

YOU ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT LEADER IN YOUR ORGANIZATION:  
TOWARDS A SHARED LEADERSHIP MODEL

By

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We accept this thesis as conforming  
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## ABSTRACT

This action research study examined how developing a shared leadership model (SLM) would benefit a multi-site, multi-program, human services organization. McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Association's (McMan), mission, vision, and values imbue a philosophy supported by current leadership theory. McMan's growth at the frontline is disproportionately large when compared to growth at the traditional leadership levels, so the opportunity for implementing shared leadership is significant. In reviewing the literature I found that there has not been much research until recently into shared leadership models, but what does exist confirms that SLMs lead to improved staff retention, commitment, accountability, satisfaction, and performance. In using an exploratory approach to action research, I gathered qualitative data by sequentially interviewing small groups of directors, managers, supervisors, and frontline staff in one of McMan's programs.

DEDICATION

For you, Mom and Dad, who, by your love, sacrifice, and your way of being in the world, gave me a chance, along with the skills I would need, to do anything I want in this life.

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## CHAPTER ONE: FOCUS AND FRAMING

### Introduction

I am a Quality Improvement Resource Specialist for a very large, hierarchical, multi-site, multi-program, human services organization spread across the province of Alberta. My role is to assist individual program managers to measure program effectiveness and implement quality improvement processes. The programs include foster care, group care, in-home family support, community youth work, protection for children abusing drugs, and supported independent living. The many programs and geographically separate sites are currently brought together by: monthly manager meetings, policies and procedures, accreditation standards, service delivery theory and practice, and strategic planning. The major stakeholders include a client base of children between the ages of birth to eighteen and their families, the regional Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSA) who provide the majority of our funding, and the community itself.

Through the knowledge acquired in the first seven courses of the Master of Arts degree in Leadership, and from observations, conversations, and studies in my own life, I have developed a passion about the concept of leadership, and a strong interest in influencing the people working within the systems and organizations around me in enhancing their leadership views and practices. In my organization senior managers are typically considered to be the leaders. In 14 years, I have rarely heard supervisors, and almost never frontline staff, talked about when discussions about leadership took place. More and more people in organizations are realizing that leadership sharing is necessary to achieve long-range objectives (Yukl, 2006). My definition of shared leadership, as collected from various sources in the literature, is a coordinated, purposeful, voluntary,

vertical, and horizontal distribution and acceptance of decision-making, influence, and responsibility (Caress & Scott, 2005; Steinheider, Wuestewald, & Bayerl, 2006; Yukl, 2006).

My research question is: How might McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Association develop and make recommendations toward implementing a shared leadership model? Three sub-questions are:

1. What is the managers and frontline staff's current perception of shared leadership?
2. What will a shared leadership model look like in this organization?
3. What structures and processes are needed to support a shared leadership model for this organization?

#### The Opportunity

In our organization there is an abundance of creativity, intelligence, expertise, and life experience, and there is currently no process for leadership development for all levels of staffing. As the organization's lower levels grow disproportionately to the identified senior leadership, a shared leadership model becomes even more important. The opportunity that exists right now is exciting. I am in a unique position to conduct an action research project, as, in addition to my role in quality improvement, I am an agency service delivery trainer who has been practicing for 14 years and has positive relationships with many people in key positions in the agency. The organization is facing a potentially significant senior leadership change in the next five years, so the timing is perfect for me to "create a sense of urgency about the need for change" (Yukl, 2006, p. 178).

Many aspects of this action research project have proved challenging to me. The size of the organization, combined with the relatively short period of time to complete the project could have created resistance, as the homeostatic nature of any living system resists change that moves too fast (Senge, 1990). The size of McMan Youth, Family, and Community Services Association (McMan) did not, in fact, create any resistance for me. The challenge was to keep a tension, or connection, between the realities of what was happening and the vision for the project, which would have required regular self-exploration and the implementation of continual feedback loops. The motivation and perseverance required to maintain and nurture these loops presented a significant challenge, and I did lose the tension between the reality and the vision occasionally when I had to wait for long periods of time to get started. Finally, because I am heavily invested in my organization, and because of my bias about leadership, it was very important to explore my objectivity with others and myself. My bias is that shared leadership is more effective than non-shared leadership, and I had to continually reflect on how my bias was affecting my ability to reserve my judgement, particularly when I came across participants that looked at shared leadership differently than I. In addition, I can be overly invested in the personal growth of others, which could have had detrimental effects on the people, the project, and the organization itself (Senge, 1990). My need to help others grow surfaced occasionally in the form of giving feedback about my observations of staff meetings and in sharing my opinions and knowledge about leadership, both of which were received well.

### Significance of the Opportunity

If this organization builds and implements a shared leadership model, the benefits to the clients, employees, and funders will be immense. People work for what they create (Wheatley, 2006). Individual employee and organizational growth will occur (Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 1999). Employee engagement and retention, through a sense of shared vision, will be enhanced (Senge, 1990), and clients will benefit from increased frontline awareness, expertise, and job satisfaction (Henderson-Loney, 1996; Walker, 2001). Through sharing the knowledge gained from this action research project, the regional CFSA will have increased confidence in allowing relatively unknown people to protect and enhance the development of children in the CFSA's care. From sharing the results of this study, other organizations will benefit from the knowledge acquired, and may be more likely to pass on their own knowledge, creating a ripple effect of collaborative practice and community building (Wheatley, 2006).

On the other hand, not engaging in this action research project and maintaining the status quo will probably have no ill effect, but we would not, however, remain static. Chaos theory tells us that change is inevitable (Wheatley, 2006). The agency will change, but by not doing anything differently, we leave change to chance. Wheatley writes that by not sharing leadership, the destruction of "individual and collective vitality" (p. 25) could occur. A few people in my organization will resist change, and believe that we are, and always have been, doing an excellent job. Somerset Maugham (as cited in Senge, 1990) maintains, "Only mediocre people are always at their best" (p. 153). Senge sums up the consequences of not doing this project when he comments that mediocrity is the price of

doing nothing. With a possibility of potential harm to human beings, mediocrity is not acceptable.

### Systems Analysis of the Opportunity

If the timing and pace of this action research project is relatively accurate, most of the systems, both external and internal, should have enhanced, rather than hindered, the project. I believe that for the most part, this has been true, with the exception being the anxiety and stress created by the economy and the resulting lack of qualified employees. Externally, the CFSA, the government body that funds the majority of our programs, has recently put forth a grant that supports contracted organizations to build leadership capacity. That knowledge alone has created excitement and interest in leadership. The structure of contracts that McMan has with the CFSA does not currently support a proportional increase in senior management positions (D. Frazer, personal communication, February 19, 2008) to adequately address the growth at the program level. In an inadvertent manner, the bottom-heavy funding allocation supports the need to build a shared leadership model, and as the workload becomes increasingly heavy for upper management (Yukl, 2006) a distribution or sharing of the leadership becomes paramount.

The Commission of Accreditation for Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), our new accreditation body, brings a significant change in the way McMan will have to conduct business. For program managers, higher standards in new areas have already created a sense of urgency and in some cases, a feeling of being overwhelmed. There will be some areas of forced organizational change, in particular quality improvement and information management, and health and safety (Commission on Accreditation for Rehabilitation

Facilities [CARF], 2009). Based on my experience with McMan in going through accreditation reviews, and compounded by the fact that this will be the organization's first experience with CARF, I can prepare for the eventuality that this proposed research study could be profoundly affected by the CARF survey. The preparation for the survey was going on throughout the full course of my research project, and definitely interfered with certain participants' ability to meet with me in a timely manner. What I cannot speak to is how my research results were impacted by the CARF survey. One of the potentially positive re-enforcers is the section in CARF's standards that speaks solely to leadership. These standards have influenced our organization to initiate different types of discussions about leadership.

In Alberta, the booming economy has led to a severe staffing shortage. McMan programs, across the board, are suffering from the lack of ability to hire and retain quality staff. There are so many jobs available that employees have more choice and tend to go where the money is greater. Managers and supervisors in our organization are visibly having a difficult time focusing on quality improvement because, in some cases, they are forced to fulfill frontline tasks, and in rarer cases, they are shutting down critical program functions because they have no staff. The reality of the staffing issue in Alberta could have a significant impact on my proposed project, particularly the action piece, if McMan leaders can only focus on current crises.

Globally, interest in improving leadership skill and capacity is evident (Grove, 2005). Grove summarizes the findings of a five-year research project that surveyed 72,000 middle managers around the world with the intent of finding out about worldwide leadership beliefs and practices. Changes in the workplace from the autocratic

management styles from the days of the industrial revolution, and emerging demands from employees in having a say in their work lives indicated a need for a shared leadership approach (Henderson-Loney, 1996). I myself have had many conversations about internationally based graduate and postgraduate leadership programs that are gaining more and more recognition.

Internally, the organization is regulated by policies that support a hierarchical framework of decision-making and communication. The grievance procedure and appeal process, for example, regulates that communication follow a vertical process through the chain of command (McMan Youth, Family, and Community Services Association [McMan], 2008). The human resources advisory committee on the other hand, distributes information sharing and decision-making on a more lateral level. Most of the human resources advisory committee participants are frontline staff. The grievance procedure creates resistance to a shared leadership model, while the human resources advisory committee tends to support it.

McMan's service delivery model supports a collaborative philosophy of working within and without the organization (Sheppard & Smith, 2002). This philosophy of working with people, both as individuals and groups, closely mirrors the collaborative nature of action research (Stringer, 2007) and could serve as a positively influencing system.

Individuals, social groups, work groups, programs, frontline teams, supervisory teams, and management teams all exert systemic influence. Some of these systems supported the project and some resisted. Each system's reaction was most likely dependent on the level of threat perceived by those within that system (Wheatley, 2006).

An individual's choice to participate, or not participate, could have impacted this project, as could their attitude. All participants with the exception of one chose to participate, and maintained incredibly positive attitudes towards the subject matter. Work groups and sub-committees could have potentially been working at cross-purposes to the action research project, or could have, depending on the scope or urgency of the group, created a timing conflict. Neither of these happened, and in fact two separate, unrelated leadership training sessions occurred which increased the leadership dialogue in the agency. Finally, the social groups, or self-organizing systems, had the potential to provide the largest barrier to this action research project, because they were not supposed to exist according to organizational charts and policies, and, therefore, might not have been visible. One of these social groups, or cliques, formed in response to the threat of another system (Wheatley, 2006) and did create some tension between research participants. As someone who is firmly entrenched in the organization and who has an opinion and strong bias against these types of groups, I needed to be extremely sensitive, tactful, and self-aware when mentioning or not mentioning these systems.

The majority of the supervisors, managers, and directors have been with McMan for 10 years or more, a fact which probably contributes to the homeostatic, or change-resisting, nature of an older and larger system (Senge, 1990). Senge likens this type of organization to an ocean liner, something that requires either immense force or strategic leverage to turn.

To conclude the systems analysis, it is important to note that the support of this project by the senior management, and the collaborative nature of action research (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005; Stringer, 2007), greatly enhanced the ability of the

organization to deal with most forms of resistance, as did truthfulness, openness, and transparency by me, the researcher (Senge, 1990; Yukl, 2006).

### Organizational Context

McMan has experienced tremendous growth in the last 15 years. Despite the growth, the senior management numbers have remained relatively the same. Their jobs have become increasingly heavy, and it makes sense that they cannot provide the same level of support as they could with an agency a quarter of the size. As these numbers are not likely to change, and growth seems inevitable, a shared leadership model becomes significantly more important.

McMan's (2008) mission is to support individuals and their families to develop skills and supports to function effectively as members of their communities. McMan's vision is to provide leadership in the community and to strive for learning, quality, and service excellence at all levels of the organization. McMan values commitment, respect, trust, empathy, and genuineness. These values are all recognized globally as important to leadership (Grove, 2005). The collaborative theme behind McMan's service delivery philosophy fits nicely with the collaborative nature of action research (Stringer, 2007). McMan's five-year strategic plan includes a goal of having the organization seen as a leader in the community (McMan, 2004).

McMan was established as an alternative group care program in Edmonton in 1975 by four community college students and currently employs over 1,200 people and provides a wide range of human services to the majority of Alberta. In Edmonton, McMan has an in-home family support program, a group care program, a foster care program, a supported independent living program, a teenage drug rehabilitation program,

an alternative school, clinical services, and a program that supports people with developmental disabilities. North of Edmonton, there are a number of smaller communities to which McMan provides similar services. Although McMan is a province-wide service provider I will be focusing only on the group care program in the Edmonton region.

McMan recently invited supervisors, managers, and directors to participate in a two-day appreciative inquiry, modeled after Cooperrider's (as cited in Coghlan & Brannick, 2005) process of discovery, dream, design, and destiny; at this inquiry, leadership was one of four central themes. The findings have not been used at this point in time, but it was experienced as a mostly positive, inclusive, and helpful process. Piggybacking on this workshop could have optimized the timing, and, therefore, the contribution to the potential success of the project. The workshop had not been followed up on and half of my participants were not attendees so no piggybacking actually happened.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction

In order to critically evaluate different shared leadership models (SLMs) and theories in the literature, I needed to understand what shared leadership is and what current scholars have been saying about the benefits and drawbacks. I also needed to know what a SLM looks like and how it is evaluated.

We cannot share leadership if we do not have individuals capable of accepting it. A large part of sharing leadership is developing leadership capacity in other organizational staff. I searched the literature to find out how successful organizations have developed leadership capacity, how they have dealt with barriers, who they have targeted, and, lastly, why they chose to do so. It appears that building leadership capacity requires at least two individuals (Yammarino & Dansereau, 2008); a leader and a follower. Becoming a leader requires personal change. To help my organization build new leaders I needed to know whose responsibility it is to create personal change, how they go about it, and again, why they would do it.

Lastly, I needed to look at the bigger picture, or change at the organizational or systemic level. I did a thorough search of the organizational change literature to find out how other organizations prepare for and cope with change, what sustains the change and what resists it, and what structures, processes, and people need to be in place to navigate the waters of change successfully. Finally, I took a brief look at the differences between for-profit and not-for-profit organizations to determine if the majority of the literature applied to my own organization's dealings with change.

## Shared Leadership

Shared leadership is referred to by many names: distributed leadership, collective leadership, co-leadership, blended leadership, shared governance, and shared power. Until very recently, the 1990s and early 2000s, most leadership research focused on individual characteristics, traits, skills, and effectiveness as opposed to group properties (Miller, Walmsley, & Williams, 2007; Yukl, 2006). My own life experience leads me to believe that most people, when they talk about leaders, are referring to individual people in positions of influence or power. The position seems to make the leader. Gronn (as cited in Carson, Marrone, & Tesluk, 2007) sees individual and shared leadership as not being mutually exclusive, but rather as being two end points on a continuum. Like leadership, shared leadership has many definitions.

In most of the definitions I have seen regarding leadership, three components are usually evident: a leader, one or more followers, and an intention of change. Yukl (2006), in comparing and contrasting many definitions, sees leadership as “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives” (p. 8). In the literature I reviewed regarding shared leadership and SLMs, shared decision-making, or the sharing of power, was the most common element (Caress & Scott, 2005; Steinheider et al., 2006). Influence sharing (Steinheider et al., 2006) and distribution of leadership (Carson et al., 2007) were also important elements of shared leadership. Caress and Scott and Henderson-Loney (1996) agree that shared leadership is a process, and not a one-time phenomenon.

From a slightly different perspective, shared leadership can be looked at as an individual's contribution to the larger group (Hoegl & Menthel, 2007). Rather than sharing leadership in a group, a member pursues individual goals that meet the greater goal of the group. Conversely, a member proactively follows the leadership of other members of the group to achieve group goals. Hoegl and Menthel refer to the former as mutual influence and the latter as proactive followership. Denis, Lamothe, and Langley (2001) view what they call strategic leadership as "a collective phenomena to which different individuals can contribute in different ways" (p. 810). Based on the above, I see shared leadership as a coordinated, purposeful, voluntary, vertical and horizontal distribution and acceptance of decision-making, influence, and responsibility.

The reasons for sharing leadership or implementing a SLM are many and meaningful. The traditional top-down or solo leadership approach of the industrial revolution does not make sense anymore, given the increasingly complex world, the demands of employees to have a say in what affects them, and the incredible demands of time placed on people in leadership positions (Goews, 1999; Henderson-Loney, 1996; Yukl, 2006). In my own organization, managers and supervisors are vocalizing a need to change the way we are doing things to adapt to the demands and expectations of the upcoming generation. Sharing power, influence, and decision-making is necessary to stay competitive (Henderson-Loney, 1996).

In recent research, shared leadership has been shown to increase empowerment, collaboration, decision-making, accountability, improve client outcomes (Miller et al., 2007), and increase overall effectiveness (Angles, 2008; Miller et al., 2007). Increased job satisfaction, improved communication (Walker, 2001), and a decrease in staff

turnover (Henderson-Loney, 1996) were some additional positive outcomes. A heightened sense of purpose, or shared vision has been noted (Miller et al., 2007; Henderson-Loney, 1996), and organizational goals are getting accomplished (Weigl, 2005). During a two-year experience with a self-directed work team, I personally developed a significantly higher degree of engagement, responsibility, enthusiasm, and satisfaction, in addition to acquiring leadership skills. When the team disbanded, I was awarded a supervisory position. Due to this shared leadership experience, I shifted from wanting to leave the organization to being positively committed. In a different situation, if organizations are not sharing leadership and are not careful about succession planning, an individual may take skills and knowledge with them when they leave, very possibly leaving a team with no leadership to fall apart (Miller et al., 2007).

Kouzes and Posner (2002) sum up the benefits of shared leadership: “For more than a quarter-century, researchers have shown that the more people believe that they can influence and control the organization, the greater organizational effectiveness and member satisfaction will be” (p. 286). Employees will buy into the goals, visions, and working processes of an organization if they feel included. Again, as Wheatley (2006) believes, people work for what they create.

From another perspective, there can be some negatives to shared leadership. In my experience with the self-directed work team, I witnessed how a lack of trust contributed to individual groups, or cliques, being formed, with their own agendas and goals. I was keenly aware of how much longer it could take to make decisions and how a lack of patience and attention to group process could lead to poor and non-committal decision-making. As a member of a large organization that makes many well intentioned

attempts at large scale inclusion, I have seen how difficult follow-through on decision-making can be. Angles (2008) and Yukl (2006) both cite lack of trust as a barrier to implementing SLMs, and Denis et al. (2001) observe group conflict to be an impediment. Taken to extremes, an over reliance on collaboration could mean an inability or avoidance of critical decision making, and not taking charge might lead to giving too much responsibility to people who are not capable or ready (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Both Angles and Goebel, Rieger, and Steinert (2006) noted in their research that there were few incentives to take on leadership positions, and Goebel et al. found that there were concerns that having more leadership positions might even lead to a greater bureaucracy.

My preliminary search of shared leadership literature revealed very little concrete information about what SLMs looked like. Some of the models included a leadership team, or a steering committee, that was representative of all levels of staffing. Goews (1999) emphasizes the need for the group to be heterogeneous, and highly valued having a balance of learning styles. In Weigl's (2005) study, three councils of nurses were created to set organizational expectations for themselves. Berning and Johnson (2006) and Henderson-Loney (1996) both used self-assessment tools to measure personality traits and leadership skill development respectively, and Miller et al. (2007) used leadership development consultants. Yukl (2006) simply refers to the traits and skills of a leader with a socialized power orientation as naturally creating a culture of shared information, inclusion, and the development of skills and attributes. In the absence of literature regarding specific SLMs, developing leaders with a socialized power orientation might be the appropriate methodology. Yukl acknowledges that new

longitudinal research is needed to understand the benefits of leadership processes as opposed to the effects of individual leadership. If, as Henderson-Loney and O'May and Buchan (as cited in Caress & Scott, 2005) posit, shared leadership is a process, and not a one-time implementation, it makes sense that creating a SLM requires knowledge and application of organizational change theory and practice.

### Building Leadership Capacity and Personal Change

#### *Building Leadership Capacity*

“What could be more vital to a company’s long-term health than the choice and cultivation of its future leaders” (Conger & Fulmer, 2003, p. 76)? Succession planning is but one of many ways in which leadership capacity can be built in organizations, but it seems to be the method most people have at least heard of, and the method that most organizations have at least paid lip service to. I say lip service because companies have a tendency to create lists of people that will fill high-level leadership roles and have an alarming number of failures, which Conger and Fulmer attribute to not combining succession planning with leadership development: these two practices typically exist in separate silos. Conger and Fulmer believe that without leadership development, succession planning will likely fail. The key factors for leadership development and succession planning are a focus on development, identifying positions that are essential to long-term organizational health, transparency in the succession planning process, measuring progress regularly, and flexibility.

Another common method of building leadership capacity in organizations is through attendance at leadership development programs or leadership training workshops (Yukl, 2006). Simply sending individuals to workshops is not effective. The Center for

Creative Leadership in Greensboro, North Carolina, shows that many employees return from training sessions full of energy and enthusiasm only to have it stripped away by the day to day organizational operations, a result that can be remedied by combining classroom training with real-life work situations, like job-sharing, special assignments or projects, and action learning (Conger & Fulmer, 2003). Another ineffective way of measuring the results of this type of training has been simply counting the hours employees spend in training, rather than asking what was learned or what capacity has been built by the training (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2004).

It is important for organizations to show that they support leadership development if they want to flush out potentially strong leaders. Employees with leadership skills may not engage with an organization that does not openly support building leadership capacity: Organizations that consistently develop effective leaders have a culture of leadership; employees know what leaders should know, be and do (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2004). McConnell (2003) believes that one of the only things that separate a leader from a non-leader is that the non-leader has not been educated about leadership. Everybody simply needs to know what their company believes about leadership. In an organization that supports leadership development, potential leaders will let themselves be known. “Most of the time we do not find leaders: rather, they find us” (McConnell, 2003, p. 364). In a time where leaders are recruited, often hand-picked, and in a time where most people seek leadership positions for self-centred reasons, it is most likely that many of our potential, highly talented, selfless leaders will remain untapped or forever unknown (McConnell, 2003). To reiterate, it is extremely important in building a SLM that organizations openly support leadership development.

Delegation is another commonly used form of building leadership capacity, although it is more positively referred to now as empowerment. Most managers would say that they practice delegation, but, unfortunately, what they are actually doing amounts to no more than assigning a task to an employee, probably one of the reasons that delegation has become a dirty word (McConnell, 2003). Some of the more effective methods of delegating are encouraging potential leaders to participate in activities that their superiors might normally do: special projects, temporary work-teams, cross-functional assignments, and job-shadowing (Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Ulrich & Smallwood, 2004). De Nils (2006) sees empowerment as motivating others to take risks and to try new things.

As discussed in the previous section, sharing decision-making was considered to be one of the main elements in developing a SLM. In a study done about shared governance implementation, Williamson (2005) concluded, “What is needed for optimal decision-making are clear aims, decision-making boundaries and responsibilities, manageable issues to address, sufficient information, adequate decision-making skills and time for reflection and evaluation” (p. 497). Clearly, delegating or sharing decision-making is not a process entered into lightly. Williamson also notes that developing leaders takes time and that patience is important. My own experience leads me to believe that there is often nervousness from upper management about the concept of sharing decision-making because of the fear of a poor outcome and their perceived responsibility.

In order to build leadership capacity in an employee, a leader needs to understand the strengths and weaknesses of that individual. Many companies use different types of tools to measure strengths and weakness (Conger & Fulmer, 2003), and yet others simply

use the relationship; an authentic, show who you are, mutual relationship (De Nils, 2006). According to De Nils, “Great Leadership begins by knowing and leveraging strengths and weaknesses” (p. 48). De Nils believes that relationship development is the most important element of any leadership model, and it is the only way to be a leader in today’s world where we do not have the social contract between employer and employee that implied the company would provide security and long-term employment in exchange for employee loyalty. This old contract still exists somewhat today and is referred to as transactional leadership, or the notion that there is an agreement that an employer will give something tangible to an employee in return for work or loyalty (Hay, 2009; Yukl, 2006). Short (1998) is another believer in relationship development: “What goes on between individuals defines what an organization is and what it can become” (p. 16).

The theory of leadership that works better in today’s world is called transformational leadership. Transformational leaders engage employees through relationships, focus on higher-order intrinsic needs, and create meaning for people in the work that they do (Hay, 2009; Yukl, 2006). Mary (2005) found that transformational leadership is related to positive leadership outcomes, which supports the notion that leaders in organizations should use a transformational leadership style to build new leaders. Leithwood (as cited in Hay, 2009) agrees: “It is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents” (p. 4). Leaders that are able to create powerful, purposeful and productive relationships are going to produce more productive, engaged, higher performing employees (De Nils, 2006). One of the common criticisms I have heard of relational leadership theory is that, although it is very nice that everyone likes each other,

there is no proof that it produces better outcomes. The actual reason for the relationship is to produce tangible results, and is accomplished through a shared understanding and sense of purpose that can best be created through that relationship (De Nils, 2006).

Kouzes and Posner (2006) talk about the power of liking your leader: “If we absolutely can’t have both liking and respect, then we’ll choose liking over respect” (p. 58).

One critical element of relationship building is listening. Leaders need to be open to the input of others. Organizations that do not allow their employees to express their opinions, that have a culture of silence, run the risk of becoming a bureaucracy, losing staff productivity due to lack of engagement, or worse, making bad decisions based on inaccurate information (Goldstein, 2005). Goldstein believes that in an organization where people are not speaking up a collusion exists between leaders and followers: there is as much a lack of listening as there is a lack of speaking up and often the two sides blame each other. Goldstein’s solution to this is to clarify which behaviours are desired and which are unacceptable.

There are a number of barriers to building leadership capacity in organizations. Some have already been mentioned. Follower styles may not match leadership styles and leadership styles might not match follower styles (Yammarino & Dansereau, 2008). Leaders may be sharing too much leadership or delegating too much responsibility which can become overwhelming (McConnell, 2003; Williamson, 2005). There may be strong leaders in the organization but they may not know what the organization believes about leadership, work in a culture of fear, or in an environment where speaking up is not supported (Goldstein, 2005; Kerfoot, 2005; McConnell, 2003). Potential leaders could be underneath weak or low-performing leaders, and their potential is never seen, resulting in

them leaving the organization (Conger & Fulmer, 2003). Lastly, lesser leaders may not be able to adapt their way of working to meet the organization's revised goals, and therefore are unable to create meaning for those that work underneath them (McConnell, 2003).

Almost everybody in an organization has the ability to become a leader (De Nils, 2006; McConnell, 2003). Failure to develop employees is "like benching a star athlete for the season" (De Nils, 2006, p. 48). Through transparency, empowerment, shared decision-making, and transformational leadership we can build a strong culture of shared leadership. Now we need to determine whose responsibility it is.

### *Personal Change*

"Organizations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning. But without it no organizational learning occurs" (Senge, 1990, p. 139). Without individuals in the organization changing, building leadership capacity is not possible. The importance of personal change is paramount to organizational change, and real change requires inner change (Goldstein, 2005). This change requires individuals to fight fears, take risks, persevere, and experiment with new behaviours. McConnell (2003) states that no matter where you fit in an organization, effective leadership starts with accepting the responsibility of leadership. As discussed earlier, it is the responsibility of the positional leaders in the organization to create a culture of leadership in which employees know what they, as potential leaders, need to know, be, and do, and it is the responsibility of individual leaders to empower others to become leaders. It is the responsibility of the learning leaders to fight fears, take risks, persevere, and experiment with new behaviours.

McCauley (2007) lists five types of challenges that employees can take on to grow as a leader: handle unfamiliar projects, lead change, embrace higher stakes and greater accountabilities, manage across boundaries, and deal with diversity. By handling unfamiliar projects employees can learn new skills and have a greater appreciation for the bigger picture. By leading change, employees can increase critical thinking skills and comfort with uncertainty. Embracing higher stakes allows them to think better and produce more under conditions of stress and pressure. Managing across boundaries, or collaborating outside of your program area allows them to learn to work with people with whom they have no authority, which can increase their ability to influence others. Finally, working with a diverse populace allows them to appreciate differences while working towards a common goal. See Table 1 for some of McCauley's concrete examples of challenges that can be employed in each of these five areas. These leadership challenges obviously need to be made available for up and coming employees intent on increasing their personal leadership capacity. It is the job of the organization to make this happen.

Personal change is a choice (Senge, 1990), and people cannot lead or make a difference if they do not have choice (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Some organizations have gone as far as implementing personal change programs where participation is not a choice (Senge, 1990). This does not generally work. In my experience, there are employees that do not want to take on any leadership responsibilities and may be afraid or uncomfortable with change. Bowe, Lahey, Armstrong, and Kegan (2003) believe that resistance to change is often inexplicable to the individual, and emphasize that examining assumptions and valuing progress rather than perfection is crucial. Senge suggests that what leaders can do is to work diligently to create a culture where personal change is a

valued part of every day life, where it is safe to express creativity, and where speaking up and challenging the status quo is expected.

Table 1. *Ways to Grow as a Leader*

Types of challenges	Concrete examples
Handling Unfamiliar Projects	Perform part of a colleague's job Represent your group on a task force Volunteer for a task that you've never done before
Leading Change	Join project team that is breaking new ground Champion a change your group has been resisting Start something new outside work
Embracing Higher Stakes	Volunteer to manage high-profile customers Chair the board of a large or highly visible community organization
Managing Across Boundaries	Seek opportunities to work with external groups Cocreate a project with someone in another function
Dealing with Diversity	Serve as a coach or mentor for people of different genders, ethnic groups, or countries Volunteer for a non-profit that works abroad

### Organizational Change

Preparing an organization to navigate change successfully is a tricky business. Moran and Brightman (as cited in Rune, 2005) define change management as “the process of continually renewing an organization's direction, structure, and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of external and internal customers” (p. 369). The literature did not appear to support any one way of implementing or coping with change, and in fact presented sometimes conflicting information about our ability to have any control whatsoever over the outcome of change projects. For example, Griffith (2002) states that

outcomes cannot be guaranteed, and that the change management industry is a fraud. Clampitt, Williams, and Dekoch (2002) talk about the need and ability to deal with uncertainty, the unknown, and the unknowable. Clampitt et al. believe that an overemphasis on planning may make outcomes even more unpredictable. Rune (2005), on the other hand, believes that measuring change is both doable and important, and Safar, Defields, Fulop, Dowd, and Zavod (2006) have gone as far as creating a model that predicts the impact of change. The literature did, however, indicate some common themes around what an organization can do to support and enhance productivity using change initiatives, to cope with the constant change the way of the world demands, and to deal with various forms of resistance.

In terms of looking at organizational change as a linear process with a beginning and an end, some similar principles emerged: (a) there needs to be an assessment of organizational readiness; (b) there needs to be a plan, or purpose; (c) there needs to be a process; and (d) the type of people in the organization need to be considered. Austin and Claassen (2008) believe that in order to assess an organization's readiness for change, five dimensions of organizational change need to be considered: (a) the types of change, either administrative or technical; (b) the degree of change, either major or minor; (c) the facilitators and inhibitors of change; (d) staff receptivity and resistance; and (e) staff readiness. Kesterson and Broome (2005) state that there are three key components to be considered: strategy, tactics, and people. Welch and McCarville (2003), in looking at ways to decrease staff resistance to change, support a similar process: purpose, process, plan, and people. Finally, Galambos, Dulmus, and Wodarski (2005) propose five principles that increase success in implementing change: (a) develop an information

sharing and feedback system; (b) prepare the organization; (c) ensure there are sufficient resources available; (d) with staff participation, develop a rewards system; and (e) use the change effort as an opportunity to prepare the organization for further efforts.

The similar themes that emerged are: preparing, or planning, for change, having a process in mind that includes the necessary resources to be successful, and preparing, including, or at least understanding, the people in the organization that can inhibit or support the change effort. Planning and purposeful intent were seen as critical (Galambos et al., 2005; Kesterson & Broome, 2005; Welch & McCarville, 2003). Tsoukas and Chia (2002) disagree somewhat. They believe that too much focus on deliberate intervention allows organizations to ignore their ever-changing nature, and that instead of focussing on outcomes they should focus on creating new ways of talking and acting.

A key part of the organizational change process was involving staff by letting them know what and why change was seen as necessary, and asking for their input (Austin & Claassen, 2008; Frahm & Brown, 2005; Galambos et al., 2005; Welch & McCarville, 2003). Frahm and Brown talk about the importance of both monologic and dialogic communication in keeping staff informed about what is going on and soliciting their feedback via dialogue. Monologic communication can be seen as one person doing the talking and is used when a corrective or controlling response is needed. Dialogic communication involves two or more people engaged in dialogue and is used to instigate change. Frahm and Brown believe that a manager's ability to shift from one form to another greatly increases the organization's ability to deal successfully with change, and greatly reduces the negative communication modality of background talk, or gossip. They add that communication competence is determined by the purpose of the act. Galambos et

al. agree: the first principle is to develop a continuous and dialogic feedback system for people likely to be affected by the change. Galambros et al. say that the majority of employees want to be kept informed by their immediate supervisors and recommend that 80% of resources be spent on helping these supervisors carry out their functions (Larkin & Larkin, as cited in Galambos et al., 2005). Keeping employees involved will increase their support for the change and address resistance and the many forms that it takes. Stensaker, Meyer, Falkenberg, and Haueng (2001) believe that this same principle is imperative in limiting the scope of change and thereby decreasing the chance of change becoming too excessive. Taken to the extreme Devos, Beulens, and Bouckennooghe (2007) found that even when jobs were being lost, people were not necessarily against change if they were given the opportunity to participate in the change process.

“When implementing organizational change, it’s vital to realize that people are the most important component of change. Without them, all of the change strategy and tactics together would accomplish nothing” (Kesterson & Bromme, 2005, p. 49). Bell (as cited in Baird, 2005), Elstak and Van Riel (2005), and Wheatley (2006) talk about the need for an organization to have an identity and for individuals to identify with that identity. Having a connection to the organization will both increase the organization and individual’s capacity for change and decrease resistance to change. People need to be prepared for change (Austin & Claassen, 2008; Kruglanski, Higgins, Pierro, & Capozza, 2007). Failing that, and failing the organization’s ability to build capacity for change in individuals, hiring a certain type of employee becomes paramount. Staff with low levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy, and staff with a definite need for a specific answer do less well with change than staff with high levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy and staff

who are action-oriented. Kruglanski et al. posit that in organizations where change is constant, employees need to be much more locomotive and have much less of a need for closure. One could assume, then, that since Tsoukas and Chia (2002) and Wheatley (2006) state that change is constant, we should only ever be hiring this type of employee. Similar to this theme of action-orientation, Baird (2005) and Ginsburg and Tregunno (2005) believe that organizations should support a culture of risk-taking.

In terms of organizational culture, certain characteristics of organizations that successfully work with change emerged from the literature. Organizations that had a history of successful changes were more likely to succeed and employed staff that were less resistant to change (Devos et al., 2007). Organizations that had a high degree of trust for upper management, and that supported the principles of empowerment, coaching and guidance, tended to succeed (Devos et al., 2007). The speed at which change happened was found to be directly linked to the success of change efforts: that is, the faster an organization was able create a vision for staff and take action, the more likely the change would occur (Murray & Richardson, 2003). Bolman and Deal (1997) caution against too much speed in that we can forget to grieve the loss of that which was. Murray and Richardson believe that most organizations are likely to attend to change after the day to day work is done, which is why change efforts consistently fail. Murray and Richardson find that an expedited change process is absolutely necessary to cope with today's fast-paced world. Ginsburg and Tregunno (2005) found that the more substantive the change, the more the sustainability of that change. Stensaker et al. (2001) believe in limiting the scope of the change. Austin and Claassen (2008) agree in that they believe that the more radical the change, the more fear and resistance can be created. Austin and Claassen also

found that, surprisingly, the size of the organization seemed to have very little to do with the success or failure of a change effort. Kruglanski et al. (2007), not surprisingly, found that organizations with positive cultures helped employees deal with change. Lastly, and more importantly, because its implications are directly related to my research project, Ginsburg and Tregunno recommend that a culture of shared leadership be developed.

Stensaker et al. (2001) caution that there are consequences of pushing excessive change on individuals in organizations, such as frustration, anger, dissatisfaction, and stress. In a worst-case scenario employees will ignore the change initiatives.

Interestingly, and again because it was related to the focus of my research project, excessive change was found to exist primarily at the mid to lower levels of the organization. Fortunately, leading change need not be top-down (Baird, 2005). Human service organizations in particular need to pay attention to the drawbacks of excessive change because they are constantly subject to external changes of the social environment and politics (Galambos et al., 2005).

In terms of the differences between profit and not-for-profit organizations when dealing with change, Austin and Claassen (2008) believe that the strategies and processes needed to be in place have similar implications. The fact that there is not much literature comparing the two may not be of critical importance.

### Conclusion

Shared leadership has many names, but there is not much literature available on the subject. It is a process, and not a one-time phenomenon, and needs to happen in organizations to meet the demands of the workforce today. It has been shown to increase worker retention, satisfaction, productivity, and most importantly, client outcomes.

Building leadership capacity in individuals in the organization is critical because positive organizational growth cannot happen without it, and it is vital to the sustainability of the organization itself. The responsibility for individual growth is twofold: it is the responsibility for the positional leaders within the organization to provide opportunities for growth and to create a culture that supports it. It is the responsibility of the individual to make the changes.

The organizational change literature is vast and varied, but there were certain themes that emerged when looked at: having a purpose, a process, and involving the people were three of them. There were certain cultural conditions that, if present, contributed to the chances of successful change efforts, such as organizational trust, competence, expedience, and experience. There did not appear to be any significant differences when applying these themes or conditions to for-profit and not-for-profit organizations.

In order to find out what my organization thinks about a SLM I needed to know why it is important to have one and what questions I needed to ask. In order to make recommendations for implementation I needed to know what current leaders in the organization need to do to prepare future leaders for accepting leadership responsibility and what those future leaders need to do themselves. By reviewing the literature around organizational change I can talk about what the implications are for the organization in undergoing the implementation of a SLM.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

## Research Approach

My research question is: How might McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Association develop and make recommendations for the implementation of a shared leadership model? For this major project, I took an action-based approach to research. Coghlan and Brannick (2005) explain that action research involves a collaborative relationship between the researcher and the researched, a solution to a problem, and a generation of new knowledge or a contribution to science. Stringer (2007) adds that action research focuses on people's life experiences, how they interpret acts and activities, and how they make meaning of these. Kurt Lewin (as cited in Coghlan & Brannick, 2005), long considered the founder of action research, believes that we can only understand something when we act to change it. By taking an action research approach, I had hoped to initiate a positive change in leadership practices in my organization.

Action research is a strong philosophical fit for my organization. Our way of working with each other and our stakeholders is highly collaborative. The theme of collaboration is written throughout our agency literature, from policy manuals to service delivery training guides to program brochures. McMan is currently going through an accreditation change process, so understanding and implementing a SLM could support that transformation in a positive way.

There are many variations of action research cycles. The cycle I adopted for this project was a quality improvement cycle designed by the Canadian Outcomes Research Institute (2008) consisting of planning, doing, checking, reflecting, and acting, followed

by subsequent iterations of the same cycle (see Appendix A). The initial, or macro, iteration of this cycle involved planning the research process, interviewing the participants, observing the staff meetings and encouraging the managers to write down, or journal, their thoughts on their weekly leadership practices. I then checked the data, reflected on what it might mean, or analyzed it, and made recommendations for the implementation of a SLM. During this larger cycle, I was continually checking the research process and the data, reflecting on what it might mean, making slight changes to the research process, re-interviewing participants, adding additional participants, and planning for the next steps. These next steps are the micro-cycles.

I chose a combination of research methods to be implemented in a sequential exploratory manner. I interviewed the executive director, a director, a manager, a supervisor, a senior youth worker, and conducted a learning circle with frontline staff. I observed staff and supervisor meetings and requested that certain participants reflect on their leadership practices. I finished the research with a focus group designed to make recommendations for the implementation of a SLM in the group care program. I used a qualitative approach for this project because I was looking for perceptions of leadership practice and participants' ways of making sense of their experiences through reflection. Palys and Atchison (2008) mention sense-making and perception as actions best inquired about through qualitative research.

### Project Participants

My project participants consisted of one executive director, one director, one manager, four supervisors, one senior youth worker and three frontline staff. I conducted five interviews, one learning circle with three frontline staff, and one focus group with

one director, one manager, and four supervisors. I observed one supervisor meeting and two group home staff meetings. Three of the participants took part in both the interviews and the focus group. Two participants took part in the interviews, focus group, journaling and staff meetings. Six participants took part in the interviews, or learning circle, and the staff meetings. See Appendix B for an organizational chart of McMan Edmonton Group Care. I contacted the directors, manager, and supervisors directly, using a purposeful sampling method (Stringer, 2007). Qualitative researchers typically use purposeful sampling because it “leads to selecting information-rich cases for studying in depth (Patton, as cited in Glesne, 2006, p. 34). With all participants, I explained the voluntary nature of their participation and that all information regarding their participation would be kept confidential. I ensured them that their roles, which could make them highly identifiable, would not be separated from information gleaned from any other participants, unless otherwise consented to by them. See Appendix C for a copy of the consent form. The hard copies of all data collected were kept by a double-lock system. The director, manager, and four supervisors were also invited to be part of a focus group to make recommendations for implementation, so I informed them of my intent to establish a process that will allow the group to set privacy and confidentiality ground rules themselves, as suggested by Gerzon (2006). I chose one supervisor who is known for running a successful program and requested her participation in the interview process. I conducted a face-to-face interview with this supervisor and sent out an electronic invitation (see Appendix D) to all of her staff, with a consent form (see Appendix E) attached, inviting them to an informal learning circle. When I realized that one of the frontline invitees was in a position of power within the group, I contacted her directly and

asked to interview her independently of the learning circle. The e-mail and consent form explained how their voluntary participation would be kept confidential, how long the learning circle would last, what I would do with the information, and how I would keep my role as a Quality Improvement Specialist separate from my role as a researcher. In cases where participants were also my friends, I maintained a keen awareness of how the information was shared with me, either as a friend or as a researcher (Glesne, 2006). I also invited all participants to attend the presentation I gave at the culmination of the project.

### Research Method and Tools

The overall project goal was to develop and make recommendations for the implementation of a SLM. The initial inquiry method I used was conducting individual interviews with the directors and then the manager, supervisor, and senior youth worker during which I asked the following questions (see Appendix F): How do you define leadership in McMan? How do you define shared leadership in McMan? How have you shared leadership in the past? How have you not? How has leadership been shared with you? What leadership activities are you willing to share? What are some barriers to sharing leadership? What are some new ideas for sharing leadership?

An interview process is a method used for acquiring new insights from participants who have relevant experience (Palys & Atchison, 2008). I recorded the data on paper, and then filled in the gaps by comparing it to the audio recording of the interview. I regularly met with my sponsor to talk about the research process and the data collected to date, and reflected with her on what it might mean and how we might alter the questions or the participants to better find what we are looking for.

The data I collected from the interviews helped me form the interview format that I brought to the frontline staff in an informal learning circle. One additional question was: How would you like leadership shared with you? I sent the questions to participants ahead of time to allow them sufficient time to reflect (see Appendix G). The purpose in doing this was to reduce reactive bias (Palys & Atchison, 2008). I used the same data collection method as in the interviews with the managers.

After I conducted the interviews and sharing circle, and completed the transcription, I again reflected on the process to date, compared and contrasted it to the data, and decided I would meet again with as many of the participants as I could to check with them on the accuracy of my documentation and to allow them to add any additional thoughts about the questions I had asked. I then invited the original management participants and three more group home supervisors to participate in a focus group; the purpose of this focus group was to view and reflect on the data I had collected in the interview and learning circle phases of this research and to make recommendations for the implementation of a SLM. I used an informal focus group to facilitate this process and asked the focus group participants to record their recommendations on cue cards, which I then transferred to flipchart paper. Throughout the entire research process, I asked additional questions of participants whom I ran into in the day-to-day activities of my job, which I recorded in a journal I carried with me at all times.

I requested that the manager and the supervisor record weekly reflections on leadership practices based on specific questions I gave them in a journal (see Appendix H). Finally, I requested that I be allowed to attend weekly group home and supervisor meetings to observe shared leadership practices, which I recorded on paper and discussed

with the manager and supervisor directly after the meetings. This process occurred randomly throughout the research process.

### Conducting the Study

In late October 2008, I contacted all of the management participants in face-to-face meetings, explained the nature of my project and requested that they participate in interviews and possibly a focus group. I informed them about what my intentions were, what I hoped for, what type of questions I was going to ask, and what I would do with the information I collected. At the same time, I sent e-mail invitations to the frontline staff of the group home that I had chosen sharing the same information with them, but instead inviting them to participate in a learning circle, or an informal group interview (see Appendix D for frontline staff e-mail invitations). I e-mailed the consent form and interview questions ahead of the actual interviews (see Appendices E and F). I conducted the interviews with the supervisor, director, and manager before the end of November, and interviewed the senior youth worker and ran the learning circle in early December. I interviewed the executive director in mid-January. I recorded the conversations on paper and with a digital audio recorder. I conducted five interviews, one learning circle with three frontline staff, and one focus group with one director, one manager, and four supervisors. I observed one supervisor meeting and two group home staff meetings, and I requested that two participants record weekly reflections about leadership practices in a journal.

In my first interview, I shared a few definitions of leadership and shared leadership that I had pulled from my literature review in order to give the participant some idea of what I was looking for. In my second interview, I decided to give the

participant the option of having me read the definitions to them and, because they chose not to, citing that they did not want this to stifle their creativity, I decided to leave that portion out of subsequent interviews. Before I conducted each interview, I reiterated the precautions I would take to preserve their anonymity and protect the data I collected, and I reiterated my hope and my intentions for the project and the organization. The interviews lasted three hours on average, and two of them required several meetings to complete.

When I interviewed the group home supervisor and the group care manager, I gave them a journal and asked them to reflect on their weekly leadership practices. I collected this from them at the end of January. I also attended one supervisors' meeting, led by the manager, and two staff meetings, led by the supervisor, for the purposes of observing them and their teams and how they and their teams both exhibit and share leadership. I recorded my observations on paper. I shared the observations of the staff meeting with the supervisor and later with the staff team. I shared my observations of the supervisors' meeting with the manager much later.

In February 2009, I invited the director, the manager, the original supervisor and three others in the same program to a focus group. I contacted all of them face-to-face with the exception of one supervisor whom I recruited by phone. I explained that I would share with them some of the themes that had come up in the interview process and that I would like them to make some specific recommendations about how to implement a SLM, in the group care program, as it related to those themes. I sent consent forms to those supervisors who had not already participated and explained to them how I intended to keep their information confidential (see Appendix C for consent forms for managers). I

conducted the focus group in mid-February. Using an electronic slide show, I presented the group with a brief overview of my research questions and my methodology, and shared some of the findings as they related to four themes that I had pulled out of all the interview data. I asked the group to write down on cue cards what their recommendations for implementation were in each of the four theme areas. As they took a break, I put the recommendations up on flipchart paper. When they came back, I read out all of the ideas and asked the group to identify any mistakes I might have made in summarizing and to fill in any ideas I might have missed. I then gave each participant six adhesive dots for each theme and asked them to place them on the ideas that they thought were the highest priority, the only rule being that they could put no more than two dots on one idea. The focus group ended with a commitment for the participants to get together, when I was able to summarize the findings and add my own recommendations, for the purposes of implementing a SLM in their program, piloting it, and sharing their findings with other programs in the agency.

Throughout this process, I met with interview participants to validate the data I collected, check the accuracy of the recording and some assumptions I thought I might have made, and to give them an opportunity to add to the information they already provided. I met monthly and sometimes bi-weekly with my project sponsor and had monthly phone calls with my project supervisor, to both keep them updated and to get their feedback. I had casual conversations with most of the participants as I ran into them in hallways, meetings, and training sessions.

## Data Analysis

In all my qualitative research, I used a categorizing and coding approach to data analysis. Stringer (2007) suggests that there are six procedures for categorizing and coding: Reviewing the collected data, unitizing the data, categorizing and coding, identifying themes, organizing a category system, and developing a report framework. Glesne (2006) acknowledges that it is important to keep coding simple in the early stages, knowing that they will become increasingly more complex. Initially, I looked for word repetitions, or used the verbatim principle (Stringer, 2007). “If you want to understand what people are talking about, look at the words they use” (Ryan & Bernard, 2007, p. 2). The other simple data coding technique I used was looking for action words in the participant’s responses to the questions, for example: “What types of leadership practices do you implement now”, and “how do you currently share leadership”? I reviewed the data many times, and sorted it in many ways. When I initially looked at the data I recorded ideas or themes that showed up more than once. I actually unitized the data, or broke it into units of meaning, when I recorded the interviews, and then again when I checked the audio recordings of the interviews. I put the units of meaning into themes, based on how many participants shared the same information, and then put the themes into categories, based on types of shared leadership practices, both current and desired, and both practical and theoretical. In triangulating the data, I compared findings from interviews, learning circles, observations, the focus group, and journals. I also compared data collected from different levels of positional leadership in the organization, from the executive director down to the frontline staff.

One of the more difficult techniques I utilized was looking for missing information. Instead of identifying themes that are present, I looked for themes that were not and could not be present (Ryan & Bernard, 2007). This technique provided me with direction in reformatting the interview questions and informing me as to whether or not I needed to do more rounds of interviews.

#### Ethical Issues

Acting ethically in a research situation is a deliberate choice: different people define ethics differently. As Glesne (2006) states, “Ethical decisions are made on the basis that moral action is that which results in the greatest good for the greatest number” (p. 141). Mostly because the occasional researcher in the past acted in a way that caused harm to come to participants, regulating bodies created ethical guidelines for research involving human beings, which then became standards, which were then adopted by researching organizations like universities (Palys & Atchison, 2008). In the literature, the overarching theme of ethics in research is the protection, to the best of the researcher’s ability, of research participants from risk or harm. The Royal Roads University (2007) *Research Ethics Policy* lists eight guiding ethical principles to be followed: respect for human dignity, respect for free and informed consent, respect for vulnerable persons, respect for privacy and confidentiality, respect for justice and inclusiveness, balancing harms and benefits, minimizing harm, and maximizing benefits.

Free and informed consent includes informing participants of the voluntary nature of the research: they are free to decline to participate at any time (Stringer, 2007). The consent process involves a discussion between the researcher and the participant that informs the latter of, in as much detail as possible, what their participation will involve,

and the associated costs, risks and benefits, along with anything else a reasonable person would need or want to know (Palys & Atchison, 2008). I used consent forms (see Appendices C and E), which included as much of this information as possible, along with the ethical competencies that the participant should expect from me. In order to be collaborative and inclusive, both the participant and I signed the document. As noted by Glesne (2006), the consent process is not a one-time event, but a continual and fluid course of action that spans the entire timeframe of the study. I continually checked in with participants as to their perception of my trustworthiness and integrity, as well as their feelings of safety. I did not use research participants that were considered vulnerable, or incompetent to consent for themselves, by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [Tri-Council], 1998).

Protecting participant privacy and confidentiality is, in its most basic form, a matter of storing data collected regarding participants so that it cannot be viewed by others (Stringer, 2007). I made my records anonymous as soon as I could, as suggested by Palys and Atchison (2008). I used numbers instead of names, on the paper I recorded on and in the information (digital recordings) I stored on my computer. I followed the regulations set out by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (2000), by storing my data in a double-locked system, and the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (2000), by ensuring electronically stored data was password protected. In a more complex form, it meant taking every care to ensure participants were not identified in any type of disclosure, unless they consented to it.

Most important in all of this is that participants felt safe and were not physically or emotionally harmed. I asked participants if they felt safe, most particularly when they needed to be specific about other persons or events in order to be clear.

In respecting the guideline of justice, I treated all participants equally, regardless of their position in the organization. This was easier said than done, as managing the political environment of my own organization was tricky (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005; Glesne, 2006). I acted with integrity, and at the same time avoided political naivety (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005): That is, I acknowledged that the political environment could be a factor and paid attention to it. In order to be inclusive I ensured the interviewing of a demographically representative sample of age, experience, and position within the organization. This was a bit difficult as I used a purposeful sampling method.

Minimizing harm can best be done by adhering to the ethical principles of Royal Roads University. Knowing that research involves unpredictability and operates in an uncertain environment (Palys & Atchison, 2008), I needed to acknowledge that harm and risk could, and probably would, happen, and all I could do is my best. I dealt with risk openly and honestly, and maintained a belief that the effort I put in building authentic relationships with participants would successfully ameliorate risk situations.

Maximizing benefits was my altruistic reason behind the project, so applying a rigorous, scholarly, collaborative approach to the study was my focus. I acknowledged the people who consented to be acknowledged. Openness in sharing the results of the study was critical. I invited all participants to a presentation where I shared the findings, recommendations, implications, and lessons learned. For those that were interested, but did not want to identify themselves by attending, I agreed to let read the published

version of my thesis. Celebrating successes can be an effective way of closing the loop on relationships (Durrant, 1993), in this case the researcher–researched relationship. I believe that all these steps maximized the potential benefits.

In acting ethically, I did what I thought was right, adhered to the Royal Roads University ethical principles, maintained continual open and honest communication with research participants, and focused on minimizing risk and maximizing benefits.

## CHAPTER FOUR: ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

## Introduction

In this action research project I am trying to discover how McMan can make recommendations towards the implementation of a SLM. I will present the findings of (a) five initial and follow-up interviews with five different levels of leadership; (b) a learning circle, comprised of three frontline group home staff; (c) observations of staff and supervisor meetings; (d) reflections from journaling done by two mid-level managers; and (e) recommendations for implementation done by a focus group of four supervisors, a manager, and a director. I will give a brief description of the demographic make-up the participants, followed by an evidence-based narrative summary of four overarching themes that emerged from the data. At the end of each of these four sections I will present barriers to implementing a SLM that were discussed related to those themes, and I will list some related recommendations for implementation from the focus group and from the interview participants.

Next, I will present conclusions reached by the study findings, and support these conclusions with evidence from related literature and the findings themselves. All evidence not cited from the literature came directly from the research findings. I will conclude this chapter by describing the factors that have limited or will limit the application of the research findings and conclusions.

## Study Findings

I could not choose a representative gender sample because of the purposeful nature of my sampling method and the natural gender imbalance in the human services field. All five of the interview participants were female. One of the three learning circle

participants was male. Both journaling participants were female, as were four of the six focus group members. One of the five staff meeting participants was male, as was one of the seven supervisor meeting participants. Eight of the 14 participants had been with McMan between 10 and 22 years. The last six had been there between one and four years. Their ages ranged from 26 to 50.

I have given all participants gender-neutral names and have determined that, since only one of the interview and learning circle participants was male, and based on my findings, identifying the difference between male and female responses was irrelevant. I also separated the participants from their positions because of the highly identifiable nature of their roles and the need for anonymity. Where relevant or appropriate, I presented findings based on their position in the organization. The gender-neutral pseudonyms are: Ashley, Jordan, Kelly, Loren, Pat, Pauly, Red, Sam, and Taylor.

#### *No Secrets*

One of the themes that emerged from the data was that of both the existence and the desire for transparency throughout the organization. Kelly, in speaking about all of McMan, talked about the fact that there were no secrets in the agency. Pauly stated, “There are no secrets at our group home.” Although Kelly and Pauly did not necessarily mean transparency when they used the words “no secrets,” I thought it might capture the idea that people interviewed truly wanted to know what is going on in the organization. For the purposes of this section, transparency, or no secrets, transcends simple organizational processes and speaks to openness, integrity, good two-way communication, and information-sharing.

Openness can be seen as a leader's ability and willingness to let people see who they are, how they are, and what they do by being available and accessible. Sam believes it is extremely important to let people know who she is, and she does this through a commitment to relationship building. "If you're not able to have good relationships, you won't get a buy in, and you will have challenges. The key to our work is the relationship agreement" (Sam). She shares who she is by openly talking about her thoughts, beliefs, and feelings. She talks about an open door policy, something which I have observed first hand, and she has journalled about how important it is for her to be available: "This week has been particularly crazy as there is a lot going on and as usual I'm trying to ensure I'm there for everyone." Pauly and Red both talk about the importance of check-ins and letting people know how you are. I heard Red backing this up by talking about a distraction she had at the beginning of a staff meeting. By letting the team know what was distracting her they would not assume something other than what it was if they noticed it. Kelly, Pat, and Red all mentioned openness as a key attribute of the leadership at McMan. Red spoke about a past supervisor who openly shared her thoughts and feelings about things and also encouraged Red to do the same.

In showing who you are, integrity, or walking the talk (Ashley, Jordan, Loren, Pat, Pauly, Red, Sam), was mentioned as critical. The participants seemed to see integrity as having beliefs and actions line up. Sam and Red both believe that a leader should never ask anyone to do anything they would not do themselves. By showing staff that they are willing to be vulnerable and show how they work they show openness to letting people know who they are. Red states that she spends a lot of time "on the floor" with her staff and works regular shifts. Loren talked about a "mop-bucket-attitude" where she sees

leaders as needing to show their employees that they are willing to mop floors alongside of them.

In addition to sharing who and how you are as a leader, it was seen as important to share what you do. Not being visible to staff can create trust issues. Red shared an example of a time where one of her staff members asked her what she did all the time, since she was not always visible. Red took it as a bit of a criticism and decided to ensure that her staff knew what her job entailed. Pat, Red, and Taylor all acknowledge that they try to let their staff know not only what they are doing and where they are, but also what the scope of their job entails. Red does this by offering to teach any aspect of her job to her staff team. Sam asks the question: "Are there any aspects of my job you want to learn?" Some of the supervisory or managerial tasks that Red and Sam have shared in the past are: placing children in appropriate homes, answering calls regarding the program, petty cash reconciliation, budgeting, scheduling, check requisitions, month-end reports, organizing camping trips and other events, and supervising practicum students. Ashley, Jordan, Loren, and Red acknowledged having been given many of these opportunities.

Out of the supervisory and frontline participants came a desire to be able to see the bigger picture of the agency. Being able to see the bigger picture certainly eliminates secrets. The four management participants all talked about opportunities that had been given to them in the past that allowed them to see what life was like at the upper hierarchical levels of the organization. They had all been asked, at one time or another, to cover for their superiors at either inter-agency or intra-agency meetings. Sam had been asked to represent the agency at wine and cheese functions, to give presentations at educational institutions, and other collaborative functions. Sam acknowledged feeling

appreciated and respected by her supervisor, and talked about a growth in confidence.

Conger and Fulmer (2003) and Ulrich and Smallwood (2004) believe that this is important for building leadership capacity. The middle-managers and frontline staff all wanted to see this opportunity given to people. Sam supports this: “Whenever someone asks for something I try to find a way to make it happen.” Employees have often been rewarded for taking on new things. “People that end up getting higher up positions are people who tend to want to do things to help out or do the extra thing” (Pat).

In terms of openness around decision-making, Red acknowledged that at times decisions had to be made and passed down through the hierarchy and could not be shared for whatever reasons, but that it was important for her to be given the rationale behind the decision, if not the opportunity to influence it. Red had experienced a few occasions where the rationale behind the decision was not offered and that it did not feel good. Red and three other leaders stated that it was their practice to offer the rationale behind the decisions that were made. Pat supports this: “Nine times out of ten I support the solution. When I don’t, I always give a rationale.” I observed this a couple of times in both supervisor and staff meetings. Red explained to her team why the decision was made to spend fundraising money on supervisory training. Sam explained why changes needed to be made to a certain type of report. Decision-making about who is eligible to move into leadership positions was mentioned several times. Pauly, Red, and Sam all talked about succession planning as being important. Red wants succession planning to be completely transparent and have the same opportunities to learn about a new job available for everyone. Conger and Fulmer (2003) also believe transparent succession planning to be critical.

Communication and information-sharing were two other sub-themes to the no secrets theme that emerged. When information is not shared or inaccurately shared people have a tendency to attach meaning to it. For example, an employee could assume that because they did not receive information that it was purposely kept from them. They might also assume that since they heard two different things from two different people that they were purposely misled. One of the supervisors observed that communication from above is not always consistent. On the flipside, one of the directors noted that she occasionally does not get information from below. Both stated good two-way communication as being important. Pat acknowledges “Two-way communication works better with a small team because of the time factor.” Kelly and Pat believe that without a solid information-sharing process, people cannot make good or effective decisions. Both Red and Sam, in staff meetings, shared information and then asked, “What do you think?”

A few barriers to organizational transparency were mentioned. Sam talked about one-way information sharing as being a barrier. I noticed that, in meetings, staff members were much more engaged and interested when two-way communication was happening. They were more attentive, had more eye contact, and spoke more frequently. Pat believes that not giving rationale behind decision-making can be another barrier, and Kelly and Pat agree that not-having the right information leads to poor decision-making. Seven of the eight people involved in the interviews or learning circle all noted that the assumptions made by people, or poor communication, can contribute to a lack of transparency in an organization. “If people don’t get the right information, they can’t know what’s going on” (Red).

Some of the recommendations from the focus group for the implementation of a SLM in the area of transparency were: (a) tell people why decisions are made; (b) allow staff to attend meetings outside program, let staff know where you are, what you are doing, and keep them informed about everything; and lastly, (c) have managers and directors attending staff meetings (see Appendix I for full details). Along these same lines, job shadowing came up as a way of sharing what leaders are doing in the organization. The executive director, senior youth worker, and frontline staff all expressed interest in the concept of the director for a day contest. Kelly thought that a contest held once per year to allow the winner to shadow one of the directors for a day was a good idea. Jordan and Pauly expressed interest in job-shadowing not only some of their leaders, but also some of the administrative or clinical staff. They were very curious about what people do and how things work in the agency. Red summed up the process for creating transparency throughout an organization in just a few words: “When someone asks you a question, answer it.”

### *Teaching and Learning*

Both teaching and learning emerged as themes of a SLM many times throughout my inquiry process. Not only was teaching valued, but it was also shared at all levels. Learning was highly valued, and it was obviously practiced throughout the group care program.

In many cases, in order to teach or learn, an assessment of strengths and weaknesses needs to be done. Red and Sam both talk about the continual assessing of strengths, abilities, and areas of growth. They both use relationship building to get an understanding of what their staff’s needs are, and what they can do to either teach them

or facilitate learning. Sam expresses a genuine interest in her staff's lives to start the process: "I do give a shit." De Nils (2006) found out that, like Red and Sam, leaders often use their relationship to assess worker abilities, while Conger and Fulmer (2003) found that many companies use different types of measurement tools. Jordan pointed out that frontline staff members are regularly assessing client strengths, needs, abilities, and preferences in order to find out methods or skills to teach them or for them to learn. Having worked frontline in McMan, I know that specific tools, such as strength, resiliency, support network assessments, as well as relationships, are used to assess strengths, needs, abilities, and preferences. The learning circle participants actually share their co-workers strengths with the clients so that they know to whom they can go to learn what they need. For example, Jordan and Loren will encourage clients to talk to Ashley about self-awareness and spiritual needs. Ashley and Loren will encourage clients to talk to Jordan about sports and recreational activities, and Ashley and Jordan will refer clients to Loren for knowledge about almost anything.

Diversity is extremely important in having a well-rounded team and in sharing diverse types of leadership. In assessing strengths and weaknesses, diversity is recognized, appreciated, and encouraged (Red, Sam). Loren notes that in McMan, unlike some other organizations, supervisors hire the staff they will have on their teams. She sees this as important in building a diverse yet complete team. One of the supervisors recognizes what a diverse group she has and actively encourages her staff to bring their particular expertise to meetings and to teach both the staff and clients what they know. Her frontline staff validated this claim, and I witnessed it occurring in a staff meeting. Twice she encouraged staff members to share their experiences of something from their

own perspectives instead of sharing only her own. Pat acknowledged that in the past that she listened only to the “squeaky wheel” and might have missed an opportunity to learn from staff members that were quieter. Jordan talked about how she encourages her clients to teach what they know and has seen them become leaders in their own groups. With the encouragement of her supervisor and peers, Ashley has become a teacher to her clients, her peers, and her supervisor. Red and Sam believe in the sharing of their learning, thoughts, feelings, and expertise, both vertically and horizontally. Sam teaches non-violent crisis intervention to all levels of the organization, and Red simply says to her staff: “Teach me.” One of the frontline staff values diversity highly and talked about an experience where a staff member was demoted. She saw this as being a situation where the diversity of that individual was not recognized or appreciated, but saw it as an issue only with a particular supervisor and knew that whatever happened, “McMan had her back” (frontline staff). She believed that the overall leadership of the organization did value diversity and that the person who was demoted would find a place in the agency where her diversity would be understood and valued.

Pauly refers to her supervisor as “a teacher-not a boss.” Pat made the distinction between someone who can teach and someone who does teach: This person that she admired “had a lot to offer and did offer.” There are many people who have a lot of things of value to share, but they either do not have the confidence, the willingness, or the forum to share it. Pat, Red, and Sam all believe in teaching the knowledge and skills that their staff members need to know to do their jobs. Red uses role modelling with clients in crisis situations and debriefing as a teaching method. In acknowledging that sometimes McMan does not give new employees sufficient time to learn about their job, Sam

appreciated that she was given ample time in orientation when she started out. Both Sam and Red indicated that there was a difference between teaching knowledge and giving people the opportunity to practice that knowledge experientially. They are both agency trainers and both give participants plenty of opportunities to practice skills learned in workshops experientially, by methods such as role-playing. Red reflected in her journal that after giving two of her staff opportunities to teach each other, she learned more about their particular styles of learning: “I reflected on this later thinking to myself that it was a great conversation. I understood more about the two of them and what is helpful in their learning styles.”

On the flipside of teaching is learning. Six participants pointed to the importance of the desire to learn, and that the responsibility for learning is on the individual. McMan, in a lot of ways, supports self-directed learning. The majority of respondents at one point or another said, “Tell us what to do, not how to do it,” and four of them actively use this philosophy in their practice. Red says, “I don’t tell them what to do. I help them find out themselves by asking questions.” Ashley, Jordan, Kelly, Loren, and Red all believe that creativity is encouraged in McMan. Ashley and Jordan were given the opportunity to take six clients on a camping trip. How they planned it and carried it out was up to them, and they both appreciated the trust given them by their supervisor, given the high-risk nature of the event. The trust given is an outstanding example of creativity being highly valued and encouraged. Sam appreciates the fact that staff members need to come up with their own training plan, which she supports to the best of her ability. Along with Pat, Red, and Sam note the significance of creating an attitude of learning. This is evident in the group home staff’s desire to attend more training. All of the frontline staff requested more

training and access to levels of training previously reserved for only supervisors and managers.

Red talked about teachable moments, and how she is able to role model in crisis or highly charged situations. I witnessed the leaders in both team meetings use humour to deal with difficult topics. Red, in addressing a serious documentation issue, laughed at herself in order to lighten the mood. She did get the message across. Pauly says she uses the same method with clients, also in complicated situations. She once had a physical altercation with one of the clients who needed to be restrained. In dealing with the follow up feelings with the client Pauly used humour to start a conversation about the incident that needed to be addressed: “Oh, my back!”

When asked about barriers to sharing leadership, the participants did not really identify any that related to teaching and learning. Pat identified that when an individual has knowledge and expertise, but either refuses to or does not know how to share it, opportunities for both teaching and learning may never appear. The learning circle participants identified that when morale is low, some employees are “just here for the pay check” (Learning Circle Participant), and do not want to learn.

Some of the recommendations from the focus group for the implementation of a SLM as they relate to teaching and learning were: Delegate duties not only to the senior youth worker, but also to the frontline—challenge the staff, and recognize and appreciate diversity—do not expect clones of ourselves; and leaders job—shadow the frontline. See Appendix I for other recommendations from the focus group.

The interview participants had some ideas. They thought that it would be a good idea to have the agency pay for relief staff to cover their shift for a day while they spend

the time learning what their supervisor learned at the training that they attended. Pauly and Red think that becoming a trainer in McMan is a huge opportunity for both learning and teaching. In talking about diversity, one of the frontline staff hopes that McMan leaders will find some way of paying closer attention to their biases and assumptions when dealing with diverse groups or individuals.

### *Inclusion*

The third theme, and probably the most prevalent that surfaced from my research, was that of inclusiveness or encouraged participation. People want to be included and to feel engaged with their organization, its vision, and its leaders. Sub-themes that emerged under inclusion were shared decision-making, shared problem-solving, input from everyone, a shared vision, and caring of each other. All of the participants believe that gathering input from staff as much as possible is already a core principle at McMan, and all of them strive to be collaborative at all times.

In terms of decision-making, there is a hierarchy at McMan (Kelly, Pat, Pauly, Red, Sam). There is acknowledgement that decision-making cannot always be shared. Sometimes decisions need to be made independently because time is a factor (Pat), or because there is risk to the organization or child (Kelly, Red, Sam). Kelly is very careful about sharing decision-making when she perceives potential risk to McMan. Pat and Sam confess to not giving staff the opportunities to share in the decision-making when they could have, citing that either their direct supervisor would not let them, policy dictates that they cannot, or that sometimes they feel the pressure to have all the answers. A couple of managers believe that sharing decision-making is separate from sharing leadership. “We try to separate decision-making from leadership” (Pat). The literature,

however, contradicts this. In the literature I reviewed regarding shared leadership and SLMs, shared decision-making, or the sharing of power, was the most common element (Steinheider et al., 2006). The executive director mentioned that a recent staff survey indicated that many employees believed McMan's decision-making to be centralized, or not shared. The evidence from my research appears to contradict this. At the director level, consensus is used to make decisions (Pat). At the manager level, the management team shares discussions and are engaged in discussions: the silos break down (Kelly). I observed shared decision-making at the supervisor and frontline level. Both Pauly's interview and Sam's journal contained data that validated shared decision-making. Pauly states, "Decision-making is shared at [this group home]," and adds that her team leader lets the team decide how to distribute tasks. Pauly points out that even the clients are empowered to make decisions regarding programming. Dinnertime at the group home is when informal resident meetings are held. Recently three of the youth raised an issue that was bothering them. They thought one of the rules around television watching was unfair. The staff team told them that if they were to advocate for them they would need to choose a representative to help her advocate to the supervisor. They chose amongst themselves. Pauly sees quite a difference in the youth when they are empowered: "They follow through." A senior manager remembers a time when one of the programs was self-directed for two years, and made the majority of the decisions amongst themselves.

Two critical shared decision-making processes surfaced. Firstly, the director allows individual programs to determine how they deliver services. For example, the individual programs determine what types of training would best fit for driving successful interventions with their particular clientele. Secondly, the program supervisor allows her

team and the clients to make decisions on service planning and case management. Staff members ask clients two important questions. What do you want to achieve in your time here? How can I help?

Shared problem solving is evident at all levels in McMan. As discussed earlier, the majority of interviewees preferred and practiced a philosophy of “Tell me what to do, not how to do it” (Red). I see problem solving as the figuring out of how to do things. Red and Sam regularly ask their staff what they think about difficult situations, and set aside their own biases and judgments. Red talked about a leader in her past that asked her reflective questions that encouraged deeper level critical thinking: “How is this working for you? How is this helpful or supportive?” Kelly and Pat both encourage their staff to come to them with a solution, and not just a problem. Sam expects her staff to have tried some things before coming to her for help, and consistently asks them what they have already tried, what they have already done to solve the problem. I observed many brainstorming sessions in both meetings and read many scenarios in the journals that spoke about brainstorming and joint problem solving. “I empowered and brought in two supervisors ... to brainstorm and finalize the plans in the distribution of children/youth from our closing home” (Sam). “The leadership was shared as I did not take the stance of the expert and everyone had the opportunity to state their case and brainstorm ideas that hopefully would work” (Sam). In support of first-rate brainstorming, Sam believes that there is no black and white in this organization, that there is no one right answer, and that all outcomes are okay. Red adds, “There is never a right or wrong.”

Allowing staff members to give their input, and in fact encouraging or expecting them to, appeared to be a common practice. Pat and Red spoke about the ways in which

they encourage participation. Pat believes she must get input from the frontline, particularly when change is happening and she needs to make an effective decision. She used a recent example in which she listened to the frontline in a particular program about their needs and wants in relation to an upcoming request for proposal that had serious implications for them. Sam invites input through curiosity and active listening, as does Red. In her journal, Red talked about encouraging her staff to be curious, rather than judgemental:

A staff member was trying to tell the situation and two staff members were not allowing her to do so and continued passing judgements.... When the other staff telling the situation finished I then talked about curiosity and how that may play into the situation. Is it possible that the parent had something else going on? How do we know if we don't ask?

In her journal, Sam says:

I feel that others appreciate my genuineness in wanting to know more from their perspectives what they feel was going on—making sure I have returned all of my phone calls, all the questions answered, all the inquiries addressed.

In both sets of meetings I observed the leaders inviting participation from staff.

Both leaders asked if anyone wanted to add anything to the meeting agenda. In one meeting the leader talked less than anyone else, an indicator that his staff members were quite used to giving input. At one point in another meeting, I noticed the leader talking much more than the staff and how the staff seemed to disengage from the monologic conversation by looking away from the speaker, looking at each other, and keeping quiet. Kelly, Red, and Sam all believe that in McMan everyone can speak freely without fear of consequences, and Kelly engages in dialogue with her team rather than using a direct reporting style of information-sharing. She facilitates a conversation. In terms of getting feedback, Pat, Red, and Sam will simply ask for it. I heard Sam ask for feedback about a

new report format that had been recently introduced. It precipitated a lengthy, productive conversation. In cases where it has been necessary, Red has taken feedback to upper management.

Relationship building involves much more than simply conversing with an employee. As I mentioned before, Red and Sam both indicated the importance of relationship-building in working with their staff. "I want you to know who I am" (Sam). De Nils (2006) believes that relationship development is the most important element of any leadership model.

A theme emerged that I did not expect when talking about sharing leadership: that of caring. Sam talks about one of the main reasons she stays with McMan; her personal life is valued. Ashley, Jordan, and Pauly know that their manager cares about them when she calls the group home on Mondays to see how things are going. The group home team spoke about the fact that they notice each other, compliment each other, and work hard to build collective self-esteem. "The dance is naturally choreographed. Staff notice each other and are always complimenting and acknowledging self-esteem things and the work that is done" (Jordan). I heard one staff member compliment another on her physical appearance, and one person express appreciation for another's knowledge and experience. The program supervisor encourages the sharing of the role of caring. I have experienced teams where the leader did not want to share the caring of the team, and saw the caretaker role as his alone. Jordan and Pauly both talk about how coming to work often can eliminate a foul mood, and Pauly adds, "This is a close company." Again, I experienced this to be true in my staff meeting observations. They took turns bringing

food to the meetings and ensured that everyone's food needs were taken into consideration.

Creating a shared vision is critical in getting everyone moving in the same direction, and it's even more important that as many people as possible are involved in the creation of it. People tend to work for what they create (Wheatley, 2006). Six individuals mentioned the concept of creating a shared vision. The general consensus was that a shared vision is desirable, but that there is not necessarily one in place. No one actually spoke about an existing shared vision. Sam sees the leadership in McMan practicing and sharing the values and philosophy of the organization. She recalls many times when she needed to take care of her children or finish her schooling that her superiors showed their support by allowing her the job flexibility to achieve these things. Sam warns that not having a shared vision could lead to staff disengagement and an attitude of egocentricity, where everyone is working at cross-purposes or for personal gain. Loren believes, "The leader needs to be able to communicate tasks as part of the vision."

Although very few specific implementation barriers were mentioned that relate to inclusion of staff, most of the leaders acknowledged that they have, at one time or another, not asked for input or encouraged participation when they clearly could have, and cited things like time, pressure, and crisis as obstacles. "At times I have to step into a leadership role and be more assertive in my presentation" (Red). "I used to be really controlling, but nice" (Kelly). Taken to extremes, an over reliance on collaboration could mean an inability or avoidance of critical decision making, and not taking charge might lead to giving too much responsibility to people who are not capable or ready (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Some of the recommendations from the management focus group for the implementation of the SLM in this area included asking certain questions like: What would perfect leadership look like? What would be happening? What would be different? What would people in all roles be doing? What needs to happen? Is it realistic? Who is committed to making it happen? One other recommendation was to create a culture in which staff own their programs and make decisions around the implementation of the program. There were a few wishes from the interview participants. Relating to the creation of a shared vision, Loren thinks all of the staff teams should get together and answer the question: “What do we all want?” Sam wants everybody to talk about the direction of the agency and the individual programs, and believes McMan should give people opportunities to practice the vision. In summing up this section, I want to acknowledge that the executive director, who has been with McMan for 22 years, has witnessed a huge shift towards collaboration in the last 10 years.

#### *Towards a Culture of Leadership*

The final theme that emerged, and the one that has the greatest implications for the development of a SLM is that leadership, and more importantly shared leadership, is not talked about. The interviewees that held the four most senior positions all conceded that this is true, and the frontline staff, with the exception of one, had never really talked about leadership. Once the participants had a chance to talk about it, however, much came out.

In speaking about the necessity of shared leadership, Pauly, Red, and Sam stated that no one person could do it all or have all the answers. Jordan, while reflecting about leadership after the initial interview, noted that it would be harder to not share leadership

because the leader would have to do much more work, have much more accountability, and probably more stress. She shared an example of a friend who supervises another group home. Her friend is constantly under stress and has to do more work because she believes she cannot share the workload in her home. Red added that it takes a team to run a group home: not one person. She acknowledges that she could not do it, nor would she want to do it, herself: "I don't want to be the one responsible for everything in the home." "Everything is shared but the paperwork" (Red). The executive director, the manager, and all the frontline staff believe that everyone has some leadership responsibility. "Everybody has some leadership to do" (Sam). Loren identified, "People with good leadership qualities in McMan are not necessarily in identified leadership positions." Baird (2005) believes that leading change need not be top-down. McConnell (2003) supports this by stating that there are many people in organizations with leadership skills that are never found. Jordan and Sam saw the frontline as being leaders with clients, as well as being leaders with relief staff when they are alone on shift with them. Ashley shares leadership with relief staff. At the beginning of a shift she will say, "You can lead tonight" (Ashley). This act is purposeful leadership. One of the directors has an expectation that all staff members demonstrate leadership, but at the same time acknowledged that leadership is not talked about unless there are performance concerns being addressed.

There was also a bit of a gap identified around contact between different levels of the organization. The executive director admitted to not having much contact with people beyond the management level. One of the supervisors mentioned that she has very little contact with the upper organization. The senior youth worker said, "I don't pay much

attention to the larger organization because it isn't broken." One of the directors assumed that leadership is shared at the lower levels but was not sure, and one of the frontline staff pointed out that a manager might think that leadership is trickling down but it might not be, and if they do not check they will not know.

Kelly has noticed a shift from the past in terms of leadership culture. She remembers that the leadership was very centralized and that the larger McMan has become, the more responsibility has been given to other leadership positions. "Supervisors and managers have much more autonomy now than they've ever had" (Kelly). Pauly sees strong leadership at McMan, and believes that there is SLM at both the organization and group home levels: "There is a shared leadership model at [group home]." Red challenges her staff to be leaders, and both she and Sam have dialogue, from a place of curiosity, with staff who do not seem to want to take on any leadership role: "Being curious can lead you a long way" (Red). "If a staff member does not want to learn or do something, that's a conversation" (Red). Pat indicated that her supervisor has solid boundaries around working 40 hours per week, which allows for leadership to be shared, especially when the job needs more than 40 hours per week to get done. Ashley, Jordan, Loren, and Sam talk about the huge responsibility of frontline staff to run the home when they are on shift: "You're on shift. You're running the show" (Sam). Kelly says, "I let people do their jobs."

"What could be more vital to a company's long-term health than the choice and cultivation of its future leaders" (Conger & Fulmer, 2003, p. 76)? Building leadership capacity in an organization is critical. In trying to build new leaders, Red and Sam find different people to cover for them when they are gone. They will either encourage staff to

help them interview for new positions or will involve them in discussions determining what type of gap they need to fill in the team. All of the participants have been given opportunities to develop leadership skills such as starting or helping to start new programs, developing recruiting and training systems, taking a lead role in teaching others in their area of expertise, supervising a student, or becoming an acting or assistant supervisor. Conversely, the learning circle participants noted that when there was leadership or supervisory training available, only the existing supervisors and managers seemed to be invited to attend. One frontline staff member wondered if McMan was really building new leaders or just maintaining the leaders that already existed. Jordan wondered if she might need to leave the organization to either acquire a leadership position, or to attain the education necessary to acquire one.

There were some strong indicators of a pre-existing shared leadership culture. Kelly and Sam do not experience micro-management. "I don't micro-manage or double-check" (Kelly). Kelly and Pat feel a confidence and trust in staff, in many ways because of the long-term nature of their employment. Sam states, "I have only been directive once in one and a half years." Jordan said, "I can't remember the last time I had to call a supervisor for anything." Kelly observes that leaders do not sit around waiting for the boss to tell them what to do. Six of the eight staff interviewed indicated that the identified leaders in their respective teams were only that in name, and that they were a part of the team, and not separate from it. "The only difference in the roles at [the group home] is the paperwork. Titles mean nothing" (Pauly). "The manager was one of the team" (Red). "The student's input is as important as the supervisor's" (Pauly). "I'm just Sam" (Sam).

“Leaders do not hide behind their roles” (Kelly). Red and Sam use words like we, us, and ours, instead of I, me, and mine.

Courage and risk-taking were seen as important in learning and growing. The frontline staff pointed out the importance of showing courage by taking risks. Jordan acknowledged that she shows courage by asking clients for feedback, and thereby making herself vulnerable. Red added that taking action and providing opportunities for creativity is important. For example, not long ago she took her staff and clients to participate in an adventure-based, team-building activity. One of her staff is afraid of heights. Red encouraged her to fight her fear and participate in the zip-line activity. The clients also encouraged her so that, in the end, she did it. The clients felt empowered and the relationships between staff and clients were enhanced. Baird (2005) and Ginsburg and Tregunno (2005) believe that organizations should support a culture of risk-taking. Seven of the eight interviewees acknowledge that making mistakes is seen as okay. In a staff meeting, I heard Jordan admit to making a mistake with one of her clients. She was completely supported by the team members.

There were a number of barriers perceived by the participants in relation to building a culture of leadership. The first and foremost is that staff may not want to take a leadership role. Staff may be overwhelmed already (Sam). They may say, “That’s not my role” (Pat, Pauly, Red, Sam). The economy, in combination with an upcoming audit, has created some crisis for leaders in the organization. Both directors have attempted to share decision-making with the management who do not want it. “Sometimes people just want someone to take charge” (Pat). Staff may not be able to take on a leadership role. Pat believes that, because of youthfulness, some of the frontline staff do not have the skills,

and Jordan has learned that there are levels of leadership and often people are put in roles for which they are not ready. Jordan used an example of a time when she worked in another organization. She had only been there eight months when she was promoted to supervisor. She acknowledged that she was not ready and made some bad decisions because she did not know the job well enough. The consequences of making the bad decisions caused her a great deal of stress. Pat, Pauly, and Sam see staff that lack self-awareness, and Pat cites fear of change as a barrier. Some of the participants say they cannot share leadership because of agency policy, because of their role descriptions, and because of their perception of ultimate accountability and responsibility. McMan policies clearly state whose responsibility each of them is. Pauly shared that her supervisor says, "Job descriptions are more like guidelines." Ashley, Loren, and Sam saw lack of funding from government contracts as a barrier to staff members accessing training resources. Again, the four senior participants all admitted to not sharing leadership or taking advantage of opportunities to build new leaders when they could have. Lastly, and conversely, the Executive Director stated, "There are no real internal barriers to sharing leadership."

Some of the recommendations from the focus group for implementation of a SLM in the area of leadership culture development were: Ask staff how they would like to be led. What does good leadership look like? How involved do they want to be? Another recommendation was to encourage leaders to share their training and expertise with their respective programs, allowing for time and opportunity. The interview participants had some ideas. In order to begin to talk about leadership or build a culture of shared leadership, Red suggested that leadership be defined in McMan, that it be made as clear

as the philosophy and values. Pat believes that the organization needs to find ways or implement processes that encourage talking about leadership. Pauly, Sam, and the learning circle participants want McMan to implement leadership training, leadership sessions, and leadership programs for all levels of staff.

### Study Conclusions

#### *No Secrets*

The idea of transparency transcends organizational openness about day-to-day processes. It is important in building trust that leaders share not only what they do, but also share who and how they are. They do this by talking about their jobs, role-modelling, and checking-in, among many other things. Frontline staff and lower-level management do want to know how things work, and what people do in other areas of the organization. They have a wish to see the bigger picture.

The fact that not all decisions that are made can be shared with everybody is acceptable to most employees. What is important to them is that the rationale behind the decision is shared. It creates greater understanding of agency thinking, and greater understanding is synonymous with greater transparency. Failure to share rationale can create a lack of trust.

Effective communication can sustain an agency's attempts at transparency. Poor communication can act as a significant barrier. Reflective practice teaches a person to be more aware of their biases and assumptions, which leads to better communication. Better communication and information-sharing leads to more effective decision-making.

Succession planning is critical to purposeful leadership development. Transparent succession planning is critical to equitable leadership development (Conger & Fulmer,

2003). Overall, the participants believe strongly in transparency, openness, and integrity. Their perception, for the most part, is that it is practiced.

### *Teaching and Learning*

Teaching and learning are seen as important and are valued elements of shared leadership. In order to teach effectively, a leader must be able to assess strengths and weaknesses, and to determine learning styles. Both relationship building and the use of measurement tools aid in the assessment process (De Nils, 2006). McMan clearly values diversity, or difference. Denis et al. (2001) view what they call strategic leadership as “a collective phenomena to which different individuals can contribute in different ways” (p. 810). By valuing diversity, the agency opens itself up to learning. “Organizations learn only through individuals who learn. Individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning. But without it no organizational learning occurs” (Senge, 1990, p. 139). McMan supports self-directed learning. At the same time there is an expectation from employees that supervisors are also teachers, and that they can and will share their knowledge and expertise.

Teaching and learning in a shared leadership environment occur both horizontally and vertically. There are staff members who resist change, or learning, but can be engaged through dialogue and curiosity.

### *Inclusion*

Employees want a say in their work lives (Henderson-Loney, 1996). Even in a hierarchical organization it is possible to share decision-making at all levels. In McMan, there may be an inconsistency between historical and current data. Past survey data indicates an organization-wide belief that decision-making is centralized, and my

research findings indicate that decision-making is shared to some degree at all levels. The most critical decisions, those of how the agency works with clients to produce outcomes, are shared with programs. Individual programs are empowered by management to make decisions about the delivery of services, and clients and frontline staff are empowered by supervisors to make decisions about service planning.

McMan appears to be adept at getting information and creativity from employees. There is a culture that supports brainstorming. This was indicated by the number of comments related to the idea that there is no black and white, no right or wrong, no one right answer, and that it is okay to make mistakes.

Relationship building at all levels is imperative. De Nils (2006) believes that relationship development is the most important element of any leadership model. Transformational leaders engage employees through relationships, focus on higher-order intrinsic needs, and create meaning for people in the work that they do (Hay, 2009; Yukl, 2006). Relationship building is done through listening, respectful curiosity, and expressing a genuine interest in the other person. Caring, and the sharing of caring, for fellow employees is essential in team development.

#### *Towards a Culture of Leadership*

Sharing leadership is necessary: no one person can do it all, and everyone has some leadership to do. Sharing power, influence, and decision-making are necessary to stay competitive (Henderson-Loney, 1996). Everyone has leadership potential: in many cases the only difference between a leader and a non-leader is the fact that leaders have been educated about leadership, and often these other people with leadership potential are never found (McConnell, 2003). Organizations that consistently develop effective leaders

have a culture of leadership; employees know what leaders should know, be and do (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2004). It appears that leadership is not talked about in McMan, with the exception of the dialogue that occurs between the board of directors and the executive director, and the dialogue that occurs when performance concerns arise. We might infer from this information that there are underutilized leaders in this organization. We might also infer, given that there are expectations that people in leadership positions exhibit leadership skills, and given that McMan does not really talk about leadership, that some of these performance concerns may be related to a lack of clarity about what leadership is.

There is an acknowledgement from upper management that they do not always know what is happening at the program level and that there is an assumption that their way of sharing leadership is passed down. The lower leadership and frontline have some concern that this might not always occur agency-wide and would like this assumption to be checked out occasionally.

Employees do want to learn new skills and do want to have leadership shared with them. In regard to leadership and supervisory training opportunities, frontline have so far not had access, and some wonder if McMan is building new leaders or simply maintaining their current leadership.

There has been a huge movement towards collaborative practice in the last 10 years, and programs have more autonomy than ever before. This may be due to the growth that has occurred, necessitating the sharing of leadership. Solid work-life boundaries have contributed to the sharing of leadership. A leader who has good boundaries in this area will share leadership, or empower others, when the workload

exceeds their ability to meet the demands of the job in the time that they have. On the other hand, a leader who does not empower or trust others will continually take the work on, which may lead to burnout or poor performance.

Supporting a culture of risk-taking is important for organizations who want to navigate change successfully (Baird, 2005; Ginsburg & Tregunno, 2005). This is important particularly for human services agencies that are often at the mercy of external forces (Galambos et al., 2005). McMan encourages risk-taking and creativity. Employees are given opportunities to brainstorm, to try new things, and there is an acceptance of when mistakes are made. Learning from mistakes at an individual level will help an organization grow (Senge, 1990).

Time, crisis, and risk were often cited as barriers to sharing leadership. Many employees do not want or are not ready to have leadership shared with them. Participants admitted that their own attitudes at times get in the way of sharing, as well as factors external to the organization. Given the diversity of the barriers cited by different participants, we could speculate that barriers, for the most part, are perceived by the individual. There may be no real internal barriers to sharing leadership.

### Scope and Limitations of the Research

#### *Participants*

Eight of the eleven participants were female, as are the majority of employees in McMan. Although, according to my 17 years of experience, the human services field is female-dominated and it might be fair to say that this study represents this field, caution should be considered when applying the findings to both human and non-human service sectors. There may be significant gender-specific leadership styles. I interviewed only

one staff team of a possible five. I chose this group home because of its reputation for success and stability, in order to capture some of its magic. The findings might not be representative of the group care program as a whole because of this fact. Three of the participants oversee more than one program; therefore, their participation was more reflective of the agency overall, and the other participants' responses may have been confined to a much narrower experience. Four of the most senior participants had been with McMan more than 10 years, which might account for the consistency of their responses, and the consistent use of agency language. This might have allowed ease in data aggregation, but it also might have limited the meaningfulness of their responses. The group care program was experiencing a period of crisis during most of the research phase, which may have impacted the findings.

### *Methodology*

I collected, aggregated, and analysed the data myself. Having a research team may have reduced researcher bias, and increased data validity and reliability. I wear many hats in the organization, and interact with the participants in many ways, such as teacher, information-provider, technical support, listener, and occasionally even friend. Although I did my best to continually check-in with participants about how I was doing, and to separate my role as researcher, it would be inaccurate to say that my relationships with them did not influence their responses.

I did not change the questions from interview to interview, because I seemed to be getting the information I was looking for. Changing the questions may have solicited richer responses, which may have caused other important themes to emerge. I was not able to observe as many staff meetings as I would have liked, but I did notice that my

observations were very similar from meeting to meeting, so this may not have been a factor. The journaling data was not as useful as I had hoped, although it did validate what participants were saying and what I was observing. That fact that the questions I asked were reflective and required the participant to look inside may have influenced the potential richness of the data.

I chose to inquire in only one of many programs in this multi-site, multi-program human services organization because I wanted to dig as deep as possible. In doing so, and in recognizing that none of the programs have identical staffing structures, I think that transferring the findings, conclusions, and implementation recommendations may be somewhat compromised.

#### *Literature*

In light of the fact that I did not find much information on the differences between for-profit and not-for-profit organizations in terms of developing a SLM, and despite the fact that what I did find indicated there was not much difference, caution should be taken when attempting to compare my research findings to a for-profit organization.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter I describe the study recommendations, apart from those reached by the focus group, based on the findings and the conclusions in chapter four. A number of overarching recommendations will be discussed with smaller, more specific tasks associated with each of them. These overarching recommendations are: (a) talk about leadership, (b) assess and evaluate leadership, (c) create a culture of risk-taking, (d) the bigger picture, and (e) leadership. These recommendations mostly come from an appreciative perspective in that they will be building on what is already being done well, as well as addressing some perceived deficit areas. I then describe and analyze the implementation processes required to implement the study recommendations, as well as the implications if the recommendations are not implemented. The discussion draws on the results and literature where appropriate and considers the leadership implications for organizational change that the recommendations will require.

## Study Recommendations

*Talk About Leadership*

One of the more important themes that emerged from the findings was that leadership is not talked about (see Table 2). Organizational directors, managers, and supervisors need to find ways and implement processes in which they can talk about leadership. They need to create a definition of leadership as it applies to McMan and ensure that it is as embedded in agency language as the philosophy and values. All employees need to know what leaders should know, be, and do (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2004). Implementing this recommendation might flush out employees with strong leadership skills that otherwise may never have surfaced (McConnell, 2003). A common

language around shared leadership needs to be created if change in this area is to be successful (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Everyone in the organization should be exposed to leadership criteria so that they know McMan openly supports leadership development. Adding the leadership criteria to job descriptions and postings will help embed leadership language in the agency and help employees understand the connection between the tasks that they do and the greater vision of the agency. The leadership criteria mentioned above might be created with the use of the leadership assessment tool suggested in the next section.

Table 2. *Recommendations for Talk About Leadership*

Sub-Tasks	Person(s) Responsible	Recommended Timeline
1. Define leadership in McMan Group Care	Focus Group	May 2009
2. Create plan to talk about leadership at all levels of Group Care	Focus Group	May 2009
3. Educate all group care staff about definition of leadership	Managers, Supervisors	June 2009
4. Add leadership criteria to job descriptions and postings	Human Resources	September 2009

#### *Assess and Evaluate Leadership*

In this organization only the executive director is formally evaluated on leadership. In order to build a SLM it makes sense that leadership strengths and weaknesses are assessed and evaluated at all levels, including frontline staff. The study findings indicate that most of the positional leaders have some way of assessing

employee strengths and weaknesses and find ways to challenge these employees to build on those strengths and improve in the areas of weakness. Most of this assessment is done through relationship, a highly utilized and effective method, according to the literature (De Nils, 2006; Hay, 2009; Mary, 2005; Short, 1998; Yukl, 2006). The first recommendation in this section is that the agency finds or creates a tool that can be used at all levels, creates dialogue, and is of a collaborative, relational, and reflective nature. This tool can be used for creating leadership capacity and for transparent, equitable, succession planning. This tool should also highlight strengths, which the supervisor can then use to support the employee in sharing those strengths or teaching others. A good example of a strengths-based tool is Marcus Buckingham's (2007) *Trombone Player Wanted*.

McMan recognizes and appreciates diversity, according to the findings: "We didn't have to be like the leader" (Sam). The group home team that was the focus of this study did a good job of recognizing and utilizing different strengths. The proposed measurement tool can also be used to do a gap analysis for areas of strength that might not be present in a team, and can inform the supervisor of what type of employee needs to be hired to fill the gap, or what type of training might be necessary to build capacity in existing staff members.

Assessing and evaluating leadership can also allow givers and receivers of leadership to know when there is not enough sharing or too much sharing, which can be a common barrier to building leadership capacity in organizations (McConnell, 2003; Williamson, 2005). Employee capacity to accept leadership responsibilities will vary from day to day and continually checking in, or assessing, will give the leader valuable

information about whether the employee can handle any more responsibility, potentially eliminating a situation where the employee is over or overwhelmed.

A final reason for using a tool for assessing and evaluating leadership is that it might bridge the gap between upper and lower levels of the organization, by creating a common language and practice, and might aid in keeping valuable employees that might otherwise leave the organization. The study findings indicate that shared leadership might not be trickling down in all cases, that this could lead to a potentially valuable employee leaving the organization (Conger & Fulmer, 2003; McConnell, 2003), and that upper leadership might never be aware of this. An assessment tool might uncover a potential deficit or gap (see Table 3). An assessment tool might also help in creating a template that outlines leadership expectations and responsibilities at all levels, including the frontline.

Table 3. *Recommendations for Access and Evaluate Leadership*

Sub-Tasks	Person(s) Responsible	Recommended Timeline
1. Find or create a relational, collaborative, leadership measurement tool	Researcher/Focus Group	June 2009

#### *Create a Culture of Risk-Taking*

Human service organizations are in a constant state of change, often influenced by external forces (Galambos et al., 2005). Employees who are action-oriented and who have the desire and ability to learn will cope better in an environment of change (Goldstein, 2005; Kruganski et al., 2007). Baird (2005) and Ginsburg and Tregunno (2005) believe organizations should support a culture of risk-taking. The study findings indicate that McMan does this fairly well. Most participants were given, at one time or

another, an opportunity to take a risk, be creative, or learn something new. All of the participants acknowledged that it was okay to make mistakes. In building on this strength, the people in the organization responsible for hiring new employees could look for and hire action-oriented, learning-driven staff members. Staff could do this by asking questions on interviews that request specific examples of an action-orientation, and ask for proof when completing reference checks. Enhancing the risk-taking culture might help in shifting current staff who do not have these two strengths. This can be done by giving equal opportunities to staff to take risks, and reiterating that making mistakes is okay. Supervisors and line staff can role model by taking risks themselves.

Organizational leaders can create a common language around risk-taking, simply by encouraging and naming it. Senge (1990) encourages organizational leaders to work diligently in creating a culture where personal change is a valued part of every day life, and where speaking up and challenging the status quo is expected (see Table 4).

Table 4. *Recommendations for Create a Culture of Risk-Taking*

Sub-Tasks	Person(s) Responsible	Recommended Timeline
1. Plan to create the culture.	Focus Group	May 2009
2. Tasks for Positional Leaders to do (i.e., Provide equal opportunities to staff to take risks—self-assess how you respond when they make mistakes)	Focus Group	June 2009
3. Add action-orientation questions to interviews and reference checks.	Managers	June 2009

*The Bigger Picture*

The upper leadership is unsure of what is happening at the lower levels and the frontline and line supervisors are unsure of what is happening with the upper leadership. This in itself is not a problem. The problem is that the frontline want to know what life is like in positions they typically have no access to, and want a sense of the bigger picture of McMan. The problem is that the upper leadership do not always have access to what is going on at the frontline and may not have the accurate information to make effective decisions. There has, for a long time, been a desire for the directors and managers to attend occasional staff meetings. Based on the findings and my own experience I recommend that the directors find a way to have direct contact with the group care frontline staff. In a meeting they might talk about their history with McMan, why they stayed, what they did to achieve their positions, and what they believe about leadership (see Table 5). It is a perfect opportunity to bridge the gap that exists, and to create a greater understanding of agency culture, which will create a greater sense of inclusion and belonging. Another idea might be to pick a book about leadership and invite any staff interested to attend a monthly leadership to talk about it and how they might apply what they have learned to their jobs. A mentor introduced me to the concept of leadership in this way, and I found it to be intensely interesting and beneficial.

One way to assist frontline staff and managers to learn about the bigger picture is job shadowing. There were a number of requests from staff to be able to walk in the shoes of a director or manager for a day. Everyone in the organization can learn about the bigger picture by shadowing the person one level above them.

Table 5. *Recommendations for the Bigger Picture*

Sub-Tasks	Person(s) Responsible	Recommended Timeline
1. Create plan for more face-to-face	Manager, Director	June 2009
2. Director for a Day contest	Director, Executive Director	June 2009
3. Set up job-shadowing system.	Directors, Managers, Supervisors	June 2009

### *Leadership Training*

Most of the participants wanted some form of leadership training, either an ongoing program within the agency, or a program delivered by an outside resource. Given that training resources are typically scarce and often 80% of resources are given to line supervisors to carry out their functions (Larkin & Larkin, as cited in Galambos et al., 2005), I recommend that a leadership workshop or training program be developed within the agency and made accessible to all staff. I further recommend that, in lieu of all staff being able to attend outside leadership or supervisory training, resource materials from those trainings be distributed to those interested (see Table 6).

Table 6. *Recommendations for the Leadership Training*

Sub-Tasks	Person(s) Responsible	Recommended Timeline
1. Create Leadership Development Program.	Researcher, Director, Focus Group	June 2009
2. Create Plan to distribute workshop material to people unable to attend.	Focus Group	May 2009

In concluding the study recommendations section, I recommend, firstly, that a strategy for implementation be developed by the group care management team. Secondly,

that consideration be given to the timing of the implementation, as the consequences of pushing excessive change on individuals in organizations can be severe, the worst being that the change initiative is ignored completely (Stensaker et al., 2001). Finally, I recommend that the implementation happen quickly, over a short period of time, with a clear timeline. Murray and Richardson (2003) found that the speed at which change happened in an organization was directly linked to the success of change efforts.

### Organizational Implications

The focus of this action research project was to find out how McMan could make recommendations towards the implementation of a SLM. Since both sets of recommendations are already made there is little to add in terms of the scope of the project; see Table 7 for the priority recommendations that came from the focus group.

Table 7. *Priority Recommendations from Focus Group*

Overarching Theme:	Priority Recommendations
1. Leadership is not Talked About	a) Ask staff: How would you like to be led? What does good leadership look like? How involved do you want to be? b) Create anonymous (initially) system for suggestions (i.e., Suggestion box to encourage staff to open up about leadership and leading one another).
2. Transparency	a) Tell people “why” decisions were made b) Allow staff to attend meetings outside program (i.e., sector meetings); “experience, networking, learning”
3. Teaching and Learning	a) Delegate duties not only to Senior Youth Worker, but also to frontline-challenge staff. b) Recognize and appreciate diversity; do not expect clones of ourselves.

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Overarching Theme:	Priority Recommendations
4. Create a Shared Vision	a) Ask people: What would perfect leadership look like? What would be happening? What would be different? What would people in all roles be doing? What needs to happen? Is it realistic? Who is committed to making it happen? b) Create a culture in which staff own their programs and make decisions around the implementation of the program.

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In May 2009, after the agency has completed the accreditation process with its new accreditation body, CARF, I, finished in my role as researcher, will arrange a meeting of the original focus group (see Table 8). At the meeting I will present the recommendations they made in February, sorted in order of importance, and the recommendations I made based on the study findings. I will facilitate a process whereby they will decide which recommendations to accept and how they will implement them in their program. Around the same time I will give an electronic slide presentation to the management team that describes the research project and its findings. The focus group will set about implementing the SLM and will come together in six months to reflect on the outcomes to date. They will then present their findings to the management team who will decide how to roll the model out to their own programs. If successful, I will take the findings to our four other sister regions in Alberta, and possibly share the findings with other community organizations.

Table 8. *Action Plan for Implementation of Shared Leadership Model*

Action	Timeline:
Focus Group meets to decide on an implementation plan based on recommendations from initial focus group meeting, findings and researcher recommendations	May 2009
Electronic slide presentation to the management team (by researcher) that describes the research project and its findings	May 2009
Group Care program implements SLM	June 2009 – November 2009
Focus group meets to review progress to date	November 2009
Presentation to Management of outcome of SLM	January 2009
McMan Edmonton & North programs decide and act on SLM implementation process	February 2009
Presentation to four other McMan regional management teams	February 2009

Should the leadership in this organization choose to implement the recommendations they will be required to change the way they practice, if only slightly. The data indicated that leaders in McMan already practice many elements of shared leadership. The leadership can build on the strengths they already have by changing some of their processes to include purposeful discussions about what leadership and shared leadership is. For example, they can introduce these specific questions to all staff teams. The leadership will need to seek out or create opportunities for experiential learning for their employees. The supervisory teams can brainstorm together to come up with a list of activities that enable experiential learning. They will need to adjust their language to accommodate leadership and risk-taking, simply by using the words leadership, shared leadership, and risk-taking.



Figure 1. Shared leadership model.

The supervisory teams will need to take more risks themselves (Baird, 2005; Ginsburg & Tregunno, 2005; Goldstein, 2005) and model the importance of personal change (Senge, 1990). Courage is contagious. By taking on new experiences themselves they can effectively role model the importance of learning, trying new things, and making mistakes. They will need to change the focus of their hiring practices to look for action-oriented self-directed learners that can better cope with an organization that is constantly changing (Kruglanski et al., 2007). The leadership may also need to look at themselves as teachers more than they have in the past, and may need to look at alternative ways of assessing and evaluating their staff. For example, leaders that use a relationship-based

approach to evaluating their staff might use an actual measurement tool, and leaders that use a measurement tool might work on the relational aspect of assessment.

The directors may need to find ways to be slightly more visible to the frontline and line supervisors. One suggestion that came from the supervisory group was for directors to attend the occasional supervisor or staff meeting. A larger challenge will be to set some clear and precise timelines around implementation of the SLM, and to ensure that the strategy replaces what is currently happening. Typically, change agents in organizations try to add change to what they do on a day-to-day basis rather than plan for it to be a part of their day. When things get busy, the add-ons tend to get dropped. This is why so many change initiatives fail (Murray & Richardson, 2003).

The group home supervisors who were not participants in the interviews may need to look at shifting how they operate their homes and relate to their teams to learn from the group home that clearly has a SLM in place. This would entail learning about how the participant group home currently shares leadership by reading the findings or talking to the group home staff in much the same way that I conducted the research, and then deciding how what they learned might fit for them.

Lastly, leaders and employees from the other programs in McMan may need to change their processes to adopt what was learned from the group care program when they are presented with the results of the research project. They will most likely need to follow the recommendations that were implemented by the group care program in creating a SLM.

The implications of not implementing the recommendations may not be too severe, given that McMan is a highly collaborative organization. Some of the staff who

participated and who were excited about an opportunity to influence the organization might become discouraged. McMan may lose an opportunity to keep newly invested staff invested. McMan would not have clearly defined ways of leadership and everyone would continue to use their own styles. The agency could lose a huge opportunity to find leaders that might not otherwise surface, and lesser leaders could continue to fly under the radar (McConnell, 2003). The agency might never know how their staff members prefer to be led, what works for them, and how their performance can be maximized. The goal of having purposeful strategies around what is expected at all levels might not be realized, and staff might never have a chance to give input into succession planning.

Based on the literature, SLMs can lead to greater employee satisfaction, improved communication (Walker, 2001), and a decrease in staff turnover (Henderson-Loney, 1996). SLMs can also increase empowerment, collaboration, decision-making, accountability, improve client outcomes (Miller et al., 2007), and increase overall effectiveness (Angles, 2008; Miller et al., 2007). McMan may miss opportunities for all of these by not acting on the study recommendations.

#### Implications for Future Research

This action research project focussed on how McMan is currently sharing leadership and what it will take to actually implement a SLM. There is limited research in this area so it makes sense that the volume of research studies needs to be increased over time. Yukl (2006) suggests that a longitudinal study of leadership processes should be done to counteract the lack of literature in the shared leadership area.

I used an appreciative approach to research by interviewing the group home that seemed to be working well and seemed to have had long-term stability with the intent of

building on the strengths that were already there and sharing what was working with other homes and eventually other programs. In taking this approach I may have missed some significant gaps or barriers. Further research could be done within this organization to find out what gaps or barriers to implementing a SLM there might be. Miller et al. (2007) mention that shared leadership results in better client outcomes. A further study could determine how building a SLM in McMan improved client outcomes. Along these same lines, McMan is entering into a new era of outcomes-based contracting with the Alberta CFSA, where decision-making about client services is supposed to be more collaborative. It would be interesting to find out how this SLM will impact this new way of contracting.

Due to the high percentage of female participants in this study, and generally in this field, it might be interesting to find out if and how males and females both share leadership and want leadership shared with them. The study findings indicate that McMan already practices shared leadership in many ways, but that it does not seem to be purposeful and there is no common language around it. Future research might look at the differences between purposeful and accidental shared leadership and might attempt to determine whether or not there is any significant difference.

Finally, I found that the results of this study were consistent with the literature I reviewed, which was primarily taken from studies done with for-profit organizations. People want a say in their work lives. Leader-follower relationships are important to them. People want to talk about leadership. They want to be included. They want to learn, and they definitely want to know what is going on in their organization. A further study might determine more specifically if there are any differences in approaching shared

leadership when it comes to looking at organizations with completely different reasons for being.

## CHAPTER SIX: LESSONS LEARNED

Action research is unpredictable. You never really know where it will take you. I was given this bit of advice many times by a few different faculty members. Given how my major project proposal began, given how my research questions changed, given how my review of the literature just seemed to happen when I needed it to, and given how the answers I got did not always line up with the research questions, I think I agree. In this section I review how I conducted the action research process and share the lessons I learned along the way.

One of the encouraging lessons I learned about leadership is that people want to talk about it. It excites and engages them. It also draws prospective leaders out when they might otherwise remain hidden. The importance of drawing upon different leadership styles to meet different follower needs was something I knew about and agreed with based on my readings and training, but not something I experienced as much as I did in carrying out this project. Managing the political environment required a diverse set of leadership skills. I found it particularly tricky to protect participants and at the same time ensuring their voice was heard.

In terms of shared leadership, I learned that it is absolutely necessary in today's environment. Unfortunately, because it has not been studied much, it can be an elusive, abstract, and ambiguous concept. The idea of a SLM in my organization was highly desired and created excitement and anticipation. Like you might expect, the excitement was higher at the lower levels of the agency. In order for shared leadership to be successful, empowerment, trust, teaching, and learning need to be openly supported values of the organization. I separate diversity from these other values because, for me, it

stands alone as the biggest potential barrier to sharing leadership if it is not truly valued. If you do not support diversity your ability to share leadership, encourage creativity, and create a culture of risk-taking is severely limited. If you only want clones, your options for sharing leadership are minimal.

One of the objectives of the major project was to develop as a leader. My specific leadership challenge was to stay engaged in the process. With the exception of the four months that I was waiting for the go ahead from the ethics review committee, I stayed very much engaged. I pushed myself to set deadlines when there were none. I spent weekend after weekend at my office planning, writing, reflecting, and writing again. When I got stuck I asked for help. I have always fundamentally believed that it was okay to ask for help, but I did not really live it. I learned how to during this project. Learning to ask for help was very much connected to my growth as a self-directed learning leader. I ran this project from start to finish without a push from anyone. When I needed advice, help, or information I searched for it. I was not the only student who had to learn to be self-directed. Most of us were fiercely independent to begin with. I did my share of supporting others through this process.

Through my reading I learned a lot about optimal conditions for organizational change. I watched different systems interact with one another and how the contagion of the conversation about leadership spread. Finally, I learned how to communicate my findings effectively by using an evidence-based style of writing.

Explaining the unpredictable nature of action research is important in gaining consent from participants. I thought I had covered all the bases in my consent form and my conversations with prospective participants. Two things happened that I did not

expect. Firstly, I had audio taped the interviews and learning circle and had, of course, informed the participants that no-one else would be able to access the recordings because of how I had them secured on my computer. Soon after I started the interview process, my computer was connected to a backup server to protect all organizational documents. Now the information technology people could hear the interviews if they wished. I had to deal with that. Secondly, the information I collected surprised me, and I realized that it was important to identify the organizational roles of the participants in my findings, something that would make the participants identifiable to members of my organization. I was able to deal with these issues because of the graciousness of the participants, but I did not find it fun to go back to them with my tail between my legs, apologizing for the mistakes. Much better to explain in the beginning that unexpected events can occur, and that we, as researchers, will always ask permission of the participants if things change that require it. One other event, which occurred while obtaining consent, was that a well-meaning supervisor took it upon herself to collect consent forms from her staff team, in effect recruiting for me. I had to ensure again that this did not create a situation in which these team members felt coerced into participating.

In conducting the interviews and aggregating the data later, I reflected on how much information might not have been shared and which questions I did not ask because of my long-term relationship with most of the participants. I wondered how many assumptions were made on both parties parts because we assumed we new what the other was talking about, and wondered how this would have been different had I been an outside researcher. Would it have been better? I tried diligently not to assume I knew what they were talking about, but I am not entirely sure how successful I was. I probably

should have started the interviews by asking the participants to pretend I did not know them, and to assume I did not know about the events or people they were talking about. One of the simple questions that enabled participants to reflect deeper and give me richer information was “what else?” I asked this over and over because it worked.

I also questioned my act of giving examples or definitions of information I was looking for to help them begin thinking. I did this in both the interviews and the focus group, and I wondered if, instead of encouraging brainstorming, it might have narrowed the focus of their answers, thereby limiting the richness of the data. I found that in the focus group, the recommendations that were made were very similar to the examples I gave, and this in itself gave me cause to reflect, and wonder if I should have held another focus group with a different set of participants.

I learned that the timing of follow-up interviews is critical. I got very little new information from the follow-up interviews and the casual check-ins I had with participants because I waited too long. A number of participants mentioned that they were thinking a lot about the topic up to a few days after the interview and could have offered new information. Although I did request that they call me anytime they had a new thought, they did not. I should have followed up much sooner than I did.

I found that transcribing the interviews myself was an unexpected benefit. I really became familiar with the data and themes began to emerge in a number of different ways because I recorded the interviews on a pad of paper and went over the interviews a second time while listening to the recording. I think if I had paid someone else to transcribe I would not have had as great an understanding of the data as I did. I also saved some money in the process. I also recommend that future researchers read the data at

least three of four times before writing anything down. It was amazing to me how many different themes or ways of analyzing the data came up simply by taking the time to read it.

The focus group, which discussed recommendations, faded as the morning went on, and contributed less with each subsequent question. I do not know why this was, but I recommend that the most important question be asked first. I also found that it was important to bring a decision-making model to the focus group. If I had not done so I might not have been able to get what I needed in the time I allotted. Decision-making in a large group is a tricky process and can be quite time-consuming.

Dig deep when asking questions about perceived barriers. In doing this I found that participants reflected on a level they had not been to before and were able to reframe many things that they initially saw as barriers into opportunities. Reflection makes participants vulnerable, so establishing trust is imperative. I saw this in the journaling I asked certain participants to do. I made every effort to make them comfortable with the questions I was asking by checking how they felt about them and reiterating my commitment to keeping them safe. I learned from a past graduate that asking specific questions of participants will make the journaling much more useful. Reminding them weekly helped as well. If I had done neither of these things I would not have been able to use the data.

In writing the thesis I found that my procrastination actually worked in my favour. I wrote the last two sections of the literature review after I had conducted the majority of the research. This allowed me to connect the literature to the themes that emerged from the data in a way that I would not have had I completed the literature review before I

started the research. It cleared up much confusion I had with the direction I needed to take in searching through related literature. I do not recommend the stress that comes with waiting, however.

Lastly, I had difficulty in adding my voice to the writing. It did not seem appropriate for me to be writing about my opinion or my experience. My project supervisor reminded me that in this project, I was the expert. My preferred way of being in the world is as a servant leader, and I had a conflict with seeing myself as an expert. It was extremely important that I get over this in order to write a well-rounded, evidence-based thesis. As my supervisor pointed out, the expert can also be the servant in that he brings his expertise to the service of others.

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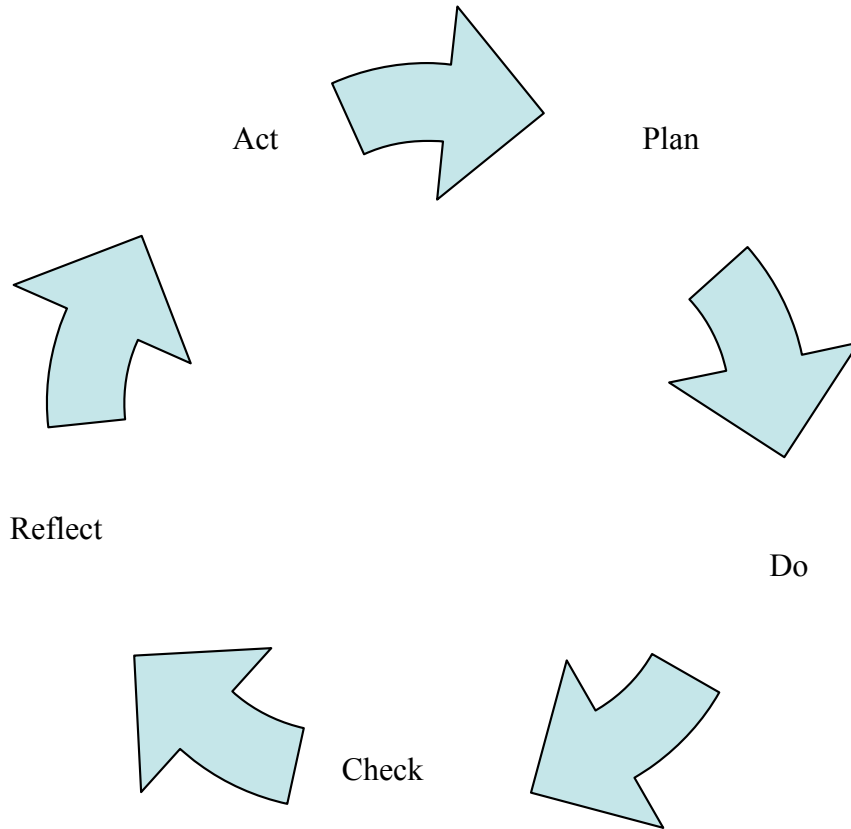
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APPENDIX A: CANADIAN OUTCOMES RESEARCH INSTITUTE—QUALITY

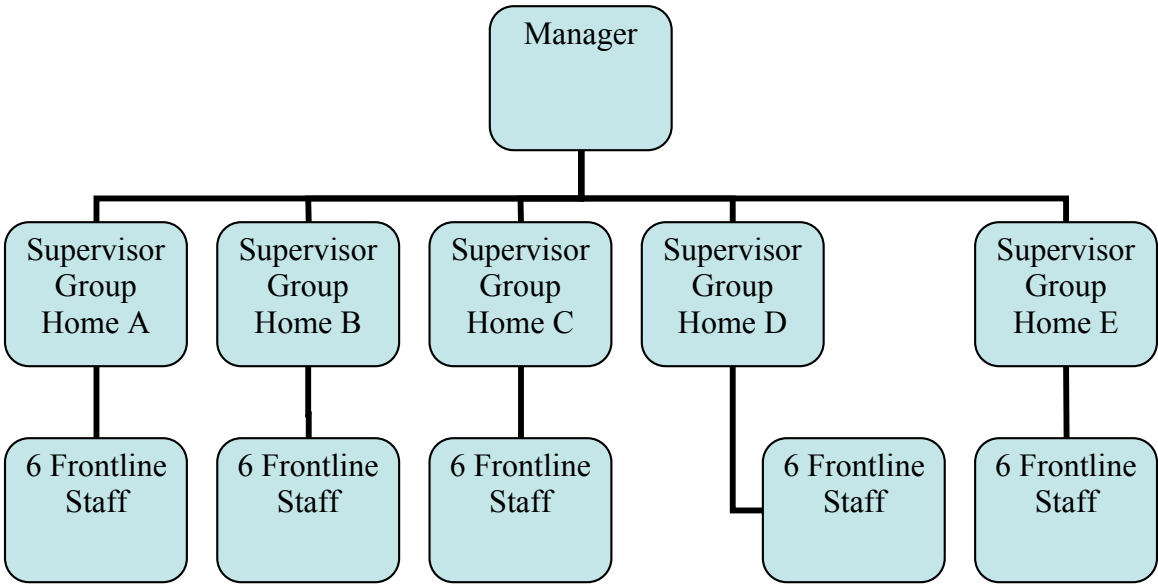
IMPROVEMENT CYCLE



*Note.* I created this figure based on my understanding of information presented by the Canadian Outcomes Research Institute (2008).

Canadian Outcomes Research Institute. (2008). *Quality improvement*. Retrieved September 21, 2008, from <http://www.cori.ca/>

APPENDIX B: MCMAN EDMONTON GROUP CARE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



*Note.* I created this figure based on my understanding of McMan’s group homes in Edmonton, Alberta.

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM FOR MANAGEMENT

My name is Ken Koschzeck, and this research project is part of the requirement for a Master of Arts degree in Leadership at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by telephoning Dr. Gerry Nixon, Program Head, School of Leadership Studies, XXX-XXX-XXXX (ext. XXXX).

This document constitutes an agreement to participate in my research project, the objective of which is *to develop and make recommendations towards implementing a shared leadership model at McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Association*. The title of my project is “You are the most important Leader in your Organization: Towards a Shared Leadership Model”.

The research will consist of a face to face interview and is foreseen to last two hours. In addition, a focus group will be conducted in January to make recommendations based on all data collected. The interview questions will refer to current and desired shared leadership practices at McMan. In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a Master of Arts in Leadership, I will also be sharing my research findings with McMan, it’s project participants, and possible other agencies.

Information will be recorded in hand-written format and by digital recorder (you may decline audio taping) and, where appropriate, summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential in a double-locked system and will be destroyed after the submission of the thesis to Royal Roads University in March, 2009.

A copy of the final report will be published. A copy will be housed at Royal Roads University, available online through UMI/Proquest and the Theses Canada portal and will be publicly accessible. Access and distribution will be unrestricted.

Your decision not to participate will not affect, in any way, your employment at McMan.

You are not compelled to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. Similarly, if you choose not to participate in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence.

By signing this letter, you give free and informed consent to participate in this project.

Name: (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D: ELECTRONIC INVITATION—FRONTLINE

Hi. My name is Ken Koschzeck and I am a student at Royal Roads University. I am currently in my second year of the Master of Arts in Leadership program. I am conducting a research project within the group care program at McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Association that has as its research question: How can McMan develop and make recommendations for the implementation of a shared leadership model?

The title of my project is “You are the most important Leader in your Organization: Towards a Shared Leadership Model”.

I would like to invite you to participate in developing this model. Your experiences as a frontline staff are invaluable in letting the organization know how you view leadership and what you think may be some great ideas on the sharing of it. What your participation would entail is approximately two hours of your time with me and three of your peers in an informal learning circle, talking about shared leadership practices, both current and desired, at McMan. Below are some of the questions I would be asking you to reflect on in a discussion:

- What is shared leadership to you?
- What leadership opportunities have been shared with you?
- What leadership practices would you like to engage in?
- What have been some barriers to sharing leadership?

Attached is a consent form outlining my promise to you about how I will protect you and any information you offer, along with a brief description of the process.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you choose to participate please e-mail me the consent form at XXXXX@XXXX.XX

Ken Koschzeck  
MA in Leadership in progress  
Quality Improvement-Resource Specialist  
McMan, Youth, Family and Community Services Association

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM FOR FRONTLINE STAFF

My name is Ken Koschzeck, and this research project is part of the requirement for a Master of Arts degree in Leadership at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by telephoning Dr. Gerry Nixon, Program Head, School of Leadership Studies, XXX-XXX-XXX (ext. XXXX).

This document constitutes an agreement to participate in my research project, *the objective of which is to develop and make recommendations towards implementing a shared leadership model in McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Association*. The title of my project is “You are the most important Leader in your Organization: Towards a Shared Leadership Model”.

The research will consist of a learning circle (small group informal discussion) and is foreseen to last two hours. The foreseen questions will refer to current and desired shared leadership practices at McMan. In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a Master of Arts in Leadership, I will also be sharing my research findings with McMan, it’s project participants, and possible other agencies.

Information will be recorded in hand-written format and by digital recorder (you may decline audio-taping) and, where appropriate, summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. All documentation will be kept strictly confidential in a double-locked system, and will be destroyed after the submission of my thesis to Royal Roads University.

A copy of the final report will be published. A copy will be housed at Royal Roads University, available online through UMI/Proquest and the Theses Canada portal and will be publicly accessible. Access and distribution will be unrestricted.

Your decision not to participate will not affect, in any way, your employment at McMan.

You are not compelled to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice. Similarly, if you choose not to participate in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence.

By signing this letter, you give free and informed consent to participate in this project.

Name: (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS—MANAGEMENT

How do you define leadership in McMan?

How do you define shared leadership in McMan?

How have you shared leadership in the past?

How have you not?

What leadership activities are you willing to share?

What are some barriers to sharing leadership?

What new ideas do you have for sharing leadership?

APPENDIX G: LEARNING CIRCLE QUESTIONS—FRONTLINE

What is leadership to you?

What is shared leadership to you?

What leadership practices do you currently use?

What leadership opportunities have been shared with you?

What leadership practices would you like to engage in?

What have been some barriers to sharing leadership?

APPENDIX H: JOURNAL QUESTIONS—MANAGER & SUPERVISOR

How did I practice leadership this week?

How did I share leadership this week?

Could I have done anything better/differently?

What did I learn this week?

APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS AND WEIGHTINGS

**1. Leadership is not talked about**

7-Ask staff how they would like to be led

-what does good leadership look like?

-how involved do they want to be?

4-Create anonymous (initially) system for suggestions (i.e., Suggestion box to encourage staff to open up about leadership and leading one another)

4-Encourage leaders to share training, expertise with their program-allow time, opportunity

3-Through supervisions and orientation (formal processes); have leaders explore with staff their thoughts, goals and vision for themselves in McMan

3-Leaders support others to “job shadow”; learn about role

2-At orientation identify who leaders are in McMan-allow for meeting-learning what individual roles are

2-Debriefing incidents a) brainstorming; b) what worked and what didn't

2-Openness to feedback from coworkers; reflective listening

2-Talk about the potential for leadership in the agency (too often people won't try because they see very few “leadership roles”)-create equal opportunity

1-be part of making decisions

1-it's okay to make mistakes

1-Make leadership part of your language; “A manager does things right; A leader does the right thing”

Others-During supervision discuss interest in succession planning-share openly attitudes/characteristics/skills needed

-ask during job reviews if person is interested in learning about my job

-discuss supervising clients as a leadership role

-define leadership

**2. Transparency**

6-Tell people “why” decisions were made

5-Allow staff to attend meetings outside program (i.e., sector meetings); “experience, networking, learning”

5-Let staff know where I am, what I’m doing, keep them informed about everything

5-Create more time for dialogue; Q and A in staff meetings

4-Managers/Directors attend staff meetings

2-Be open about what you do

2-Top down and bottom up sharing (i.e., Director talks to frontline and vice versa)

2-Have a contest “winner”—gets to job shadow someone; and other forms of job shadowing

1-Okay to ask questions without fear of repercussions

1-Open training to all staff (having 2 sessions to allow for flexibility)

Others-Talk to our staff!

### **3. Teaching and Learning**

6-Delegate duties not only to Senior Youth Worker but to frontline-challenge staff

6-Recognize and appreciate diversity; do not expect “clones” of ourselves

5-At staff meetings at all levels ask “What do we want?”

4-Everyone learning from everyone; sups/managers learning from frontline

4-Leaders job shadow frontline; “experience what they do” (i.e., Do a shift)

3-Focus on training and skill development; offer knowledge and skills

3-Have staff coordinate projects; everyone is teaching and learning

3-Alternate taking staff (one at a time) to sector/supervisors/managers/meetings

1-Create time in staff meeting for staff to teach each other

Others-provide leadership training as “service delivery refresher”  
-choose “open” people to move into leadership roles

-thorough orientation

#### **4. Create a Shared Vision**

15-Ask people “What would perfect leadership look like? What would be happening? What would be different? What would people in all roles be doing? What needs to happen? Is it realistic? Who is committed to making it happen?”

10-Create a culture in which staff “own” their programs and make decisions around the implementation of the program.

3-Make time in team to discuss all viewpoints

3-Brainstorm together: think big; everybody shares their vision

2-Accountability at all levels to ensure vision/mission in our day-to-day work.

2-Have directors/executive director to get input from programs by “exposing themselves”