened in their job based on the information they share because I directly supervise some of the staff who were invited to participate. Therefore, a third party was asked to present the invitations and the world café. To be transparent, participants were informed of my dual role as a researcher and employee. I stated any conflict of interest as well as the overarching purpose of the study. The conflict of interest was also disclosed in the ethics proposal.

The Tri-Council Policy outlined three major principles: respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice. In order to ensure respect for persons, the invitations outlined the nature of the study and the facilitator, while offering the opportunity to withdraw at any time. Further considering the welfare of the participants, the help of two other facilitators with no authority over participants eliminated the risk of loss of career, comfort, and transparency in the answers given during data collection process. Finally, the justice perspective was addressed through the invitation and information around participation. All parties were invited in order to ensure the greatest level of diversity. The questions offered to the management team were the same as those offered to the employees. No incentives were offered other than the food and refreshments, which were equally available to all participants.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the research approach and its alignment with an organizational action research engagement framework. The participants were purposefully invited to ensure as many perspectives within the system as possible were represented. Taking into account the overarching question around collaboration, I chose collaborative data collection methods. Likewise, the analysis process was done in a way that was inclusive.

CHAPTER 4: ACTION INQUIRY PROJECT RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

As has been described in previous chapters, at the time of my research, Tillicum Lelum articulated challenges regarding the high turn-over in staff, external stakeholders, and overall vision. These challenges brought opportunity for internal collaboration with the underlying intent to raise awareness in the community around urban Aboriginal human services. For the reader's ease of reference I will articulate the overarching question again here: How can Tillicum Lelum establish internal collaborative approaches? The subquestions included:

1. What methods of collaboration are currently working at Tillicum Lelum?
2. How can collaborative approaches be effectively incorporated into Tillicum Lelum?
3. What are the current barriers to collaboration at Tillicum Lelum?
4. Who needs to carry out the collaboration initiative?

The four primary findings are:

1. Participants articulated the importance of culture
2. Participants voiced their strong support for team building
3. Participants affirmed that communication enhances collaboration
4. Participants articulated the need for accountability

Although these are presented as separate findings, themes from some findings were also prevalent in other findings, highlighting the interconnectedness of the findings and the need to foster each area as if they were one.

Study Findings

Finding 1: Participants articulated the importance of culture

Like any organization, many different factors influence the culture at Tillicum Lelum. In response to the research questions, the overall culture of the organization was referred to as already collaborative with comments on how this collaboration could be enhanced. The organization is unique from other organizations because it serves all populations but with an Indigenous approach. The team at Tillicum Lelum includes employees from different cultures around the world who are accepting of diverse lifestyles. Further, the way the organization operates as a nonprofit organization also impacts the culture. Overall, in the data I found that the organizational culture was primarily influenced by Indigenous traditions, as will be exemplified in the first subsection below. In addition, fostering strengths and needs within the organization, and the fact that the organization is a nonprofit agency, were contributing factors in the collaboration initiative. These will be described in more detail in the subsections that follow.

Traditional culture

Focus group participants in particular suggested that Tillicum Lelum promotes traditional Indigenous teachings as a foundational piece of their practice (FG2; FG5; FG6). Both the world café (WC) and the focus group (FG) participants agreed that the Aboriginal culture embedded in the organization was important in how the organization offers programming, and more significantly, the way employees interact with one another. As one participant stated, “One of the things that we see by mainstream culture is that knowledge is valued and I think our organization also values wisdom. So knowledge speaks and wisdom listens” (FG2). Coming from a number of different traditional territories, employees are nurtured in their ability to adapt (FG5). Therefore,

“traditional values” is an effective contributor to collaboration (WC1). Traditional culture is acknowledged from the board of directors and throughout all management and employees (FG6). Because the organization is off reserve and serves a diverse population, respect for diversity in traditional values was outlined in the focus group:

There is collaboration because I’ve seen people adapt to different ways of doing things: ceremony [or] whatever, It’s not ‘oh this is the way it’s done’ because we see that so much in First Nations on this side of the island is ‘you can’t do that,’ whereas here that doesn’t happen. That’s collaboration and that’s huge when we’re talking about culture being such a part of our programs and our services and our environment so I think it’s unique what happens here. (FG5)

In light of diverse Indigenous cultures, cultural gatherings and celebrations such as Aboriginal Day celebrations and barbeques were pinpointed as fun and effective ways to collaborate and build relationships (FG2; FG5; FG6; WC1; WC2).

The overall findings through both data collection methods concurred that the cultural events and traditional teachings are a foundational piece of staff members’ ability to collaborate and serve the targeted population.

A culture around fostering personal strengths and needs

Employees at the world cafe described the organizational culture as “accepting of alternative lifestyles” (WC1). Focus group and world café participants outlined a value around self-care in the organization: “It’s obvious staff care, and [there is] commitment to the well being

of people [and] working with each other” (WC1). Participants in both methods further articulated self-care was a priority and supported by management (FG1; WC1). Focus group participants agreed and emphasized the correlation between the organizational culture and their behaviours:

It all goes back to personal awareness and personal development and building on relationships. All these things are possible if people have a high level of relationship building and personal awareness and development, and I would also like to reiterate on building internally helps us to build externally with other organizations. (FG2)

Tillicum Lelum also facilitates annual training sessions with staff to explore personal empowerment work (FG1; FG2). Both the world café and focus group expressed value around the workshops (WC1; WC2; FG1; FG2): “When we do [the] personal empowerment [training], it’s looking at their own personal growth, and just that [one particular workshop, called sacred journey] looks beyond that as well...I think that works” (FG1). Overall, much emphasis was placed on gratitude for and value around self-care and self-awareness. World Café participants emphasized “management’s respect for well being” (WC1) and the “respect of what other people do [and] show of appreciation for one another” (WC1) as a contributor to successful collaboration. When employees can practice and collaborate in a way that promotes “good coworker support” (WC1) and space for fun and self-care, their effect on the greater community will be similar to what is practised at a personal level (WC1; WC2; FG1; FG2; FG6). Further, taking advantage of what each employee had to offer at an interpersonal level and in their professional strengths contributed to the culture of the organization and how interactions amongst members occurred. The “informal approach” (WC1) and open door policy contributed

to the organizational culture (WC1; FG1). Through the two methods, I found self-care and personal growth to be a significant part of the organizational culture, which was articulated as impacting the greater system.

Cultural influences around being a nonprofit agency

Issues such as financial restraints in relation to being a nonprofit organization appeared to be a common thread throughout much of the data. In regards to culture, the operation of the organization was described to be in “survival mode” (FG2) in that the lack of funding and pressure from external stakeholders created a culture around work ethic and the overall style of collaboration (FG1; FG2; FG3; FG4; FG6; WC3). Participants in the focus group agreed that they witnessed many staff going above and beyond their job description in order to “just get things done” (FG1; FG4; FG5). Although staff are often only contracted to work 35 hours a week, some staff take time out of their weekends to volunteer, build connections and make things happen (FG1; FG4). Therefore a culture of “going above and beyond” was developed (FG1). Although the general work ethic in the organization was considered useful in that many are exceeding employee responsibilities to meet the needs of clients and contracts, this ethic was also viewed as a negative cultural norm: “We’re spread so thin and a lot of staff have to take on multiple jobs and usually it’s put on the ones that are already doing the good work so they can handle more and then we’re looking at burn out” (FG1). Some of the world café dialogue concurred, with one table stating some are “wearing too many hats” (WC3). The perspectives from the world café regarding working in a nonprofit culture outlined the difficulties around

proper training and direction (WC3). There are very few funding sources for training for new employees at Tillicum; therefore, participants stated that there is not enough direction and often a high-staff turnover due to exhaustion (WC3). Focus group participants FG1, FG2, FG3, FG4 were in agreement with the front line employees and, unfortunately, this issue sometimes relates back to the nature and culture that has been developed around nonprofits: staff will move on to better wages and benefits at other organizations (FG1). Moreover, “the workload [is a barrier]; Sometimes some programs have [too] extreme [of a] workload to worry about collaboration. They just want to make it” (FG3). The impact of financial restraints was proven to affect the way people in the organization practised, proving to play a role in organizational culture.

While the focus group participants articulated their desire to be approached and support the employees, some participants in the world café stated their apprehensions about asking for help or the normal inaccessibility of management due to time constraints or scattered locations (FG1; FG5; WC3; WC4). Drawing new staff from existing relationships is very much evident at Tillicum Lelum. While some employees articulated their appreciation for the culture and “family feel” (WC1) at the organization, others found that new employees to the organization needed more inclusion and support, that there was a fear of working with others, and a “fear of feeling safe or unsafe to share issues” (WC2; WC3). Thus, the family feel culture based on the relationships already established in the working environment was articulated as both a barrier and success, but overall a resonant part of the organizational culture.

In response to questions regarding the current state, enhancement, and barriers to collaboration, the complexities of the organizational culture was a primary thread throughout the

dialogue. Internal factors such as established relationships, work ethic, and ethnic background were contributors to Tillicum Lelum's culture and response to external factors like funding sources were very much relative to the organizational culture.

Finding 2: Participants voiced their strong support for team building

The comments in the world café and focus group indicated that time as well as strategies around team building were critical pieces of collaboration. Upper management and employees agreed that the space for communication and drawing on each other's strengths allowed teams to work together at a deeper level. Activities such as cultural ceremonies and celebrations, work parties and program development were useful in creating deeper friendships and working relationships and overall producing effective work in the organization.

Interdepartmental strengths

In response to the question "what methods of collaboration are currently working at Tillicum Lelum?" participants from both data collection methods placed high value around utilizing interdepartmental strengths (FG1; FG2; FG3; FG5; FG6; WC1; WC2). Each of the participants in the focus group articulated the wealth that the organization has in employees' different areas of expertise, culture, and walks of life (FG1; FG2; FG3; FG4; FG5; FG6; WC1; WC2). However, a barrier in sharing employees across programs is while some employees are over utilized for public speaking and presentations, other employees remained untrained in that area (FG1; WC3). This was described in relation to the lack of time and funding to properly train and guide, so management simply pulls from other programs to fill the gaps (FG1, WC3). Both groups stated staff meetings and case management meetings were effective ways of collaborating

and team building because they could draw from each other's strengths in a face-to-face setting (WC1; WC2; FG3). Participants correlated this theme to their quality of service to clients: "when they have different areas that they need expertise in or just discussing better ways to success for our families...To be successful it's inviting different team players into those teams" (FG1). Specifically, face-to-face meetings seemed to work well for upper management when writing reports or proposals because the questions can be answered quickly and clearly (FG1; FG5; WC1; WC2). Overall, the ability to lean on each other for support and guidance was held as a valuable tool for team building, effectively leading to more ways of collaboration.

Events that foster relationship building

A common thread throughout the findings was the strong relationships between staff at Tillicum Lelum. Common ground among all participants was the ability to build relationships through events, which then trickled into their own time including playing softball, running, or traveling together. While some staff had relationships with employees before they came to work for the organization, others articulated their ability to build meaningful relationships based on the space provided to them (WC2). The world café and focus group participants frequently expressed the value specifically in regards to the empowerment workshops provided because "we get to know each other at a personal level [in a] relaxing atmosphere" (WC1). In relation to the effectiveness of the staff training, both groups articulated the desire for more training (FG1; FG2; FG3; FG6; WC3).

Focus group participants emphasized the need to do more team building and networking, "by having more workshops and presentations it benefits everyone, you know, creates more

efficiency and avoids gaps” (FG3). When asked what collaborative practices could be implemented, both the world café and focus group participants highly advocated for a monthly newsletter to stay connected (FG3; WC3). However, focus group participants stated that all employees and management need to be committed to contributing to the letter, as obtaining information can often be difficult due to location barriers outlined in chapter one and lack of time (FG2; FG5).

Much of the conversation that involved team building made reference to the ripple effect personal wellness and relationships have on Tillicum Lelum’s programming and the greater community (FG1; FG2; FG3; FG6; WC1; WC2). As one participant stated, “I hear a lot of great feedback from staff who come from bigger organizations. They love it here and the way we work, the team spirit” (FG3). Based on the current relationships in the organization, world café participants asked for support in organizing a slow pitch baseball game, a dragon boat team, and more staff barbeques (WC2; WC3).

Both groups concurred that the space provided to make meaningful relationships, specifically the empowerment workshops, contributed to the wellness of the clients and outside organizations. The relationships built in the space provided has affected outside relationships and activities for some. Thus, effective teambuilding has been created not through only management efforts, but also through the initiative of people in the organization.

High staff turnover proves to be a barrier

When asked “who should carry out the collaboration initiative?”, both parties agreed successful collaboration would take the contribution of everyone; however, they would need the

space and leadership of management. Considering the structure and function of the nonprofit organization, employee workloads are substantial. Participants agreed that there was not enough time to make meaningful connections because schedules are so demanding and caseloads are high (FG3; WC3). Furthermore, because of the number of locations out of which Tillicum Lelum serves, some participants articulated that they did not know staff in other departments (WC3). Some world café tables stated that “there are too many new staff” (WC3) as well as “high staff turnover” (WC3). Because of the constant shifting of teams within Tillicum Lelum, participants articulated their desire to come together and form new foundations and values (WC3; FG5). While Tillicum employees are willing to move forward with collaborative practice, not knowing who will be coming on the journey or what the journey will look like has created a barrier (W3).

Management support is needed to build teams

A common thread in the world café was the appreciation for support from management. Unfortunately, Tillicum management was defined as often invisible, which creates a barrier to collaborate with different levels of the organizational hierarchy (WC3). This occurs often but is not always the case, and the upper management group articulated a desire to be approached to help their staff more: “That’s what we’re here for” (FG1). As a result of the dialogue in the focus group that considered systemic factors like nonprofit struggles and location barriers, participants were in strong agreement that they would like to explore creative and realistic ways to recognize those who are working hard to successfully fulfill employee responsibilities while providing overall strong support for employees at Tillicum Lelum (FG1; FG2).

When considering who will implement and facilitate the collaboration initiative, groups expressed frustration in the way employees are trained and how the internal system works. However, the data suggested that there is a willingness throughout the entire organization to tackle the unknown despite the overarching challenges around lack of training dollars, barriers in being a nonprofit, and the constant change in staff (FG3; FG5; WC4). As a result, I found that participants in the world café and focus group articulated a desire to move forward with the help of those in leadership positions in a way that is collaborative and recognizes of the strengths and hard work already available within the organization (WC1; WC2; WC4; FG1; FG2; FG3). Employees also expressed excitement about obtaining management support to foster initial collaboration strategies in maintaining connections outside of their work atmosphere.

Finding 3: Participants affirmed that communication enhances collaboration

While one research question asked what current strategies were working to collaborate at Tillicum Lelum, another question asked participants to identify the barriers. Both questions drew out themes around effective communication. Participants agreed that face-to-face communication is useful, including methods such as a focus group or world café (FG1; FG3; FG4; FG5; WC1; WC2; WC3). Although technology is used as a tool to better collaborate, some thought technology was also a barrier to make meaningful relationships (WC3; FG5). Moreover, the organizational culture arose as a barrier for new staff to communicate in that some participants felt excluded or unsure of management's expectations based on the high pace of the organization as a whole. Participants from both the focus group and world café concurred that there are strengths and weaknesses in the way the staff currently communicate on a day-to-day basis (FG4; FG5; WC2; WC3).

Face-to face communication

When asked “what methods of collaboration are currently working at Tillicum Lelum?”, both parties were in agreement that face-to-face communication not only contributed to relationship building, but also that such communication is used as a way to obtain information quickly and easily (WC1; WC2; FG1; FG3; FG5). One focus group participant explained the ease he felt being able to go from one office to another while writing reports to ask quick, simple, or direct questions (FG5). Furthermore, the face-to-face communication proved to support staff with connecting to external stakeholders, thereby contributing to the ecological philosophy Tillicum Lelum practices: “Working together helps with keeping consistent factual stories straight with families we are working with” (WC1). A focus group participant expressed the desire to have more face-to-face contact; however, she recognized that being in upper management means demands from other areas make this difficult (FG1; FG3; FG6). Participants in the focus group and in the world café were in agreement that the “open-door” policy that management holds is useful. As mentioned above, one focus group participant articulated, “That’s what we’re here for; we want to be approached so then people are clear on what they are doing instead of trying to do it themselves when it might not be the appropriate way to do something” (FG1). However, this policy is often hard to access because members of the management team often meet with external stakeholders offsite (WC1; WC2; WC3). Overall, face-to-face communication was deemed useful for quick and accurate results and meaningful connections.

Technology

Technology was a common thread in what works for collaboration. Some participants connected the relationship building piece to the way they were able to communicate through personal phone or email (WC1; WC2; FG4). This connection was voiced as useful depending on the number of locations around the city where staff actually work. One participant said, “I hate to say it but it works, texting each other, calling each other, knowing where we are all at — it works” (FG4). In conclusion, the face-to-face contact was a contributor to effective collaboration.

Although participants discussed the strengths in their communication, many barriers were brought forward as well. While technology was seen as useful to some, others stated it often made the job more challenging (FG5; WC1). Participants voiced concerns around others’ priorities and timing to check emails (FG5). Others were not receiving memos or important announcements (WC2; WC3). This led to some staff feeling “left out” (WC3). Some voiced that regardless of the type of technology used to communicate, the number of locations remained a barrier in being able to communicate and collaborate (FG1; FG4; FG5; WC3). Some concerns around the face-to-face contact were that others were “out of the loop” (WC3) if they were not connecting with other programs or finding time to connect. This led to dialogue around expectations from management and the disclosure that some employees felt nervous in approaching their superiors with issues, as they feared that they would be “annoying” or incompetent (WC; FG).

Questioning the barriers and strengths around collaboration highlighted the importance of relationship building. However while meaningful points arose around the value of relationships, there is a need to for management and employees to communicate in their positions.

Finding 4: Participants articulated the need for accountability

Considering the high volume of new staff, locations, and programs through Tillicum Lelum as well as the culture that has been influenced by the nonprofit world, positions in the organization often have little or no supervision. Throughout the data collection process, many of the staff members recognized this as a challenge (FG1; FG2; FG6; WC2; WC3).

All members are accountable to utilize their strengths in their positions

While the management team participants in the focus group articulated the expectation that employees can be independent, employee participants in the world café argued that some direction is required. If both management and employees articulate their perspectives, the programs will include more perspectives, thereby impacting the quality of service to the greater community (FG2; FG3; FG6). Consequently, employees' perspectives are broadened from a personal level to a systemic level. As a result of the two dialogues that took place, it became evident that both parties had expectations of each other.

Both groups recognized barriers such as lack of timing or multiple locations the organization had to work with in order to train each other or seek guidance. Participants in the focus group articulated value around the diverse strengths throughout the staff: "We hire people knowing that they come with their own strengths and we want to see them utilize those strengths in their position" (FG6). However, focus group participants recognized that it is often the same

staff members leaving the organization to provide presentations or training and access community resources because they have been around longer (FG1 FG2; FG3; FG5).

We need to train our front line workers to be able to collaborate outside the organizations so it's not always the same people going out meeting with other organizations because we see them as being outspoken or they have the ability to be good communicators, but all of our staff really need to have the ability to collaborate outside the organization. (FG2)

Employees come with diverse strengths and perspectives that need to be shared and fostered. While there is a need for management to support employee strengths, personal responsibility on the part of each employee is also required.

Help from management

The focus group participants also articulated the desire for employees to consider time management, clarifying that many program needs could be met based on accuracy of reporting and taking time to articulate or record the needs of their program. These issues were voiced in the world café as skills front line employees would like guidance and support in. However, some argued that the freedom of being resourceful in their position based on their personal experience or past professional experiences is what allowed them to develop skills (WC1). Focus group participants recognized their requirement to role model: “Role modeling: I think it’s important here to role model and I think managers and coordinators should be doing that” (FG3). Although a very common theme throughout the entire organization was the appreciation of diverse strengths and skills, participants voiced the desire to have more face-to-face contact with management so that their strengths could be better utilized (WC2; WC3; WC4; FG1; FG3; FG5).

In conclusion, upper management and employees had expectations of each other. Although employees have been hired to bring their strengths to the programs they are work with, more effective collaboration between employees and management seems to be needed.

Many factors contribute to carrying out effective collaboration at Tillicum Lelum. Those factors have developed an organizational culture. External pulls such as funding directly affect employees' ability to thrive and collaborate at an internal level. Therefore, participation and accountability from both upper management and employees are required.

Study Conclusions

I have drawn three conclusions to enhance and sustain internal collaboration at Tillicum Lelum:

1. Methods of collaboration rely on organizational culture
2. Collaboration includes all parties
3. Strong internal teams positively affect external stakeholders

The conclusions were drawn from connecting threads throughout the findings and aligning with the literature.

Conclusion 1: Methods of collaboration rely on organizational culture

Throughout the data collection methods, both groups at Tillicum Lelum articulated the direct impact organizational culture has on their ability to collaborate. Shein (2010) outlined how culture impacts the behaviours within, and the operations of, an organization. Therefore, culture can be a contributor to, or disruptor of organizational collaboration and teamwork (pp. 276–278).

While the organizational culture was articulated to be dependent on personal qualities such as traditional culture and diversity in lifestyles, external factors such as funding sources and fragmented locations were included in how able employees are to collaborate. To conclude, Tillicum Lelum's organizational culture is foundational to the enhancement of collaboration at both an interpersonal and organizational level.

Internal contributors to culture

Through answering the subquestions, participants concluded that the quality of interpersonal relationships correlated to the culture around case conferencing and the general context of their meetings. Further, the expectations from management and colleagues created a working culture. Overall, the diversity in strengths and perspectives were primary qualities in the organizational working culture.

Interpersonal qualities were also deemed to be useful. The personal empowerment workshops and openness to self-care assisted staff in personal well-being, which then enabled them to make better connections with each other. The freedom to informally discuss cases and have meaningful personal conversations was articulated as a strength; however, participants felt there was also a need to make an effort to create appropriate parameters around formal communication, specifically around program maintenance with the management team. Shein (2010) stated, "In the end, cultural understanding and cultural learning start with self-insight" (p. 291). Overall, the culture around informal meetings and the ability to make meaningful personal connections through conversation was of high value.

Although the communication styles within the organization contributed to the sustainability of collaborative practice, the freedom to converse with others established an effective communication method creating independence and resourcefulness in employees' conversations. Commonly in nonprofit organizations, the work ethic and values of those in leadership become an expectation or cultural norm within the greater organization (Alaimo, 2010, pp. 419-420). It appeared that the upper management was confident in their employees' ability to create their own programs based on their clients' needs and the team members they chose to access for support. However, employees argued they need more direct support from management. Thus, comparing management and employee perspectives, there was a clear contrast between expectations of work and the realistic ability to do so with the amount of direct supervision and support offered.

External contributors to culture

While those working within the organization primarily shape culture, external contributors affect the working style of those members. Tillicum Lelum is a nonprofit agency. Therefore the ability to provide programming, staffing, and training are impacted by the overarching culture of being a nonprofit agency. Further, given that the organization has an Indigenous focus, traditions and protocols from different nations all over the world have impacted the culture through an Indigenous lens. Thus, in the context of culture, an ecological perspective is equally as important as contributors at a micro level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 9).

Tillicum Lelum has developed as a nonprofit society for almost 50 years. Throughout that time, the organization has adapted to the external pulls nonprofits face. With little funding to

train or fully staff programs, employees are hired based on their strengths. Because there is little capacity to provide direct supervision, as described in chapter two, nonprofit leaders often hire based on existing relationships in the community in order to ensure the appropriate staff is hired for the job (Tierny, 2010, p. 557). The existing relationships created fear for some of those new to the organization and this is a barrier to collaboration (WC2). Being a nonprofit agency has created a fast-paced “just do it” culture at Tillicum Lelum, which promotes a strength-based leadership style. More management support has been asked for in facilitating such leadership. Senge (2006) argued “Individual learning, at some level, is irrelevant for organizational learning. Individuals learn all the time and yet there is no organizational learning” (p. 219). In short, a balance between embracing strengths and experiential learning with direct support from management could be a good organizational practice.

When outlining current collaboration strategies that worked for the participants, the diverse Indigenous lenses created a deeper understanding of Aboriginal human service. Because Indigenous culture varies in each family, community, and nation, the inclusiveness of all Indigenous perspectives contributed to a respectful working culture. Kenny and Ngaroimata Fraser (2012) stated, “elders view culture as a healthy resource for community and family living. Leadership skills develop through community-based cultural processes and through protocols that require collaboration” (p. 57). Thus, the implementation and acceptance of Indigenous⁷ cultural background was resonant to the organizational culture and participants’ ability to collaborate.

⁷ Choice of using “Indigenous” is based on the direction of the literature used, as preferences vary.

In summary, the personal qualities and strategies to communicate are a foundational piece to the organizational working culture. However, ecological contributors play a significant role in how responsibility is fulfilled, and often are more difficult to change. Ricks, et al. (1999) outlined the complexities of interpersonal and systemic issues. When both dynamic and behavioural complexities are high, community is impacted: “Unless we learn to learn from and with one another across traditional organizational, cultural, disciplinary, and professional boundaries, real progress is not possible” (pp. 28-29). Senge (2006) defined “leverage” as the nonobvious change that creates a massive difference to the system. Often organizations can focus on the most practical change for the big, or “high-leverage” issues, when in essence, it is the simple initiatives that make meaningful change to the organization (p. 64). Therefore, the current strengths within the culture at Tillicum Lelum can be used to foster a collaborative working environment at an organizational level, creating a ripple effect to the organization and community.

Conclusion 2: Collaboration includes all parties

In response to the question, “who needs to carry out the collaboration initiative?”, participants indicated the need for all employees, including management to work toward a collaborative organization. A repeated thread throughout the conversations was the value in being able to connect with one another and build both personal and professional relationships. However, with regard to new staff, new programming and the hierarchical structure, both groups concurred with the need to have support and direction from the management team in order to enhance and sustain a collaborative working environment.

Fostering and utilizing interdepartmental strengths

The diverse strengths and perspectives were commonly used in reference to collaborative approaches at Tillicum Lelum. Kouzes and Posner (2002) defined this as positive interdependence and stated, “To get extraordinary things done, we have to rely on each other. We need to have a sense of mutual dependence — a community of people each of whom knows that they need the others to be successful” (p. 251). Although every program, location, and position at Tillicum Lelum remains unique, they are interconnected. Power has little to do with position in the hierarchy, as management and employees possess power within their positions, influencing the greater system. Whether an individual has a management or employee position, their role is critical to the function of the organization, thereby serving a purpose other positions may not be able to serve (Oshrey, 2007, p. 178).

Using strengths to take on the unknown

Considering the high paced nature of this nonprofit organization, employees articulated the struggles they faced with lack of training, direct supervision, and high staff turn-over. Weisbord (2012) outlined four stages for potential action in the face of such struggles: contentment, denial, confusion, and renewal (p. 326). In relation to creating foundations, leaving the contentment stage can cause denial that any change is good. As a result there is confusion, and perhaps an organizational feeling of the need to be directed by someone who at least knows what is occurring in the workplace. However, no one knows what is occurring, and therefore, there is opportunity for renewal. A common thread throughout the two groups was the space that is made for personal growth and relationship building. This seemed to be a foundational piece of

collaboration in that personal relationships can be used as a tool to develop new programs and enhance collaborative practice on a broader spectrum rather than within individual departments.

The collaborative nature of this research is the same as the strategy deemed as an effective way to practice organizational collaboration now and in the future at Tillicum Lelum. Stinger (2007) explained this collaboration as inherent to action research: “Action research requires all participants to engage in styles and forms of communication that facilitate the development of harmonious relationships and the effective attainment of group or organizational objectives” (p. 30). Because all staff members’ perspectives play different yet significant roles in the organization, by establishing a collaboration initiative, overarching goals are reachable.

Conclusion 3: Strong internal teams positively affect external stakeholders

As a result of internal collaboration, participants outlined the ripple effect internal collaboration has on external stakeholders. The ability individuals have within the organization to work collaboratively has begun to trickle out into the community. Some participants discussed the positive impact their interpersonal relationships have made on clients and other professionals in other agencies.

Interpersonal skills

Focus group participants outlined the value their interpersonal relationships have had on their clients. Skills at a personal level are foundational for community success: “Healthy and well-functioning individuals possess a human and relational capacity that enhances the capacity for social capital at the neighbourhood level” (Ricks, et al., 1999, p. 59). Kouzes and Posner (2002) suggested those who feel able and in control of their own destiny are more powerful in

their position, whereas those feeling controlled by the system they are working in or individuals they are working under simply feel obligated to complete their duties (pp. 281-282). In conclusion, those that have developed personal skills have a better capacity to live and work in relationship and at organizational and community level. Thus, personal growth has an ecological ripple effect.

Personal impact on community

Employees defined personal empowerment workshops and events that foster personal relationships as contributors to successful collaborative tactics at Tillicum Lelum. Senge (2006) defined mental models as “not only how we make sense of the world, but how we take action” (p.164). By looking within, employees are able to recognize their personal perspectives and how these contribute to the greater picture. Ricks, et al. (1999) defined “personalization and inclusion” as the shift from segregation and objectification of each other based on bureaucratic status or departmental titles to working in a “social mosaic,” utilizing all positions, personal strengths, and values in a way that is productive for the entire community (pp. 56-57). Although some issues seem outside of an individual’s influence, each individual’s very reaction to the system is significant to the system’s operation. Opportunities for personal growth provided to Tillicum Lelum employees have proven to influence the greater community. Because all staff members’ positions impact the greater system, collaboration can contribute to the development and enhancement of how those parts work together to create the organization.

Scope and Limitations of Inquiry

In particular, there were two primary limitations to my study: my dual role as researcher and employee and the fact that not all employees participated in this study, and both of which will be discussed below. In addition, it may be useful to remind readers that given the context-specific nature of action research, as mentioned previously, this study was not intended to be generalized to other organizations, though it is possible that external readers may be able to apply lessons learned here in contexts outside of the study. This type of exploration is not designed to gather objective data, but to reveal the realities that make up people's day-to-day experience, bringing their assumptions, views, and beliefs out in the open and making them available for reflection.

Given my position as both a researcher and an employee, I fall under what Coghlan and Brannick (2010) described as "dual role" (p. 117). Action research in my own organization required me to balance my preunderstanding of the organizational programming and culture with being reasonably objective in my research, which included awareness of my own mental models and how they impact the study. Dual roles in action research are unique to each organization (p. 119). Dependent on the individual, dual roles can trigger openness or restrictiveness with study participants (p. 120). As previously stated, Aboriginal communities hold value in established relationships with researchers. However, my position as an employee as well as a family member of the executive director further created a complex role, which I mitigated through the use of third party facilitators and an inquiry team, as described earlier. Taking into consideration the collaborative nature of action research, my dual role also played a significant role in the outcomes of this study. Being that I am an employee at Tillicum Lelum, as well as a researcher, I

will have biases based on my own experience working within the organization that are unavoidable. Rather than viewing my dual role as a limitation, Coghlan and Brannick outlined the opportunity for organizational learning in that I am now more informed through conducting this study and will carry this knowledge with me as I engage in the collaboration initiative at Tillicum Lelum (p. 49).

Although all employees were invited to the world café, not all were present due to appointments, vacation, or simply the decision not to participate. In addition, staff members at Tillicum Lelum are primarily female. Accordingly, the female representation at the world café was much higher than male representation. Further, a majority of the participants were from the health centre location as that is where most of the front line employees work. Because there are evening and weekend programs offered, and participants were not offered to be compensated for their time, those who were not working on the day or time of the world café did not participate. As a result, world café only represented approximately one third of the employees at Tillicum Lelum. Although it needs to be acknowledged that the data do not represent the entire staff, they do provide an outline of the perspectives of the stakeholders involved (Stringer, 2007, pp. 65-66). Likewise, while the conversations were rich with the experiences of those who participated, it is significant to note that the entire employee population was not thoroughly represented in this study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the themes and observations made throughout the data collection process, which resulted in the study findings. From there, conclusions for the organization were

made. This chapter also described the limitations of the study. To follow, chapter five will define the organizational implications and specific recommendations based on the above data and literature.

CHAPTER FIVE: INQUIRY IMPLICATIONS

In light of the conclusions drawn from the data and outlined in the previous chapter, this chapter outlines the recommendations Tillicum Lelum might consider to foster an even more collaborative environment in response to the question: How can Tillicum Lelum establish internal collaborative approaches? The subquestions included:

1. What methods of collaboration are currently working at Tillicum Lelum?
2. How can collaborative approaches be effectively incorporated into Tillicum Lelum?
3. What are the current barriers to collaboration at Tillicum Lelum?
4. Who needs to carry out the collaboration initiative?

Further, implications for the organization as well as future inquiry will be explained. In this chapter, I will also offer Tillicum Lelum specific strategies relevant to the feedback of those working within the organization and the approval of the organizational sponsor.

Study Recommendations

Considering the findings outlined in chapter four, I developed recommendations based on specific suggestions as well as underlying points of “leverage” (Senge, 2006, p. 64) articulated in the world café and focus group. Further, these recommendations were drawn out of relevant literature. The recommendations are as follows:

- Recommendation 1: Continue to foster both formal and informal gatherings
- Recommendation 2: Establish guidelines around receiving training that enable employees to share their new skills with colleagues

- Recommendation 3: Encourage all employees to share and make partnerships in the community
- Recommendation 4: Support leaders in facilitating a self-leadership environment

Recommendation 1: continue to foster both formal and informal gatherings

Employees and management at Tillicum Lelum outlined the effectiveness and enjoyment of team building activities (WC1; WC2; FG1; FG2; FG3). Team building activities create better outputs for programs as well as the overall organization. The formal monthly staff meetings provided by Tillicum Lelum's management seemed to ignite a desire to make more meaningful connections. My first recommendation is for all individual employees to continue to invest in such healthy connections.

Tillicum Lelum has provided space and training sessions to employees to look within themselves and connect at a personal level with other employees. Further, monthly staff meetings and weekly team meetings proved to be an effective method of collaboration (WC1; WC2; FG3; FG4). However, both the world café and focus group participants articulated the desire to do more teambuilding activities in an enjoyable environment. Weisbord (2012) stated

Team building remains durable, flexible, and broadly useful for starting new teams and task forces, reorganizing, managing conflicts between departments, setting goals, planning strategy, integrating cultures —any activity people cannot do alone. In team meetings, well-motivated groups routinely learn how to manage with less frustration and higher output. They usually report more openness, more mutual respect, trust, and cooperation over time. (p. 377)

Accordingly, the more Tillicum Lelum employees connect on both the personal and professional levels, the more effective they are in their programs, with clients, and with other organizations.

While the management team at Tillicum Lelum has provided space to connect both personally and professionally, many employees in the world café expressed excitement and desire to apply their recreational interests to the organization's collaboration initiative (WC1; WC2; WC4). Collaboration has repeatedly proven to be a critical piece of organizational advancement. Those who are able to connect at a personal level are considerate of the value of trust, integrity, and effective work on a day-to-day basis (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 242-249). Both groups articulated the value around diverse strengths in the organization (FG1; FG2; FG3; FG4; FG5; FG6; WC1; WC2). Likewise, the diverse strengths and interests from a more leisurely perspective could also be applied. For example, many expressed interest in softball; organizing a team consisting of only employees and their family members not only strengthens the bond of employees, but can also strengthen broader systemic needs such as raising community awareness about Aboriginal nonprofit organizations and fundraising ideas through prize money in tournaments.

Based on the study findings, Tillicum Lelum seems to be on the right track in sustaining collaboration within the organization. By continuing to provide space for interpersonal and professional contexts, the outputs at a systemic level will continue to improve. My recommendation is to branch out into informal and entertaining settings to further connect and continue to strengthen the teams at Tillicum Lelum.

Recommendation 2: establish guidelines around receiving training that enable employees to share their new skills with colleagues

My study's findings concluded that although some employees felt confident to assume new programs based on their allies and training, others would like more intensive training (WC2; WC3). Although individual skills are essential for maintaining employment, team learning and collaboration with others enable the entire organization to move forward (Senge, 2006, p. 217). I recommend Tillicum Lelum establish a standard way of sharing information with colleagues once an employee has returned from training to ensure that all employees are exposed to the same tools. Further, employees receiving the training will have the ability to play a leadership role in organizational learning and team building.

Notwithstanding the fact that Tillicum Lelum receives little funding for training employees in a new position, staff articulated their desire to be more thoroughly trained. Senge (2006) stated, "Individuals may work extraordinarily hard, but their efforts do not efficiently translate to team effort. By contrast, when a team becomes more aligned, a commonality of direction emerges, and individuals' energies harmonize" (p. 217). Therefore, my recommendation to train one another not only shares the information that only some receive based on the nature of their program, but also fosters a collaborative and team environment. Because a common thread throughout my study was the lack of funding for many different aspects of the organization, it is unrealistic to recommend that all staff attend all training seminars. Considering the funding restraints and literature around team building, if leaders at Tillicum Lelum can provide space for those who have attended training to share with other

employees, finances are not affected and employees receive a chance to share their findings in the context of the organization and thus collaborate through team learning.

Weisbord (2012) outlined four conditions for success in team building: Interdependence, leadership, joint decisions, and equal opportunity (p. 377). In recommending employees teach each other, all parties are given an opportunity to be a leader and depend on each other based on the area of training, effectively allowing all employees to have equal exposure to new and innovative information. From an ecological perspective, if each individual can seek different training based on the nature of their program and share with one another, the organization becomes a mosaic of diverse perspectives.

Recommendation 3: encourage all employees to share and make partnerships in the community

While participants in the upper management focus group articulated that only specific employees are asked to present in the community, some employees articulated their fear of working with others or not feeling qualified to do so (FG1; FG2; WC3). Through team learning, all employees at Tillicum Lelum can deepen their understanding of their position in the community. As a result, employees' capacity to share with external stakeholders and the understanding of service to clients will improve. Each community develops their own values and culture. If individual employees are aware of the organization's influence in community, they can work from a systems perspective (Ricks, et al., 1999, pp. 68-69).

Allowing all employees to participate in collaboration strategies can enhance employee engagement and foster the perspectives of those working within the system in a non-management

position. As a result, the complexities of the system are better presented (Stringer, 2007, pp. 35-36). Further, “people in all workplaces have untapped skills, experience, and common sense. We keep these resources hidden by making outdated assumptions about who is allowed to do what” (Weisbord, 2012, p. 382). Upper management recognized the need to diversify those who are presenting and participating in community development and collaboration practices (FG1; FG2; FG5). My recommendation is to give action to this awareness by enabling all employees to get to a place where they can feel comfortable in this role. Offering opportunity to new employees to present and participate at a community level will not only strengthen the engagement of employees, but also draw out untapped perspectives that may have been overlooked in the past.

Recommendation 4: support leaders in facilitating a self-leadership environment

While leaders at Tillicum Lelum articulated their confidence in the strengths of their employees, the employees themselves advocated for more leadership visibility and support in their positions (FG1; FG2; FG3; FG5; FG6; WC2; WC3; WC4). In response to the question, “who needs to carry out the collaboration initiative?” the primary response was that leaders need to inspire the initiative so that employees can follow (FG1; FG2; FG3; FG4; FG5; FG6; WC4). My recommendation is for leaders to facilitate a self-leadership environment. As such, if leaders can facilitate the empowerment of their employees, employees are more effective in their position and more likely to take initiative in their teams. The next two sections will outline how a leader can implement self-leadership and the impact self-leadership has on the organization.

How can a leader implement self-leadership?

Chapter two outlined the definition of self-leadership. Traditionally, leadership positions hold power within the organization. Too much power in the hands of one person can enable staff to rely on their leader for small tasks that should be taken on independently. Staff members who are not self-reliant in this way often feel no need to thrive (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, pp. 281-282). For the management team at Tillicum Lelum to foster self-leadership to their employees, they must “accept and act on the paradox of power: *we become most powerful when we give our power away*” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 284). Including employees in making decisions has been proven as a successful method of self-leadership implementation (Hackman, 1986; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2011). Further, leaders who focus on fostering individuals’ strengths significantly increase the engagement of employees (Rath & Conchie, 2008, p. 2). While the management team articulated their “open door policy” (FG1), some employees felt fear of burdening managers with program questions (WC3). Further, when time to write proposals, employees seemed to be caught off guard with questions specifically regarding their programs (FG5). I suggest upper management schedule time to meet with their staff in order to create a space that includes the staff in their program decision-making and development in a context that is safe and does not feel to be a burden. If employees are invited into management’s space at the time of decision-making, perhaps employees will eventually feel empowered to lead themselves in their program development.

Although strength-based leadership in employees is an effective tool at Tillicum Lelum, Hackman (1986) suggested employers must be clear and assertive in their expectations. Being assertive and clear with employees will orient the organizational objectives. After establishing expectations within the organization, employees can feel empowered to apply their skills to the

overarching goals (pp. 773-775). In summary, by creating a formal space that invites employees to be exposed to the clear objectives of the organization, leaders will grant power to employees to lead themselves in the direction their leader has established for them. Within that context, employees can apply their skills openly and freely, increasing their confidence and self-leadership skills.

What does self-leadership create?

As employees begin to feel more able to complete tasks on their own, they feel empowered to do whatever is needed and thus create ownership around their position. Those who begin to lead themselves feel more personal responsibility, practising self-reflection in challenging situations rather than blaming the employer (Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2011, p. 187). As a result, employees monitor themselves on a regular basis, creating heightened skills in addressing issues in the workplace and allowing them to become more resourceful within their organizational environment (Hackman, 1986, pp. 765-767). Therefore, self-accountability is developed and a decrease in direct supervision is needed (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, pp. 287-288). Senge (2006) suggested that managers expose their employees to the greater systemic complexities. In doing so, all employees can grasp a greater sense of the system and understand issues and challenges to come. Otherwise, employees will continue to seek direction as issues arise (pp. 123-125). Considering the desire to have more employees engaged out into the community, their feelings of self-leadership and accountability will enable them to confidently share in the greater community.

Initiation of meeting times and open dialogue can create a safe space for employees to ignite their self-leadership, creating a ripple effect on the organization and community.

Organizational Implications

In order to carry out the collaboration initiative, all parties must be engaged (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Stringer, 2007; WC4; FG1; FG2; FG3; FG4; FG6). Participants in both the world café and focus group articulated the need for the upper management team to create space for organizational change. Further, a foundation for self-leadership needs to be facilitated by management, which will encourage employees to partake in carrying out their role in the collaboration initiative. Finally, sustaining collaboration is required in order to make a meaningful and long-lasting change. This section will outline how managers can ignite organizational change and empower employees to lead and how Tillicum Lelum can sustain the collaboration initiative.

Managers igniting organizational change

To foster a smooth organizational change, the collaboration initiative needs to be presented with an appreciative stance. Historically, organizational change presumes the current state it is in crisis (Shein, 1964, p. 78). Shein suggested employers should consider a way to thaw the current state of the organization and foster an environment that creates fluidity of the behaviours and perspectives that already exist in the organization (p. 78). With support from the literature and themes within the data, managers at Tillicum Lelum could encourage staff members to apply their personal strengths or areas of expertise to program development, presentations, and collaborative events or meetings. Schein further asserted, “The process of

integrating new responses into the ongoing personality and into key emotional relationships leads ultimately to changes that may be considered stable” (p. 79). Therefore, my suggestion is that the change be implemented in a way that is subtle and includes everyone’s opinion. World café participants defined staff meetings as one of the primary contributors to successful collaboration (WC1; WC2). Considering those meetings as a current strength, the organizational change that can be incorporated simply into is the strategies that are already working. My suggestion is to prioritize meetings with employees, ensuring that all staff members and management are at the staff meeting as this environment can be used for the ignition of the collaboration initiative as a function that is already in place. This will also create consistency in the visibility of managers. Further, the structure of the staff meeting could be shifted into an enjoyable setting as requested by staff members (WC1; WC2). Likewise, changes in styles of dialogue could sustain engagement. For example, one month present a world café and another month, offer a focus group. Considering the feedback of and requests by employees, implementation of new changes into existing staff meetings can create a gentle shift.

If managers choose not to take leadership in the collaboration initiative, there will be little response from employees to make any change. Focus group participants defined meetings, empowerment workshops, and opportunities to build relationships as primary contributors to successful collaboration (FG1; FG2; FG3; FG4; FG6). Kouzes and Posner (2002) stated “Leaders must be ever diligent in guarding their credibility. Their ability to take strong stands—to challenge the status quo, to point us in new directions—depends upon their being perceived as highly credible” (p. 35). If managers do not take the lead in carrying out the collaboration initiative, not only will the initiative fail, leaders could lose credibility.

Empowering employees to lead

In order for the collaboration initiative to take life, all staff members must feel a sense of ownership. Employees need to feel responsible and have choice in the matter (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 231). As an extension of managers prioritizing the monthly staff meetings and space to connect, employees can develop a sense of ownership in the collaboration initiative. In staff meetings and program development settings, I suggest that managers develop a sense of trust in their employees, allowing them to make mistakes and be open to their influence. Although managers must ignite the organizational change, staff members must be supported in positive interdependence (pp. 242-252).

Hackman (1986) outlined five techniques to support self-management: “(1) clear, engaging direction; (2) an enabling performing unit structure; (3) a supportive organizational context; (4) available, expert coaching; and (5) adequate material resources” (p. 773). In the beginning, inclusion of these points into leadership practice may seem exhausting; however, the investment will enable staff to take on tasks and thrive in their positions.

Specific to Tillicum Lelum, employees need to be provided space to create their own power in their positions. Coaching staff members in their attendance at meetings and making space for them to listen and contribute to one another could create more action within meetings. Further, assigning a different chair to every meeting could encourage staff members to be a part of the collaboration initiative. Perhaps encouraging different techniques to explore programs could create different avenues that were not considered by the usual chair of the meeting. These meetings could also be used for proposal of team sports or upcoming community events where

staff can collaborate outside of the organization. Further, encouraging staff to reach out into the community to present program information or develop their own partnerships could be considered. Opening the space for new people to facilitate can empower them in their positions. Giving power to others in the organization will strengthen Tillicum Lelum as a whole (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Senge, 2006; Stringer, 2007).

If employees do not receive an investment in their strengths from management, they might remain without the tools to work in positive interdependence. As a result, Tillicum Lelum may continue to see a high staff turn-over and ongoing break down in relationships. Further, the lack of clear direction or available coaching may enable staff to disregard ownership and work carelessly in their positions (Kupperschmidt, 2004, pp. 114- 115).

Sustaining collaboration

Once space has been made for more collaboration to happen and others are actively participating, the sustainment of the collaboration initiative will come from within the staff members. Secretan (1997) suggested that individuals must recognize their role in their organization and trust their ability to make changes (pp. 210-213). Further, managers and employees must support one another to thrive, including moving into new positions or receiving requested time off. Essentially, employees who can look after themselves can then look after others, thereby creating a healthy community (p. 219). From a leadership perspective, Kouzes and Posner (2002) suggested, “The best kept secret of successful leaders is love: staying in love with leading, with the people doing the work, with what their organizations produce, and with those who honor the organization by using its work” (p. 399). Thus, all parties need to be

committed and engaged to the collaboration initiative, applying their personal strengths, qualities, and love for their work.

In order to ensure the participation of all parties, I suggest Tillicum Lelum incorporate checking in during the times of shared leadership in upcoming meetings. Ensuring that all parties are heard can bring out perspectives that may have been missed in the past (Stringer, 2007, p. 35), especially those who may be oppressed by the greater system they sit within (Brown & Tandon, 1983, p. 281). Again, allowing all employees to facilitate staff meetings and organize functions can open up opportunity to share their perspectives, which might not be considered in other cases.

Brown and Tandon (1983) emphasized the significance of all perspectives being included in collaborative research and organizational change (p. 281). Choosing not to take personal responsibility in the collaboration initiative will disregard true collaboration.

Throughout this study, I have already witnessed some collaboration initiatives within the organization. Staff members have invited each other to weekend activities such as beach days, dinner outings, and go-cart racing. Further, participants in smaller team meetings have implemented the method of alternating chairs and have offered brief mindfulness activities at the beginning of each meeting. Continuing in this direction will be significant in sustaining the collaboration initiative at Tillicum Lelum.

Implications for future inquiry

As outlined in chapter three, this action research project focused on one of four stages of Coghlan and Brannick's (2010) dynamics of action research (p. 31). Because this study only

focused on the constructing stage of action research, future inquiries could focus on the any of the three remaining steps of action research: planning of action, taking action, or evaluating action for Tillicum Lelum's collaboration initiative. The next steps are what are referred to as the transition zone in Royal Road University's School of Leadership Studies' OAR model (see appendix B). Although this thesis outlined recommendations and implications for the organization, further inquiries could focus on an in-depth action plan for Tillicum Lelum employees' collaboration. A more in-depth action plan could further be applied to any strategic plans or community development strategies. Considering Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979) outlined in Chapter one (Figure 1), future inquiries could also focus on collaboration with external stakeholders.

What is familiar in one place may be unfamiliar in another. What works in one setting may not work in another. What we know needs to be differentiated for each situation. Understanding actions in the everyday requires inquiry to the constructions of meaning that individuals make about themselves, their situation and the world, and how their actions may be driven by assumptions and compulsions as well as by values. (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 36)

Because I am an employee at Tillicum Lelum, I have the opportunity to be a part of the next steps. Considering the recommendations for employees to take leadership and to sustain collaboration, I proposed in my ethics application to facilitate a collaborative workshop to present this thesis. This workshop will invite collaborative dialogue around what the next steps and how we will carry out the collaboration initiative. Further, I will facilitate a space to

prioritize and converse about the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. This could create an example of how we might share the space do to more collaborative dialogue facilitated by all staff members.

In short, the next steps cannot be concretely defined based on the diverse perspectives within the organization. The nature of action research is to ignite the organizational change with those living within the system. A dialogue inclusive of all staff members for the next inquiries or next steps would be best fit. Because this project focused on one of four stages in action research: constructing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 8), further inquiry could broaden the scope to a community level or create a more in-depth understanding of the next steps for the internal collaboration initiative.

Report Summary

This thesis began by outlining the challenges articulated by my organizational sponsor. This report explored how action research could be applied to Tillicum Lelum's collaboration initiative. Exploration of scholarly literature in chapter two enabled me to support the findings from the data collection methods and, with the help of my sponsor, create meaningful and tangible recommendations. Chapter three outlined how I was able to facilitate an ethical study that aligned with the principles of action research. By inviting all employees to participate in a dialogue based on collaboration strategies, how the collaboration initiative can be carried out, and indications for the organization, employees acted as coresearchers. Chapter four outlined the answers staff members gave in response to the research questions and subquestions. With respect to action research fundamentals, the recommendations in chapter five were developed in

partnership with the organizational sponsor; however, the participants in the world café and focus group primarily influenced recommendations, as they will be a significant part of carrying out and sustaining the collaboration initiative at Tillicum Lelum. Because I am an employee at Tillicum Lelum, I have the privilege to be included in moving the collaboration initiative forward.

The recommendations are directed at all staff members, including managers, at Tillicum Lelum. As stated by multiple authors, organizational change, specifically with reference to internal collaboration, critically requires the participation of all members of the organization (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Coghlan & Brannick, 2010; Hackman, 1986; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Stringer, 2007; Oshrey, 2007). With the ignition of the collaboration initiative from the management team, Tillicum Lelum staff members will have the opportunity to create meaningful changes and continue to collaborate in ways that foster personal development as well as development of the organization. With participation from all parties, the collaboration initiative's sustainability has strong potential to be successful.

Discussing recommendations and organizational implications with the sponsor of this project, Inga Cooper agrees that they are tangible and realistic (I. Cooper, personal communication, August 8, 2014). Because there is a foundation in place on which the recommendations can be built, the next steps are to continue practices that are working and build on the strengths within the organization.

As mentioned, because I played a dual role as researcher and employee, I will also be a participant in the collaboration initiative.

To the extent that people in the process of exploring the nature and context of the problems that concern them, they have opportunity to develop immediate and deeply relevant understandings of their situations and be involved actively in the process of dealing with those problems. (Stringer, 2007, p. 32)

My dual role is unique to my personality, my family background, and the organization I work in (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, pp. 119-125). Based on the organizational implications, I think it is my duty to build on my personal strengths and offer myself as a resource to others.

Consequently, I too will work on my self-leadership skills.

My final thoughts as a result of this report place significant hope in the individuals working at Tillicum Lelum, myself included. Through my research I have concluded that not only the value, but also the power of a system sits within all of its parts. Individuals have the power and knowledge to create meaningful change. By focusing on all elements that make up a system, the change initiative comes within reach and belongs to everyone. Recognizing the significance that each part holds, all staff members at Tillicum Lelum have the capacity to influence great change. I am excited to see that Tillicum Lelum employees have already established change by taking on small tasks such as inviting other employees to participate and creating fun in the organization.

In the Aboriginal communities that I have worked and been raised in, the saying to close is simply "All my relations." Like systems thinking, we are all related. Each part is related and directly impacts the whole. In closing, with consideration to systems thinking and ancient

traditional teachings that have influenced my study, I would therefore like to say, all my relations.

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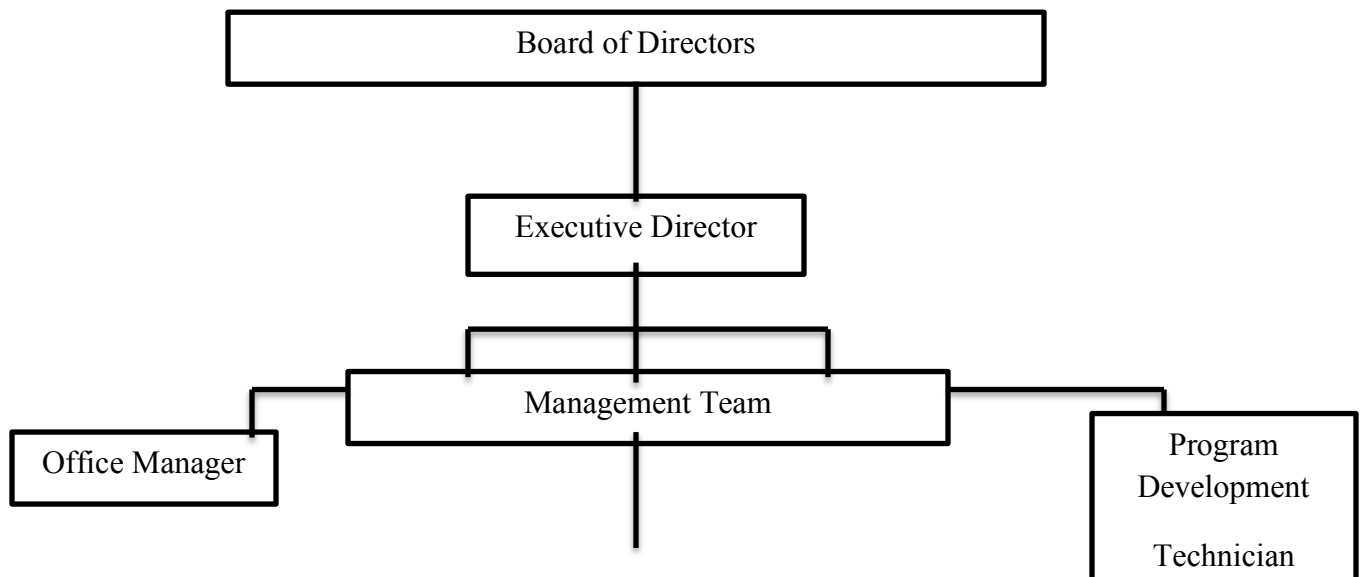
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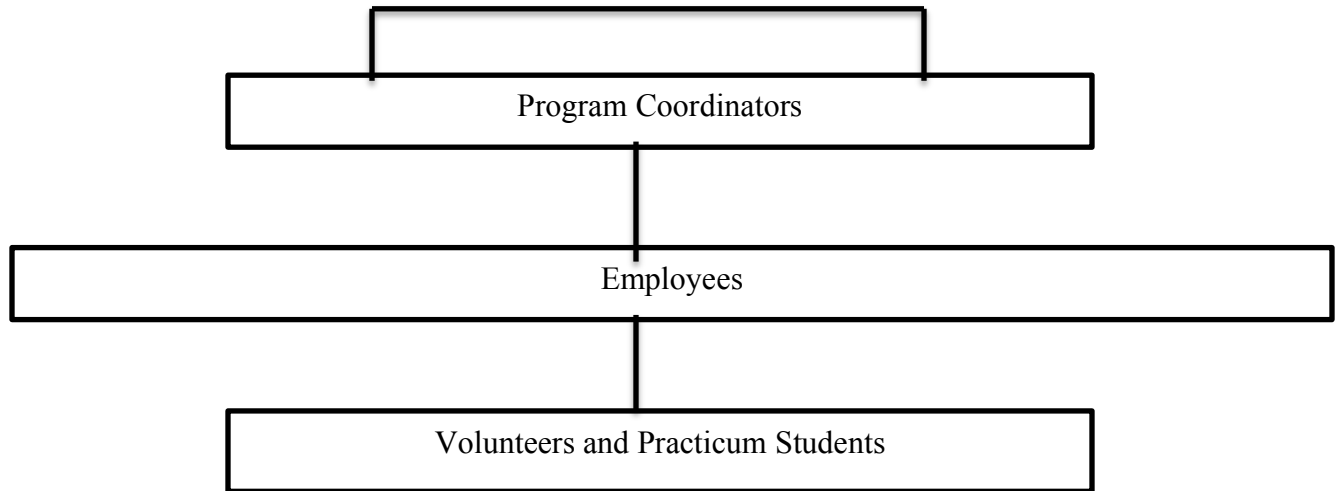
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APPENDIX A: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

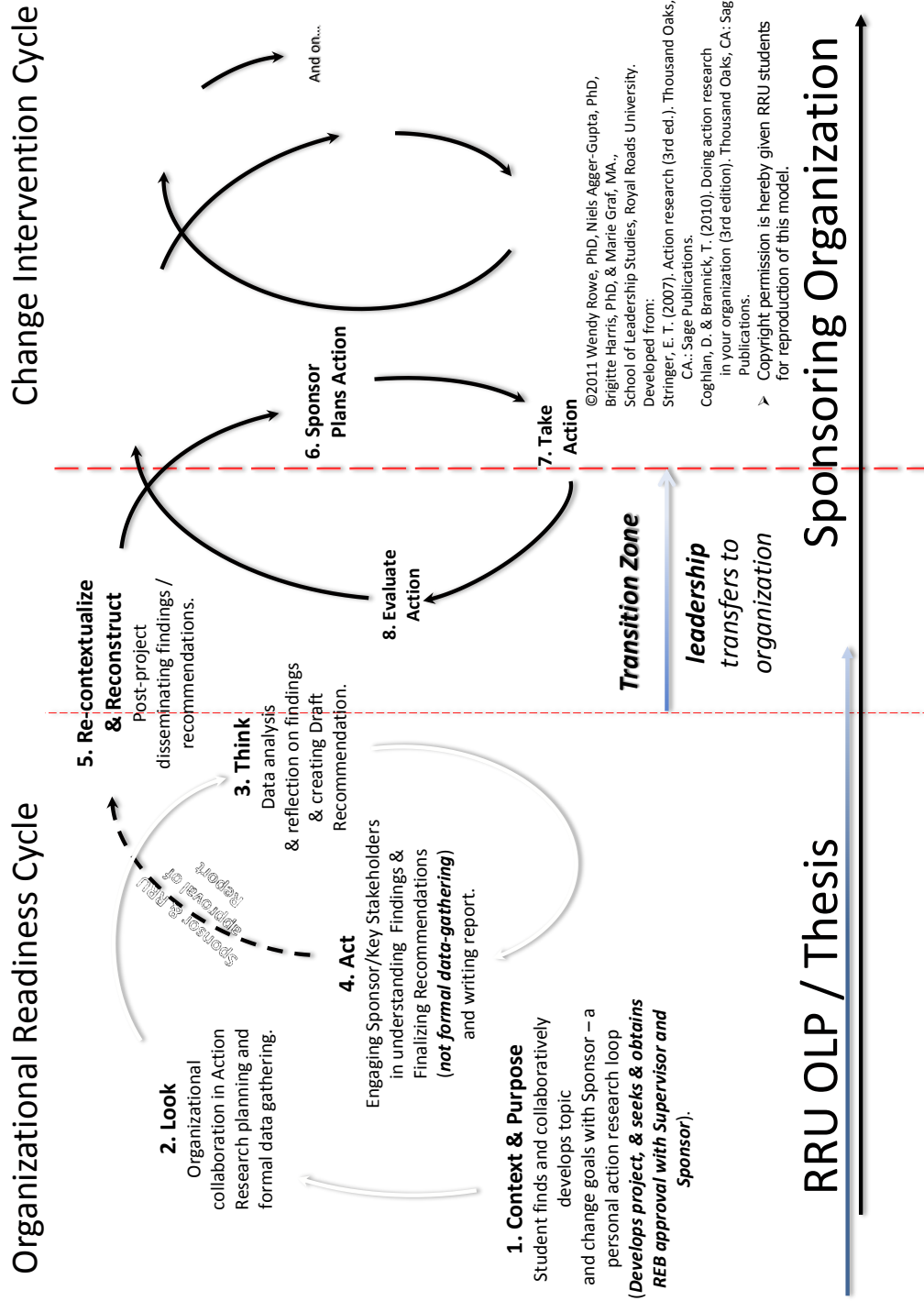




APPENDIX B: ORGANIZATIONAL ACTION RESEARCH

RRU School of Leadership Studies

Organizational Action Research (OAR)



APPENDIX C: INVITATION AND INFORMATION LETTER FOR FOCUS GROUP

My name is Courtney Wylie and this research project is part of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by contacting Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director, School of Leadership Studies.

May 8, 2014

FOCUS GROUP DATE:

THURSDAY, MAY 15, 2014 – 3:00 - 4:30pm at Education Centre

Dear Manager,

I am writing to invite you to participate in an action research project based on collaboration during program development and organizational transition at Tillicum Lelum.

I will be offering a focus group for the management team, followed by a world café for the employees at Tillicum Lelum. Based on your position at the Friendship Centre, I would like to invite you to a focus group on collaboration at Tillicum Lelum. The focus group is intended to last approximately 1.5 hours. Drinks and snacks will be provided. For those that would like to process the questions I will be asking before the event of the focus group, I will offer more detail in regard to the 4 questions being presented the day before the focus group takes place.

As we come into transition with our new location, rapid program development and changes in the community, my goal is to facilitate a dialog around how we at Tillicum Lelum can collaborate effectively. My inquiry is based on an ecological philosophy suggesting that the internal staff can have a ripple effect on the greater organization, community, and overall Aboriginal human services system. If the Tillicum Lelum staff can articulate a way to collaborate effectively, the benefit might impact our position in the greater system we work in.

As the moderator, I would like to take notes while I facilitate the focus group, but also voice record the group for future reference in my data analysis. Where appropriate, your comments will be summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. You may be familiar with staff member, Rebecca Harris. I have asked her to join me in the analysis process. Once themes have been chosen from the focus group, I would like to briefly follow up with the focus group members by sharing a transcript of the focus group and draft findings. This can be done individually with respect to your time and availability.

As you may be aware, I am a family member of some of those that are on the management team. I disclose this information up front to enable you to make a fully informed choice of whether or not you wish to participate. I will be facilitating the focus group. You are free to participate,

however are not obliged to. If you accept my invitation, you have the freedom to share information that you so choose. You are also free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. Please be assured that I will not be sharing individual comments with my family members and your refusal to participate, or to withdraw from participation in this project will have no impact on your employment or advancement at Tillicum Lelum. However, based on the collective nature of the data collection during a focus group, it will be difficult to identify individual comments in order to withdraw them. Please know that if you choose to withdraw after the focus group, your input will not be destroyed unless it can be specifically identified as your own opinion and no one else's. All records will be shredded three years following my program completion date: January 15, 2018.

The information you provide in the focus group will stay confidential to Rebecca Harris and me. I will work to protect your privacy throughout this study. All information I collect will be maintained in confidence with hard copies (e.g., consent forms) stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Electronic data (such as transcripts or audio files) will be stored on a password-protected computer on my home computer.

At the time of completion, this project will be public in Royal Road University's archives in thesis format as well as the Thesis Portal of Canada, and upon opportunity, in journal format. You will be provided with an e-copy of the final report, which will include recommendations and findings.

Please feel free to contact with me with questions or concerns previous to signing, or at any time throughout our action research process.

Thank you for your consideration,

Courtney Wylie

APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH CONSENT

By signing this form, you agree that you are over the age of 19 and have read the information letter for this study. Your signature states that you are giving your voluntary and informed consent to participate in this project.

- I consent to the audio recording of the Focus Group
- I commit to respect the confidential nature of the Focus Group by not sharing identifying information about the other participants

Name: (please print) _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX E: INFORMATION AND RESEARCH LETTER FOR WORLD CAFE

In representation of Courtney Wylie, her research project is part of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership at Royal Roads University. Her credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by contacting Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director, School of Leadership Studies.

May 8, 2014

WORLD CAFÉ DATE AND LOCATION:

WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, 2014 at 1:00pm-3:00pm in the Great Room at the Health Centre

Dear Tillicum Lelum Staff,

I am writing to invite you to participate in an action research project based on collaboration during program development and organizational transition at Tillicum Lelum. As you know I am currently enrolled in the Master of Arts Degree in Leadership program at Royal Roads University.

Chelle Sheehan and Tasa Chesterman will be facilitating a World Café on my behalf for employee and coordinators, which will follow a focus group held for the management team at Tillicum Lelum. Based on your position at the Friendship Centre, I would like to invite you to a world café. The event is intended to last approximately 2 hours. Drinks and snacks will be provided.

As we come into transition with our new location, rapid program development and changes in the community, my goal is to facilitate a dialogue around how we at Tillicum Lelum can collaborate effectively. My inquiry is based on an ecological philosophy suggesting that the internal staff can have a ripple effect on the greater organization, community, and overall Aboriginal human services system. If the Tillicum Lelum staff can articulate a way to collaborate effectively, the benefit might impact our position in the greater system we work in.

There will be four questions presented at the World Café. Everyone will have an opportunity to answer (other than the table facilitators). Based on the four questions, there will be four tables. I am looking for 16-24 participants in order to ensure diverse perspectives. If more than 24 participants apply, I will ask Chelle and Tasa to choose participants based on program and location that you work in, simply to ensure diversity in the dialog you will be involved in. At the end of the world cafe, table hosts will be asked to pull out themes you witnessed throughout you and your colleagues' dialogue.

As you may be aware, I am a family member of some of those that are on the management team. I disclose this information up front to enable you to make a fully informed choice of whether or not you wish to participate. I will not be presenting the World Café based on my familial connection to the management team. However, I will collect the flip chart paper with notes from dialog and themes pulled out of the conversation. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. You may be familiar with staff member, Rebecca Harris who is one of the two project managers of our Tillicum Village. I have asked her to join me in the analysis process.

You are free to participate, however are not obliged to. If you accept my invitation, you have the freedom to share information that you so choose. You are also free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. Please be assured that Chelle and Tasa will not be sharing individual comments with me or my family members and your refusal to participate, or to withdraw from participation in this project with no impact on your employment or advancement at Tillicum Lelum. However, based on the collective nature of the data collection during a World Cafe, it will be difficult to identify individual comments in order to withdraw them. Please know that if you choose to withdraw after the World Cafe, your input will not be destroyed unless it can be specifically identified as your own opinion and no one else's. All records will be shredded three years following my program completion date: January 15, 2018.

I will work to protect your privacy throughout this study. All information I collect will be maintained in confidence with hard copies (e.g., consent forms) stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Electronic data (such as transcripts or audio files) will be stored on a password protected computer on my home computer. Your name will not be published in the final documents, rather the information you choose to share in a thematic nature with the information of others on the management team, and the employees at Tillicum Lelum.

You will then be invited back to participate in an activity to prioritize the findings of your data. At this point all the data will be completely anonymous and thematically coded. At the time of completion, this project will be public in Royal Road University's archives in thesis format as well as the Thesis Portal of Canada. You will be emailed a copy of my final report.

Please feel free to contact with me with questions or concerns previous to signing, or at any time throughout our action research process.

Thank you for your consideration,

Courtney Wylie

Celle Sheehan and Tasa Chesterman

APPENDIX F: WORLD CAFÉ CONSENT FORM

By signing this form, you agree that you are over the age of 19 and have read the information letter for this study. Your signature states that you are giving your voluntary and informed consent to participate in this project.

- I commit to respect the confidential nature of the **World Café** by not sharing identifying information about the other participants
- I would like to be considered for a table facilitator (please check if interested)**
 - *If more sign up than what are needed, you will be chosen on a first come first serve basis*

Name: (please print) _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please return this form to Chelle Sheehan or Tasa Chesterman as an RSVP to the World Café. There will be a file to collect them at the front desk of the Health Centre.

APPENDIX G: INQUIRY TEAM MEMBER LETTER OF AGREEMENT

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree at Royal Roads University, Courtney Wylie (the Student) will be conducting an inquiry research study at Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre around internal collaboration. The Student's credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by calling Dr. Brigitte Harris, Director, School of Leadership.

Inquiry Team Member Role Description

As a volunteer Inquiry Team Member assisting the Student with this project, your role may include one or more of the following: providing advice on the relevance and wording of questions and letters of invitation, supporting the logistics of the data-gathering methods, including observing, assisting, or facilitating an interview or focus group, taking notes, transcribing, or reviewing analysis of data, to assist the Student and Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre's organizational change process. In the course of this activity, you may be privy to confidential inquiry data.

Confidentiality of Inquiry Data

In compliance with the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Policy, under which this inquiry project is being conducted, all personal identifiers and any other confidential information generated or accessed by the inquiry team advisor will only be used in the performance of the functions of this project, and must not be disclosed to anyone other than persons authorized to receive it, both during the inquiry period and beyond it. Recorded information in all formats is covered by this agreement. Personal identifiers include participant names, contact information, personally identifying turns of phrase or comments, and any other personally identifying information.

Bridging Student's Potential or Actual Ethical Conflict

In situations where potential participants in a work setting report directly to the Student, you, as a neutral third party with no supervisory relationship with either the Student or potential participants, may be asked to work closely with the Student to bridge this potential or actual conflict of interest in this study. Such requests may include asking the Inquiry Team Advisor to: send out the letter of invitation to potential participants, receive letters/emails of interest in participation from potential participants, independently make a selection of received participant requests based on criteria you and the Student will have worked out previously, formalize the logistics for the data-gathering method, including contacting the participants about the time and location of the world cafe or focus group, conduct the world cafe or focus group (usually no more than one) with the selected participants (without the Student's presence or knowledge of which participants were chosen) using the protocol and questions worked out previously with the Student, and producing written transcripts of the interviews or focus groups with all personal identifiers removed before the transcripts are brought back to the Student for the data analysis phase of the study.

This strategy means that potential participants with a direct reporting relationship will be assured they can confidentially turn down the participation request from their supervisor (the Student), as this process conceals from the Student which potential participants chose not to participate or simply were not selected by you, the third party, because they were out of the selection criteria range (they might have been a participant request coming after the number of participants sought, for example, the focus group request number 10 when up to 9 participants would be selected for a focus group). Inquiry Team members asked to take on such 3rd party duties in this study will be under the direction of the Student and will be fully briefed by the Student as to how this process will work, including specific expectations, and the methods to be employed in conducting the elements of the inquiry with the Student's direct reports, and will be given every support possible by the Student, except where such support would reveal the identities of the actual participants.

Personal information will be collected, recorded, corrected, accessed, altered, used, disclosed, retained, secured and destroyed as directed by the Student, under direction of the Royal Roads Academic Supervisor.

Inquiry Team Members who are uncertain whether any information they may wish to share about the project they are working on is personal or confidential will verify this with Courtney Wylie, the Student.

Statement of Informed Consent:

I have read and understand this agreement.

Name (Please Print)

Signature

Date

APPENDIX H: WORLD CAFÉ AND FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Overarching Question:

How Tillicum Lelum can establish internal collaborative approaches?

Subquestions:

1. What methods of collaboration are currently working at Tillicum Lelum?
2. How can collaborative approaches be effectively incorporated into Tillicum Lelum?
3. What are the current barriers to collaboration at Tillicum Lelum?
4. Who needs to carry out the collaboration initiative?