Matriarchs in the Making: Empowering Women in Tl'etinqox

By

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Master of Arts

In

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We accept this Final Report as conforming

to the required standard

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Acknowledgements

I dedicate this work to my Ɂetsu and Ɂetsi (grandma and grandpa) who taught me everything I know about being a Tsilhqot'in. They devoted their lives to my traditional education, but they also reinforced my Western education. It was important to them that I learned to walk in two worlds. Every time I have felt like quitting, I know they were both there in spirit giving me the motivation to keep moving forward. I feel their presence and I know they would be proud. I also dedicate this work to my Ɂinkwel (mother), who taught me what it is to be a strong, empowered, and resilient woman, and continues to be that shining example today. I also dedicate this work wholeheartedly to my husband, he dedicated countless hours listening to me talk about my research, dried my tears when I was overwhelmed, and picked me up off the floor when I thought I could not do this anymore. He has been my rock through this whole process and showed me so much patience, love, and support through this entire journey. We did this together, and I could not have done this without my support system. Lastly, I dedicate this work to my community. Whom I deeply love and respect. It is so important to me to become a good ancestor, and I will dedicate my life to moving my community forward.

Executive Summary

The purpose of my project was to create relevant research for my community that finally answered the question "What steps can Tl'etinqox Government take to empower women in the community?". From my experience in Indigenous governance, the revitalization of matrilineal systems among many Indigenous communities has become a priority, and my community is no different.

There is a deep connection to women in leadership and the roles matriarchs have within our traditional systems. My research was about imagining which traditional matrilineal roles transform into our modern world and how my project partner, the Tl'etinqox Government Office (TGO), can honour and protect the roles of Tl'etinqox women within their governance system. One of the inquiring research questions was "what did traditional matrilineal roles look like for Tsilhqot'in women?". There was a formidable understanding that women's roles were traditionally highly respected. Throughout the colonial experience of the Tsilhqot'in, this has changed. In an effort to understand how we can reinstate the matriarch in our society, the sub research question was "where do we start?". Gathering the answers to such important questions was achieved by going directly to community members, and allowing their voices to be the focus of the research.

The surveys asked five questions concerning what traditional roles looked like and what empowerment looked like to the research participants, and what they imagined the future of Tl'etinqox to be after we have learned to empower women. The objective was to find a pathway to dismantle racist and colonial structures in order to serve the vision of our ʔEsiggdam and address the needs of the community in present day, with a focus on future generations. The survey also asked community members to nominate members of the community who could potentially be interviewed. This removed my bias from the research as I was not the one deciding who would be interviewed. The community members who were nominated the most frequently were requested to interview for the project.

The survey was released to the community via TGO's social media page with the set goal of either ten days or 30 responses. The option to complete the survey was closed by day seven with a total of 32 responses. These responses were then analyzed using an excel spreadsheet which highlighted common statements. Those statements were then organized into themes. Three potential interviewees were identified from the surveys. Those interviews were conducted using the same questions as the survey, then that data was analyzed for common themes. Both the surveys and the interviews had much of the same themes and statements about empowering women, what that looks like, and how it is accomplished. This data was triangulated throughout the process to ensure validity.

The emerging findings from the research were that the community wants to focus on education and support for women and girls in the community. There was a call for community safety. Women want to feel safe in the community, and they believe it should be one of the priorities. Respect (and other forms of respect) were one of the most frequently mentioned topics. There appears to be a need for women to feel like their contributions are recognized, appreciated, and supported. The women in the community want to feel heard.

There is also a desire for healing to be the focus of many of the efforts to move forward with empowering women and girls in the community. You will notice throughout the themes that healing is directly intertwined behind all findings. It has become abundantly clear through the interviews, surveys, and through lived experience, that a focus on healing is a top shelf priority. The final most mentioned statement was the call for more female presence in community politics.

To address all the recommendations made from these findings require more research into a culturally appropriate change management strategy. This will properly delve into community and staff engagement to uncover a culturally appropriate plan for change. An Indigenized change management plan would encompass all of the recommendations and answer the sub research question of "where do we start". The recommendations are all centered around healing and bringing back traditional and cultural teachings of being Tsilhqot'in.

Recommendation 1 – Custom Election

This recommendation is to adopt a custom election process that stipulates more women be regulated into the current chief and council system.

Recommendation 2- Tsilhqot'in Women's Council

There was also a call for women to play more important roles in community governance. This could be accomplished by allowing the two community representatives who are on the Tsilhqot'in Women's Council to participate in regular chief and council meetings, then eventually work up to them playing a larger role in community and in leadership.

Recommendation 3- Healing

There are many ways to address the themes of healing. I recommend starting small with quickly achievable avenues such as workshops on addressing lateral violence, trauma, and cultivating safe spaces. There also should be a long-term strategy on what a healthy community looks like to Tl'etinqox. This could address issues such as current funding not being available to pay for traditional healers. There is also a need to merge both traditional and Western methods of medicine, a community health strategy could decide what is included in that.

Recommendation 4- Community Safety

In terms of addressing community safety, in addition to leadership taking an active and strong stance against violence in the community, there is opportunity to create an ʔinkwel and ʔetsu (mothers and grandmothers) circle that would look at addressing community safety issues, make recommendations to leadership, and host healing circles for perpetrators in the community. This group could take on a meaningful role in the community that deals with issues in a traditional and culturally appropriate way.

Recommendation 5- Bringing Our Men Along

There was an interesting notion brought forward that men are being left behind and continue to be a part of the reason for the cyclical issues in the community. There is a need to inform and empower men to take their rightful roles in our society as the protectors and the providers. The recommendation is to not forget about our men. There needs to be cultural development targeted towards instilling pride, confidence, and respect in our men by rounding out their experiences with Western influence to include traditional teachings.

Recommendation 6- Cultural Development Plans

The final two recommendations are related to one another in the sense that there needs to be cultural wisdom shared and embedded within our people at an early age. My recommendation would be to create a cultural development plan for both men and women in our community. This plan would encompass everything about what it is to be Tsilhqot'in, how we interact with the world, our people, and how we contribute to our society. The plan could champion what it is to be Tsilhqot'in from the womb to the tomb, a lifetime strategy of creating good ʔesiggdam (ancestors). This process would

inevitably and wholeheartedly address all the opportunities of empowering women and bringing along men. We are Tsilhqot'in, our journey is never alone.

This research attempted to create change by providing smaller and more manageable solutions to addressing a bigger issue within our community. The issue of neglected and abused Indigenous women is an issue many communities face across Turtle Island. There are many ways to address the different levels of disparity; however, this plan created an authentic Tsilhqot'in way to approach issues the community sees as worth addressing. The associated knowledge products (AKP) created out of this research was a short power point presentation (Appendix A) that was delivered to the project partner and the project inquiry team. The community also gained recorded and transcribed interviews of community members and Elders that captured the values and traditions in terms of the roles of Tsilhqot'in matriarchs. The final report will also be shared with leadership, community members, and will be stored in the community archive as well. This invaluable information will be saved for future generations in the community archive system. There is a possibility that seven generations into the future they could be listening to how the movement to empower women started in Tl'etinqox.

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Glossary of Translation Terms	
Ɂinkwel	Mother
ɁEtsu	Grandmother
ɁEtsi	Grandfather
ɁEsiggdam	Ancestors
Tsilhqot'in	People of the river (my nation)
Tl'etinqox	People beside the river (my community)
Tl'etinqox-T'in	Possessive term of "I am from Tl'etinqox" or "people of Tl'etinqox"
Nen	Land
Tsilhqox	Chilcotin River
Midugh	"White Man" but used to describe colonial in the context of the interviewee
Tl'etinqox Government Office	Tl'etinqox band office

Matriarchs in the Making: Empowering Women in Tl'etinqox

It is traditional and cultural practice to introduce ourselves in our language so the ʔesiggdam (ancestors) hear us and know who we are. Seoghuzi Ashton Harry. Se ʔInkwel Eleanor Cooper. Se ʔEtsu Victorine Stump xinli. Se ʔetsu Julia Stump Xinli. Tsilhqot'in deni neslin.

My name is Ashton Harry. My mother is Eleanor Cooper, and my grandmother was the late Victorine Stump. I am also the great-granddaughter to Julia Stump. I am Tsilhqot'in (Chilcotin); we are the people of the Chilcotin river. The Tsilhqox (Chilcotin River) runs strong and beautiful through our territory. The river is the lifeblood to my people, and we live to protect our river and everything in it because without that river, we cease to exist as a people. I am situated in the interior of British Columbia in a place we call Tl'etinqox, a loose translation means people beside the river. My nation's territory spans over hundreds of kilometres in the central interior of the Cariboo-Chilcotin. My people have lived here since time immemorial and challenged European invasion into our territory with great success; however, in 1864 six of our war chiefs were hanged for murder when they were waging war against the mistreatment of their women and people by railroad workers in their territory (Swanky, 2012). My ʔesiggdam were a force to be reckoned with and highly feared, which meant we were among some of the last Indigenous groups to see a Western invasion. Having a late introduction into colonization meant our connection to our teachings, to our land, to our ʔesiggdam, and the stories of our people are still very much intact; unfortunately, we did not escape the intergenerational trauma associated with Indian Residential School, Indian Day School, The Sixties Scoop, and many other factors of targeted genocide. I came to know from the teachings of my Elders that one of the most important factors of being Tsilhqot'in was the traditional teachings of how women were treated in the community. Women are our life givers, we are supposed to empower and treat women respectfully, just like we treat Mother Earth and everything she gives us. Women were traditionally the decision makers. They made decisions on marriage, seasonal locations, governance, trade, and they were the nation builders.

This in no way diminishes the role Tsilhqot'in men played. They were the ones who sprang into action to protect, and provide. Our people all had a purpose and their strengths were utilized based on what roles suited them best.

I grew up on the reservation. I attended school on my reserve and only left to attend university in Prince George, with the full intention of returning home and contributing to the growth and resilience of my community. I wanted to see a society like the ones my grandparents talked about. I wanted to see my people revitalize the teachings, the culture, and the traditions. When I was in university, I used to recall all the teachings of my grandparents, it was my way of relating to the world in a context I could understand. I did not understand just how rich this knowledge was until I lost my grandparents. I continue to hold a passion for knowledge-sharing about my grandparents and the things they taught me. The matriarchy, respect for all living beings, and being strong was the foundation of every lesson I was taught growing up. My topic is a combination of these things and where my topic idea comes from. Growing up I was never taught about gender specific roles. I was never taught or made to feel as less than because I am a woman. If anything, I was empowered because of the teachings, especially from those of my grandfather who believed in and respected matriarchal leadership. The word "matriarch" is not something I was aware of until I attended university. This was not a term I knew or was taught, but the essence of matriarch leadership and "the matriarchy" is very well embedded in who I am today and who my people were traditionally. When I would tell my grandfather what teachings I was being told from school about women's roles in society he would quickly debunk them with a story about how women were highly revered, and how I am powerful in my own way. My grandmother was also the epitome of matriarch leadership in my family. My grandmother was a strong woman, who raised strong women and men who respected and empowered women; she then continued to raise strong women and men in her grandchildren. The difference between learning about matriarch leadership, empowering women, and all topics related to this, is living it. It is important to my community to

revitalize these teachings and live in a society that honours women by empowering them. The next seven generations deserve a society that lives closer to the teachings of our ʔEsiggdam because there is no better way to dismantle colonialism than to bring back a teaching that was diminished in favour of the patriarchy with the sole purpose of assimilating and dismantling our sovereignty as Tsilhqot'in.

My project partner is my community band office, Tl'etinqox Government Office (TGO), but more specifically my chief. Chief Joe Alphonse has been the chief of my community for over a decade and is in support of bringing back the teachings of a matrilineal society. My project guidelines determine that I select one project partner, however; I am whole-heartedly supported by my Chief and Council and my entire community in this project. My project is possible because of communal knowledge and elder support on the topic of Matriarch leadership. The importance of a topic like empowering women is crucial to not only my community but to all Indigenous communities because colonization and the Indian Act degraded and betrayed the role of women. Joseph (2018) discusses the facts that throughout history the notion of ridding North America of its *Indian problem* [emphasis added] started with removing governance structures that honored women, removed culture by making it illegal to have ceremony, and erased tradition because Indigenous people were not allowed to practice their culture. Indigenous people were scared to talk about their practices for fear of being jailed or murdered. McDougall (2008) talked about a man named Duncan Campbell-Scott who was a high-ranking man in the Department of Indian Affairs from the late 1800's and was responsible for the creation and enforcement of policies that bolstered all of the beforementioned acts of dispossessing Indigenous people, disempowering Indigenous women, and stole children from communities by forcing them into church run residential schools. Further degradation to the sovereignty of First Nations people happened through continued cultural genocide by the reality of the Sixties Scoop where children were literally stolen from communities and adopted out all over the country. The birth of Child and Family Services continued the legacy of racial and economic discrimination that continued to dispossess Indigenous

communities by stealing their futures from them. These policies and organizations continue to exist in different forms and still affect our ability to truly self-govern and return to who we were before colonization.

As Kelm and Smith (2018) detail, women were further discriminated against within the Indian Act by removing them from governing, and women were forced to give up their status when they married or had children with non-native men; however, non-native women who married native men were allowed to inherit status. Men who went to war for their country were promised lands and a simple house as long as they *enfranchised* themselves and gave up their Indian status only to return to lies and to be barred from seeing their wives and children because non-natives were not permitted on reserve lands.

Based on my professional experience and understanding of the systems we are subjected to as Indigenous women; the violence continues with systemic racism and discrimination that is built into government run services like Child and Family Services. This organization continues to remove children from their lands, culture, language, and family connections in order to reap the monetary benefits of stealing Indigenous children.

The systems are stacked against Indigenous women, with no way through the endless loopholes. The plight of Indigenous women does not stop at the unbearable fact of their children being stolen; our young women are also being stolen. This narrative of devaluing Indigenous women continues to contribute to the devastation of our matrilineal society and amplifies violence against Indigenous women.

For all these reasons and more, my passion, my fire, and my alignment to reinstate the matriarch within my community lies within the necessary dream of empowering women. The dismantling of Indigenous women's power has served the patriarchy for far too long. The fire inside the matriarchs is there, it will light the way through this darkness, but someone must spark it. My research

will focus and frame my project, by expanding on why empowering women in my community is important. I will also review relevant literature to my project that helps support my argument and frame a plan for change. In addition, I will discuss the engagement methods I used to complete this project in my community. I will discuss any ethical implications that became apparent and how I addressed those situations. I will also describe how I will be accountable to the plan for empowering women, how the project partner can be accountable to the plan, and frame out a culturally relevant template that can be further developed with deeper engagement in the future.

Section One: Focus and Framing

The purpose of my project was to create relevant research for my community that finally answered the question "What steps can Tl'etinqox Government take to empower women in the community?". From my experience in Indigenous governance, the revitalization of matrilineal systems among many Indigenous communities has become a priority, and my community is no different. There is a deep connection to women in leadership and the roles matriarchs have within our traditional systems. My sub question inquired "what did traditional matrilineal leadership look like?" because my research was about imagining what traditional matrilineal roles transform into in our modern world and how the TGO can honour and protect the roles of Tl'etinqox women within their governance system by getting the answers directly from community members and allowing their voices to be the focus of the research. This was accomplished by answering five essential questions (see Appendix B) that also explored my second research sub question "where do we start?", as a means of prioritizing efforts to empower women in Tl'etinqox.

The objective was to find a pathway to dismantle racist and colonial structures in order to serve the vision of our ʔEsiggdam (ancestors). Colonization changed the roles of Indigenous women through the destruction of our governance systems with laws like the Indian Act of 1876, which is riddled with sexism and discrimination, as Kelm and Smith (2018) describe

> [m]ore then many pieces of legislation, the Indian Act has been explicitly gendered. Over the course of the act's history, this has had a profound effect on Indigenous communities. It has disrupted familial relationships. It has removed Indigenous women from their homes and barred them from active roles in governing. The Indian Act and its effects have tended to produce and confirm negative stereotypes of Indigenous women. It has made them vulnerable to violence both within and outside their communities (p. 127).

Women's voices continue to be silenced, not only legislatively, but within our own communities.

The intended target group for my project was specifically within my community. As members of Tl'etinqox, we are a part of the Tsilhqot'in Nation and there are six Tsilhqot'in communities. However, my purpose was to collect only my community's knowledge. Tsilhqot'in culture and traditions are relatively similar; however, details vary depending on the community. My survey was open to anyone registered to Tl'etinqox. The survey asked participants to nominate someone from our community who they thought should be interviewed on the topic of matriarchs and women in leadership. This independent nomination eliminated my own personal bias regarding who should be interviewed on the subject and allowed the community to choose who they thought should be the larger contributor to this project.

My inquiry team consisted of one community member and two non-community members. The role of the community member who was involved was to ensure that my questions were culturally appropriate and that I was following a format as close to Tsilhqot'in protocol as possible. The two other team members were to provide advice, feedback, and support (see Appendix B for Inquiry Team Consent Form). The role of my Chief and Council (more specifically my Chief) as my project partner, on behalf of TGO, was to review my project and consider implementing the research as an active solution to empowering women's voices within our community. This would be done by integrating the research results into the organization based on recommendations of the community. The research also provided areas of focus for more research to be done in the future. Reinstating matriarch leadership has always been a goal of TGO, this project provided a visual and attainable plan that is within reach of the organization.

As a Tsilhqot'in woman, this project has value deeply connected to culture and tradition because I want other women in my community to see themselves the way I do. I want the women of Tl'etinqox to see they are powerful beings that create change the moment they get out of bed in the morning. I recognize my privilege in the sense that I was raised by culturally strong and traditional

grandparents and not everyone was as fortunate as I was. I was raised traditionally, simply because I was raised by Elders. My grandparents taught me to be strong, outspoken, and to value and respect myself, as well as others. Not everyone had the opportunity to be raised in the manner I was, because my community – like many Indigenous communities – are dealing with children being stolen from their homes, with parents having no option to fight the system. For those who did not receive the same upbringing I did, I offer my knowledge whole-heartedly and openly. I created this project to ensure that the teachings of matrilineal society are documented before more Elders are lost and that knowledge disappears. I want women and men to understand traditional teachings around the roles of women and the cultural importance of empowering women and giving them the space to lead. My grandparents were a significant part of empowering me to be the woman I am today; I want other women to feel their own power and step into their leadership As the current Executive Director of TGO, and as a community member, it is my commitment to empower women without prejudice, and to also remember that I have a responsibility to create an environment where men can heal, evolve, and flourish as well.

I believe that this project contributed to changes in my executive leadership practice. By creating, affirming, and inspiring curiosity in my community we can imagine what our society could become through the dismantling of a colonial construct that imposes values that are foreign and harmful. I have opened up the conversation with this research, and it has inspired others to look to their Elders and ask questions This project affirmed what I grew up knowing; women are leaders. My Essential Executive Leadership Practice (EELP) is about affirming and inspiring others; however, this topic inspired me as well. I believe that the path to empowering women will be a long one and one that we, as a community, must commit to. It will take hard work, and trial and error to uncover the way in which we empower women's voices in the community that will help build back the pieces of our community that were taken as a result of colonialism.

This project allowed me the opportunity to further develop my EELP by giving me the opportunity to speak about empowerment and specifically affirming and inspiring women's empowerment for those who were interested in my topic. This project inspired me because it brought an element to light that I never thought of before, that men need to be uplifted to. This has opened my eyes and will forever change the way I view empowerment and has positively impacted my leadership learning. This EELP also gave me an avenue to make people excited about lifting up and making space for women. This has had a ripple effect on me as a leader within my community who is sometimes silenced too.

Section Two: Significance

This section describes the change that *Making a Matriarch: Empowering Women in Tl'etinqox* (the ELP) has sought to address and contribute to. This section also discusses why this change is important and outlines the specific benefits for the organization involved, myself as a leader, and for the broader community. The ELP sought to discover the ways in which Tl'etinqox Government could put into action empowerment for women and girls in the community. It has been said at many community events that reinstating our matrilineal society has been a top priority for leadership in the community. The community has heard many times that it is time to put our women back in their rightful places, but the issue was determining what that really means, and how to do it. The biggest piece of the puzzle was understanding what empowerment will look like and ensuring that Tl'etinqox Government is able to contribute to this collective need to empower women and girls in the community.

Throughout the research phase of this project, it became apparent that everyone who participated in the surveys understood what matrilineal leadership was. The knowledge of those traditions is not lost. As one Tl'etinqox Elder said "it was just sleeping" (Interview 1, Feb 17, 2023). Hearing the similarities between traditional values, how that became dismantled, and what we dream it to be; it was made clear that colonial trauma has played a huge role in dismantling our traditional governance system in terms of women's roles in our society. This is an issue that still plagues my people today. The objective of a project like this is to create an avenue to talk about the trauma, to bring it out in the open, name it, deal with it, and then find a path to heal it. There is no forgetting the horrible truths of colonization; however, there are ways to grow and still be resilient. As another Elder expressed that it is wonderful that people wanted to return to traditional cultural aspects of who we are, but there are some things we cannot get back, and maybe some things that we change to meet today's requirements (Interview 2, Feb 15, 2023). This project aims to find how those traditional practices of matrilineal leadership can transform into the society we currently live in, and still hold true to the

traditions of Tsilhqot'in Ɂesiggdam. We are ever evolving people, and this is only a small piece of the work I know is to come for my community.

The importance of empowering women and girls in the community directly benefits the organization because empowered women, empower women. From a Western lens, this will grow the work force which means we create capacity in community, and we can function autonomously. This means that self-governance becomes more attainable when we have the capacity to fill roles within the organization. Concurrently if we increase the levels of Western recognized education, then we create lasting and sustainable change in community that contributes to the overall values of the organization of being self-sufficient. Through a cultural lens, when we empower women, we are breathing life back into our traditions. The language is being learned; the traditions are being passed down; traditional values in terms of parenting, governance; and community values are being taught, adhered to, and thriving. The vision of having healthy communities where men are healing the same rate that women are, and we are leading together, starts to become a reality. A healthy, traditional community means that we hold close to our hearts the teachings about how we treat women and allow women to fulfill their natural roles as leaders within the community. It does not mean that women overpower, it means that they are given the space to take their natural places within the community.

A direct benefit is that I am able to live my purpose of passing along my wisdom and teaching others. It is always my goal to be a good Ɂesiggdam, I achieve that by giving back to my community and ensuring the knowledge I hold is passed on. When thinking about how a project like this would benefit me, I wished that my community had done this when I was a girl so that I did not struggle to find my way through the world. Regardless of the timing, everything happens when it is meant to.

Imagine a society where the empowerment of women is not just a wish, but something practiced. My community has decided that the timing is now. Everything we have endured up until now has brought us to this moment. The significance of a movement toward empowering women and girls in

our community will have a domino effect like no other. We might all be lucky enough to witness it in our

lifetime.

Section Three: Relevant Literature

The literature I chose to include directly speaks to my research questions:

1. What steps can the Tl'etinqox Government take to empower women in the community?

2. What did traditional matrilineal leadership look like?

3. Where do we start?

The chosen books and articles all relate to matriarchal leadership, empowerment –whether that is women's empowerment or Indigenous empowerment – and topics related to Indigenous research methods. These choices helped me better explain the way in which I researched and give me ideas on how to be gentle in my methods and continue to indigenize research and stay focused on what matters most.

Topic #1: Indigenous Leadership and Empowerment

Rationale

This section examines Indigenous leadership and empowerment because it is important to understand how impacts of colonialism have affected Indigenous matriarchal leadership. It is also indicative of how resilient my people are in challenging the colonial constructs of leadership and empowerment by embracing the struggle and winning with resilience. This section will look at authors who understand Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing in terms of the matriarchy. Every story is a thread that we weave into our ever-growing dream catcher.

The Past

The Indian Act has perpetually reinstated discrimination and disempowered and disadvantaged Indigenous women. In *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act*, (Joseph, 2018) explains that the Indian Act's election system was imposed on Indigenous communities in 1869. The act stipulated that only males aged 23 and older were allowed to be elected and women were not granted the right to vote until 1951 (pp. 16-17). The role of the Chief and Council was to administer the Indian Act, not carry

out traditional governance measures. The point of the Indian Act, according to Joseph, was to demolish

the traditional systems and absorb the "Indian". Joseph goes on to explain how the Indian Act

discriminated against Indigenous women by removing their status when they married non-status men

but granted status to non-Indigenous women who married status men. This act was not amended until

1985, however, even today women and their children are still struggling to gain back their registered

status (pp. 19-23). "The Indian Act regulations devalue women and are considered the primary cause of

the vulnerability of Indigenous women today" (p. 23).

The Present

When considering the present conditions for Indigenous women in leadership and empowering

our women in our communities, it is important to draw on authors who are experts in this field and

understand what it means to be a female leader in our communities. Maracle (1996) said

> [w]ithout a firm understanding of what our history was before the settlers came to this land, I
>
> cannot understand how we are to regain our birthright as caretakers of this land and continue
>
> our history into the future. This understanding cannot come from the children of my generation
>
> alone. It must come from our elders' generation and the memories they cherish of their own
>
> grandmothers' words (p. 40).

The basis of what I need to collect are stories from my community who have oral history about women

in leadership. It is crucial to capture these stories and intertwine them with those of authors who have

researched similar topics. In most stories the same theme rings true. The women are at the forefront of

action, protection, and knowledge transfer in Indigenous communities. It is what makes them

matriarchs. A lot of movements that demanded and created great changes for our Indigenous people

were started by women. The foundation of my project is about Indigenous strength, particularly

Indigenous women's strength, and how we transform that into our roles within our community. I was

able to draw from Cora Voyageur's (2008) work *Firekeepers of the Twenty-First Century: First Nations*

Women Chiefs and draw out some critical pieces to leadership postcolonial contact for context. In particular, she speaks about the roles women take on being a leader – such as a chief – and that more is expected of them than men. Women are expected to be everywhere, to be everything everyone needs, to still be able to take care of house and home, and to make all the right decisions (p. 106). Her underlying tone is that everything is harder for women in leadership. All the authors I have read on this subject have had this same sentiment. As an Indigenous woman in a leadership role, I know this is true and can validate these sentiments. A valuable piece of advice that Voyageur (2008) marked out at the end of her book cited by a long-time female chief was "know that you cannot do it all. It is impossible" (p. 110). I was also able to draw on the strength of Indigenous women through the work *In Good Relation: History, Gender, and Kinship in Indigenous Feminisms* (Nickel & Fehr, 2020), a collection of stories about young Indigenous women's experiences through colonial imagination. They effectively explore the reinstatement of traditional roles of not only Indigenous women, but those we call *two spirit.*[1] This is important to the explanation of disenfranchising Indigenous women and cultural norms in order to assimilate Indigenous people. There are also strong ties back to matrilineal leadership through our grandmothers within the collection of stories in the book *Living Indigenous Leadership. Native Narratives on Building Strong Communities* (Ngaroimata Fraser & Kenny, 2012). Ngaroimata Fraser states that "they [her grandmothers] were the community leaders who played a significant role in shaping the ways of knowing and being. They were the ones who taught the language, traditional values and practices, and customs and ceremonies" (p. 114). Ngaroimata Fraser goes on to say that she embodies "the lived experience of witnessing the grandmother's tireless efforts of building strong communities" (p. 115). Fraser explains that grandmothers played a significant part in childrearing in her

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[1] Two spirit is the term used by Indigenous people for Indigenous people who are identifying themselves as LGBTQ+. The term reflects the cultural and traditional role two-spirit people had in our communities. Two spirit people walk in both worlds and are highly revered as being medicine people. (Tsilhqot'in Elders)

community. Fraser might have been of a different Indigenous background; however, the practices are similar to what I was taught; which is that women are essential to the foundation of who we are as people. We need to find a way to revitalize, celebrate, and sustain this.

Topic #2: Change Management

Rationale

In reviewing the overall goal of my research questions, there needs to be a change management plan that is authentic to my community and their needs as Indigenous people. The plan needs to be easily implemented so that it will not just sit on the shelf. My commitment to my community essentially means creating a change management plan that adheres to cultural protocol, community perspectives, and is culturally relevant to my people. There are a few very good processes I can use to create a change management plan; however, it is important to state that not everything the experts depict as working effectively in non-Indigenous organizations will work in mine. From my professional and lived experience, most change management plans cannot consider what governance is like under the Indian Act. They are not built to. The truth is, only Indigenous people understand the weight of the policies that were meant to eradicate them, and we are the only ones who can create a change that will work for us. The same policies whose aim was to kill my people, still dictate the funding given to us, there has never been funding allocated to creating anything useful before, let alone a change management strategy that will help my community reclaim their power to self-governance, and resilience. There is not one change management plan that can solve all of our problems (or any organizations for that matter), I will only take what I can use, and I will leave the rest.

Why Change might be difficult

From what I can see, a lot of the change management plans are not meant to address centuries of inequity, and ultimately, they fail to recognize the struggle Indigenous communities face when it comes to implementing changes, even if the changes are for the benefit of the community. A prime

example of resistance to change is the workplace culture that was created by the Indian Act, and trickles into the lives of everyone who lives in community. Schein et al. (2010) said,

> Group and organizational theories distinguish two major sets of problems that all groups, no matter their size, must deal with: (1) Survival, growth, and adaptation in their environment; and (2) internal integration that permits daily functioning and the ability to adapt and learn. Both of these areas of group functioning will reflect the macrocultural context in which the group exists and from which are derived broader and deeper basic assumptions about the nature of reality, time, space, human nature, and human relationship ((Chapter one: The Concept of Organizational Culture: Why Bother?, para 43).   ).

This will be essential to explaining that the policies of the Indian Act and the forced systems of assimilation have created mindsets that are deeply rooted in the ways of the oppressor. Hamel and Zanini (2014) said it best: "[t]he reality is that today's organizations were simply never designed to change proactively and deeply– they were built for discipline and efficiency, enforced through hierarchy and routinization" (p.1). They were speaking about westernized organizations; however, this is still a facet of policy assimilation that is ever present in my organization today. From my experience in Indigenous governance, there is little room for change, improvement, or cultural relativity because of the Indian Act, and I feel that a change as significant as honoring and reinstating women in the hierarchy may be a more difficult task then my organization is ready for.

When thinking about why change may be so difficult in my organization, I am drawn to Brian P. Hall's (1994) Four Stages of Consciousness. Particularly because phase one is about survival and growth. "Phase 1 consciousness is the first stage of human development. It is the child's world – but many adults exist in phase 1 consciousness, usually because they have grown up in an oppressive environment and been unable to move on or been thrown back into a world of survival by their circumstances" (pp. 46-47). If this is not a clear picture of intergenerational trauma experienced by most Indigenous people due

to residential schools, day schools, the 60's scoop, and just daily life of being Indigenous, then I do not

know what is. From my personal and profession lens of experience, when we dive deeper into the

common issues that plague Indigenous communities across the country: insufficient access to

healthcare, food insecurity, extreme poverty, potable water, the housing crisis, youth deaths, and all

forms of violence, we see that the basic needs of my people are not even being met. How are we

supposed to create a change management plan that addresses the most important piece of reinstating

matriarchal leadership, while not forgetting about the basic needs and survival of my community?

Indigenized Change Management

Beckhard and Harris (2009) build on change management strategies and emphasize that change

is messy and that typically change is only brought on for one of two reasons: socioeconomic or new

technology. I have already iterated that not a lot of the strategies address Indigenous issues or reasons

for change. Socioeconomic factors seem to be the only relatable reason for change for my community.

One of the most important pieces from the Beckard and Harris' method is determining the *need* for

change for my community. This will be critical for buy-in. I believe the most interesting thing about their

method is that it is easily Indigenized. I can use the graph (figure 40.2) on page 691 and turn it into a

medicine wheel, which is culturally relevant. The purpose of my research questions is to find out what

the present state is, what can be done now, and what the future state will look like for my community

after the revitalization of the matriarchy.

Figure 1

Indigenized version of the Beckard & Harris (2009) change management model
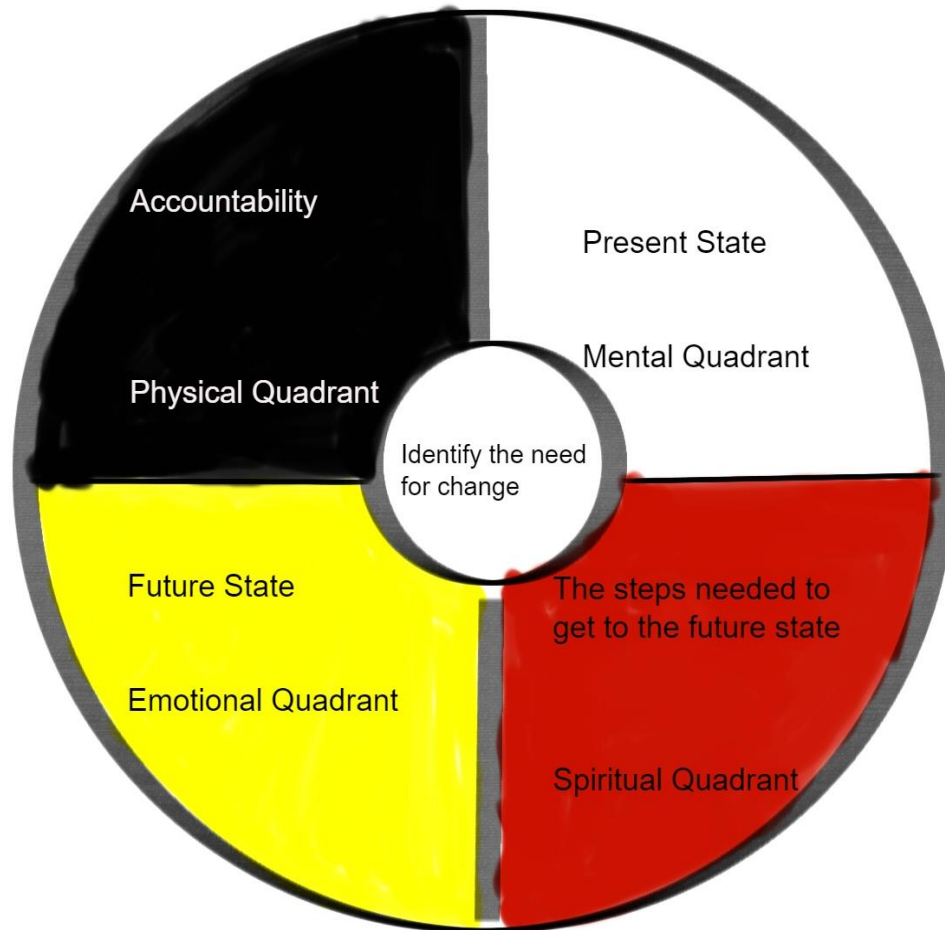
Note: adapted from the Beckard & Harris (2009) Change Management Model. The original Image of the medicine wheel was sourced from Valerie, The Medicine Wheel. https://earthethos.net/2018/07/09/the-medicine-wheel/

The example of a medicine wheel change management model adapted from the Beckard and

Harris (2009) model would include the "identify the need for change" in the middle because it is the

premise for the change. The top right quadrant is associated to the Northern direction and is typically

depicted in white and connected to our mental state. This would be where we would describe the present state. The next quadrant is the spiritual and is connected to the colour red. This would be where we discuss all the work that needs to be done to get to the future state. The next quadrant is emotional, and is yellow. This is where we imagine the future state of what this new empowerment of women will look like in our community, and the last quadrant is the physical, it is black. This is the piece that will be culturally adapted to fit our needs. This will be the accountability piece. How do we ensure our leadership is following through with the wishes of the community? How is leadership kept accountable to the revitalization of the matriarchy? At what point and what checks and balances are in place for the community to call the leadership in to discuss the process.

Hamel and Zanini (2014), make a great case for the reason that change needs to be a platform and not a program. They note several approaches to why change is never effective or accepted because the process is top-down, rolled out and imposed, and predetermined. They state that in order for "reimagining the model for change" (pp.2-3) needs to be bottom up, invited, and there needs to be a commitment to make change, and it needs to go from managed to organic.

> [g]uiding a process of socially constructed change is neither quick nor easy- but it is possible and
> effective. The biggest obstacles to creating robust change platforms aren't technical, the
> challenge lies in shifting the role of the executive from change agent in chief to change enabler
> in chief. This means devoting leadership attention to the creation of an environment where
> deep, proactive change can happen anywhere – and at any time – inspiring the entire
> organization to swarm the most pressing issues (Hamel and Zanini, 2014, p.4).

Hamel and Zanini (2014) help prove why the change proposed by my community should be embedded in the values of the organization as "who we are" instead of "what we do", this will also help determine how we best decolonize our practices as an organization.

In *Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail*, (Kotter, 1995) presents eight reasons that change efforts fail and also eight steps to a successful transformation. "The most general lesson to be learned from the more successful cases is that the change process goes through a series of phases that, in total, usually require a considerable length of time. Skipping steps creates only the illusion of speed and never produces a satisfying result" (p.59). Kotter goes on to say that the next lesson is that mistakes can have a devastating impact on the momentum, but that everyone makes mistakes. Kotter lists steps to transforming your organization as:

1. Establish a sense of urgency

2. forming a powerful guiding coalition

3. creating a vision

4. communicating the vision

5. empowering others to act on the vision

6. planning for and creating short term wins.

7. consolidating improvements and producing still more change

8. institutionalizing new approaches (p. 65)

Kotter's (1995) methods will be used to help inform the change management strategy and ensure that his number one point about creating urgency for change is emphasized within the report and giving clear steps to how the organization can make the changes.

Topic #3: Indigenous Research Methods

Rationale

I understand the importance of ensuring that researchers who conduct research within Indigenous communities fully comprehend the effects their research could have and for them to mitigate any and all of the possibilities of negative effects. With that being said, I reviewed several expert researchers who led me back to the core of understanding that research is embedded in my

culture. I used the First Nations Information Governance Centre (2014) to inform all my methods of

research and ensured I was following the rules of Ownership Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP).

The stories collected from my research will be returned to my community to be put into their archives.

How Indigenous Research Methods Informs my Practice

In *Two-Eyed Seeing and the Language of Healing in Community-based Research* by Bartlett et al.

(2009) they stated " 'Two-Eyed Seeing adamantly, respectfully and passionately asks that we bring

together our different ways of knowing to motivate people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, to use

all our understandings so we can leave the world a better place and not compromise the opportunities

for our youth…' " (p. 5). Growing up Tsilhqot'in and being raised by my grandparents I understand how

crucial it is for us to have a traditional upbringing and education, but I was always taught that in order

for us to move forward we need to understand the other world as well. Western education was a

priority in the same way as my traditional education was. Bartlett et al. further prove that their research

on two-eyed seeing is crucial to change initiatives and acceptance by saying:

> Traditional knowledge needs no legitimizing, But in Unama'ki, a flood of contrary voices
>
> threatens the lives of our young people. Bonds between youth and Elders – those who hold and
>
> live accordingly to traditional ways of knowing have been weakened to the point that youth not
>
> only lack traditional knowledge, but doubt its worth. Many Elders point to this generation of lost
>
> youth and the problems that attend the waning of traditional knowledge as their motivation for
>
> participating in Two-Eyed seeing research. They hope that the example of university researchers
>
> and Elders learning together in equitable relationships will in the minds of young people
>
> authorize traditional knowledge as it demystifies the scholarly (p. 7).

It is critical to have buy-in from Elders to support the project, and it is important for the project to have

a positive effect on future generations. This is the whole theme around my research questions. It is

fusing the past, present, and the future together. Honouring the lives of all who are present, passed, and those we have not met yet.

Fiona Hornung discusses how researchers approach her Australian Indigenous community and is relevant to my research as she speaks to the preservation of traditional and cultural knowledge (Hornung, 2013, as cited in Mertens et al., 2013). She says that outside researchers are to seek permission for their research, be transparent, and communicate the results of the study as many times as the community dictates. She also goes on to explain that there "should be an understanding between the researcher and the participants that the results of a particular study should be transparent and that the participants will benefit in a positive manner from the study" (p. 142). This advice is something I have given time and time again, and I need to remember that just because I am from the community, that I am not immune to our own rules. The results of the project will be shared with the community and all those involved in its development.

Most importantly, I also included Shawn Wilson's (2008) work *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods.* Wilson emphasizes that it is important to take on the role of "storyteller" rather than researcher. This is my complete intention with my research because it is about capturing my community's knowledge in the form of storytelling. I have also taken the methodology of creating ceremony within my research from Wilson and it has informed the way I will be conducting myself with my community. "It is the knowing and respectful reinforcement that all things are related and connected. It is the voices from our ancestors that tell us when it is right and when it is not. Indigenous research is a life changing ceremony" (p.61). Apart from using "two-eyed" seeing, walking into this research is also about honouring the lives and stories of my ancestors. Wilson is able to capture the importance of how Indigenous worldviews, ways of knowing, and knowledge systems make valuable and important contributions to Western society. That is what I hope to do with my research, make a contribution that is worthy of the sacrifices of my ancestors.

Section Four: Engaged Approach, Implementation, and Knowledge Translation

This section outlines the methodology for my Engaged Leadership Project, the process around

selecting interview candidates from anonymous surveys, and the data analysis and triangulation from

both methods. I also included my method of journaling and why I thought that was important to the

research, and the knowledge translation and exchange.

The methodology for my ELP was to conduct anonymous surveys through Survey Monkey (see

Appendix D for Survey Information and Consent), which would then lead to one-to-one interviews. The

anonymous survey method was not a method I had considered because of the difficulty engaging and

following-up with individual participants when they are completing surveys. To ensure the research was

unbiased and due to my relationship and position in the community, it was essential to alleviate any

perceived or real conflict of interest, power-over, or community influence I may have. The second

method used were one-to-one interviews (see Appendix E for Interview Invitation). This process allowed

for personal connection and is also a cultural practice of story-telling and oral transmission (see

Appendix F for the interview invitation and consent form).

A call out to all community members was made requesting voluntary participation in the study

via the community's social media page. The survey advertisement included a direct link and information

that the survey was part of a student's Master's in an Executive Leadership program and requested the

community's input. The social media page also described the project, and why the research was being

conducted. The survey was only open to those who are registered members of Tl'etinqox Government.

This was a requirement because even though other communities are still Tsilhqot'in, we sometimes

have different teachings and understandings regarding some topics. My purpose for this research was

only to collect the teachings and knowledge of my community, because the research was to directly

benefit them. Due to my positionality within my community, I did not own the email address that the

surveys were sent to, it was operated by one of my inquiry team members, this ensured anonymity to all

participants. The survey was set to be active for ten days or until 30 responses were collected. The survey closed before the ten days concluded, and 32 responses were collected.

The second method of research was by sequential design. Participants from the survey were also asked to nominate community members they thought would benefit from the research by contributing their knowledge to the survey questions. The nominations were conducted in a linear snowball sampling style, which is "the formation of a sample group starts with one individual subject providing information about just one other subject and then the chain continues with only one referral from one subject" (Bhat, 2023, Types of Snowball Sampling, para. 1). Community members were asked to nominate someone, including themselves, if they thought they should be personally interviewed about the same topic. When the nominations came in, the names of potential candidates were noted on a tally sheet and the ones who were sought for an interview were the ones nominated the most frequently. This completely removed myself from the process and allowed the community to have the say in who participated in the project. However, it was difficult to obtain participants for one reason or another. When the next set of tallied names were all ranked the same, according to the number of times they were nominated, I chose to diversify the pool sample by selecting the only male who was nominated.

The procedure for asking the five selected candidates from the community was a phone call invitation to one candidate, an email inquiry to three other community members, then a social media message to the last candidate. Unfortunately, only three candidates participated. When talking to the candidates, I explained that I was doing my master's and that I had released a survey to the community, and that the community chose them to talk about matriarchal leadership. Once confirmed, the proper consent forms were sent and reviewed with them when we met to conduct the interview. The interview invitation was explained verbally to the participants before they agreed to the interview.

Once the candidates agreed to the interview, I emailed them the consent form, the interview information, and the interview questions were included in the email, so they had time to think about their answers prior to the interview (see Appendix C, E and F). Two of the interviewees were Elders from the community and I wanted to make sure they understood the forms. I went over the forms with them in-person and explained: they were able to withdraw at any point; they did not have to answer any questions they did not want to and could leave the interview without explaining anything to me. I made certain that the Elders felt safe and in control of sharing traditional knowledge for the purpose of my research.

Throughout this process I used journaling as a method to capture my leadership learning and growth and to follow my EELP goal of inspiring and affirming others (see Appendix G for journal template). I completed a journal entry after every interview which helped to ensure I was not biased with my research by allowing me to capture my observations, and how the interview evoked emotions in me. It was beneficial in the sense that I was able to reflect on where improvements could be made for the next interview and gave me the opportunity to make those changes. It also gave me time to reflect deeper on my learning and understand where I saw limitations.

After all the surveys were completed and the interviews were conducted, I analyzed the data by recording the answers into an excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet was marked with the questions in the header and the corresponding code number of the survey on the left. After a few read-throughs of the answers, I started pulling out common statements and sentiments and themed them. I aggregated those with the interviews by highlighting interesting points from interviewees that were similar or used the same language. Triangulating the information given from the surveys and from the interviews was important because it showed consistency in community knowledge, community needs, and goals.

Knowledge translation and exchange happened organically with community members asking me about the project after hearing about the surveys. Members were interested in my overall goal and

wanted to understand more about the findings of the research. Even though typical research is about

what research can teach other people, this research also taught me. I learned more about traditional

roles of women; I learned that intergenerational trauma is a real factor in the lives and functionality of

Indigenous communities. I also learned that trauma-informed leadership is extremely important in every

setting, especially in those settings where we are interviewing Elders who are residential school

survivors. One of the interviewees told me that I made her feel safe, and like she had the power in the

room simply because I told her she could leave at any moment (Interview 2, February 17, 2023). Giving

the power to the interviewee, I feel, is of great value. It also helped me honour the required ethical

standards of my ELP on working with Indigenous populations by not re-traumatizing the participant and

being culturally sensitive and aware. I felt that the value was noticed because I received quality answers,

my participants were relaxed, and like many Indigenous cultures across Turtle Island, there were a lot of

laughs, no matter how deep the subject was.

Knowledge exchange happened throughout the project. Chief Alphonse was informed on the

progress of the project. The final PowerPoint presentation (see Appendix A) was delivered to him and

after he approved, the project was presented to staff at TGO. The final product is available for all

participants in the project, and to anyone from the community who requests to read it. The data, the

final paper, and the recordings have all been sent to the Tl'etinqox Nen (lands) Department, where it will

be archived in the community data archival system for future generations.

The overall process of the research project aligned with what the community has seen before,

so the process was familiar and comfortable for everyone who participated. Unfortunately, due to

timing, there was only room for anonymous surveys and limited interviews. However, in the future a

project of this magnitude or importance would greatly benefit from a community meeting or community

gathering where a collective of ideas can come together and really dive into what the issues are, what

the solutions are, and how we get there together. There is significance in community gatherings as a

way to form collective needs-based solutions.

Section Five: Findings, Conclusions, and Limitations

Findings

Through both the anonymous survey and interviews, it was clear there were some common

themes and statements with regard to empowering women in the community. The five emerging

findings were: education and support, community safety, respect, political presence, and healing. There

were many statements made in the surveys and interviews that supported these themes and the most

common answer was that the traditional roles of women were centered around being caregivers.

"Traditionally women were involved in making decisions for the community in regard to trades,

movement of camps, marriages, and child rearing" (S1). Another participant said, "women traditionally

made the decisions for the community, and the men carried it out" (S9). These notions of women's

traditional roles in our community were reiterated by the interview participants. One Elder said that

women were highly respected, another said they were the caretakers, that they had the babies, and

another participant referred to their grandmother and said "they were basically the keys to holding

families together" (Interview 3, February 24, 2023). The images of how powerful women's roles were

pre-contact were very uplifting. Seeing the passion, enlightenment, and recall about what those roles

were, how they changed, and what the community envisions for the future was very inspiring.

Finding 1- Education and Support

There were several mentions throughout both the survey and the interviews about educating

and supporting women's empowerment. This same sentiment had participants mentioning the need for

group learning opportunities where there was a concentration on traditional and cultural practices in

connection with empowerment. This same finding is also connected with a common statement of

empowering youth in the community. There is a need to connect youth to Elders to pass on the cultural

and traditional values of not only empowerment, but all education that is connected to being

Tsilhqot'in. One surveyor responded in connection to what future steps Tl'etinqox Government can take

to empower women, said "provide education and training opportunities to help women and girls acquire the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce. Creating mentorship programs to connect women and girls with successful role models and provide guidance and support" (S9). Another survey respondent suggested developing and refining programs that would be geared towards empowering females would be beneficial to the long-term commitment of empowering women and girls in the community. One interviewee said something that not one other participant mentioned, but it was a concrete idea. The interviewee mentioned that there was a lot of development available for women, however the men are being left behind.

>...the social aspect of it is what we need to deal with, and at the end of the day, there are more courses happening for women and they're taking on those roles, and guess what? the men are further and further behind. The further they get left behind, the more frustrated they become, the more angry, and the more abusive (Interview 3, February 24, 2023).

This sentiment of men being left behind is a valid concern and connects to other themes brought to light during this process.

Finding 2- Community Safety

Community safety appeared to be a priority for participants. Most citing that women need to feel safe in their community, and that abuse needs to be called out. Participants also mentioned the need for creating safe spaces in the community for not only women and children, but Elders as well. It is a common understanding within our community and in most Indigenous communities, the violence we see today was not brought on from traditional practices. Participants of the research and survivors of residential schools in my community mentioned the violence they endured in the Indian Day Schools that helped create a cycle of community violence. One interviewee said.

>I see everything as a big mirror. A really big mirror, and in that mirror is our language, our songs, our stories, our legends, our cultural knowledge. Everything is in there, and

they got broken into a million pieces during that time frame [colonization]. They got

broken into a million pieces, and now it's up to us to put the pieces back together

(Interview 2, February 17, 2023).

Moreover, in connection with creating a safe community that fosters empowerment for women

and girls, one participant said that "women can be as powerful as to lead a group to stop the drug

trafficking in our community" (S13), but they need to feel supported and safe to do that work. Another

said "creating a safe community for women to succeed in anything that they decide to do, we see

women living in such patriarchal relationships and removing those barriers for them is very important"

(S5). Another participant said "young women need to know if they're in trouble, they can rely on safe

protocols to feel safe and get justice" (S2). These sentiments were further rationalized by the

interviewees when all three mentioned at least one thing connected to creating safe spaces or standing

up to abuse. In speaking about what it means to empower women's voices, one interviewee said "it

means stand up. Stand up against abuse, start communicating. In saying that, the balance is

broken…because the men started being controlling, abusive, overpowering. The women a long time ago

were treated with high respect and high regard". (Interview 1, February 15, 2023). Another interviewee

mentioned the community signs that advocate against sexual assault that were recently placed around

the community, and then vandalized. The interviewee said, "the signs are out there, they were

spreading an important message, and the fact that they were ruined says a lot about the people

committing these acts" (Interview 3, February 24, 2023). In cooperation of creating safe communities,

there is an underlying message of calling out the behaviors that are creating safety concerns for women,

that may mean putting up signs that say Tl'etinqox Government does not tolerate abuse, "if they start

seeing that and that sends a message, a heavy message, I think that is kind of how we start doing it,

because without it, the respect for women is only by a handful of people" (Interview 3, February 24,

2023).

Finding 3- Respect

Another major finding that materialized was respect, and everything aligned with respect including equality, consulting women, listening to their opinions, giving them the space to speak, and ensuring their voices are being heard. There was a definite undertone of women feeling like they are not respected in the community because roughly 25 survey respondents cited that women's voices need to be heard, or they felt that women's voices were not being heard. "It would mean recovering their voices in a world that is male dominated" said S17, and another said, "empowering women's voices is keeping our voices alive! these days women's voices go unheard and unseen" (S16). There is a sentiment that women in the community feel invisible and they would like the opportunity to be a part of the discussions on decisions made about the community and that it is important to "give women a safe space to be empowered, [by] giving others the confidence to be the voices" (S27). A couple of respondents iterated that this needs to start with leadership (chief and council) giving women the opportunity to voice their concerns, to seek out matriarchal leadership, and to listen to the advice given. One interviewee said in respect to their grandmother being the matriarch in their family "what she said would go, and if sometimes the sons disagreed with the things [decisions made] it all came back down to her knowledge." (Interview 3, February 24, 2023). There was a foundation of respect built that it did not matter if the sons disagreed, what was decided was respected. One of the Elder participants said that traditionally women were silent leaders. When the priests came into our territory during the beginning of colonization, they misinterpreted that as the men were the leaders in the community, they never fathomed that the women were leading the man from behind in her gentle way (Interview 2, February 17, 2023). A big piece of the finding around respect also intertwined with empowering women and men to understand and start taking back their traditional roles within the community. Another Elder stated "the men are supporters. They support the women. They protect the women while the women are the decision makers and hard workers" (Interview 2, February 23, 2023). Bringing back the essence

of respect also has a cyclical effect. Respect for our women means respect for our land, our protocols, our laws, our animals because when you respect Mother Earth and all she gives you, you are learning to respect women. Elders used to say how you treat Mother Earth is representative of how you treat women.

Finding 4- Healing

Healing is the essence connected to all of the emerging findings within this research. There is a foundation of healing needed in order to move forward and when discussing what that looked like to an interviewee they said.

When we talk about being traumatized, you have to be traumatized before you even understand what the word traumatized means, and when you don't understand it that's when they [community members] go to their alcohol and their drugs and they get lost in the world (Interview 2, February 17, 2023).

There are no solutions that outsiders can give us to heal. This is a task meant for Indigenous people because no one knows or understands the pain of intended genocide like Indigenous people do. The topic of healing was mentioned 15 times within the survey, and some mentioned the future of Tl'etinqox after they learned what empowering women would look like to a community that has healed. An Elder said.

I always wish that one day we would become a true Tsilhqot'in, which means we go back to our Tsilhqot'in protocols, Tsilhqot'in laws, we don't have to follow them *midugh* (colonial) laws. And the midugh (colonial) laws that were put in place, it was not us who did put it in place, so we don't fit that law. We were always Tsilhqot'in, we always lived by our Tsilhqot'in protocols everyday (Interview 2, February 23, 2023).

Healing also means balance. Balancing out the roles in the community and balancing out voices. All three interviewees mentioned balance at some point during their interview. In connection with not

forgetting about the men, an interviewee mentioned that we need to learn to balance both,

empowering men while also empowering women. Another interviewee said that it is important to

modernize our colonial policies within the TGO to create balance between Western and traditional

medicine. An interviewee recalled a story about needing to see a traditional healer and being denied

because it did not fit current funding requirements. If we are going to heal as a community, it appears to

be important to honour the teachings of our ʔesiggdam and ensure we can walk in both worlds. One

participant in the survey wrote about what the future of Tl'etinqox would look like and said "[the

community would be] a positive place to visit. A community is only as strong as their members. Imagine

if the women lead the way to this, to empower men to take their place in community as well" (S13). A

beautiful sentiment that about balancing roles with healing our community was also given by an

interviewee in saying that "we have to have a balancing act of everything, and that's the only way that

empowerment is going to go back as long as you have confidence in structures" (Interview 3, February

23, 2023).

Finding 5- Political Presence

Another form of balance in structures comes in the embodiment of political presence for

empowering women. There were many respondents who mentioned there needs to be more women in

political positions in the community and that men need to make space for women to lead. A common

answer to the question "What is one step we can take towards empowering women?" was having more

women in leadership. An interviewee said in terms of creating an Indian Act custom election code, the

community needs to make the decision to uplift women's participation in chief and council. There needs

to be a structure in place that ensures women are equally afforded seats on council. Another

interviewee said the "women's council needs to be the balance. They [chief and council] need to take

into consideration what the women say…don't use talk, keep using it as women have the power.

Empower the women to stand with leadership" (Interview 2, February 15, 2023). In terms of what the

community sees as a goal of empowerment is strength and resilience brought back by holding space for women to take their rightful positions as leaders in our community.

I see women in leadership. Women lead differently, they look at generations to come. They want to build a better future for their children, their grandchildren, and their great-grandchildren, [it's] not just right now. They're not looking for quick wins (S32).

Another participant said, "In today's world the governance structures and system is mainly run by patriarchs/men when a woman speaks, it is not always acknowledged" (S30). There is a call from the community for leadership to invite members to start creating something beneficial for the community. It will take many levels of governance, community members, and experts to create a governance structure that starts to mirror traditional governance structures of the Tsilhqot'in, but the data makes it abundantly clear, the path forward requires the past.

Figure 2

Most common statements throughout the survey

Theme/ Common statements	# of times mentioned
Voices needing to be heard/not being heard	25
Characterized as caretakers/mothers/child rearing/care givers	19
Listening to women's opinions/advice	17
Healing/healthy/strong community	15
Teaching the younger generation (about matriarchs, respect, empowering)	12
Politics (more women in leadership)	12

Respect (giving it or being respected	12
Concentrating on culture and traditions	12
Theme/ Common statements	**# of times mentioned**
Creating women's groups/ fostering spaces for elders/youth/women to connect	10
Safe spaces/places for women/elders/girls	8
Decisions (making them or being consulted on them)	7
Equality	7
Creating opportunities for women/educate	6
Community involvement	4
Guiding women and supporting them (giving support for empowerment)	4
It starts with leadership (recognizing women)	2
Having/seeing a better future with women empowered	2

Conclusions

There is most definitely a weaving between the overall findings and all topics are interconnected between each of the findings. We cannot empower women in the community and forget the men. We cannot empower women without education and supporting their efforts. We can only start to look at empowering women when we create a safe community that allows for the nourishment of respectful

communications and actions towards women and girls. All these aspects need to be wrapped around by healing. There needs to be healing of all the traumas our community has suffered. Maracle (1996) said,

> [W]ithout a firm understanding of what our history was before the settlers came to this land, I cannot understand how we are to regain our birthright as caretakers of this land and continue our history into the future. This understanding cannot come from the children of my generation alone. It must come from our elders' generation and the memories they cherish of their own grandmothers' words (p. 40).

The hurt and intergenerational trauma left by the legacy of Indian residential school is rearing its ugly head in forms of addiction, abuse, assault, and the disempowerment of women in our community. In connection to the research question "what steps can Tl'etinqox Government take to empower women in the community"?, and assessing the sub question of "what did traditional matriarch leadership look like for Tsilhqot'in women?", It is more important than ever to call in Elders, leaders, community members, and experts to help devise an appropriate action to change in order to answer the final sub question of "where do we start?". There are many expert change management theories out there that my community can indigenize to fit their needs. For instance, the Beckard and Harris (2009) model is adaptable into cultural formats that fit the needs of our community. Hamel and Zanini (2014) created a case about looking at long-term forever change and making change a program, not a platform. According to community views in the survey and in the interviews, it is time to make real strides towards empowering women in a tangible and authentic way. In the words of a Tl'etinqox Elder, it is time to "[get] back to being a community. Or go back to being a nation". (Interview 1, February 15, 2023). It is important for the future of our Tl'etinqox-T'ins that we find a way out of the darkness and finally start healing our community. The next seven generations depend on it.

Limitations

There were a few limitations with this ELP; however, none created a big enough barrier that I do not trust the information I am giving in this ELP. Communal knowledge is consistent among all participants, despite a few survey participants that I was not able to gauge their understanding of traditional knowledge. Traditional knowledge and knowledge of community struggles was essential to understanding how to answer the questions, and a few survey participants appeared to have a disconnect with that. There was a survey participant that disclosed they were a new member to the community and did not know much about it, so they could not nominate anyone to be interviewed. I would have liked to have a larger sample size as there were only 32 survey responses, and three interviews. I only met minimum numbers for interviews; nevertheless, I exceeded my maximum for survey responses. The research was well received and people were interested in the topic.

Originally, I wanted to engage the community on the topic as one of my methods, but because of the struggle I had getting the Research Ethics Board's (REB) approval to allow my community to keep their data, I did not have enough time to do what I originally planned. I knew that surveys would have a wide range of answers, because from my professional experience within the community, not everyone reads the questions the way they were intended. The best approach is in-person because there is an opportunity to ask and explain questions in a manner that is easier to understand.

The survey also left out Elders because it was published online. I was thankful that Elders were nominated, so they were able to be interviewed. I also realized after I published my survey, that some of my questions were too similar to each other and the participants were not able to differentiate between questions 3, 4 and 5. In the future I would ensure the questions are more differentiated. The lack of differentiation did not limit the quality of answers I received; however, it is possible that I might have received a wider range of data had I asked a different question.

It was a busy time of year and bad timing to be doing research in the community. My community was going through a chief and council election and in order to prevent compromising my research I did not push for interviews or advertise the surveys as much as I wanted to because I was also running in the election. I held back from seeking out candidates for interviews and the ones I interviewed I made clear that the interview and the project had nothing to do with elections, that, at that moment I was just a student. I had to have hyper awareness of my position not only in my profession, but the political role I played in the community. At no point did I want to compromise myself as a leader. I did not want the community to view the project as campaigning, because that had nothing to do with the project. It was a project that I cared deeply about and I wanted to succeed, but not at the cost of my ethics or the perception that I would use a topic of this importance to garner seats in an election.

The final limitation was that as Executive Director, I am at the top of the organization. The people above me are the chief and council. I had originally wanted to be accountable to the entire chief and council, with a quorum signing off on my project but was directed to have only one project partner. My chief is a very busy man. It is hard to get an audience with him for business let alone as a student, not to mention he was in the middle of preparing for his first baby, and then during the end of my research was on parental leave. Those circumstances created a limitation for me as a student. If I was able to answer to a committee chosen by the chief and council that would have been more beneficial to me, as well as freeing up my chief for his more important duties. The stipulations from the REB do not take into consideration the dynamics of Indigenous communities, and as a student I felt that I suffered because of it.

Section 6: Recommendations and implementations

The recommendations for the TGO on empowering women and girls in their community and within their organization are surprisingly attainable. It will take commitment and work; however, it is not impossible. The community ultimately wants healing and healing needs to happen concurrently within all these recommendations in order to see success. As an ever-evolving people, and with the strength, perseverance, and resilience of the Tsilhqot'in, I have no doubt that all of these are accomplishable goals.

Recommendations

Long-term change that positively impacts not only the organization, but the community as a whole, paves the way for empowering women and girls in the community. It is for this reason that I recommended a change management strategy that can effectively take into consideration all the recommendations. Throughout this research I referred to the Beckard and Harris' (2009) change model because I found that it is easily adapted and can be culturally relevant with some minor adjustments. In reality it is hard to find Indigenous specific models that meet our needs, so it is up to us as a community to decide what that change model looks like. There is no obligation to use the Beckard and Harris (2009) model, there is more emphasis on finding what works for the community. Due to time constraints, I was not able to fully delve into creating a Tsilhqot'in envisioned model that could encompass the following recommendations. I also encourage further research into an appropriate change management model and a more thorough investigation into what the community specifically wants to see for empowerment. A consideration connected to the plan would be to build accountability measures into the plan. It is widely known by professionals in the change management industry that, without accountability, there will be no action. The plan needs to be a living, breathing, working document that incorporates organizational and community buy-in to succeed. Members of the community and the organization also need to play roles in the change management process. This call for change needs to be

a community level, organizational level, and leadership level sanctioned change in order for it to work.

Recommendation 1- Custom Elections

Since there was a call for more women to be involved in community level politics, and to adhere to the calls for women to take on more meaningful roles within the community in terms of the governance structure, I recommend exploring a custom election process. This process can stipulate a certain number of seats are dedicated to women if that is what the community decides. Discussions need to happen over several sessions with community members (on and off reserve) and should be done in phases until the community is ready to vote the custom code into place. My recommendation would be to review the old proposed custom code. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, take what you need from that and leave what is not relevant anymore.

Recommendation 2- Tsilhqot'in Women's Council

In connection with politics and giving women a voice, there should be consideration from the chief and council to include the two members of the Tsilhqot'in Women's Council in regular chief and council meetings. They are not required to be voting members right away, but for now it is important for them to understand what is happening at a community level since they are negotiating and advising on a Tsilhqot'in Nation level. This could be the easiest implementation of all and could work as a first step in creating more political involvement for women in our community. There should be a commitment from leadership to meaningfully engage and involve women in politics and give women a voice in decisions that affect the community. I would also recommend there be a commitment to revisit the role of the Tsilhqot'in Women's Council members and consider giving them a bigger role within community level politics after testing out the first step of this recommendation.

Recommendation 3 – Healing

There were copious calls for healing from the community. There needs to be meaningful undertaking from leadership to prioritize healing in ways that make sense to the community. There

should be a requirement for all leadership and TGO staff to undertake trauma informed leadership

practices so that they are informed, aware, and undertake their positions from a perspective of being

trauma informed. To get movement and to start the journey, the other recommendation would be to

start with easier obtainable priorities by providing workshops on lateral violence training, trauma

training, and cultivating safe spaces. I also recommend there be a long-term strategy on bringing

together community members to discuss healthy communities and what that looks like on a community

level. From my research, there appears to be a need to focus on merging traditional values in terms of

health and healing with the westernized version as well.

Recommendation 4 – Community Safety

A notable concern was also community safety. There is a necessity for leadership to commit to

creating a safe community that prioritizes uncovering and addressing abuse, healing, and moving

forward in a community that does not tolerate abuse. Women have a desire to feel safe in their

community and want to be larger contributors to the discussions about abuse and they want to be given

a safe space to speak on those issues. This could start with the creation of an ʔinkwel and ʔetsu

(mothers and grandmothers) circle that are supported by leadership to discuss and come up with

solutions to community safety concerns. These members could also be trained to facilitate healing

circles that call in perpetrators of abuse and crimes in community, and deal with the issues at hand in

the most traditional way possible. This group could also be the deciding factor in the return of members

to the community who have committed crimes that they were incarcerated for, which limits access of

potentially violent offender to a vulnerable population.

Recommendation 5- Bringing Our Men Along

There also needs to be a plan for creating healing programs for men. The men are a part of the

community, a part of the healing process, and a part of creating cycles whether those are good or bad. It

is important that as a community, and as leaders, we pledge to bring men along with the women. It is

critical that everyone has an equal and deep understanding of the important roles everyone plays in the community, understands the balance, and respects each role. This recommendation speaks to restoring the balance within the community as well as addressing community safety concerns because men are typically the ones committing the violence. This could be accomplished by creating programs or learning opportunities that address the concerns of abuse in a gentle and non-threatening way that allows for cultural transmission to be at the forefront of the teachings. There could also be a strategy to ensure that young males are being taught these values as soon as they enter elementary school, and there is follow-through with some type of culturally appropriate young adult workshops that highlights healthy relationships and confidence building. With that being noted, it is important to bring attention back to the call for education and support for empowering women in the community.

Recommendation 6 – Cultural Development Plans

Lastly, the recommendations I made for supporting the emotional and mental growth of men can also be duplicated for women and girls. It is important to create a foundation of confidence in young women, so they know they are capable, valued, and sacred. Knowledge transmission and a concentration on cultural and traditional values needs to happen at a young age and consistently throughout their lives. It is pertinent that a Tsilhqot'in cultural development model/plan be created that nurtures the emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual balance of all Tl'etinqox-T'in and is at the center of their education. This could also include the traditional teachings of providing for their family with hunting, fishing, and trapping. These values instill pride, respect, and self-worth, it is important as Tsilhqot'in to learn these essential things. These same programs can be targeted to the women with a concentration on traditional roles of parenting, creating regalia, ceremony, and governance.

Implications

The leadership implications of my ELP findings, conclusions, process, associated knowledge product, and recommendations have highlighted the strength and resilience of our community. The

knowledge and the desire to make changes shone through the interviews and the surveys. The community did the heavy lifting by providing thoughtful, insightful, and honest answers to questions we all understand are important to the future development of our community. My hope is that this work will be of value and that a commitment to move forward on empowering women in Tl'etinqox will be taken under serious consideration. There is opportunity to explore further what empowerment looks like to the community. The detailed steps were meant to be purposeful and give TGO a good starting point.

Community members have voiced how hopeful they are about this project. They want to see action, accountability, and commitment to create a society that we all deserve to live and thrive in. The follow-through for the recommendations would be easily accomplished by hosting a change management session with staff and reiterating that these recommendations are mandated within the organization and every effort needs to be made to start addressing these concerns across all departments. Once the staff are aware of the direction prescribed by the community, then leadership can authorize the new strategy.

TGO is fortunate that Chief Alphonse recognizes the need for reinstating the matriarchs in our community. When the findings were presented to him, he was not surprised about the answers. He was surprised that there was a lack of knowledge about how much Tl'etinqox has already done towards empowering women. He was also interested in the notion that the men are being left behind, and found that to be an interesting concept that made complete sense when really evaluated the situation. Chief Alphonse said there is value in creating a better communication strategy to ensure that Tl'etinqox members are better informed in the future. He also stated a change management strategy needs to be investigated because the research on this topic was important, and he would like to see more.

It was clear that the project and the findings were well received. The fact that the commonalities around statements of disempowerment were expected, says that we all understand the

need in community to address the change. However, the decision to not implement any changes in connection to empowering women will be detrimental to not only the organization, but to the community. The organization is largely populated by women, and so is the community. There is a desperate need to start addressing the issues of disempowerment but walking the walk. It is critical that we break the cycle of abuse.

Section Seven: Summary

Traditional roles of Tsilhqot'in women were highly respected and revered. Tsilhqot'in women were not only the caregivers, but they also carried the language, the culture, and the traditions in their bloodline. It was the woman's responsibility to ensure the transfer of knowledge happened at the right times. The matriarchs were also a part of making decisions for the community and their opinions were of great importance. In traditional Tsilhqot'in society everyone had important roles, those roles were diminished by the forced assimilation and the genocide of my people according to our Elders. In terms of what the community felt would be essential in addressing the empowerment of Tl'etinqox women, we saw key themes of: education and support, community safety, respect, political presence, and healing. Our people have suffered with generations of trauma and abuse at the hands of colonization. This has directly impacted how we conduct ourselves in our community.

What became apparent during this research was that the way to move forward in our community is to look back at where we came from and try to make sense of how we can incorporate traditional and cultural values into our modern day lives. The key recommendations that were born out of this research are directly tied to traditional and cultural values of Tl'etinqox.

Recommendation 1- Custom Election

This avenue addresses the issues of inequality felt by women in community in terms of having meaningful roles in governance. The process of creating a custom election would include community consultation, where the community will outline their needs and wants in terms of creating a governance structure that makes sense to them.

Recommendation 2- Tsilhqot'in Women's Council

In connection with giving women meaningful roles in community, this recommendation is about a structure that already exists within our nation. The two members of the Tsilhqot'in women's council who are Tl'etinqox members should be granted the opportunity to sit at the community chief and

council table. If they are voting members or not, should be decided by the community, but it is essential to give them a seat at the table. These women are responsible for advocating on behalf of our community at the nation level, it should be a requirement that they understand community governance in terms of needs, goals, and outputs. There could be a future discussion in terms of giving the Tl'etinqox members of the Tsilhqot'in Women's Council more authority in the future, again that is a discussion topic for the community.

Recommendation 3- Healing

Healing is an enormous undertaking and I recommend starting small. There should be implementation of trauma informed skills especially to leadership and staff within the community. This is important because as leaders and staff, they are the people dealing with a population of people who are affected by trauma. The recommendation also takes into consideration that the leadership and staff who are community members are also affected by the same trauma. As a measure to eliminate issues of lateral violence, there needs to be training and development on trauma informed leadership. The recommendation to have regular lateral violence training is to address issues in the findings about community safety, but will also benefit the organization. There also needs to be development of a long term strategy on building a healthy community. This could encompass learning to merge traditional and western methods that honor the teachings of being Tsilhqot'in but also assist us in walking in both worlds in a good way.

Recommendation 4- Community Safety

The sentiments around community safety are about creating a safe space where women are permitted to address the issues of abuse in community and know they are supported by their leadership. Chief and council need to commit to creating those safe spaces for not only women, but for children and Elders. Tl'etinqox should be a zero tolerance zone for violence. This recommendation also suggests that creating a circle of mothers and grandmothers to address members in a culturally and

traditionally appropriate manner will benefit the community in terms of re-empowering our matriarchs.

Recommendation 5- Bringing Our Men Along

This recommendation is about healing our men. There needs to be further development support for our men in community. Men are typically the population committing acts of violence against women, it is important to teach about traditional values of respecting and upholding each other as Tsilhqot'in. There should be workshops and training on confidence building, emotional intelligence, trauma training, and critical communication skills. The men deserve to be uplifted just as much as they women. Breaking the cycle and restoring balance means becoming equals again.

Recommendation 6- Cultural Development Plans

It was said over and over that the balance is broken. It is time to find that balance. There needs to be development of a plan that creates Tsilhqot'in members from the womb to the tomb. The plan should incorporate everything needed to become a good Tsilhqot'in ancestor. These plans should be developed with Elders in the community so that there is a foot in the past and a foot in the future. It is important for us as Tsilhqot'in to leave a legacy of healing, growth, and resilience for the next seven generations.

All of these recommendations create the way to a change management plan that is culturally appropriate with mindset of empowering Tl'etinqox women in a time where our women feel invisible. The time is now. We live in an era where the path to Indigenous self-governance is being paved, and it is time we reclaim our inherent rights to be truly Tsilhqot'in by dismantling one of the biggest acts of genocide in our nation. The revitalization of the Tsilhqot'in matriarch's voice will be one of the most important acts of reclamation we ever make.

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Appendix A

Associated Knowledge Product
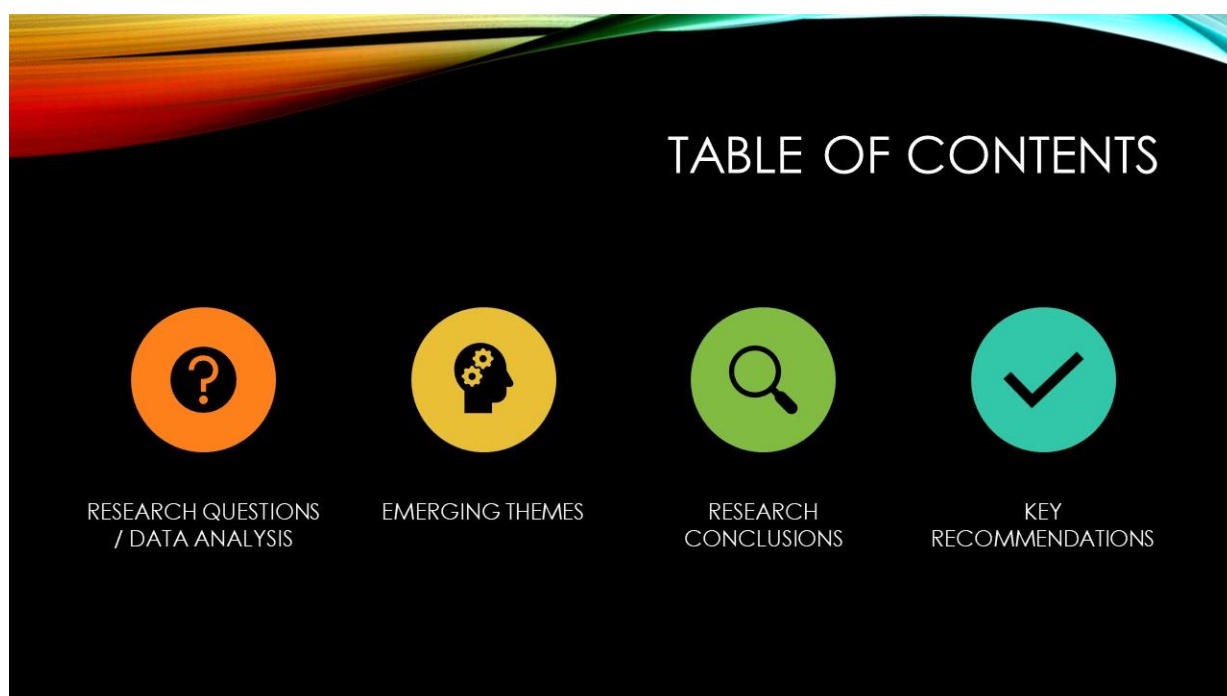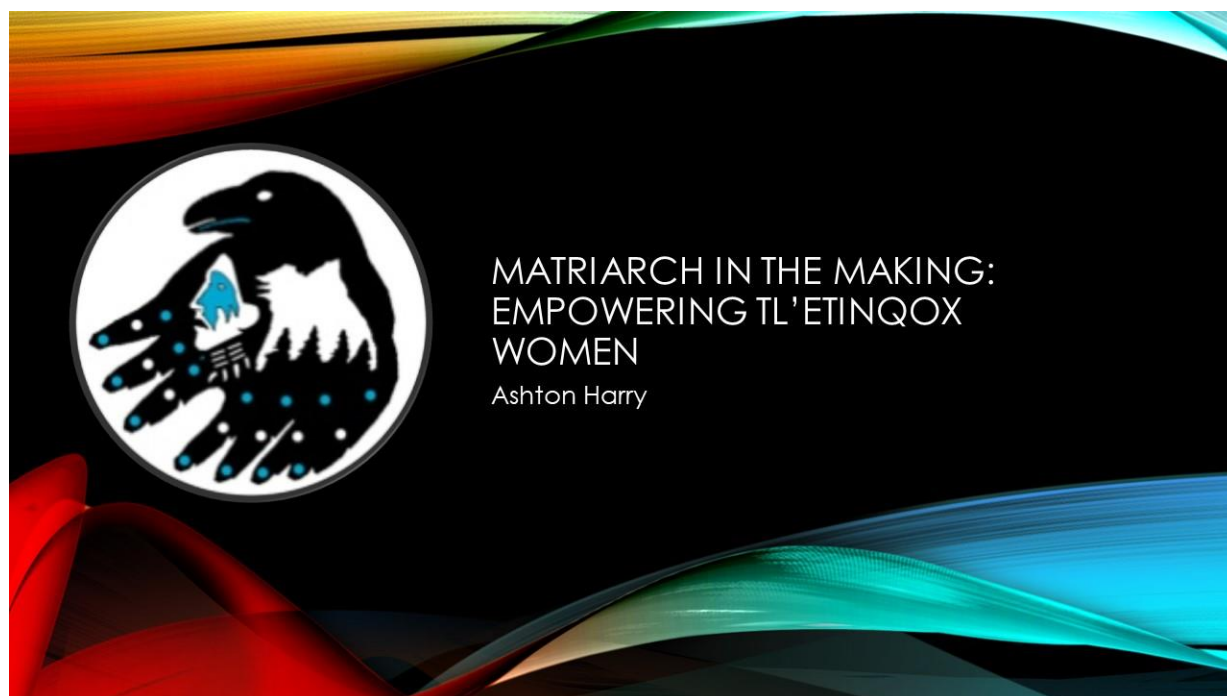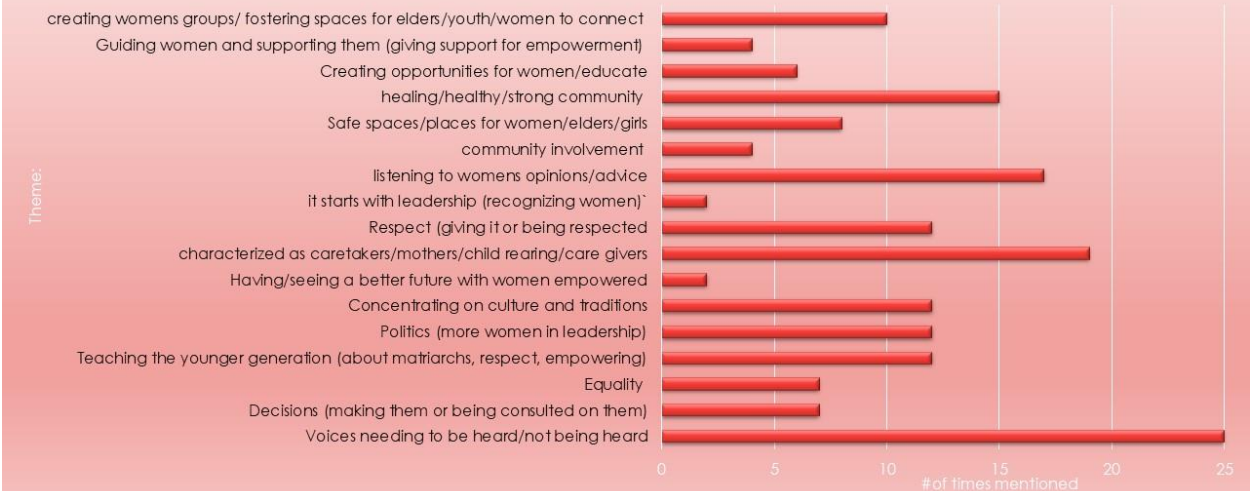
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- "What steps can Tl'etinqox Government take to empower women in the community?"

- Sub Questions:

- "what did traditional matriarch leadership look like?"

- "Where do we start?".
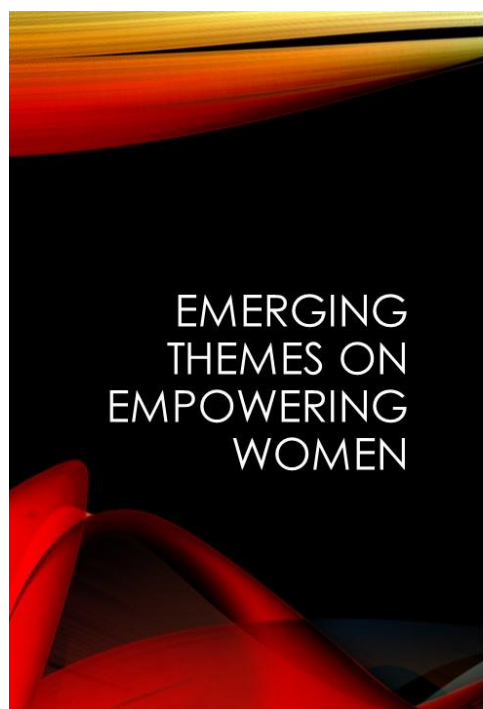
PARTICIPANTS

- Anonymous surveys
  - Given 10 days or 30 responses
    - 32 responses in 7 days.

  - Questions asked in the survey?
    - What did women's roles look like traditionally for Tsilhqot'in women?
    - What does empowering women's voices mean to you?
    - What is one step we can take towards empowering women right now?
    - What are future steps we can take to empower women and girls in our community?
    - What do you see for our community after we have learned to empower our women?

- Interviewees were selected from the nomination section of the surveys.
  - 3-5 interviews were to be conducted
  - Time restraints and lack of interest from top selected candidates left me with 3 interviews

DATA ANALYSIS

'# of times mentioned'

EMERGING THEMES ON EMPOWERING WOMEN

- Education and support
- Community safety
- Respect
- Political presence
- Healing

RESEARCH CONCLUSION

The following recommendations for Tl'etinqox Government Office on empowering women and girls in their community and within their organization are surprisingly attainable.

They will take commitment and work; however, they are not impossible.

The community ultimately wants healing, and healing needs to happen concurrently within all the recommendations in order to see success.

As ever evolving people, and with the strength, perseverance, and resilience of the Tsilhqot'in, I have no doubt that all of these are accomplishable goals.

KEY RECOMMENDATION 1

- Custom Election
  - This addresses the issue of inequality in leadership
  - The community should be consulted about the process, and it should be up to them to dictate what they would like to see within a code.
  - There is no need to reinvent the wheel, there is a document that already exists from a previous custom code journey. Use what you can from there and scrap the rest.

KEY RECOMMENDATION 2

- Tsilhqot'in Women's Council
  - There should be an opportunity to allow the two members of the women's council a spot at the leadership table. They don't need to be voting members but they should understand the inner workings of community governance since they are representing the community at the nation level

  - There could be discussion in the future about giving the women's council more authority in community and enfolding them into the governance structure
    - Recommending more research and thought go into how that would work.

KEY RECOMMENDATION 3

- Healing
  - Healing is a big undertaking and I recommend starting small
    - Trauma informed leadership needs to be a requirement for Chief and Council and staff.
    - Lateral violence training needs to be a regular occurrence within the community and in the workplace because statistically women are the ones perpetrating and receiving lateral violence
    - Long term strategy on building a healthy community
      - Merging traditional and western methods
      - Honoring the teachings of our ancestors and integrating that into a community wellness strategy

KEY RECOMMENDATION 4

- Community Safety
  - Leadership needs to commit to creating safe spaces for women, children, and Elders by creating no tolerance to violence policies.
  - There has been a call out to talk about abuse happening in communities instead of hiding it.

  - I recommend creating an ʔinkwell and ʔetsu circle that is authorized to discuss community safety matters, make recommendations to council, and that they be trained to facilitate healing circles, justice circles, and to bring in perpetrators of violence into a circle and handle matters in a culturally appropriate way.

KEY RECOMMENDATION 5

- Bringing men along
  - There needs to be further development for men in our community
    - They are typically the perpetuators of violence towards women, and we need to call them into the circle and teach them.
    - There needs to be workshops and training on confidence building, emotional intelligence, trauma training, and critical communication skills.

KEY RECOMMENDATION 6

- Cultural development plan for both men and women
  - It was said over and over again, "the balance is broken" its time to find that balance.
  - There needs to be development of a plan that for women and men that fosters traditional and cultural knowledge, but also balances walking in both worlds.
  - These plans need to be created with the future mindset of becoming good ancestors for our people and leaving a legacy of healing, growth, and resilience for the next seven generations.

MATRIARCHS IN THE MAKING: EMPOWERING TL'ETINQOX WOMEN BY: ASHTON HARRY

SUPERVISOR MIKE ATKINS
ROYAL ROADS UNIVERSITY
Sechenalyagh!

Appendix B

Interview and Anonymous Survey Questions

1. What did women's roles look like traditionally for Tsilhqot'in women?

2. What does empowering women's voices mean to you?

3. What is **<u>one</u>** step we can take towards empowering women right now?

4. What are future steps we can take to empower women and girls in our community?

5. What do you see for our community after we have learned to empower our women?

Appendix C

Inquiry Team Consent Form

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for a Master of Executive Leadership at Royal Roads University, Ashton Harry will be conducting an inquiry study at Tl'etinqox Government about empowering women. You can confirm the student's registration at Royal Roads University by contacting the Program Head, **Dr. Kathy Bishop at Kathy.bishop@royalroads.ca**

Inquiry Team Member Role Description

As a volunteer Inquiry Team Member assisting the Student with this project, your role will include the following:

- provide feedback on methods and questions for the research
- provide cultural context and assist with enhancing cultural relatedness with the methods
- Assist with academically Indigenizing methods, process, and methodology in a way that serves the community
- help synthesize the data if required
- review the final report and provide feedback.

This will assist the Student and the Tl'etinqox Government's 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.

Power Over Dynamics

Understanding that you are directly supervised by the student, Ashton Harry, it is emphasized that your participation in this project is completely voluntary and you have free and informed consent. If you do not wish to be a part of the Inquiry team, there will be no repercussions (professionally or personally) and no explanation will be required as to why you do not want to participate. Your decision will be 100% respected and your employment will not be affected.

Personal information will be collected, recorded, corrected, accessed, altered, used, disclosed, retained, secured and destroyed as directed by the Student and Tl'etinqox Government, in cooperation 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 Ashton Harry, the Student.

Statement of Informed Consent:

I have read and understand this agreement. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary, and if any time I feel like the power-over dynamics are affecting my work with the student, I am free to step away with no professional or personal repercussions.

_____   _____ _____
Name (Please Print)   Signature   Date

Appendix D

Survey Information and Consent

Matriarchs in the Making: Empowering Tl'etinqox Women

Sid Sazi Ashton Harry, Se?Inkwel Eleanor Cooper, Se?etsu Victorine Stump Xinli. I currently live and work in Tl'etinqox and was raised there. I am enrolled in the Executive Leadership Masters program at Royal Roads University, and you are welcome to confirm my registration by contacting the Program Head, **Dr. Kathy Bishop at Kathy.bishop@royalroads.ca**

Purpose of the study

I grew up with stories about Matrilineal leadership from se?etsi Myles Pigeon Xinli. The purpose of my research project is to create an authentic and simple action plan that gives a basic first step to empowering women in Tl'etinqox. My research question is "What steps can Tl'etinqox Government take to empower women in the community? and my two sub questions are "what did traditional matriarch leadership look like?" and "Where do we start?".

The survey asks five questions on empowering women in Tl'etinqox. The survey also asks you to please recommend a knowledge holder in the community that you wish to be personally interviewed on the topic. The top 5 community members nominated will be asked if they would like to participate. You are allowed to nominate yourself as well.

Sponsoring Organization

Tl'etinqox Government is my sponsoring organization, meaning the research I am collecting and the action plan I create is for them.

Inquiry team and Supervisor

My inquiry team is made up of two people. Melanie Johnny and Dr. Mitch Verde. I chose these two because of the expertise they can lend to this project. Mrs. Johnny is a cultural knowledge keeper and can ensure that I am following proper protocol within my methods. Dr. Verde has a research background and can validate my methods, review my report, and ensure I am asking the right questions to get the results I am looking for. The inquiry team will also review the final report before it is submitted to the university. My RRU report supervisor is Mike Atkins at atkinsmf@gmail .com.

Confidentiality and security of data

For the survey portion of the research, please note that your valuable ideas and opinions will appear in the report itself. However, any connection to your personal identity such as your name will be strictly confidential. Results will be gathered, and no comments will be directly attributed to you. While it is very unlikely, Survey Monkey, the format this survey is being carried out on, carries a possible risk in that data contained on U.S. servers or connected to a U.S. company are subject to the Patriot Act and may be accessed by U.S. authorities.

Sharing results

In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for my Masters in Executive Leadership. I will also be sharing my research findings with Tl'etinqox Chief and Council. I will also offer to share my report with any participants who wish to read the report.

RRU Ethics Approval

This research project has been approved by the RRU Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethicalreview@royalroads.ca.

My Contact

If you have any questions about this research inquiry, please contact me at any time. Ashton Harry, 778 267 6001, ashtynlacey@gmail.com

Consent and Voluntary Participation

By completing this survey you are providing your free and informed consent for your answers to be used in my report in anonymous format. This survey is completely voluntary, and you are under no obligation to participate.

Appendix E

Interview Invitation

Hunilhta'h,

(Name) this letter is written to you in hopes that you would be interested in participating in my master's research project. I am hoping to explore the question of "What steps can Tl'etinqox Government take to empower women in the community", I released an anonymous survey to the community and asked for the members to nominate someone they thought would be helpful to the topic of the project, and you are someone the community felt was knowledgeable on the topic of traditional leadership and empowering women.

I am humbly inviting you to participate in this research and add to the important topic. You are not required to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without any judgement.

I am completely flexible and can arrange a time that works with your schedule to meet with you. I am open to this being in person or through the telephone.

The questions are listed below so you have time to gather your answers on the topic. The interview is more of a conversation, and I want to follow a "story-telling method" so you are able to speak freely.

1. What did women's roles look like traditionally for Tsilhqot'in women?
2. What does empowering women's voices mean to you?
3. What is **one** step we can take towards empowering women right now?
4. What are future steps we can take to empower women and girls in our community?
5. What do you see for our community after we have learned to empower our women?

I realize that due to our relationship within the community, you may feel compelled to participate in this research project. Please be aware that you are not required to participate and, should you choose to participate, your participation would be entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice.

If you do not wish to participate, I do not require any explanation and your choice will not affect our relationship (personal or professional) in any way.

If you are interested, please let me know by _____ so I can organize a date, time, and place for us to meet.

Covid Safety Protocol:
I am fully vaccinated, and in an effort to keep you safe, I will conduct a rapid test before any face-to-face meeting (if you choose that method). If you are feeling sick, or have any symptoms of cold/flu/covid 19 please let me know right away and I am happy to reschedule.

Please review the consent form attached and have that completed on or before our scheduled interview
Sechenalyagh,

Ashton Harry
778 267-6001
ashtynlacey@gmail.com

Appendix F

Interview Information and Consent Form

Matriarchs in the Making: Empowering Tl'etinqox Women

Sid sazi Ashton Harry, Se?Inkwel Eleanor Cooper, Se?etsu Victorine Stump Xinli. I currently live and work in Tl'etinqox and was raised there. I am enrolled in the Executive Leadership Masters program at Royal Roads University, and you are welcome to confirm my registration by contacting the Program Head, **Dr. Kathy Bishop at Kathy.bishop@royalroads.ca**

Purpose of the study

I grew up with stories about Matrilineal leadership from se?etsi Myles Pigeon Xinli. The purpose of my research project is to create an authentic and simple action plan that gives a basic first step to empowering women in Tl'etinqox. My research question is "What steps can Tl'etinqox Government take to empower women in the community? and my two sub questions are "what did traditional matriarch leadership look like?" and "Where do we start?"

How your name was selected.

This study consists of two parts, the first is a survey to Tl'etinqox community members asking for their ideas on empowering women in the community and the second is to do five personal interviews. In order to identify five participants to be personally interviewed, the survey asked participants to nominate either themselves, or other members of the community that they believe should be personally interviewed for this topic. I am approaching you as one of the top 5 nominated community members to see if you would wish to be personally interview for the project.

Honoraria

It is customary to provide a gift to the participant as a way of honoring their time to the project. For the time you provide to the project, you will be gifted with a $50 gift card to a store of your choice.

Your answers and stories would identify you

While the survey itself was confidential, the five interviews will not be. We would like your name to be attached to these interviews. While I have identified a number of questions for the interviews, I wish to hear your stories that in turn help to answer these questions. Your answers and stories would appear in my report. Further the raw data would be housed in the Tl'etinqox Government office for future use.

Sponsoring Organization

Tl'etinqox Government is my sponsoring organization, meaning the research I am collecting and the action plan I create is for them.

Inquiry team and Supervisor

My inquiry team is made up of two people. Melanie Johnny and Dr. Mitch Verde. I chose these two because of the expertise they can lend to this project. Mrs. Johnny is a cultural knowledge keeper and can ensure that I am following proper protocol within my methods. Dr. Verde has a research

background and can validate my methods, review my report, and ensure I am asking the right questions to get the results I am looking for. The inquiry team will also review the final report before it is submitted to the university.   My RRU report supervisor is Mike Atkins at atkinsmf@gmail.com.

Transparency: Power Over and Conflict of Interest

There is a perceived "power over" in terms of what the University considers to be power over dynamics. The fact that many of my participants as well as my advisory team could end up being current staff of Tl'etinqox, there is stipulation that a researcher cannot have "power over" participants. As I am the Executive Director and a member of Chief and Council and the power over is referring to participation in this project, based solely on my position within the community, all participation must be completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any point.

The conflict-of-interest portion of my research would be that I am a Tl'etinqox woman in leadership, who holds high values towards matrilineal leadership, and I am someone who aspires to be the chief someday. This perceived conflict of interest could read that I am using this research to garner support and that because this project is about women in leadership it could be perceived that I am using this research to support my career path within the community. However, as a Tl'etinqox member who was raised by grandparents who taught me the values of being honest, trustworthy, respectful, and to lead with wisdom, I know better than to try and leverage our culture and traditions to support my endeavors. I will in no way compromise the stories of my people to fit my narrative.

I completely understand and respect everyone's choice to not participate. There will be no threat to your position within the organization, our relationship, or your reputation should you choose to not participate. I will not even inquire as to why you do not want to participate.

Sharing results

In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for my Masters in Executive Leadership. I will also be sharing my research findings with Tl'etinqox Chief and Council. I will also offer to share my report with any participants who wish to read the report.

RRU Ethics Approval
This research project has been approved by the RRU Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Ethics at ethicalreview@royalroads.ca.
My Contact
If you have any questions about this research inquiry, please contact me at any time. Ashton Harry, 778 267 6001, ashtynlacey@gmail.com

Consent and Voluntary Participation

Consent to participate in the interviews is completely voluntary. I realize that due to our relationship within the community, you may feel compelled to participate in this research project. Please be aware that you are not required to participate and, should you choose to participate, your participation would be entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice.

If you do not wish to participate, I do not require any explanation and your choice will not affect our relationship (personal or professional) in any way.

By signing this form you have not waived any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

Please read the following carefully and check that you agree or disagree

Agree   Disagree

☐   ☐   I consent to audio recording during the interview.

☐   ☐   I consent to quotations and excerpts expressed by me through the interview to be included in this study, provided that my identity is not disclosed.

☐   ☐   I consent to the material I have contributed to and/or generated through collective storytelling through my participation in the interview to be used in this study

☐   ☐   I wish to review the data I have contributed and affirm its correctness before it is put into the final report

☐   ☐   I consent to the Tl'etinqox Government archiving the raw data (transcripts, notes,

and audio) in a password protected system for the use of future generations.

In the case that you are not comfortable with Tl'etinqox Government archiving your data, you are free to check these boxes below:

☐   I DO NOT consent for the Tl'etinqox Government to keep any data or audio with my name or voice attached to it.
            ☐ I want this data returned to me for my safe keeping
            ☐ I want this data destroyed after the report is completed.

Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G

Journal Template

The Executive Leadership Practice I am seeking to develop is: _____

The self-inquiry question, I am asking, How can I enhance my executive leadership practice of:

_____

I will complete the following journal template after every interview and engagement session, paying particular attention to events that occurred that brought up strong emotions.

I will try to record events as close to the time they were experienced as possible.

Journal Entries

Observations (Concrete Experience)	What are the explicit (actual) and tacit experiences I encountered today in my executive leadership practice of _____ (described factually, as if each event was recorded on film)?
Reactions (Reflective Observations)	How did I react emotionally to those experiences? What was I thinking as the event unfolded?
Judgements (Abstract Conceptualizations)	What insights did I have and what judgements did I make based on those experiences and reactions? What theory or literature that can I link to my experience?