

Police Surviving and Thriving Following Emotional Trauma

by

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Abstract

In 2015, the Province of British Columbia (BC) focussed on treating and improving the mental health and well-being of first responders (BC First Responders Mental Health, 2021). At this time, the Nelson Police Department (NPD) established the Wellness Group to provide access to education, training, and treatment programs. NPD and other police agencies experienced initial success, and these programs became essential within their respective organizations. My focus in this capstone was to identify a means to continue to develop these in-house initiatives through an appreciative inquiry lens. The principal inquiry question of my thesis was: How might Nelson Police Department improve the mental health and well-being of its members? Drawing from positive lived experience of the NPD membership allowed me to make recommendations for positive change that were rooted in the organization rather than cloned from general adopted practices of other police agencies.

Keywords: police, emotional trauma, communication, support, trust, community, recognition.

Dedication

This project is dedicated to the men and women of law enforcement who gave the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. Specifically, I dedicate this to Constable Doug Wollocott, his family and friends, and to those who reminded me that sand castles and the pyramids are made of the same small grains of sand. The former lasts a day and the latter lasts eons.

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Executive Summary

In 2015, the Province of British Columbia (BC) began a focus on treating and improving the mental health and well-being of first responders (BC First Responders Mental Health, 2021). The Nelson Police Department (NPD) fell under the mandate of this provincial initiative, which was developed in consultation with various BC police, fire, and ambulance stakeholders. Many if not all police agencies have established mental and physical wellness programs inside their organizations to reduce stigma around seeking mental health treatments and to improve the overall health, productivity, and morale within those organizations. Specific to NPD was the formation of the Wellness Group to provide access to education, training, and treatment programs. Programs such as the NPD Wellness Group have experienced initial success and have become essential within their respective organizations. However, larger internal programs require either additional budget funding for more staff or place added workload and responsibility on employees who are asked to form these committees in addition to their regular paid duties. My focus in this capstone was not to find an alternative to programs such as the NPD Wellness Group, as they are critical in the health functioning of NPD as an organization. Instead, my focus was to have research participants identify “orientation to possibility” (Harris & Agger-Gupta, 215, p. 4) within the organization through an appreciative inquiry lens. Drawing from positive lived experience of the NPD membership allowed me to make recommendations for beneficial change that were rooted in the organization rather than cloned from general adopted practice.

Chapter One: Focus and Framing

My purpose in this chapter is to introduce the principal inquiry question for my capstone thesis: How might Nelson Police Department improve the mental health and well-being of its members? My purpose in this capstone thesis was to generate engaged positive change at Nelson Police Department (NPD) that leads to sustained progressive development for the mental health and well-being of its sworn members, civilian staff, and their families. This change was not a result of my own personal vision but aimed to identify a collective future state (Stroh, 2015) that employees benefit from and have had an opportunity to contribute to. Sylven (2011) noted, “Thinking about a potential organizational change such as this inquiry from the perspectives of each of these interconnected groups is essential to making effective change” (p. 6). One challenge police face in generating change is they often fall into a culture of blame (Mitchell, 2014, p. 4) and regularly find themselves in a position of being the judge (Adams, 2015) or finder of fault. Police are oftentimes required to find fault as part of their job and the criminal justice system requires them to provide objective evidence to support this finding of fault. As a result, police often develop a cynical outlook on members of the public (Gilmartin, 2002). These lenses, in turn, can transfer, causing officers to view each other in the same light. However, the truth is police provide much more benefit to society than they often realize or give themselves credit for.

I hoped to be a part of positive change in my organization through an appreciative inquiry method that allowed police personnel to shift their outlook to the positive aspects of police work. Police are an integral part of Canadian society and across the world. Police fulfill the roles of protector, advocate, facilitator, and even hero in many cases. One of my most effective police officers identified not with the wolf or the shepherd, but rather the sheepdog that owns both roles

of predator of danger to the sheep and protector of the flock he walked amongst, in this case the public and his police brothers and sisters (J. Anstey, personal communication, January 11, 2019).¹ Police often answer the call to serve while viewing the world through an idealist's lens. Senge (2006) proposed, "Scratch the surface of most cynics and you find a frustrated idealist – someone who made the mistake of converting ideals into expectations" (p. 135). A multidecade career in law enforcement can often create resistance to inquiry of other lenses, alternatives, and changes, which can frustrate the idealist in the police officer, turning them into a cynic.

Oftentimes in the policing profession the stressors placed on officers manifest themselves in a concerning degree of burnout, which in the most severe cases takes the form of self-destructive behaviour. My first-hand experience as an 18-year serving police officer is that exposure to trauma is a certainty. Among the big three—police, fire, and ambulance—in the City of Nelson, BC, NPD officers are often the first on scene to the most traumatic calls. NPD employees are the first responders who write and report most about traumatic events, thereby reliving psychological trauma each time they retell the story. There is no question that in the course of a career, a police officer is exposed to loss and events outside the range of normal human experience (Seligman, 2007). It is these events that lead to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and occupational stress injuries (OSIs) amongst police personnel. Finally, police are the ones to be held to the highest level of public and organizational accountability for actions while attending and resolving these events. Specific to NPD is the *familiarity* lens that officers must contend with. NPD members are more likely to know the victims of trauma than are the

¹ All personal communications in this report are used with permission.

members from Port Moody Police, New Westminster Police, or any medium-sized organization by virtue of the city's small population size.

All aspects considered, because of the expectation of perfection that police have of themselves and that the public have of police, police are more likely to adhere to stigma and suffer shame than many professions. This has been my own personal experience during my policing career. B. Brown (2012) offered simply that to men "shame is weakness, period" (p. 27), and, although roughly 24% of police organizations in BC are female (Statistics Canada, 2020), policing is still a profession that adheres to male stigma, or as Marshall and Laorenza (2018) described, "The suck-it-up mindset" (p. 58). Regardless of gender, the public expect police to be strong, plain and simple, to protect citizens while they sleep and to allow the public to continue their daily lives with minimal intrusion. When most of society is running from danger, police run toward it. There is no room for negotiation in that basic job description when public safety really counts; this expectation puts tremendous emotional strain on the person in the uniform. This realization has led me to explore one specific area of the NPD organization, the mental health and well-being of members, as discussed in the section that follows.

Subquestions for Inquiry

As previously mentioned, I explored the following principal inquiry question: How might Nelson Police Department improve the mental health and well-being of its members? I also examined the following subquestions:

1. How might employees at NPD identify their collective current state of reality in the organization and of the organization?
2. How might the NPD take a positive lens reframe for the police work culture to encourage collaboration and good communication?

3. How might the NPD engage its key stakeholders to generate a paradigm shift toward opportunities for change?
4. How might the NPD engage its key stakeholders in an appreciative process to create a paradigm shift toward improving the mental health and well-being of its members?
5. What are the stories of positive memorable experiences stakeholders tell about moments when they were proudest of NPD and their work there?
6. How could the NPD positively engage its members in order to identify a collective ideal future state?

Context, Learning Partner, and Stakeholder Engagement

In this section, I provide the context to my capstone by outlining a brief history of my learning partner. Established in 1897, NPD is among the oldest police organizations in BC (NPD, n.d.). NPD is also the only independent municipal police agency in the Interior Region of BC, as well as being the smallest in terms of sworn members with 22 (NPD, 2018). While NPD is a small department, it is also busy with 6,234 calls for service in 2019 for a population of 10,664 (NPD, 2018). To give some perspective, the Port Moody Police Department received 7,488 calls for service in 2018 (Port Moody Police Department, 2017) and in comparison, has a population of 33,551 with a total sworn officer complement of 52 (Port Moody Police Department, 2017, p. 2). These numbers paint a basic picture regarding what officers at NPD can expect if being recruited from other agencies or considering NPD for employment. It will be busy, policing will be much more personal, and, as a result, may place an increased mental, emotional, and in some cases even a physical demand on frontline officers.

I involved four main groups of people in my capstone research project. The total numbers of each group are detailed in the “Data Collection Methods” section in Chapter 3, Table 1. I

identified current serving members in two subcategories of sworn members (police officers) and civilian personnel; this group also included employees in the communications centre (dispatch). The second group involved was the Wellness Group, which provides peer-to-peer support, resources, mental readiness education, and direction for NPD members. This group comprised two sworn constables, one staff sergeant, and three civilian members. The primary involvement of the Wellness Group was as part of my inquiry team, which provided me with a third-party participant to eliminate power-over conflicts, both perceived and actual. These power-over considerations existed in my research by virtue of my supervisory rank of sergeant at NPD. I also involved retired NPD members in the research to gain perspective on potential blind spots to areas for opportunity I may have otherwise missed. Finally, I engaged spouses of retired and serving members to gain a full perspective on where the department could create meaningful change and how this change could extend beyond the workplace and positively include those who support police personnel outside of work.

While NPD is unique, due to its size and geographical location in the province, it shares the high expectations placed on police organizations throughout BC by members of the public and by the officers themselves. Police are held to a higher standard than most members of the public, this has been a long-standing ethos in broad culture. In many cases, police expect perfection of themselves and each other in every decision, every public interaction, and in every call they attend. Police conversations are on recorded phone lines, captured in radio transmissions, and catalogued computer aided dispatch calls. In addition, officers are expected to keep contemporaneous detailed notes of each interaction. Judges often remark in their decisions that if it is not in the officer's notebook, it never happened. Many of these interactions last seconds, yet, in the most serious cases, they are deliberated over for days in processes that can be

held years after the event occurred. It is because police decisions are dissected with surgical precision that police officers hold themselves to the level of perfection they do. Add to these already adhered to best practices the scrutiny of traditional and social media, new practices such as body-worn video, and a massive spike in the public being able to record officer interactions with hand held devices. One can see both the need and desire for perfection amongst police officers. Conversely, one should not ignore that years before an officer may be exonerated or found guilty of wrongdoing, they may already have been condemned by the public, peers, and even family because modern media platforms allow instant information sharing that oftentimes only tells a partial story. Whereas in the past it needed to be written down to be true, modern police officers conduct themselves as though they are being video and audio recorded all the time. As public and self-expectation of perfection evolves, so too may an officer's own self-criticism increase. In addition, the level of scrutiny by independent oversight groups has increased, which has resulted in further expectations of perfection by the public. The effect can be that of the proverbial carriage horse chasing the carrot, never receiving its promised reward for the effort put forth. When organizations turn a blind eye to the failures within their own walls, or worse, seek to only punish them, they are unable to identify strategies for learning from failure (Edmonson, 2011). An aim of my research was to reveal and highlight the positive contributions police make to the public and to each other, rather than the self-criticism, external scrutiny, and stigma police officers may face in their careers. Furthermore, I sought to find educational value in the moments when police fall short of perfection in their jobs or choices.

While the public and the police agree that contemporaneous oversight, accountability, and transparency are critical to maintaining public trust in police; if applied to the free citizen, such expectation would be considered an unreasonable expectation of perfection. The Canadian

Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) would deem the expectations that are placed on police a charter breach of a person's fundamental freedoms when applied to the private citizen. Police officers are restricted in their freedom of association and are often restricted from their freedom of expression as alignment with certain political beliefs or special interest groups can be perceived as a conflict of interest. The conduct of a police officer is under scrutiny while on or off duty and their actions or speech, if deemed misconduct, can be subject to imposed financial penalty. (BC Police Act, 2021). The expectation of a higher standard from police comes at a cost to the individual officer and often results in compensating feedback. The harder you push the system, the harder it pushes back. The harder you push the person in the system, the higher the probability they will push back in resistance (Senge, 2006). In a system such as policing, in which the interdependence of police and public is central to the system functioning properly, the stressors placed on police have a feedback effect in their interactions with the public.

Further Context Through Systems Analysis

In this section, I provided context to the challenges that NPD faces in terms of providing support for the well-being of its members. Oftentimes members at NPD perceive these challenges as being unique to NPD and solely the responsibility of the department to find solutions for. However, a systems analysis demonstrated that these challenges are shared not just by other police services but also by multiple organizations involved in the public and private sector. In this section, I explored why the data resulting from the principal inquiry question, subquestions, and topics held significance and importance to all police agencies and nonpolice organizations. Throughout this section, I also provide personal examples and relate them to literature to demonstrate why this capstone project was important to me.

A personal example of why I once believed police held exclusive rights to dealing with trauma relates to police performing next of kin notifications, telling a family member that a loved one has died. Police are tasked with delivering this tragic news and it is preferably always done in person. Whether the notification is made to strangers or people the police officer knows; the empathy required takes decades of life and professional experience for the officer to become comfortable with the job. Regardless, it never makes the sorrow experienced by all involved any more palatable. Next of kin notifications are one of my least favorite calls to attend, and this sentiment is shared by every police officer I have worked with. I find I receive a lot of empathy and compassion from members of the public, which often is conveyed in a variation of the statement, "I could never do your job, thank you for doing what you do." By comparison, my spouse, who at the time of writing this capstone worked at a veterinarian office in our small town, often does two next-of-kin notifications in a week to families whose pets have died in their organization's care or have been euthanized due to illness. The comparison of these two circumstances has caused a paradigm shift for me that first responders do not own the exclusive rights to the effects of trauma. I believe this realization has been positive and has caused me to shift my lens to view that police are not alone in finding ways of supporting each other in times of direct or vicarious trauma.

I am also fortunate enough to have paid access to an amazing clinical counsellor who has become a staple in my healthy life practice. My job provides this benefit, whereas my spouse's job does not. Gilmartin (2002) offered a distinction between police officers who appreciate these benefits and those who do not as survivors versus victims. He elaborated that it is the survivor mindset that best prepares police for fulfilling careers and fulfilling retirement (Gilmartin, 2002). I have been able to create a personal paradigm shift to gratitude for having access to this

resource, and I hope to generate the same shift to gratitude in my organization for having this benefit at their disposal.

The “orientation to possibility” (Harris & Agger-Gupta, 2015, p. 4) that exists for NPD includes orientations to possibility that many other police agencies may identify as well. The BC Critic for Public Safety (M. Morris, personal communication, May 6, 2019) presented to BC Police Association (labour union) delegates that in the estimation of the official opposition to the provincial government, police were dedicating only 17% of their time and resources to Criminal Code (1985) investigations. The remaining time placed demands on police agencies were what Morris (personal communication, May 6, 2019) described as jobs that the police should not be doing. This assertion created a great deal of discussion both in agreement and disagreement as to what the role of police in modern society actually is. In favour of Morris’s assertion is that the role of police falls into three specific common law duties: protect life and property, maintain the Queen’s peace, and identify and apprehend offenders. If police were to take a stand that emergency mental health calls were not their job or that providing a police presence for a peaceful protest was not their job, police organizations could quickly find efficiencies in their respective agencies. What Morris may not consider is that police are one of the only professions trained to put themselves in the threat of a dangerous situation involving actively violent people. In my experience, police are oftentimes asked to solve the acute social problems that no one else in society wants to deal with, feels safe dealing with, or has the training to deal with. Police are often called to situations by virtue of being one of the only professions still open for emergencies while the rest of society is asleep. NPD is a fully functioning 24/7 police service; the communications centre and front counter is always open and responsible for 911 calls for police (both NPD and Royal Canadian Mounted Police), BC Ambulance Service (BCAS), and Nelson

Fire Rescue Service (NFRS). NPD members do not go home during night shift, nor do they have an opportunity to sleep on shift. Much like the remaining independent municipal police services in BC, NPD members are awake and deployable at a moment's notice. The nature of this deployment, while necessary to provide the service, puts stress and strain on individual members. What is described is a "hypervigilance biological rollercoaster" (Gilmartin, 2002, p. 50).

Regardless of how police departments approach this offering by Morris (personal communication, May 6, 2019), most people can find agreement that the current state of reality (Stroh, 2015) in policing is much more challenging than it has been in decades past. Criminal Code (1985) investigations have become increasingly complex and require police officers to have a higher level of skill during investigations. Police reports to Crown counsel used to be three pages long. Today, reports to crown council, even for a basic criminal charge request, is measured in the thickness of the physical stack of paper in a file and no longer by number of pages (R. Smyth, personal communication, January 11, 2020). Morris suggested that police agencies are overburdened by jobs that are not in the description of a police officer. Morris' desired state is to simplify and eliminate many of the tasks placed on modern policing in order to refocus police resources on Criminal Code (1985) offences. Morris proposed engagement of key stakeholders in order to find a collaborative solution to the problems that fall outside of Criminal Code infractions, thereby lessening the burden on police.

The principal inquiry question of this capstone is influenced by what Morris (personal communication, May 6, 2019) offered. Policing has become more complex; the result of this complexity is a higher demand on the general duty officer to perform as a specialist in a vast variety of tasks. These varied calls for support result in an expectation to make the right decisions in areas that may not be in their job description. The end result of such high

expectations of perfection in all the decisions police make, regardless of whether a given job is part of their skill set or not, increases the chances of officers making the wrong decision.

Mitchell (2014) offered, “The construct of blame has been well articulated in areas such as the legal system” (p. 1). In policing, when blame is assigned, oftentimes shame on the part of the responsible party follows. Surrounded by a culture that assigns blame as a means to find accountability, officers often fall into their own “judger pit” of cynicism and depression as opposed to a “learner path” (Adams, 2015, p. 60) of asking positively focused questions around what needs to be done next and what could be done to move on. Since people cannot change the past, they can only learn from it, the key is not feeling discouraged by past approaches that did not work. In a profession that expects perfection, my experience is that officers carry increasingly more stigma as they believe that they are making more mistakes than they ever have before.

One possible desired future state of NPD is not to ignore or minimize the errors police make, but rather to refocus the lens on the vast majority of calls that police officers attend in which they make the correct decision. The appreciative inquiry method to examining officers’ experiences allows for a reframe toward the positive experience officers have in their work. Moreover, it provides a framework to identify when they were most satisfied in their careers, how they relate their experiences to the current state in the organization, and what factors need to be present to align current state with desired future state. At the time of writing, NPD was experiencing three phenomena that may speak to lived examples of low morale in the organization: unclear and inconsistent communication, shortfalls in training opportunities, and the added uncertainty of organizational direction due to both the COVID-19 pandemic and the fallout from the death of George Floyd.

The public demonstrations and calls to action that followed the police-caused death of George Floyd have resulted in the discussion of systemic racism in policing. This discussion has since reached the topic of scope, which mirrors the question Mike Morris (personal communication, May 6, 2019) posed, what jobs should police be doing? The largest police organization in Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) have dedicated a significant portion of the *Vision 150* strategic plan (RCMP, 2021b) to addressing systemic racism in the organization. In addition, RCMP have focused on implementation of antiharassment and antidiscrimination policy and practices to be in place by 2023. Vancouver Police Department (VPD, n.d.) have also long had a focus on the importance of cultural diversity in their communities. Being the largest independent municipal police force in BC, the VPD has continued to renew this focus in response to recent calls for police reform.

As a smaller sized organization, NPD looks to both RCMP and VPD to gauge trends and innovations in policing. At the core of the discussion around systemic issues in policing exists the question, how might police more effectively address public safety in the communities they serve? VPD (n.d.) highlighted, “Community engagement promotes cultural awareness, safety, and helps build trust in the police” (p. 1). The RCMP (2021b) echoed the importance of this refrain: “17 percent of visible minorities have no confidence at all in the RCMP” (p. 11). The significance of cultural awareness is relevant to the department’s relationship with the community. The developments of 2020 and in particular the calls for police reform, offer and “orientation to possibility” (Harris & Agger-Gupta, 2015, The Four Principles section, para. 15), which are reflected in the original principles that Sir Robert Peel proposed in 1829 (Ottawa Police Service, n.d.). Specifically, that police are the public and the public are the police. The

current challenges facing police organizations may offer greater opportunity for community connection than previously realized.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter, I explore the literature review process encompassed by gathering, synthesizing, comparing, contrasting, and discounting information and knowledge in previous contextual literature (Royal Royals University, 2019). My aim was to identify themes that related to the topics of discussion in my capstone thesis surrounding improving mental health and well-being of police employees. The majority of the literature and research I reviewed regarding mental health and well-being of police focused on the effects of trauma on police employees:

Psychological research may also be adding to the perception of police officers being unwell, since research with the police population, similar to the general population, has largely been disorder-focused and deficit-based, highlighting difficulties in police officers instead of their strengths. (Conn, 2018, pp. 4–5)

This capstone thesis explores mental wellness from an appreciative inquiry approach; as a result, there were topics that arose out of my research that were overarching rather than specific to policing. These topics include the impact of great communication, employee support of each other during successful case files, the influence and excitement of community service, the importance of a healthy and supportive workplace, and resolving personal differences among NPD staff.

Impact of Great Communication

In this section of the literature review, I discuss the importance of communication and explore the most impactful and relevant offerings by authors relating to my capstone thesis. Communication is a simplified term for a complex system of actions, perceptions, reactions, and beliefs that allow humans to express and share ideas, feelings, and thoughts. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (as cited in Skills You Need, n.d.) defined communication as “the imparting or

exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium. . . . The successful conveying or sharing of ideas and feelings” (Defining Communication section, para. 1). A common understanding of language is also crucial in the communicative process.

Communication became a recurring theme in the research and was also found to be of importance in much of the supporting literature I reviewed. The NPD (2018) *Strategic Plan* stated a key directive is to “improve internal and external communication” (p. 9). In addition, the *Strategic Plan* identified that the current climate at NPD presents an orientation to possibility when it comes to improving communication (NPD, 2018).

Communication in any organization is not the sole responsibility of one person; every person in the organization is a contributor in making great communication happen. However, it cannot be overlooked that those in positions of leadership are responsible for “modeling the way” (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 13) in regard to what is expected when it comes to expectations around communication. “Leadership is first, and foremost, a communication-based activity” (C. Johnson & Hackman, 2018, p. 21). Organizational success is founded on great communication; it allows a shared vision to be created, which “is vital for the learning organization because it provides the focus and energy for learning” (Senge, 2006, p. 192). Communication itself lies in both the spoken words of the participants and in the general discourse of stakeholders of the organization. However, central to developing great communication in chain-of-command environments such as NPD is senior management’s alignment of espoused beliefs and actions.

Communication is not only central to conveying a message on how members do things in an organization, it is central to lowering employee stress when it comes to organizational change. Galbraith et al. (2020) suggested lowering unhealthy stress levels at police agencies “might be

made by raising the level of consultation and improving communication with personnel” (p. 231). Short (1998) stated, “There is simply no way misattribution, misinformation and misrepresentation can be clarified unless individuals talk directly to each other” (p. 110). Unhealthy stress, both at the organizational and individual level, can be infuriating and is also a result of poor communication patterns. As Short noted, “You’re not crazy, rather the pattern of triangulation and denial is crazy making” (p. 110).

If great communication is essential in creating a shared vision, poor lines of communication are certainly responsible for creating misalignment in how the organization arrives at its desired future state. Once the organization is no longer in alignment it becomes difficult to engage those in the organization in order to create positive change. Misalignment can also create mistrust and a feeling of weakness amongst those in the organization. The individual seeks to find safety in smaller groups or simply look out for their own interests without consideration of how it may affect others. Senge (2006) stated, “Alignment is the necessary condition before empowering the individual will empower the whole team. Empowering the individual where there is a relatively low level of alignment worsens the chaos and makes managing the team even more difficult” (p. 218). Great communication sets clear expectations from leadership on how people in the organization treat each other; it forms the foundation of the organization. Great communication is key to improving employee well-being and in creating the roadmap to a desired future state at NPD.

Support of Each Other During Successful Case Files

Participants in this research discovered that employees at NPD found support in each other during times of greatest achievement. In this section, I examined what precursors existed in these moments to identify what may be happening with the individuals who comprise these

successful teams. From the moment police are hired there is a strong bond that is rooted in personal accomplishment: “At the very beginning of my career, I was reminded almost daily by my police academy instructors that wearing a police uniform and carrying a badge were special privileges reserved for our country’s finest men and women” (Sylvén, 2011, p. 3).

Great achievement is not always based on a given end result. Oftentimes, teams experience failure and an event is not defined as a success but a bond is formed. Frankl (1962) stated, “For what then matters is to bear witness to the uniquely human potential at its best, which is to transform a personal tragedy into triumph, to turn one’s predicament into human achievement” (p. 112). It is in these moments of perceived failure that successful outcomes among police build stronger team environments. Police are often asked to respond to situations involving people having the worst day of their lives and find a resolution to those seemingly unsolvable problems. The importance of successful files can be found in the existence of trust building between officers during these times. Gilmartin (2002) explained,

Being accepted and trusted by other officers is, for most new officers, the major goal during the first year or two of their careers. The goal is earned only when the younger officers can demonstrate that they can be counted on in tough situations, that they can be trusted when the chips are down. (p. 3)

Great achievements and great moments are important to building trust. Being counted on in tough situations was not only important in building trust but also critical in knowing support would be there among each other throughout their respective police careers.

Gilmartin’s (2002) analogy of the new officer highlighted a key concept as to why support was found and trust was built in research participants’ most significant moments. New officers are required to learn their jobs when they start. However, this learning really never stops;

as the experience of the individuals grows, so too does the opportunity for team learning. As Senge (2006) noted, “When teams are truly learning, not only are they producing extraordinary results, but the individual members are growing more rapidly than could have occurred otherwise” (p. 9). Teamwork and the support that occurs during collaborative police efforts are central to the culture of policing. Sylven (2011) stated, “Every hour of every day, officers count on each other to make it safely through a shift. This teamwork, often forged over 25 to 30 years, can create very strong interpersonal bonds” (p. 4). Solidarity among police has been the subject of countless movies and novels that highlight the close relationship police have with their peers. Caudil and Peak (2009) highlighted the reasons for this bond between officers and their coworkers having “shared the dangers, successes, and frustrations inherent in the work” (p. 3).

Flynn and Herrington (2015) proposed that the relationship police officers have greatly impacts the training and development of leaders in the organization, “70 percent of the learning an individual does occurs at work, through stretch assignments, projects and day to day experiences” (p. 10). The importance of peer and senior staff coaching is also credited for 20 percent of an individual’s learning in the organization (Flynn & Herrington, 2015, p.10). These experiences and collaborative approach help develop a learning organization (Senge, 2006, p. 5) and allow the organization to “learn its way out of its problems” (Day, 2000, p. 582).

Being a police officer is perhaps the most visibly identifiable career, and as such, carries a strong personal identity that is rooted in a common goal and bond that approaches that of family rather than a profession. The literature I reviewed helped me understand that the organizational aspects of policing are also influenced by the bond employees share. This bond allows for emotions to exist in the objective world of law enforcement. Much of the literature I reviewed tended to focus on the negative influence emotion has in creating cynicism and burnout

(Gilmartin, 2002). However, these emotions create advantages and orientations to possibility within the police organization. Sir Robert Peel's famous quote—"the police are the public and the public are the police" (Peel, as cited in Ottawa Police Service, n.d., para. 3)—reflects these advantages spreading into the communities that police serve.

Influence and the Excitement of Community Service

Participants identified their most alive and engaged moments of their career having a strong relationship with participation in critical incidents, major files and major events. A police career starts with excitement; receiving a phone call or letter of acceptance into the police academy or from the employer is the first of many exciting times in an officer's career (Gilmartin, 2002). Burke (2009), who explored the reasons officers have for initially being drawn to a police career, found four primary reasons: (a) family policing history, (b) attraction to the power of the position, (c) prior experience with police (sometimes as a victim), and (d) desire to help people.

The participants in the research identified strongly with the desire to help people; this arose as a point of importance when discussing the most exciting moments in their careers. Burke (2009) also clarified the negative connotations of attraction to the position of power and the relationship of power stemming from making a positive impact in the officer's community. Often, it was the most positive experiences of the research participants that were also the times they felt most alive. Peel's principles repeat the importance of positive community relationships and is best outlined in his rule of "the ability of police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions" (Ottawa Police Service, n.d., para. 6). In a hierarchical environment like a police department, one of the best ways to combat resentment and feelings of inferiority is to give people power within their own domains (Greer, 2020). Burke (2009)

highlighted the important relationship between an officer's positive experiences with police prior to joining the profession and their desire to repeat these experiences as members serving the public.

In the most basic sense, for those who are attracted to being a police officer, it is exciting to simply do the job. My own police academy graduating class identified their class motto as "there's magic in the shirt," borrowed from one of our instructor's lessons on police patrol tactics (K. McConnell, personal communication, April 14, 2004) and making reference to the uniform shirt police officers wear. The motto spoke to the ability for police to resolve seemingly unsolvable issues with simple dialogue and officer presence alone, as though the visual presence of an officer can magically solve conflict. I have experienced the effect of my own officer presence many times in my career; the effect is much more objectively recognized than the more subtle "magic" that happens when a uniformed officer resolves complex issues by simply arriving on the scene. The national use of force framework (NUFF) and the incident management intervention model (IMIM), which all police agencies in Canada recognize as training standard, list officer presence and communication as an initial and integral part of the conflict resolution process (Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, 2000; RCMP, 2021a).

Reviewing the literature and comparing responses from participants highlighted the importance of the exciting elements in policing. These elements are what attract people as recruits to the profession and give it meaning throughout a multidecade career. Excitement is part of the reason why members choose a police identity (Sinek, 2009), similar to the reason "why people tattoo Harley Davidson logos on their body" (Sinek, 2009, p. 38). In fact, a number of NPD members have tattoos to commemorate moments in their careers.

Importance of a Healthy and Supportive Workplace

Postrumatic stress injury (PTSI), commonly referred to as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), has come to the forefront of discussions in police organizations in the last decade. The University of Regina (n.d.) revealed that 44.5% of first responder survey participants had operational stress injuries and symptoms of PTSI, such as depression, social anxiety, panic, and alcohol use disorders. Relating to mental health, the Ontario Chief Coroner, Dr. Dirk Huyer (as cited in Laucius, 2019), recently announced, “One in five Canadians has some form of mental health illness, but police suffer from both stigma and self-stigma in seeking help” (para. 6). In this context, stigma refers to external discrimination and devaluation by others, whereas self-stigma refers the personal internalization of negative stereotypes about people who seek help.

While police suffer from a higher rate of mental illness than non-first-responders, police themselves tend to feel that they are healthy when in fact they may not be. In spite of 44.5% of police suffering from PTSI, 84% of police officers surveyed believed that they were healthy and ready for work (Laucius, 2019). This is what Huyer (as cited in Laucius, 2019) coined “the broken toy culture” (para. 2) in policing. This personal belief that police are supposed to appear unbreakable prevents many police officers from seeking help; this leads to deterioration of mental well-being and becomes a cycle of mental anguish experienced by many first responders.

My own personal experience is very similar. I was diagnosed with depression in 2013 after 10 years of policing. When I received the news my first reaction was genuine surprise and denial; physically and mentally I did not feel depressed at all. Where Huyer (as cited in Laucius, 2019) described the symptoms of exposure to OSIs, Gilmartin (2002) offered one of the founding opinions on what police experience in their careers: Police officers often fall into a cycle of hypervigilance while at work, and exposure to risk and stress develops into a destructive

addiction to action—“I get a front row seat to the greatest show on earth” (Gilmartin, 2002, p. 43).

Exposure to risk stimulates chemicals such as endorphins, dopamine, and adrenalin (Sinek, 2017, p. 46). Overcoming these risks can cause an enjoyable euphoric sensation and can also lead to an addiction to these sensations (Seligman, 2007, p. 206). Recently, dopamine triggers have come to the forefront of public concern for many medical doctors and clinicians who research the addictive nature of social media and digital devices (Sinek, 2017). When the thrill of the chase is absent in an officer’s life, oftentimes they will unknowingly seek to replace it with other high-risk behaviours such as alcohol abuse, gambling, or peer group socializing (often referred to as *church*). When work fails to provide thrills, officers search for excitement in off-duty life. When this happens their families and loved ones suffer, as does the officer’s own health. Off-duty officers become detached, isolated, and apathetic (Gilmartin, 2002, p. 44)—the equal and opposite reaction to the euphoria experienced on the job.

Seligman (2007) and Peterson (2018) explored the causes of police PTSD symptoms and proposed a clinical psychoanalytical perspective. Peterson attributed much of his work to the founding studies of Freud and Strachey (1955) and Jung (1979) in terms of how humans act and react emotionally as a species. More recently, Sinek (2017) coined the acronym “E.D.S.O” (p. 47) in an effort to simplify the complex work of psychology and the psychoanalysts, which refers to the happy chemicals—endorphins, dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin—that dictate much of human behaviour, with Dopamine being the most relatable to police work. The pleasure people get out of a dopamine response arrives out of accomplishment of a task. “Two chemicals—endorphins and dopamine—are the reason we are driven to hunt, gather, and

achieve. They make us feel good when we find something we are looking for” (Sinek, 2014, p. 47).

Police work is full of opportunities to constantly stimulate endorphin response and dump dopamine into the officer’s system; the chase and the catch of a bank robber, scoring perfect on their annual pistol qualification, opportunities for public recognition, opportunities for commendation, the chance to be a hero—the list is seemingly endless. Peterson’s (2018) and Seligman’s (2007) concepts, simplified by Sinek (2017), relate to Gilmartin’s (2002) view that the thrill of the hunt transforms into hypervigilance in the officer. Eventually, the excitement runs out and depression sets in (Gilmartin, 2002). Police are not recognized for their work every time they accomplish something; officers do not arrest a bank robber every day. The ideal life of repeating reward dries up and becomes the life of a cynic. Senge (2006) supported this concept in his thoughts on resistance: “scratch the surface of most cynics and you will find a frustrated idealist” (p. 135). Senge (2006) proposed an explanation to the mental models officers fall into in policing, which Gilmartin (2002) acutely termed “victim orientation” (p. 113) mindset. Peterson (2018) backed this up with a bold assertion that responsibility is the meaning of life, which builds resilience in a person. Gilmartin agreed with both Senge and Peterson and noted the importance of building resilient mindsets by approaching problems from a lens of positivity. Gilmartin termed this shift being an emotional survivor or having a survivor’s mindset. Peterson’s view was founded in Freud’s foundational work, offering that while life is unfair it is no reason to identify as a victim and that “the optimism is nested in the pessimism” (p. 257) of life. Agger-Gupta and Harris (2015) discussed the “orientation to possibility” (p. 4), which relates to shifting members’ mental models away from the victim culture police may hold. This victim mindset often exists because of the skillset held by the people in the organization who are

trained to help those in times of crisis, not in the police officer's perceived absence of what is being done by the organization to support the mental well-being of police employees.

Where does that leave NPD in exploring how to develop resilience in members who have experienced OSIs? Gilmartin (2002) offered, "The first step is clearly to teach officers to maintain control of their personal lives" (p. 112), in that the goal is "not so much turning off police work as turning on something different" (p. 112), such as family, hobbies and self-improvement. Huyer (as cited in Laucius, 2019) proposed a contrasting perspective of normalizing mental health as a starting point: "making mental health as normal a subject as any other form of health, wellness and fitness of duty" (para. 22). Adams's (2015) idea of learning to change from the judge's mentality to that of the learner is another recognized starting point for mental model change (Senge, 2006, pp. 163–190) and paradigm shift (Covey, 2004, p. 37). Applying Adams's (2015) approach of changing the question as a researcher, I would ask, what might we change in order to shift mental models in police culture? Marshall and Laorenza (2018) offered the following insight: "The suck-it-up mindset prevails among responders of both genders. Why? All of us want to fit in and be accepted by our peers and our culture. We adapt and assimilate to survive" (p. 58). The conclusion I arrive at is that, in order to discover how members might develop resilience, they must first normalize conversations around mental health in police organizations. As Laucius (2019) noted, "Only now have we recognized the importance of creating resilient organizations rather than resilient people" (para. 14). This was previously highlighted by Senge (2006) in his concept of "learning organizations" (p. 5).

Resolving Personal Differences Among NPD Staff

The topic of personal differences at NPD was revealed as a theme in the research. It is not uncommon for any organization to experience perceived differences of opinion, but it is when

that perception turns personal that the result is an emotional attachment to one's own position on a topic. Stone et al. (2010) offered the "shift from a message delivery stance to a learning stance" (p. xxxii) when dealing with difficult conversations in an organization. Bohm (as cited in Senge, 2006) reflected on the synergy between dialogue and discussion and more importantly the appreciation of the distinction of the two forms of discourse to resolve divisiveness. Diverse perspectives are reflected in the dynamics of group decision making, as noted by Kaner (2014) who viewed the challenges of collaboration or "groan zone" (p. 21) as an "orientation to possibility" (Agger-Gupta & Harris, 2015, p. 236), rather than a hindrance to arriving at a collective desired future state (Stroh, 2015).

Police are part of a criminal justice system that can be viewed as adversarial and punitive in its very nature. Oftentimes success of an investigation is determined by a guilty verdict against a single person, when in actuality the challenges that are faced run much deeper. The guilty verdict against former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin demonstrated how deep the challenges of police reform run (Forliti et al., 2021). Again, worldwide events such as the murder of George Floyd allow citizens and officers alike to reflect on a tragic moment and identify a simultaneous orientation to possibility. NPD shares a responsibility in bringing systems change in that regard, returning to the issue of resolving personal differences at NPD should not pose nearly as daunting a challenge. The outlooks of the authors I reviewed are also reflected in NPD's own *Strategic Plan*, in which "community, communication, engagement and relationships" (NPD, 2018, p. 4) are all recognized as key directions and have been highlighted as important in resolving personal differences by the authors reviewed in this capstone thesis.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explored the following topics: great communication, employee support of each other, the influence and excitement of community service, the importance of a healthy and supportive workplace, and resolving personal differences. The links between the themes identified in the research and the literature reviewed will reappear later in the thesis. In the next chapters, I address the research process, findings and conclusions, recommendations, implications, and finally opportunities for other police organizations.

Chapter Three: Engagement Methods

Each specific approach to action research has in common a cyclical nature that aims to cause change as a result of the research. Lewin (1952) described action research as a spiral of steps: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. By comparison, the action research engagement (ARE) model proposed the “cyclical process of inquiry, dialogue and deliberation” (Rowe et al., 2013, p. 6). Creating change is the aim of action research. Rowe et al. (2013) noted, “Generating engagement, commitment and ‘readiness’ for change – all of which are necessary and foundational to a successful change intervention” (p. 6). The ARE model pointed to the importance of inquiry and dialogue, a balancing of which is echoed by Senge (2006), who offered “advocacy without inquiry begets more advocacy” (p. 183). If balance is not found in these essential elements of the ARE model (Rowe et al., 2013), a challenge arises in that participant engagement is not met. Failing to find balance results in defensive routines in which each participant finds a threat to their position and may refuse to consider alternatives to it.

Rowe et al.’s (2013) ARE model identifies one of the most consistent challenges with creating change in organizations regardless of the method employed, generating and maintaining engagement. Simply put, in my organization, there are two things police officers do not like: changes to traditional methods and the way things are currently done. This paradox is often present in many organizations. “Success in organizational change efforts is frequently poor” (Beer & Nohria, 2000, p. 24). As a solution, Rowe et al.’s ARE model specifically points out the importance of early stakeholder inclusion in the change process. Sinek (2017) suggested,

When we feel like we belong to the group and trust the people with whom we work, we naturally cooperate to face the outside challenges and threats. When we do not have a

sense of belonging, however, then we are forced to invest time and energy to protect ourselves from each other. (p. 41)

One of the strengths of action research and specifically Rowe et al.'s (2013) ARE model is the demand it makes to include all participants in the change process early on in order to ensure the highest level of stakeholder engagement and avoid defensive routines. As a result, Rowe et al.'s ARE model will likely find success in its goal of supporting positive organizational change. It is the simplicity of this approach that makes it most intriguing to me, in my own experience it is the simple solutions that gain foothold in creating organizational engagement.

Appreciative Inquiry

In this section, I focus on the concepts proposed by appreciative inquiry (AI), which resonated with me in terms of being appealing and possible within my organization. The primary aim of AI appears to be the cultivation of the best people within an organization; by this I meant helping people discover the best within themselves in their existence within the organization. Furthermore, and specific to policing, connecting people with why they became police and nurturing the reasons why they chose to give their lives to the service of their communities. However, the process that AI proposes is founded in a much deeper concept. Not only should an organization seek out the best people but it should also seek to encourage people to find the best in themselves and the world around them, including their organizations.

The reason I believe this model holds so much possibility is precisely because it is rooted in a positive outlook lens. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) defined AI as “the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems” (p. 12). The reason this concept is so important to my organization is that being positive and

seeking out moments of daily positive reflection is nearly absent in policing, the result of a hard reality that on nearly every shift police interact with people having the worst day of their lives.

This environment does not foster a positive outlook. In fact, police officers often become cynical and jaded as their careers progress, as some police simply see repeat offenders, recurring traumas and little hope for change. Officers start their careers with idealistic outlooks on the world.

Gilmartin (2002) emphasized, “Idealism can become cynicism; optimistic enthusiasm can become pessimism and the easygoing young recruit can become [an] angry and negative police veteran” (p. 3). This is where the appeal in AI existed for me, as it has the ability to cause positive change in my organization simply by shifting focus to the solutions officers find that no one else in society has been able to. This may appear to be a counter-cultural approach, but I have heard many positive reflections from members. Stories of great files and good humour (war stories) are also a go-to in most if not all police organizations. Police solve the problems that no one else can, and in that regard there is a great deal of value in police work. When appreciated, the outcomes of officers’ efforts can become fuel for positive change in police organizations.

To understand the AI process, I explored the separate phases involved in the process and relate them to NPD. AI is typically broken down into what is “described as the 4-D or 5-D model: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 5) see also Barrett & Cooperrider, 1990; Watkins et al., 2003). The Define phase is the additional phase added by Watkins et al. (2003) and is essentially the planning phase prior to the Discover process. During my capstone process, the initial steps involved speaking to my learning partner stakeholders and creating engagement to participate in the project. The “Discover” phase involves the appreciation of the narratives as told by the stakeholders in an organization (Agger-Gupta & Perodeau, 2017). From my own personal experience, law enforcement is a storytelling

culture; officers communicate in both official reports and to each other through stories of personal experience that relate back to the organization's guiding principles. The focus of AI in the first phase is to highlight the positive stories held by stakeholders in the discovery process.

The second phase in Cooperrider and Whitney's (2005) AI model is the Dream phase, which involves amalgamating the positive stories of stakeholders with the hopes and dreams or desired future state (Stroh, 2015) of the organization. To me what is most important in this phase is combining the narratives to allow for the development of a shared vision (Senge, 2006) as opposed to the individual hopes and dreams of those in the organization. Desired outcome is something that every police officer is trained to identify; ask two police officers how to solve a problem and you will often find three or four answers. In an organization in which individuals are expected to have answers, it is vitally important to identify the shared visions that each individual holds.

The Design phase in the AI process provides a vehicle for the desired shared outcome to be put into action (Agger-Gupta & Perodeau, 2017). The process could be more acute in the form of a "make it happen meeting" (Agger-Gupta & Perodeau, 2017). Specific to NPD, officers have transitioned away from these types of meetings due to a change in senior management's approach over the years. NPD used to have a Leadership, Plan, Change, Action Committee that is no longer in existence and does not hold these types of make-it-happen meetings. Participation in this capstone would provide my organization with an orientation to the possibility where such meetings would begin to occur as a result of participation in the research process. Reintroduction to these meetings would occur during stakeholder participation in online survey and circle way methods outlined in section four.

The final phase in the AI process is the Destiny phase, involving the realization and implementation of the concepts revealed during the previous phases in the process. In regard to NPD, traditionally the hope would be that stakeholders would arrive at a consensus for change or desired future state. However, AI challenges these traditional concepts of problems and short-falls in an organization. “AI reconceptualizes the organization as a learning brain, or a network, instead of as a machine in need of fixing” (Agger-Gupta & Perodeau, 2017, p. 241). The Destiny phase is not the conclusion of the AI process, which is cyclical and constantly in development within a learning organization (Senge, 2006, p. 5).

During the research process, the Wellness Group was able to reach the Destiny phase in two areas identified in the recommendations and implications chapter. Specifically, Recommendation 2 (see Chapter 5), in which NPD held a recognition ceremony for 20-year exemplary service awards, and Recommendation 5, in which the Wellness Group made an online health and wellness resource platform (Lifespeak, n.d.) available to all members and their families. Recommendation 1, surrounding improving communication, also reached the Dream phase with an updated *Nelson Police Department Strategic Plan* (NPD, 2021), acknowledging the need to improve communication with marginalized and visible minority groups.

Community-Based Research

In this section, I discuss the concepts surrounding community-based research. Etmanski et al. (2014) acknowledged that community-based research is interchangeably labelled community-led research and community-based participatory research. For simplicity, I use community-based research as an umbrella term, acknowledging that other terms are used as well. While both community-based research and AI approaches highlight a lens of positivity,

community-based research tackles much broader complex social issues. The focus on these complex issues makes this approach most challenging to me in an organizational setting.

Community-based research finds its place in the macro terminology of action research. While researchers who employ this approach share the desire to create positive change in their organizations and communities, community-based research approaches such change from the challenges of modern social and ecological lenses. As Etmanski et al. (2014) noted, “These challenges are related to the rights of indigenous peoples, sustainable community economic development, food and water security, poverty, health, housing, disability, violence, addictions, aging, systemic racism, education, democratic participation, global citizenship, the impacts of climate change and more” (p. 3). Indeed, this is a comprehensive list of challenges to focus on, and even selecting one social or ecological aspect can require a lifetime of research and data collection. When reflecting on these challenges, my interpretation is that they are so immense that they cannot be resolved in the academic setting alone. The community-based approach shares this outlook, taking the research process out of the classroom and developing a symbiotic relationship with outside practitioners and stakeholders. The learning experiences provided by community-based research aim to “undertake the practical, theoretical, emotional and spiritual guidance of new researchers – how they and we engage the hands, heads, hearts, and spirits of learners” (Etmanski et al., 2014, p. 3). The challenges outlined by community-based research become the challenges to the approach itself and include impacts such as climate change, decolonization, poverty, or even the current opioid crisis, which have become focal points for all levels of government and have affected all communities on some level.

The community-based approach identifies a “gap between teaching, learning and practice” (Etmanski et al., 2014, p. 7). When reflecting on the daunting challenges ahead of all

action research practitioner-scholars through a community-based lens, I feel that this approach has potential to change the epistemologies and ontologies researchers currently hold. Changing how people know and view the world is the foundation for causing community and organizational change. If people agree they have the ability to cause change in the world, they also have the choice to do so through a positive lens. Community-based research provides a vehicle to address global and systemic challenges. Combining community-based research with the AI method allows people and organizations to discover positive change collectively and realize these challenges as opportunities rather than barriers.

Development of Inquiry Team

My primary means of engaging the stakeholders was through the recently formed NPD peer-support Wellness Group, as I had no supervisory role in or over this group. This group made up my inquiry team, enabling me to draw on the experience from decades of policing and public service work as well as from a human resource lens approach. All members of the inquiry team signed an agreement prior to taking part in the process (Appendix A). The inquiry team included people in the following NPD roles:

- Retired RCMP Inspector and current Victim Services Worker for NPD and RCMP as a third-party research assistant, anonymization, and ethics consultant.
- Patrol Constable “A” Platoon as a third-party research assistant, Circle Way method.
- Beat Constable “B” Platoon as an alternate third-party research assistant, Circle Way method.
- Executive Assistant to office of the Chief Constable as a third-party research assistant, Survey method.

- Staff Sergeant Operations NPD as an operations supervisor to oversee and ensure power mitigation over is not breached.
- Relief Dispatcher, transcription clerk, as a data transcriptionist and vetter of information.

Data Collection Methods

I utilized a primarily qualitative online survey method in order to engage stakeholders. The survey also included a small section of quantitative questions. I recognized the limitations of the online survey method but also felt that it would be difficult to engage my entire organization in a large group method such as a world café or design thinking method. Due to shift work and the need for 24/7 coverage, I could not risk unintentionally excluding individual participants who could not attend a large group method because of their work responsibilities. A survey allowed me to invite an entire stakeholder group and minimize or eliminate exclusion of participants. Survey participation was voluntary and anonymous. A third-party inquiry team member electronically sent and received invitations (Appendix B) to the survey to ensure anonymity and informed consent should people wish to not participate. A third-party inquiry team member handled the data collection and removed any information that may identify participants. Due to the anonymous nature of this survey, consideration was given to any responses that indicated a strong discriminatory bias or as to whether the data should be included in the research. Expressing negative or highly biased views did not occur exclusively in survey methods, but such views still need to be given attention to decipher the root cause of why they exist. The survey was conducted online to maximize stakeholder engagement, protect the identity of participants, and ease data collection. I pilot tested the survey with the inquiry team to refine the data collection process. The invitation contained the link to the survey, which did not require

direct response. The landing page for the survey contained an information letter (Appendix C) detailing the nature of the data collection, data retention period, withdrawal process, full informed consent information, and clearly stated voluntarily participation rights. No survey questions (Appendix D) or demographic information were required on this preamble page (Appendix E). Participants were then required to click a link button at the bottom of the preamble page that confirmed informed consent to participate in the survey.

Once this thesis has been accepted by Royal Roads University, data from the survey will be destroyed on an agreed-upon date estimated to be a month after my convocation. I arranged for the data to be transcribed and anonymized by an independent transcription service and by a neutral member of my inquiry team.

A secondary data collection method was the use of a circle way story telling method. I choose this method because it is a viable large group method that allowed further exploration of the data received from the initial survey. It is also a method that can be conducted in an online format, as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) protocol necessitated social distancing at the time of this study. Storytelling is also part of police culture; as such, it was anticipated this method would allow participants to feel at ease during the data collection process. A third-party inquiry team member issued invitations to sessions electronically, requesting participants identify a session time and date they were able to take part (Appendix F). The inquiry team member also sent out an information letter (Appendix G). I needed to conduct two sessions for this method based on the number of participants who responded to circle way method invitations. Participants were invited to the circle way sessions regardless of participation in the survey, which maintained participant anonymity. A neutral third-party inquiry team member received participants' invitation responses to ensure confidentiality. During the session, I ensured data

were collected via digital voice recorder and scribe, then transcribed by a separate neutral third party again to ensure anonymity of participants. Participants took part within their stakeholder subgroups to avoid any power over or perceived power-over conflict within those groups. I pilot tested the circle way with my inquiry team to refine the process. All circle way participants signed a consent form prior to taking part (Appendix H). Appendix I contains a list of the circle way questions.

Following the circle way sessions, I conducted two follow-up informed consent interviews with subject matter experts. I held these interviews with participants whom I identified as subject matter experts due to their career long dedication to the mental health and well-being of police employees. Once this thesis has been accepted by Royal Roads University, I will destroy all circle way data on an agreed-upon date estimated to be a month after my convocation.

Data Analysis

I completed data analysis with the participation of my inquiry team and the NPD Wellness Group in order to ensure clarification of data and minimize insertion of personal bias, which I acknowledge exists in my role as researcher. My role as a supervisor at NPD also required me to have input from a neutral group that I did not have a supervisory position over. The data, findings and draft recommendations were presented to the Wellness Group for feedback and contribution. A *make it happen meeting* was utilized to present my findings and to receive alternative perspectives that some members of the Wellness Group had. This meeting was critical to ensure that I was not simply following my own hopes and goals and inserting my personal bias into the research recommendations.

Use of the Wellness Group as an inquiry team was intentional as the subject matter discovered in these methods may be personally sensitive to the participants. The Wellness Group is trained to assist people in providing emotional support should this arise. However, the appreciative inquiry approach also was aimed to minimize discussion of traumatic events by focusing on positive opportunities for change.

Participants

I offered no hope of advantage or incentive for data collection participation. “The rule of two feet” (Owen, 2008, p. 95) was applied and informed consent provided prior to and during data collection methods. Table 1 lists the stakeholders for this inquiry.

Table 1

Stakeholders for this Inquiry

Stakeholder’s Role	No. of Employees
Currently serving sworn police officers	24
Currently serving civilian personnel	6
Currently serving dispatch personnel	6
Retired police personnel	12
Spouses and family members of retired police personnel	24
Members of the Police Board	5

All employees and NPD retirees were offered the chance to have input into the future mental health and well-being of current and prospective police personnel at NPD. My goal in conducting this research was to acknowledge best past practices, along with identifying current practices in order to allow for a more comprehensive end product in eventual recommendations for change. Including retired members in this study was important to my ability to identify

meaningful positive change. My hope with including retired members was to allow current and future members to be guided by the positive vision held by those who dedicated the best years of their life to service.

Ethical Implications

As with any research involving people, ethical practice needed to be at the forefront of this capstone research process. The research I engaged in was guided by both the Royal Roads University (2020) *Research Ethics Policy* and the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* guidelines (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018) for ethical research. I designed the research to be minimal impact research and did not exclude any person at NPD. The research included data collection from retired members as well as employees' family members. Children did not participate in the process, as the research could be successfully conducted without needing to include those below the age of majority. Selection of group participants was done with a mind to the potential power-over conflicts that arise by virtue of the rank structure in all police departments. Transparency and informed consent were present throughout the research process as well. Continual acknowledgment of personal bias was a critical part of the research process, utilization of an independent third party was key in mitigating this bias and ensuring participant confidentiality.

I acknowledged that by virtue of my position as an operational supervisor at NPD that there was a power over and perceived power-over concerns that needed to be respected throughout the research process. It was not the goal of my research to implement my personal vision for change; rather, I sought to uncover a shared vision for positive change at NPD. The Wellness Group had made inroads amongst the NPD membership and past members through a week-long training presentation on first responders and PTSIs that occurred just prior to the

beginning of my research process. Furthermore, the Wellness Group had engaged the membership with a degree of success in providing access to some of the related literature materials that I reviewed for my capstone. Most importantly, inclusion of the Wellness Group significantly mitigated and, in some cases, eliminated the power-over concerns that I had. Working with the Wellness Group as my inquiry team allowed me to maintain respect for persons, eliminate conflict of interest, ensure the welfare of participants, and uphold a just process. My role in the topic of ethics was to remain as neutral as possible to mitigate my own unconscious bias while facilitating the research process that would holistically inspire positive change at NPD.

Inquiry Outputs

My primary inquiry output is this academic thesis research paper. I also intend on using the research findings to potentially develop a training resource for NPD and stakeholders involved in the project. I will present the material in this document in a personal oral presentation, with a visual format component, to a larger group or possibly through an online presentation to other police agencies. My goal is to share positive change generated in NPD organization with other community groups, stakeholders, and police agencies. The Design phase of AI saw the inquiry team taking findings back to the Wellness Group as the action inquiry group; in the make-it-happen process, attendees identified priorities among the findings discussed. A representative from the senior management team at NPD was invited to this meeting and ultimately took place as a circle way discussion around the findings that I presented.

This phase was part of the output process and resulted in the beginnings of implementing two of the recommendations I put forward based on the inquiry findings. The Wellness Group conducted a recognition ceremony for long-service awards in a number of one-on-one

ceremonies. These ceremonies were then part of an internal communication fanout to the organization. The Wellness Group identified that the COVID-19 pandemic prevented a larger public awards ceremony. To address this, individual recognition ceremonies were held; this option was identified as being a less desirable option due to the lower level of attention it would receive. The Wellness Group explored a polarity management model, opting to conduct individual ceremonies during pandemic restrictions with a plan to also hold a public ceremony when restrictions were lifted. and would be an output that would occur prior to the completion of the thesis.

Contribution and Application

The Canadian public agree on the importance of police in society (Jackson & Bradford, 2019). Sir Robert Peel (as cited in Ottawa Police Service, n.d.) captured the symbiotic role of police in society in his founding principles of metropolitan policing when he simply offered that the police are the public and the public are the police. The decisions and actions of police have a direct influence on the reaction of the public. North Americans witnessed this in the in-custody death of George Floyd, in which a single officer's actions set in motion rioting across the United States and led to calls for immediate police reform worldwide. Not only are police officers' actions scrutinized more than ever by independent oversight watchdogs, they are constantly monitored and reported on by the public through social media. The current state of reality increases the demand for police officers to make the correct decisions moving forward. In order to ensure the person in the uniform is incapable of making the right choices, it is essential for police organizations to identify possibilities to improve the mental health and well-being of its employees. Healthy minded police officers are much more likely to make correct decisions under

stress than those with low morale, high instances of occupational and organizational stress, and poor mental health.

A focus on this current state of this reality can benefit the members of NPD and is reflective of the work done by agencies across the province. Sharing of the information gathered in this research capstone project can provide similar benefits to all provincial agencies. Oftentimes positive change in providing supports for mental health of police officers relies only on the reframe of outlook police officers have on their jobs. Focus on positive learning outcomes rather than judging mindset (Adams, 2015) creates orientation to possibility (Harris & Agger-Gupta, 2015) within the organization itself. Even in the first steps of this process positive change may be happening at NPD. The NPD Wellness Group will benefit greatly from this capstone project by shedding light on new knowledge and practice in the field of police mental health. The city managers and human resource section has expressed an interest in sharing knowledge arising from this capstone to positively change practice for all city employees.

Chapter Summary

The goal of this capstone was not to identify problems at NPD or challenges that currently limit positive change. The primary goal of this capstone was to cocreate engaged and positive change in the organization with a focus on the principal inquiry question: How might Nelson Police Department improve the mental health and well-being of its members? I conducted this research using Rowe et al.'s (2014) ARE methodology and maintained an ethical practice throughout the research process. Respect, empathy, and justice were guiding principles of ethical practice during the data collection process (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018), which utilized the survey and circle way methods. My primary aim of the entire

process was to contribute in a positive lasting way as both a practitioner and scholar to both my academic field of study and professional field of practice.

Chapter Four: Inquiry Project Findings and Conclusions

I conducted this inquiry to discover methods that would seek to answer the principal research question: How might the Nelson Police Department improve the mental health and well-being of its members? I also posed subquestions to further identify acute areas for positive change:

1. How might employees at NPD identify their collective current state of reality in the organization and of the organization?
2. How might the NPD take a positive lens reframe for the police work culture to encourage collaboration and good communication?
3. How might the NPD engage its key stakeholders to generate a paradigm shift toward opportunities for change?
4. How might the NPD engage its key stakeholders in an appreciative process to create a paradigm shift toward improving the mental health and well-being of its members?
5. What are the stories of positive memorable experiences stakeholders tell about moments when they were proudest of NPD and their work there?
6. How could the NPD positively engage its members in order to identify a collective ideal future state?

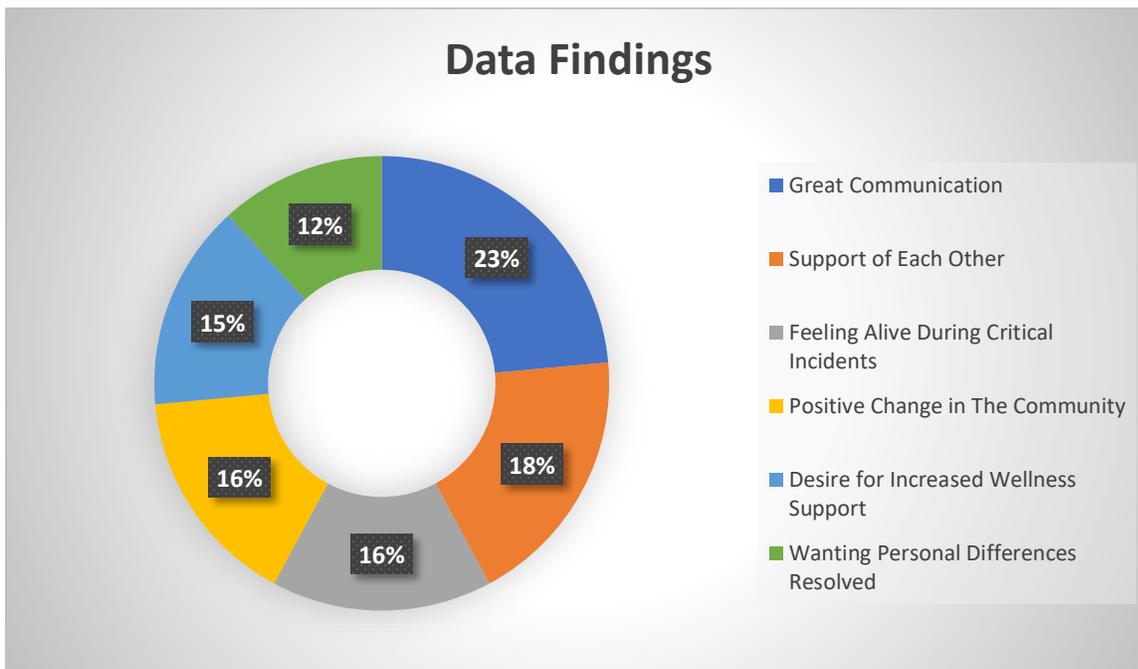
I conducted two separate rounds of data gathering among the sworn and civilian staff of currently serving NPD members and retired members of NPD. Given the small size of the NPD, engagement of a diverse cross section of members was important to allow for adequate data collection. The data collected from these research participants is presented in the findings and conclusions in this chapter. I conclude this chapter with the scope and limitations of the research.

Study Findings

Responses from the anonymous survey and transcriptions from the Circle Way revealed themes and trends that are related to the research question and subquestions. The following themes surfaced throughout the data analysis process: great communication, support, integrity, community, teamwork, trust, innovation, leadership, and purpose. I identified themes with the collaboration of a member of my inquiry team in order to mitigate unconscious bias, as I did expect to reveal certain themes ahead of time. Overall, many of the themes that emerged from the data analysis were ones I expected, but there were significant ones I did not anticipate. There were no responses that required exclusion, which was a challenge that I anticipated happening due to the questions in both the survey and circle way relating to personal experience.

After an analysis of the data, six distinct themes were identified as shown in figure 1 below. These themes are expanded upon further in this section.

Figure 1



In order to identify orientation to possibility, I conducted a further in-depth analysis to identify which themes participants identified as previously or currently espoused by the organization and which themes were in line with the desired future state as identified by participants. There was very little disparity in terms of the two identified categories, which allowed me to identify the following repeated themes in the data:

1. Great communication was consistently present in examples of moments when members felt most alive and engaged in their jobs.
2. Support of each other inside the organization was found in times of greatest achievement.
3. Most participants felt most alive and engaged during serious files or critical incidents.
4. Participants expressed importance in causing positive change in the community and felt that this was a part of both their personal and professional identity.
5. Participants did not feel as engaged as anticipated with the initiatives brought forth by the NPD mental health Wellness Group since its creation.
6. Personal differences in the organization were not being addressed effectively.

Role codes were assigned to the participants according to the data-collection methodology utilized. For example, those completing the survey were assigned the role code of SP-1 through SP-7. Of the 24 survey invitations sent out, seven invitees responded resulting in a 29% response rate. Those participating in the circle way were role coded as participants CW-1 through CW-8 to reflect the eight participants. Despite being lower than anticipated, the response rates were adequate to conduct the research; this will be expanded upon in the “Scope and Limitations” section at the end of this chapter.

Finding 1: Great Communication was Consistently Present in Examples of Moments when Members Felt Most Alive and Engaged in their Jobs

In this section, I discuss the most recurring theme in the positive experiences of research participants who highlighted the importance of communication in their responses. The primary focus in both the survey and the circle way method was around positive experiences in which participants provided examples of when they felt most alive and engaged in their policing careers. This appreciative lens was purposefully used in order to determine what participants identified to be present in positive experiences, rather than what was missing in the current state at NPD. The hope was that an appreciative approach would assist in answering Subquestion 3 of the research questions. As Adams (2015) offered, “Change your questions, change your life” (p. 4). Communication is a simplified term for a very complex system of actions, perceptions, reactions, and beliefs that allow humans to express and share ideas, feelings, and thoughts. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (as cited in Skills You Need, n.d.) defined communication as “the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium. . . . The successful conveying or sharing of ideas and feelings” (Defining Communication section, para. 1). The theme of great communication was highlighted by one survey participant who offered,

The time I felt most alive and engaged in the Nelson Police Department was when a guest speaker was invited to our department to offer an interactive course on survival skills for first responders. The group I was placed in was one I resonated with right away. The comfort of our honesty and vulnerabilities had already been established through years of working together on a regular basis and the strong communication we had already formulated. The day brought me closer to everyone that participated. (SP-1)

The importance of communication continued beyond the rank and file of the organization and emerged in the community as being a meaningful component in police work. In one example, a survey participant reflected on the importance of community in job enjoyment, and Sir Robert Peel's most fundamental principle emerged: "As a team, three of us were successful in preventing a woman from committing suicide by taking the time to talk to her and make her realize how many people depended on her" (SP-3).

Communication not only contains a message but also direction and a sense of well-being. One participant provided an analogy relating to communication at a basic organizational level:

Would you get on a cruise ship that did not have a destination or that you did not know where it was going? Even if the destination is not where you want to go, telling people what is happening is key to identifying a common goal. (CW-6)

Another circle way participant offered impactful insight into how frightening failed lines of communication can be for them: "Not knowing what is happening from management with my job is like being in a pitch-black dark room, and I'm in there with someone else who has a loaded shotgun" (CW-5).

It was encouraging to find that the theme of great communication, which was present in organizational great experiences, was echoed in a desired future state. This theme appeared among what participants were asked to identify as their three wishes at NPD. One survey participant offered simply, "better communication" (SP-1) as one of their wishes, while another was specific when they outlined, "better communication from management" (SP-3). A survey participant wished "that folks would talk to each other to gain understanding if there is a conflict or disruption in the relationship" (SP-6). Yet another participant simply stated "better communication" (SP-4) as one of their three wishes. The specific example of "addressing

interpersonal issues more promptly” (SP-5) could also fall into the theme of desire for improved communication at NPD, as it involves having difficult conversations to prevent operational conflict from occurring. NPD even identifies that communication is a vital part of the organization and is even specifically listed “improve external communication with the community and our policing partners” (NPD, 2018, p. 8) as key direction one in the current NPD strategic plan. This is echoed again in key point two “enhance internal communication” (NPD, 2018, p. 9).

Finding 2: Support of Each Other Inside the Organization was Found in Times of Greatest Achievement

This finding included the themes of teamwork, support, and leadership, which the inquiry team decided to categorize broadly as support. The theme of supporting each other and being supported was repeated throughout the survey and the circle way data. During the data collection period, NPD handled a homicide investigation that was related to the death of an off-duty Abbotsford Police Department member. The event was both tragic and had a personal lens to it for all employees at NPD and caused many officers to be upset about the loss in their community and their police family. One participant reflected on the investigation and offered, “Nothing brings us together like doing good police work” (CW-8). Support was a consistent theme in the more qualitative aspects of the research as well. In Survey Question 2, “supporting each other during our work” was ranked as what respondents value the most about how NPD works as a team. “Camaraderie,” which is often closely associated with supporting each other and being supported, was ranked as third in the same question. One survey participant explained the relationship between the act of supporting or being supported and the result it had in the

organization and community; this response was offered to Survey Question 7, which focused on examples of making a meaningful impact in the lives of others:

The stabbing on Baker St. in 2019 and the assault causing the death of an Abby PD [Abbotsford Police Department] member on Baker St. I feel it necessary to mention both because they were within a year of each other and only a block and a half away from each other on Downtown Nelson. For our small community to be so impacted with both of these violent crimes, I believe our team gained the confidence of our community to not be scared or angry. We handled all people involved; witnesses, victims, their families and friends and media with extraordinary professionalism and compassion. (SP-7)

The importance of supporting each other is captured in this response as well as the link it has to the survey participants' desired future state at NPD. Survey Question 4 asked, "What do you feel is the most important measure of success for NPD as a team?" Respondents ranked "high level of morale among employees" first and "positive connections with community members" second. In response to that same question, outlying answers offered included "teamwork environment" (SP-1), "strong and supportive leadership" (SP-2), and "making a positive impact in the life of someone I shared myself with. Whether it is with the public or a co-worker, influencing their life positively" (SP-4). One survey participant reflected on a familiar refrain used at NPD, "No call too small" (SP-6), meaning that what is important to some NPD members is that even the smallest act of support has value in the organization. The survey question surrounding three hopes or wishes for NPD moving forward also contained the theme of support, with one participant wishing for "more support [to] be provided to individuals and teams to strengthen relationships and support team spirit" (SP-4). One participant demonstrated

orientation to possibility in their recollection of a specific example in which the innovative restorative justice program was utilized to make a meaningful impact in the lives of others:

A young man who suffered from addiction and homelessness was provided a chance to make amends with the person and business he caused harm to. This man was supported to overcome his addiction and is now working full time and attending a support group. He has been sober for three years. (CW-3)

A. Picciolini (personal communication, March 6, 2020) explained why support in an organization is so crucial to high moral and group participant satisfaction in that it fosters “identity, community and purpose, three things that give meaning to human existence.” The profession of policing is often considered more of a calling than a job. In my personal experience, it is police officers’ unique identity and purpose that fosters community in the profession. It is the community of police officers that provides peer support, and support is expected from leadership as well.

Finding 3: Participants Felt Most Alive and Engaged During Serious Files or Critical Incidents

In this section, I discuss the data that came out of the research which helped my inquiry team arrive at the theme that employees felt most engaged and alive during some of their biggest and most challenging calls. Gilmartin (2002) provided numerous analogies as to why police officers love their job, comparing it to “getting a front row seat the best show on earth” (p. 43); this highlights the importance of involving employees in significant files. Assisting in high-profile and high-risk files captures many of the elements of feeling most alive, engaged, and connected with each other in policing. One survey participant recalled a moment they felt most alive and engaged was when they were “working on a file involving my whole team. The

preparation that had gone into it, the sense of camaraderie with everyone working together and the sense of achievement after we got results was exhilarating” (SP-2). Another survey participant provided their most alive moment, which could be applied to nearly any high priority call for service: “I felt the most alive and engaged in the department when involved in a serious criminal investigation. Other members were there to assist. We were all working as a team with the same goal to solve the event” (SP-6).

It is easy to understand why those who chose a career with a high level of risk would feel most alive during moments of danger. However, there are also moments in policing that hold significance to police employees, highlight their career, and involve very little risk to them personally. Some of these moments involve a high degree of personal stress placed on the employee because of the logistical complexities of the event. One retired survey respondent recalled,

I can think of a few times when I felt truly engaged and ‘alive’ during my career, but to narrow it down to one incident is difficult. One that comes to mind was in January 2007 when the CBC and Hockey Night in Canada came to town to do the Hockey Day in Canada broadcast. I felt very engaged during this because I had a large hand in organizing the police involvement and most of the Department’s personnel took part. The weekend was a success and a bonding time for most of the members. (SP-7)

The emotional connection for police officers often becomes an unavoidable part of the job. Many people join policing to make a positive difference, protect lives and property, or arrest offenders; along the way, I have personally worked on files that became emotionally significant to me and had a lasting influence on my life. Another retired survey participant provided a story of one such event:

Early one morning, a young victim was viciously sexually assaulted in Nelson. Various homeowners heard the victim's cries for help but no one responded. I was in GIS [General Investigation Section] at the time and by NCO [noncommissioned officer] notified me and we both started into the investigation. It proved to be a very long and at times intense file. The victim in this incident proved to be very strong and resilient, as did their family and fiancé. At some point in the process, I recall telling the victim that we will find the person that did this to them. Over the course of the investigation, I discovered I had an emotional obligation to live up to my promise. The investigation proved to be very engaging and in the end the offender was located and convicted on DNA evidence. (SP-4)

The personal promise that this participant touched on is very much in line with the espoused values of policing and is in fact reflected in the oath all police in BC must swear to uphold when they are hired as officers: "I will, to the best of my power, cause the peace to be kept and prevent all offences against the persons and properties of Her Majesty's subjects" (Police Oath/Solemn Affirmation Regulation, 1998, para. 5). However, it is likely more than this oath that causes officers to find significance in their approach to work. No participant offered that they were most alive and engaged when fulfilling their oath; rather, this occurred when they were connected personally to the work they did. A current employee shared the following meaningful impact on their lives in response to Survey Question 7:

A few years ago, members of our department became involved in a chronic family matter involving two infants. Members took personal interest in the situation and were eventually able to assist the mother and the children out of the situation and keep them safe. In time the offender left the community and later the mother re-married. The new

family have been together ever since and the children have grown and are now well adjusted and productive members of the community. (SP-6)

As strong as this theme was, the related findings are a double-edged sword, as they also lead to what Gilmartin (2002) offered as the “hypervigilance biological rollercoaster” (p. 47), which, over time, puts tremendous stress and demand on the individual in the uniform. While exciting and engaging, critical incidents account for a significant increase in OSIs and have contributed to the rise in PTSD among police and first-responder professionals. Looking closer at the data allowed me to find clarity in this area, which led to identifying the next finding as an orientation to possibility for police professionals at NPD.

Finding 4: Participants Expressed Importance in Causing Positive Change in the Community and Felt That This was a Part of Both their Personal and Professional Identity

In this section, I discuss the theme of positive change in the community and how it emerged as being part of both the research participant’s identity as a police officer and the individual’s own personal identity. I have known many police employees during my career who include being a police officer as part of their personal identity. However, this is not unique to police personnel. Many career professionals who have invested years of training and education to qualify for their profession of choice also believe their job is part of their personal identity. What emerged from this research was a unique connection that police officers had with their community. Survey Question 2 focused on what was most important about working as a team and participants ranked “positive differences made in the community” as the second most important behind “supporting each other during our work.” Responses to Survey Question 4 supported the findings in Question 2, in which the second most important measure of team success was identified as “positive connections with community members.” Survey Question 4

also contained a “other” option for participants to provide their own answer. One survey participant provided the following response: “Making a positive impact in the life of someone I shared myself with. Whether it is the public or co-worker, influencing their life positively” (SP-7).

The inquiry team and I decided that this response falls into the same theme as “positive connections with community members,” which places “positive connections with community members” as the number one measure of team success among survey participants. The theme of “support” surfaced throughout the research findings as did the importance of “making a positive difference in the community”. One circle way participant provided their reason behind why making a positive difference in the community was important to them personally:

I felt most alive and engaged with NPD in the first two years of my contract with the Restorative Justice program. Our program was receiving files and I had many interactions with the officers who were referring files. Back then I had opportunities for learning from the feedback that officers were providing. It felt as though our program was thriving and that it was valued. I felt valued and believed that I was playing an important role in the community and the department. (CW-3)

This example provided a multilayered reason related to playing an important role in the community and organization. What materialized for this participant was being valued, having their program thrive, and feeling important while they were making positive differences.

Not only was making a positive difference in the community integral to the past and current experiences of participants, it was identified as important in a path to a desired future state at NPD. Question 13 dealt with the three most desirable things the department can build on for future success at NPD. Responses included “positive regard for each other and our

community members” (SP-1). The same survey participant also offered “more community engagement and opportunities for learning about community needs and perspectives” (SP-1). This opportunity for community to be the path to a desired future state was also reflected by another survey response with “relationship with the community” (SP-2) being identified. A more relationship specific response was presented along the same theme with the same participant providing “support from the community, small town knowledge” (SP-3) as two of their three areas for opportunity. This theme continued in the majority of responses to Question 13 being “a vested interest in the community, a desire to make a positive difference and the ability to work as a team” (SP-4). Another response reflected community with “commitment to the community” (SP-6) as one of three opportunities for future success. Another survey respondent echoed “improved community connection” (SP-5) as part of a desired future state.

The findings in this section are in alignment with one of the central recurring themes to success in the profession of policing. Strong relationships with the community and an expressed desire to improve the community are still valued in the modern police organization at NPD. The police are the community and the community are the police was shown to be as relevant as it was when metropolitan policing was established in 1829 by Peel (as cited in Ottawa Police Service, n.d.). Findings in this section from the responses by participants support the importance of positive differences in the community. Nearly 200 years later, events worldwide that unfolded after the murder of George Floyd support the importance of a strong relationship between people and police. In the wake of protests, the public in some communities are once again voicing the need for a community-based public safety system in place of police. I would offer that is exactly what Peel sought to create and when executed correctly is what already exists in most communities. It is why this particular finding is so relevant to this project. If respondents identify

with positive community connections as a source of positive outcome in the workplace, surely an unhealthy relationship with the community would have an adverse effect on the mental health and well-being of employees. Negative impacts on the mental health of police employees are not altogether unavoidable and have resulted in many police organizations adopting or initiating a response to employee support. In 2018, NPD formed a Health and Wellness Committee that has taken on continued support for its members and brought training and education to NPD employees and family members. This research project provided an opportunity to check in with participants as to how well the Wellness Committee has done in a short period of time. The survey and circle way lead to the next finding.

Finding 5: Participants Did Not Feel as Engaged as Anticipated With the Initiatives Brought Forth by the NPD Mental Health Wellness Group Since its Creation

In this section I present the data that related to how engagement with the NPD Wellness Group resonated with participants. Question 15 was created with the intention of establishing an objective starting point for what mental health and well-being initiatives impacted employees in a positive way. The data revealed an orientation to possibility that I had not considered. While some participants identified experiences at wellness events as being times they felt most alive and engaged, there were a significant number who felt these initiatives did not assist their mental health and well-being. I will first begin by focusing on the initiatives that did resonate with participants.

Question 15 asked, “Which initiatives or directions pursued by the Wellness Group so far have had the most positive impact on you as a member of NPD?” Examples of initiatives were provided but participants were not limited to these choices and could provide their own input or experience. The *take five* reading initiative was chosen by two survey participants, one who

responded “the take five reading initiative and implementation of reading library for employees” (SP-2) had the most positive impact on them as an employee. The additional participant compared the provided examples “reading some of the books from the reading library has been more useful than a, b or d” (SP-1). The reason for one participant’s use of the library was offered during a circle way session alluding to the inherent anonymity of the process: “I can take a book from the cart on night shift when no one is around and return it when I’m done or choose to keep it if it has meaning” (CW-6). As opposed to a presentation, online or in person, access to knowledge through reading puts control of the information in the hands and mind of the learner. Attending a meeting allows for other attendees to see who joins the session or even who chooses not to. Stigma can be inherent in these processes as a result.

While stigma around mental health has been commonplace and may dissuade engagement in the Wellness Group, more participants found little or no value in the initiatives offered as well. One survey respondent offered, “Honestly, probably none of them” (SP-3), when asked which initiatives had a positive impact on them. This theme was echoed by another respondent who simply stated, “None of the above” (SP-6). These responses gave a clear indicator that some people simply were not engaged in the wellness initiatives at NPD but it did not offer much beyond that as to why. A circle way participant provided their own reasons why they had not felt engaged in the Wellness Group:

NPD is so small and this town is so small that everyone knows everyone else’s business. Even if this is not the case, I always feel like everyone does. I don’t like the idea of a select group of people possibly discussing my reaction to a traumatic event at work or in my personal life to try and find a solution. The wellness team is made up of five or six

people and I may only trust one, it does not mean I want my life discussed with the other five. (CW-7)

What this response seems to indicate is that this participant feels that they are not in control of their own mental wellness. This particular response revealed a paradox of sorts in this well-intentioned initiative. How can a small organization address specific trends or events without giving the impression that they are talking behind someone's back about a very personal event? Another survey participant shed light on stigma that can exist when people face mental health challenges when then hoped for a "more harmonious work environment in which individuals demonstrate acceptance of diverse perspectives and feel safe to share feelings and perspectives without fear of reprisal or shame; people feel excited and happy to come to work" (SP-7). Another survey participant reflected on the human aspect of a job that often requires perfection: "still striving to live by my values. I mess up a lot" (SP-6). I feel this response also captures a paradox of sorts. Police are expected to strive for perfection in their work. Moreover, police face a higher level of public scrutiny than most professions. Police are also possibly the most visible profession save for celebrities. The paradox that exists is that each time a police employee attempts to meet the criteria expected of them, they face complete failure as a possible outcome. The result of this very exposed professional life is the magnification of shame and perception of failure among police. This perception inevitably influences the outlook of respondents in this survey as well.

Other responses to this question around wellness initiatives were discovered in other questions as well. While some participants did not want to be unwillingly included in a wellness process, other participants felt that such knowledge, skills, and training should be an organizational priority. One survey participant provided "improved mental health awareness"

(SP-5) as part of their desired future state at NPD. This priority was reflected among the three wishes that participants had for the future of NPD. These wishes included, “mindfulness training” (SP-1) and, more specifically, “involv[ing] spouses more in improving and understanding mental wellness” (SP-3). “Open discussions surrounding traumatic incidents” (SP-3) was also identified as a wish for the same participant, while another participant connected mental wellness to physical wellness in their wish of “more opportunity for physical fitness training” (SP-2). A solution for lack of engagement in the Wellness Group was also approached from a different lens with a survey participant recommending “mandatory counselling sessions” (SP-7) for employees. This mandatory approach was expanded upon in a circle way group with the explanation that “if it becomes no option for people to attend clinical counselling at NPD, then it eliminates the stigma attached to it. Everyone has to go so everyone is equal” (CW-5). This approach does hold some validity, it appears, as it allows employees to transfer the potential stigma that they might feel onto the organization as a whole in the form of mandated initiatives. This approach would solve the engagement issue but may result in unintended consequences that turn into additional organizational challenges. While there is constant conversation in the organization as to how the Wellness Group can better engage employees; the last finding may hold some insight as to first steps in the engagement process.

Finding 6: Personal Differences in the Organization Were Not Being Addressed Effectively

In this section, I discuss a theme that, in spite of an appreciative approach, holistically arrived out of the research that is closely related to all of the previous themes. While this research primarily focused on the positive experiences of participants, much of the data collected highlighted a theme of interpersonal conflict at NPD that was not being resolved. This finding is not a criticism of NPD, as all organizations experience interpersonal conflict and many struggle

with resolving these tensions quickly. Participants were very specific in their responses to which identified this theme. One survey participant listed, “Address inter-personal issues promptly and effectively” (SP-5), as a response to Question 6, which asked participants for three wishes for improving mental health and well-being. This was supported by a response to the same question that also fell into the communication category, a wish “that folks would talk to each other to gain understanding if there is conflict or a disruption in the relationship” (SP-6). While this response supported the first finding of great communication being a priority, it was much more specific as to what areas of the organization needed to be actioned to achieve better communication.

Although used to identify Finding 6, another respondent to the survey identified interpersonal differences at NPD with the hope for “a more harmonious work environment” (SP-7) as a desired future state within the next three years at NPD. I did not analyze these three responses as standalone data to identify this finding.

The importance of this is reflected in the appreciative approach questions as well. The majority of participants’ most alive and most engaged moments involved forming connections with people in times of crisis or collaboration. The survey participant who recalled “working on a file involving my whole team. The preparation that had gone into it” (SP-2) specified that “the sense of camaraderie with everyone working together and the sense of achievement after we got results was exhilarating” (SP-2). Many of the desired future states at NPD and highest ranked values logically follow repairing fractures between the people the department serves and working together to do so. In Question 2, participants identified “camaraderie” as being the third most important value and “supporting each other” as the most important value about how NPD works as a team. This was supported by responses in Question 4, which identified a “high level of morale amongst employees” as the most important measure of success for NPD as a team.

When comparing the most alive and engaged moments to a desired future state, a connection emerged that may allow an orientation to possibility at NPD. Within the conflict that some identify exists at NPD may lie the solution, which moves us closer to the desired future state. A respondent to Question 14 noted, “NCOs [noncommissioned officers] who work together and support each other” (SP-2) as a desired future state. This response resonated with me, as the noncommissioned officer (NCO) or sergeant rank is one that I hold at NPD. This response was echoed by another survey participant in the same question who offered “supportive leadership and being the change that you want to see in others” (SP-6) as a path to a desired future outcome. If the participants are stating that there are personal differences at NPD and that the NCOs need to better support each other; then it locally follows that the NCOs need to “model the way” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 13) behaviour that they expect in those that they lead at NPD. A survey respondent identified the possible outcomes in Question 14, noting that when personal differences are resolved with their potential future state may be one of “improved morale, improved teamwork, improved community relations” (SP-1). Another potential result of having difficult conversations surrounding personal disagreements was that of “camaraderie,” which required “integrity and accountability” (SP-7) during the journey to solving these differences.

Study Conclusions

Responses to this study were not limited to one certain group or section at NPD. As stated in the participants section; all employees and NPD retirees were offered the chance to have input into the future mental health and well-being of current and prospective police personnel at NPD. My goal in conducting this research was to acknowledge best past practices, along with identifying current practices in order to allow for a more comprehensive end product in eventual recommendations for change. Including retired members in this study was important

to my ability to identify meaningful positive change. Peterson (2016) evoked much the same reasoning that when threatened by malevolence, even to the point of damage to your consciousness, you go down into the chaos and you find the dead spirit of your tradition and you give it vision. My hope with including retired members was to allow current and future members to be guided by the positive vision held by those who dedicated the best years of their life to service. The following conclusions resulted from the research.

1. Employees want consistent and effective internal and external communication at NPD.
2. Employees want to be recognized for their actions during the most serious events and positive accomplishments in the service they provide.
3. Employees want the organization to communicate the positive difference members make every day to the public and community.
4. Employees want to be included in the most serious files and biggest events.
5. Employees want the Wellness Group to continue to engage the membership and capitalize on potential blind spots in support delivery.
6. Employees want personal differences in the organization resolved.

Conclusion 1: Employees Want Consistent and Effective Internal and External

Communication at NPD

The importance of effective communication is critical to the success of any organization; whether the organization be a family or a large global corporation, great communication is present in moments of great success. Moreover, effective communication is present in successful organizations. NPD espoused that their primary key direction is to “improve external communication with the community and our policing partners” (NPD, 2018, p. 9). This is

supported by key direction two “enhance internal communication” (NPD, 2018, p. 10).

Management noted the importance of continuing to improve communication and participants recognized that great communication was present in their most important moments. Kouzes and Posner (2017) offered, “That the alignment between a leader’s words and deeds has a powerful impact on how much constituents trust the leader and on their subsequent performance levels” (p. 74). Communication ties into trust and into performance. Participants in the research made the link between high performance and high trust equating to higher morale. Morale has a strong relationship to well-being and safety within organizations. This may be why communication emerged as having high value to employees at NPD. A common understanding of language is also crucial in the communicative process. Gottman and Silver (1999) highlighted the importance of communication in a relationship by focusing on the impact of its absence with the concept of “stonewalling” (p. 34), or no communication at all, as the final step in many failed relationships.

Conclusion 2: Employees Want to be Recognized For Their Actions During the Most Serious Events and Positive Accomplishments in the Service they Provide

Police are historically known for participating and practicing public ceremonies for recognition of personal and organizational accomplishment, as well as for commemoration and remembrance. Participants in this research provided personal examples of being recognized by the organization and by each other as being important to them. Furthermore, they recognized the importance of the community being part of these moments as well. Kouzes and Posner (2017) provided insight into why these acts of celebration are so important: “Ceremonies and rituals create community, fusing individual souls with the corporate spirit” (p. 274). Many leadership researchers understood the importance of recognizing their followers. Sinek (2017) drew a link

between acts of kindness and the release of oxytocin and its relationship to stress and high levels of subsequent cortisol in people who experience this stress:

Cortisol actually inhibits the release of oxytocin, the chemical responsible for empathy.

This means that when there is only a weak circle of safety and people must invest time and energy to guard against politics and other dangers inside the company, it actually makes us even more selfish and less concerned about one another or the organization.

(p. 69)

Policing already exposes the employee to high levels of stress. It is logical for participants to identify that acts in the organization that help alleviate the effects of stress as being desirable to them. Essentially, recognition of achievements equates to better mental health and well-being of police employees. Sinek (2017) also provided an explanation of why mutual support in a basic human sense holds value: “Participating in acts of kindness releases the positive chemical oxytocin into our bodies. Turns out that witnessing acts of kindness also have the same effect” (p. 62).

Conclusion 3: Employees Want the Organization to Communicate the Positive Difference Members Make Every Day to the Public and Community

Police relationship with the community has been the key principle of policing since Peel introduced his model to metropolitan policing in 1829 (Ottawa Police Service, n.d.). In contemporary times, the vast majority of public focus on police has been during the most negative experiences that citizens have had with the police. The media cliché “if it bleeds it leads” is a common experience that police have with those who tell the stories of officers’ actions. From my own personal experience, the vast majority of officers’ daily interactions with the public end on a positive note. Participants identified the desire to have these positive

experiences communicated back to the community. This conclusion is very much in line with Conclusion 2, communicating accomplishments to the community is a ceremony of sorts as well and “ceremony creates community” (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 274). This conclusion is also very much in line with NPD’s key direction one: “improve external communication with the community and our policing partners” (NPD, 2018, p. 9), making it equally important to NPD employees as it is to the community of Nelson.

Conclusion 4: Employees Want to be Included in the Most Serious Files and Biggest Events

Participants felt most alive and engaged during serious files or critical incidents. I arrived at this conclusion by reflecting on the data provided by participants and my own lived experience in my career. I know the feeling of pride when I am included in significant files, large investigations, or even planned events such as Canada Day or Remembrance Day. Moreover, I know the feeling of insecurity that surfaces when I am not included in these events, even if it is merely everyday circumstances that prevent me from taking part. Police bond together over critical incidents and inclusion of people creates trust in the organization. Sinek (2017) offered the concept of “the circle of safety” (p. 69) in organizations and the important role leaders have in creating this circle. “The best leaders extend their circle of safety to the outer edges of the organization” (p. 244). Participants made the link between inclusion and success in their own experiences. “The ability of a group of people to do remarkable things hinges on how well those people pull together as a team” (Sinek, 2017, p. 25).

Conclusion 5: Employees want the Wellness Group to Continue to Engage the Membership and Capitalize on Potential Blind Spots in Support Delivery

The creation of the NPD Wellness Group was guided in part by the NPD Strategic Plan key direction two “facilitate and support mental health and wellness among all staff” (NPD,

2018, p. 10). While there were specific initiatives that participants identified as important to them, there were just as many that felt they were not finding value in the work that the Wellness Group had taken on. I do not feel that the research data identified that the Wellness Group was ineffective, rather that it has revealed an orientation to possibility at NPD. One participant identified the work the Wellness Group had done as their most alive and engaged moment in their career. It was responses like this that supported my conclusion that the Wellness Group has been effective in achieving improved mental health and well-being at NPD. However, the data also supports that the Wellness Group needs to continue to engage the membership in order to provide improved wellness to all staff as the *Strategic Plan* (NPD, 2018) directs. A possibility also available to NPD would be the introduction of mandatory mental health training sessions. However, NPD senior management must also be mindful that mandatory training also finds itself in conflict with at least two of the five universal truths proposed by Thompson and Jenkins (2010): “People would rather be asked than told . . . [and] people prefer options over threats” (p. ix). Providing improved mental health and wellbeing should be closely aligned to a shared desired future state that all employees define together.

Conclusion 6: Employees Want Personal Differences in the Organization Resolved

Research participants identified that unresolved personal differences existed between employees in the organization. Furthermore, participants provided responses that specifically indicated that they would like those personal differences to be resolved. There are many reasons that employees avoid resolving these differences in spite of the negative effect they can have on morale. People may feel that a conflict may not involve them, or that difficult emotions may arise from conversations about differences, employees may even feel unsafe in approaching these issues. All of these elements exist in what Stone et al. (2010) labelled as “difficult

conversations” (p. 4). All too often, these conversations are avoided and instead manifest as “communication triangles” (Short, 1998, p. 123) in organizations leading to smaller differences festering into seemingly unsolvable problems. Over time people in organizations forget what these differences are about, and, in some cases, the participants in the conflict forget what they were originally in conflict over. Regardless of the cause for conflict, participants in this research identified that they want to move on from personal differences at NPD.

Scope and Limitations of the Research

The primary limitation of this study was the population size who participated in the research. NPD is the smallest independent municipal police agency in the Province of BC. A secondary limitation to the research was the ongoing global pandemic, which locked down many services in the City of Nelson during the research planning phase. Following the restrictions put in place by the COVID-19 pandemic were the protests across North America in response to the existence of systemic racism in the criminal justice system. These protests caused many police officers to make a choice to not have input into any change process. I had employees come to me during this time saying that they had stopped participating in social media and in any forum that made them identifiable members of the law enforcement community in fear of scrutiny. I also had employees tell me that they adjusted the way they policed operationally and avoided difficult conversations surrounding race for fear of repercussions in their personal lives or damage to their professional reputation. What took place with the murder of George Floyd had a ripple effect in the law enforcement community; police officers who used to feel confident in their view on organizational issues may have felt afraid to express their opinions in the data collection methods used. In the face of defund police movements, police officers found themselves attending to new and challenging calls for service that added operational fatigue to the membership at NPD.

Paradoxically, the very data collection process that employees were asked to engage in to improve their mental health may have added to the already overburdened NPD employee's workload. The optional participation required under ethical approval guidelines resulted in many employees simply choosing not to participate in order to manage their own stress levels.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provided an in-depth view into the study findings, conclusions from the study and the literature reviewed, as well as the scope and limitations of my research. In the final chapter, I will draw on these study findings and present my recommendations. I will address the implications that these recommendations have on NPD and identify areas for potential further research.

Chapter Five: Inquiry Recommendations and Implications

In this chapter I present the research recommendations for NPD, which I developed from the research data and literature reviewed. These recommendations address the principal inquiry question: How might the Nelson Police Department improve the mental health and well-being of its members? In addition, I explored the following subquestions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the principal inquiry question:

1. How might employees at NPD identify their collective current state of reality in the organization and of the organization?
2. How might the NPD take a positive lens reframe for the police work culture to encourage collaboration and good communication?
3. How might the NPD engage its key stakeholders to generate a paradigm shift toward opportunities for change?
4. How might the NPD engage its key stakeholders in an appreciative process to create a paradigm shift toward improving the mental health and well-being of its members?
5. What are the stories of positive memorable experiences stakeholders tell about moments when they were proudest of NPD and their work there?
6. How could the NPD positively engage its members in order to identify a collective ideal future state?

In addition to the study recommendations, I discuss their implications in this chapter. I also explain areas for further research and study that if explored may provide further understanding of how to improve the mental health and well-being of employees at NPD. In the course of this research there has not only been engagement by the membership in discovering

what brought the most alive and engaged moments in their careers but also my realization of what orientations to possibility exist all around them.

I also discuss the recommendations and implications from the research findings and how the lived experience of research participants translate to leadership development opportunities at NPD. At the core of sharing lived experience in these moments is the possibility of exploring a “learning organization” (Senge, 2006, p. 5) which is supported by Flynn and Herrington (2015) who proposed “70 percent of the learning and individual does occurs at work, through stretch assignments, projects and day to day experiences” (p. 10). Exposure and mentoring during these significant events provide this learning opportunity for NPD members. Moreover, “20 percent occurs through networks, and in particular, through being coached and mentored by peers and more senior staff” (Flynn & Herrington, 2015, p. 11). When shared with each other, the experiences of the NPD employee group create the foundation for a learning organization “because not only is it our nature to learn but we love to learn” (Senge, 2006, p. 4).

Study Recommendations

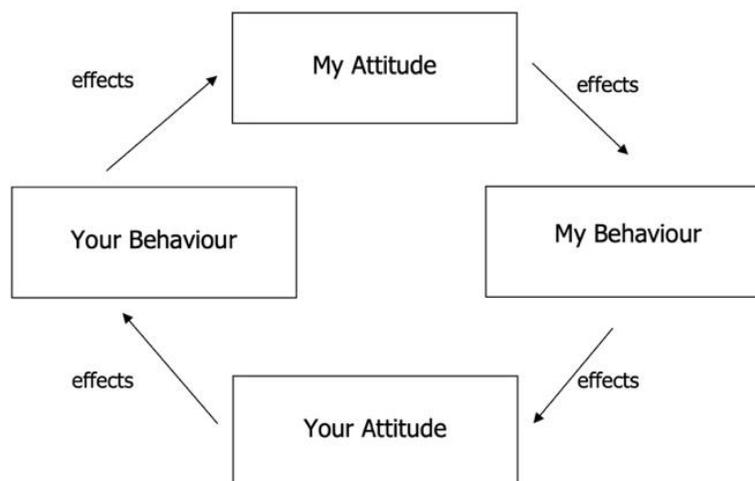
The inquiry recommendations I present in this section arrive out of an examination and combination of the research methodologies, an analysis of the research data, and a review of the literature during the research journey. Action research principles were employed to explore the information drawn out of both the research data and literature explored in the research process. The goal of this research was rooted in the shared approach that action research provided, which is research with rather than research on (Lippitt, 2016), in which “the researcher and the researched are working in collaboration” (Coghlan, 2019, p. 59). In order to identify and create meaningful positive change at NPD, the recommendations needed to be arrived at in a holistic manner rather than be delivered as chain-of-command orders from on high. The importance of

positive change related to mental wellness at NPD is significant. What happens in the organization has an impact on what happens in the public. The ancient “Betari Box” (Mindtools, n.d., para. 1) concept simply demonstrates how the ability to control conflict resolution among the public originates in the climate and culture influencing individuals in the organization. This concept is demonstrated in Figure 2.

Participants in this research also identified the symbiotic relationship between community and police and moreover how the community and the police look to each other for identity and purpose to form the community of Nelson, BC. This is supported by Peel’s principle “the police are the public and the public are the police” (Peel, as cited in Ottawa Police Service, n.d., para. 3). This principle was developed over 190 years ago but has shown to be as relevant today in the wake of George Floyd protests and calls for police reform. The police and the public once again are engaging in discussions about the well-being of our communities around North America and this has a direct relationship to the well-being of the employees at NPD.

Figure 2

Betari Box Concept



My recommendations in this section provide NPD employees with a shopping list for how they might improve their own mental health and well-being as well as that of others they work alongside. Due to the nature of action research, this list of options was developed by the members themselves and gives valuable insight for management on how to effect positive change at NPD. Most importantly, the majority of these recommendations have evolved from themes, trends, or changes in organizational climate that currently or have previously existed at NPD. The recommendations can be implemented at a minimal to no cost in most cases, yet have the potential to yield tremendous positive results for the mental well-being of employees and even improved morale at NPD. As these recommendations are essentially born out of the minds of the research participants, they offer significant orientation to possibility for both senior management, employees and their families, and the community. Finally, these recommendations provide a roadmap to the NPD Wellness Group to further engage membership participation in their own well-being and bring NPD closer to accomplishing key directions set out in the current NPD (2021) *Strategic Plan*.

I suggest the following be implemented at NPD in order to build upon the work that the Wellness Group has already done with the intention of improving the mental well-being of all employees at NPD.

1. Establish, improve, and maintain consistent internal communication expectations at NPD.
2. Implement and facilitate an employee and public recognition program at NPD.
3. Establish a medium to consistently communicate the positive impact NPD members have on the community.

4. Establish mentorship programs for frontline members and support staff to include them in the most serious files.
5. Encourage the Wellness Group to continue to engage employees through psychological and physical wellness program delivery.
6. Create a safe space to resolve personal differences at NPD.

Recommendation 1: Establish, Improve, and Maintain Consistent Internal Communication Expectations at NPD

A recurring theme in the research was the presence of great communication, which surfaced when participants spoke about their moments of feeling most alive and engaged in the work that they do. This recommendation is made as a result of the data from the research and my incorporation of NPD (2018) *Strategic Plan* key directive to “improve internal and external communication” (p. 9). Not only does the *Strategic Plan* identify a desired future state and espouse that great communication is important, it identifies that the current climate at NPD presents an orientation to possibility when it comes to improving communication. This recommendation is important as both the membership and the senior management at NPD agree that great communication is a desired future state. Communication, both written and oral, are listed as the first standard for performance evaluation of sworn members at NPD (2018). This further supports this recommendation and highlights that communication is a consistent priority for successful outcomes in service delivery.

Communication in any organization is not the sole responsibility of one person; every person in the organization is a contributor in making great communication happen. However, it cannot be overlooked that those in positions of leadership are responsible for “modeling the way” (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 13) when it comes to expectations around communication.

“Leadership is first, and foremost, a communication-based activity” (Johnson & Hackman, 2018, p. 21). J. Jackson and Parry (2018) agreed, “Whenever we ask ‘What makes an effective leader?’, being a good communicator is invariably one of the top three requirements. When we change that question to ‘What makes a great leader?’, it invariably tops the list of essential requirements” (p. 57). Organizational success is founded on great communication; it allows a shared vision to be created which “is vital for the learning organization because it provides the focus and energy for learning” (Senge, 2006, p. 192). Communication itself lies in both the spoken words of the participants and in the general discourse of stakeholders of the organization. However, central to developing great communication in a chain of command environments such as NPD, is senior management’s alignment of espoused beliefs and actions. If senior management fails to demonstrate consistent great communication, the perception is created that employees are allowed to do the same. The end result is either miscommunication about organizational expectations, formation of “communication triangles” (Short, 1998, p. 109) or even worse the existence of “stonewalling” (Gottman & Silver, 1999 p. 34), which occurs when groups simply stop talking altogether about their wants and needs.

Communication is not only central to conveying a message on how members do things in an organization, it is central to employee stress when it comes to organizational change. Galbraith et al. (2020) suggested lowering unhealthy stress levels at police agencies “might be made by raising the level of consultation and improving communication with personnel” (p. 1). Change can come from organizational directives, needs, or constraints, but it can also come from external governing bodies that oversee police at a provincial or federal level. Communicating these changes effectively amongst the employee group eliminates uncertainty and creates a much clearer picture of how the individual’s future exists in the group. If change is ignored, or only

discussed among the inner circle of management, it can lead to assumption and false conclusions by the employee body. Slowly, the employee group can begin to talk less to each other directly and more about the unknown and about each other. “You cannot learn from anonymous feedback. There is simply no way misattribution, misinformation and misrepresentation can be clarified unless individuals talk directly to each other” (Short, 1998, p. 110). Organizational and individual unhealthy stress can be infuriating and is also a result of poor communication patterns; as Short (1998) noted, “You’re not crazy, rather the pattern of triangulation and denial is crazy making” (p. 110).

If great communication is essential in creating a shared vision, poor lines of communication are certainly responsible for creating misalignment in how the organization arrives at its desired future state. Once the organization is no longer in alignment it becomes difficult to engage those in the organization in order to create positive change. Misalignment can also create mistrust and a feeling of weakness amongst those in the organization. The individual seeks to find safety in smaller groups or simply look out for their own interests without consideration of how it may affect others:

In fact, alignment is the necessary condition before empowering the individual will empower the whole team. Empowering the individual where there is a relatively low level of alignment worsens the chaos and makes managing the team even more difficult. (Senge, 2006, p. 218)

The human species is reliant on strong social connection for its mental well-being and even survival. Even among the divided opinions of today’s political climate, humans find solidarity amongst groups who share a common view on how the world should be. While competition can be healthy in certain cases, in an organization like NPD this is true when all

members are in alignment toward a unified goal. Competition can often be confused with divisiveness, which can lead to erosion of trust within the organization itself. When leadership does not communicate effectively, a common goal becomes defined many different ways by the individuals in the organization. Much like how Aesop described the four oxen who fell a-quarrelling, mistrust, the formation of cliques, and divisiveness pick off the individual ox one by one until an end is made to each person's mental well-being in the organization (Sinek, 2017). Great communication sets clear expectations and forms the foundation of the organization. Great communication is key to creating the roadmap to a desired future state at NPD.

Recommendation 2: Implement and Facilitate an Employee and Public Recognition Program at NPD

I have made this recommendation as a result of the research data provided by participants and also by examining past practices at NPD relating to employee and public recognition. Many scholars have debated the value of recognition programs or awards and the causal relationship to employee and organizational performance:

There is little consensus on the causal relationship between public sector awards and performance, though award programs continue to proliferate in the public sector and multiple scholars have called for the study of their relationships to effectiveness and performance. (Federman, 2019, p. 1)

However, in this research, I did not set out to establish a correlation between employee recognition and performance specifically. Furthermore, most research on the relationship between police performance and recognition are focused around metrics such as reduction of crime rates or solve rates within the organizations researched. My aim in making this

recommendation is to improve the mental health and well-being of NPD members. Previous research has supported the importance recognition plays in police organizations:

Lower levels of support and reward and higher levels of effort and overcommitment were associated with higher levels of mental health symptoms, officers who had experienced a discrepancy between work effort and rewards showed a marked increase in the risk of depression . . . when compared with their counterparts who did not perceive themselves to be in a condition of distress. (Garbarino et al., 2013, p. 1)

In instances of low level of support, high workload, and low levels of recognition, anxiety has been shown to be increased among the employee group (Sherwood et al., 2019). This recommendation is supported by the data provided by research participants who identified that they found value in having their most positive and alive moments of their career highlighted by their organization.

In October of 2015, NPD held a fundraising dinner named Cuffs and Claws in order to raise money for the then newly established Nelson Police Foundation. The foundation was created with an aim to raise money for items police need that would not normally be covered by the police budget. More importantly, it was created to highlight the strong relationship that the community of Nelson, BC, has with its police officers. One of the components of the event was an awards and recognition ceremony for the sworn officers, civilian employees, and members of the public involved in the apprehension of an armed bank robber from the previous year. The event was deemed a success and raised a significant amount of money for the Nelson Police Foundation. NPD repeated a smaller commendation ceremony in 2017 and again in 2018 to recognize several members for long service awards. All of these events resulted in positive feedback from the public and employees involved. These positive outcomes, coupled with the

expressed wants of research participants, have resulted in me putting forward this recommendation. The relationship between acts of recognition and mental wellness has been shown in the research surrounding human physiology, more specifically around the hormone serotonin. Sinek (2017) offered a simplified reason why such acts of recognition are so important in leadership practice: “Serotonin is that feeling of pride. It is the feeling we get when we perceive that others like or respect us. It makes us feel strong and confident, like we can take on anything” (p. 57). The release of serotonin in the body is one of the reasons why Royal Roads University holds a convocation ceremony, not only does receiving recognition cause us to feel confident and strong, “if we are the ones giving the support, we feel an equal sense of responsibility” (Sinek, 2017, p. 58). The importance in ceremony ties in with Peel’s notion of community and police being equal pieces of a symbiotic relationship (Ottawa Police Service, n.d.). When members of the public see police recognized for bravery, they feel an equal sense of pride. This relationship is reciprocal; when citizens are recognized for honourable deeds, police feel the same sense of accomplishment and connection with the public.

As I noted in the scope and limitations section, the global COVID-19 pandemic has put significant restrictions on large gatherings and ceremonies such as the ones previously described. However, this is not to say that recognition of honourable deeds or accomplishments cannot take place. In the process of developing these recommendations, I met with our Wellness Group and we discussed this recommendation. The challenges of the pandemic were highlighted as a limiting factor in holding a large gathering awards ceremony. I proposed that NPD do both an individual recognition of members in the immediate future and plan to hold a larger ceremony when the pandemic permits. From a lived experience perspective, in 2003, I was sworn in individually by Chief Constable Jamie Graham when I started as a prerecruit at VPD. Normally

police academy classes are sworn in as a group at a large ceremony with friends, family, and senior police officers present. I was sworn in early because I was fortunate enough to receive employment as a prerecruit three months prior to the start of my academy class. When it came time for my class to be sworn in, I handed my badge back to my training officer to have it presented to me once again but among my peers. The experience on each occasion was different, but the sense of pride I had was equal in both occasions. The factor that matters most in recognition ceremonies is that someone took the time to recognize those receiving the accolade at the ceremony. “Time is the one thing we can give for free but is also the one thing we all have in such short supply, that is what makes it so valuable when we give it” (B. Brown, 2019, 1:30). Leaders and members taking time out of their busy schedules to recognize the hard work of others pays valuable dividends in the morale of the organization and in the case of NPD, in the community of Nelson as well.

Recommendation 3: Establish a Medium to Consistently Communicate the Positive Impact NPD Members Have on the Community

North American police have rarely been under such perceived scrutiny as they have in 2020. Events unfolded which led to many policing organizations being criticized for being systemically racist and even called upon to be defunded. Most relevant to this study, in the living memory of the NPD’s membership, there has not been such a push back against the police establishment as occurred in the USA in 2020. Previous events such as the 1992 Los Angeles riots saw similar push back, but none of the NPD’s current membership was working as police professionals during that time. Indeed, these events are important and highlight that being a police officer is not only a profession but also an idea that every citizen and police officer has a stake in. The lived experience of those officers who do good on a daily basis represent the

majority of police officers in Canadian police organizations. I have made this recommendation for two reasons which combine to fulfill the very important need of maintaining public trust in the police. This recommendation complements the importance of employee recognition. Where ceremony can be a positive morale boost among employees and members of the public, communication of the daily good work provides a foundation for cultural change within an organization. Large awards ceremonies are infrequent by their nature, whereas mediums such as weekly press releases highlighting significant events police attend throughout their tour of duty provide a more consistent version of the work police do. Telling the stories of the good work police helps to maintain positive morale in police organizations. “One of the primary ways leaders shape reality is through storytelling” (Johnson & Hackman, 2018, p. 25). The current trend at NPD is more consistent with communicating the actions of members, which lie on the extreme ends of the outcome spectrum; stories of heroic deeds or stories of calls gone wrong are usually all that gets told to the public. Oftentimes, police tell these stories out of necessity, as the events are too large to go unnoticed by the public or the media. When leaders neglect to tell the story in between the extremes we can create a distorted version of reality. This reality then becomes an expectation that both the public and police officers attempt to live up to, oftentimes falling short. Harvey (2018) explained that leaders frame stories and events to help followers understand the world. If leadership at NPD falls short in communicating the everyday great work of its membership, they offer a misunderstanding of reality to followers in the organization and to the public.

The second reason I feel this recommendation is significant relates to Peel’s key principle of “the police are the public and the public are the police” (Ottawa Police Service, n.d., para. 3). If we agree that trust between the public and the police is key for public safety to exist, then the

police and the public must consistently communicate expectations and outcomes in a transparent manner. I provided the example of weekly media releases as one such way to communicate with the public but there is no singular approach that will accomplish a positive outcome to this recommendation. Provided below are some additional approaches that NPD senior management currently employ and may consider moving forward:

- Maintained participation in community public safety stakeholder groups.
- Presence of a downtown beat officer.
- Weekly or monthly communications by Senior Management regarding organizational direction, accomplishment or development.
- Establishing a presence on social media platforms.
- Investing in the training and identification of a media and public spokesperson for NPD.
- Establishing a regular written column in local traditional print media for public inquiry and police response to questions.

These examples are not intended to be comprehensive or constrictive, I propose them only to demonstrate possibilities that have arrived out of the research.

Recommendation 4: Establish Mentorship Programs for Frontline Members and Support Staff to Include Them in the Most Serious Files

Much like Recommendation 2, I have made this recommendation after analyzing the data provided by research participants surrounding the most engaged and alive moments in the participants careers. This recommendation is also made by comparing and contrasting current performance appraisal standards at NPD, which focus heavily on the most significant files employees are involved in over a 2-year evaluation period (NPD, 2018, p. 2). I do not make this

recommendation to suggest additional workload or strain be put on the employees at NPD; rather, to be inclusive towards employees in relation to important work already being done, I have identified the most serious files in this research not by relationship to traumatic events but rather as investigations that may fall into one or all of the following categories:

- Investigations that result in successful life-saving efforts being rendered by members involved.
- Investigations involving successful outcomes where members require urgent assistance from other police members.
- Long term investigations that involve positive collaborative interaction with affected parties.
- High profile investigations that result in positive media coverage regarding the efforts of members.
- Departmental initiatives or projects that create positive change for employees and the community.
- Large community events that require police participation to resolve in a successful outcome.

This list is not intended to be comprehensive or absolute but rather as a guideline to types of files that research participants found significant in their respective careers. In my own experience, the only thing certain about police work is that it is uncertain what work the individual officer ends up doing. For this reason, there is no certain set type of call that will result in a rewarding experience for police personnel involved, but the data provided gives a good indication of the types of situations participants found rewarding.

The performance evaluation process at NPD provides positive feedback on objective experiences of employees during the 2-year evaluation period. From my own personal experience, this performance evaluation process is based on analysis of how employees responded to the most significant files during that period. As a front-line supervisor, I keep separate files on each of my five constables to record these significant calls they deal with. The performance evaluation process specifies “do not use this document to introduce performance concerns” (NPD, 2018, p. 2). In its design this performance evaluation process employs an appreciative approach to feedforward for development of members and specifically states that performance development is to be an ongoing process in between evaluation periods. This performance evaluation process ties into Recommendation 2, in which I focused on positive recognition ceremonies. In order for the performance evaluation process to be effective, employees must be included in the most serious files so that objective criteria can exist to provide positive feedback.

The importance of serious files is entrenched in the subculture of policing and very much results in the identity of an individual police officer. This phenomenon is not specific to the profession of policing; it falls into a simple category of overcoming a challenge, which results in a successful outcome. The serious files police attend to are complex and require the individual employees to think critically in order to identify resolution. Oftentimes police are called when communications break down and no one present is able to identify resolution for the problem. It is because police are able to resolve violent situations peacefully or mediate intense conflict with perceived effortlessness that police are held to the high standard that they are. This high standard is part of the officer’s identity and when achieved becomes a feeling of value in the organization and in the community. This recommendation is also significant because involving employees in

serious files is not limited to a small group of employees at NPD. Because serious files fall into such broadly defined categories, they become available to a broad range of employees in the organization. It is important that leaders at NPD recognize this possibility and seek opportunities for others to participate in these serious files when they occur.

I recognize that putting forward this recommendation also creates the existence of a proverbial double-edged sword. The more employees are exposed to serious files, the higher the potential is that they are also exposed to trauma, which can increase the instance of occupational stress injuries. Cotton and Hart (2003) suggested:

Work demands have a complex relationship with employee wellbeing. Feeling a heavy workload can be a positive uplift for employees, contributing to their level of morale, whereas feeling overloaded is often a stressor that contributes to levels of distress.

(p. 123)

I have intentionally involved the NPD Wellness Group in the findings process, as they play a key role in implementing these recommendations given that they work closely with both the membership body and senior management. The role of leadership and management at NPD plays a key role in ensuring this balance between positive uplift and distress are met. Dollard et al. (2019) suggested managers “would be cognisant of evidence regarding work environment psychological risks, and would actively engage in participatory framework with workers to ensure work demands are not excessive, and that the work is appropriately challenging” (p. 172). The expertise and training of those in the Wellness Group is critical to providing this balance in appropriate stress levels. K. W. Brown (2004) highlighted that organizations need to be vigilant and ensure that their provider groups have at least some staff who have postgraduate clinical training and skills in the delivery of focused psychological treatments. The NPD Wellness Group

consists of members who either have this training, are familiar with trauma-informed practice, and are supported by those who have clinical expertise. I will explain the importance of the Wellness Group's participation in Recommendation 5.

Recommendation 5: Encourage the Wellness Group to Continue to Engage Employees Through Psychological and Physical Wellness Program Delivery

I have made this recommendation as a result of the data provided by the research participants but also to highlight the important role the NPD Wellness Group plays in the organization. Although well established, the Wellness Group is still relatively new in its creation and has not fully realized its desired future state at NPD. The COVID-19 pandemic presented a challenge to this group as it has with most organizations worldwide, by it impacting the ability to meet physically and maintain creative tension (Senge, 2006) and engagement with the initiatives already taken up by the Wellness Group.

In Recommendation 4, I provided a brief introduction as to one of the primary reasons why continued employee engagement by the Wellness Group is critical to realizing a desired future state not just with the group but for the organization as a whole. The research participants identified that the groups work was important to them but they also identified a link between the serious calls police attend and the need for postincident support that is required due to trauma exposure. In Recommendation 4, I proposed increasing employee engagement in the most serious calls in order to effect positive change. This recommendation is made to provide mental health and wellness support systems to establish a proverbial toolbox of skills to deal with the trauma exposure that may occur during these calls for service.

This recommendation is perhaps the most objective response to the principal inquiry question. When I began my career in policing in 2003, discussions around mental health and

wellness of police officers had already begun. Police recruits were encouraged to see counsellors and were all given a copy of Doctor Kevin Gilmartin's (2002) book *Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement*. However, "suck it up" (Rich, 2017, 21:44) when it came to experiencing emotional trauma was still very much a part of my lived experience as a new police officer. There has been a tremendous shift in police culture to address the stigma around seeking mental health treatment. Former Abbotsford Police Department Chief Constable, Bob Rich (2017) provided his perspective at the funeral of a fallen officer:

If you get hurt because you've responded heroically on behalf of this community, doing your job, then I want you to take a knee, I want you to get help. I want you to talk to a counsellor. I want you to ask your family to bear you up. I want you to take sick days. I want you to put in a claim. I want you to do whatever it takes so that you are well and that when you step back out on the street to protect our community, you are able to do it because you have looked after yourself. (22:05)

The words of police leaders like Chief Rich have inspired police leaders across the country to place an emphasis on improving the mental health and well-being of their employees. Presentations on the lived experience that Chief Rich had while in command at the Abbotsford Police Department have had influence on the implementation of NPD's own Wellness Group implemented by Chief Constable Paul Burkart. Regardless of the implications of any of the recommendations in this chapter, the importance of mental health and wellness support is acknowledged by many law enforcement agencies across Canada (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2018). Police will continue to attend traumatic calls for service and have continually stepped into new roles to prop up underresourced community stakeholders (Caudil & Peak, 2009, p. 3). Whether responding to traditional calls for service or problem solving new

challenges, the evolving role of the police personnel will continually expose the individual in the uniform to trauma. The NPD Wellness Group provides academic resources to support a learning organization (Senge, 2006, p. 5) and peer support that maintain the healthy well-being of police employees.

In addition to academic resources, the NPD Wellness Group has an opportunity to contribute to not just the training but also the development of employees. This distinction is critical to the success of NPD as a learning organization (Senge, p. 5). Flynn and Herrington highlighted this difference:

We make a deliberate distinction between development and training. Training suggests that there are certain knowns a leader must have, and that there are proven solutions to identified problems. Development, on the other hand, embraces the goal of building capacity to respond to a range of unknown and unforeseen problems. (p. 5).

The challenges to NPD as an organization are not unique but they are evolving. Policing is both a complicated and complex environment (Flynn & Herrington, 2015, p. 2) with many of the challenges NPD face being new and requiring solutions never before considered. These new challenges can lead to additional stress being put on employees when tried and true best practice is no longer a viable solution. Continued support from the NPD Wellness Group supports the individual employee with both training and development opportunities allowing the organization to “learn its way out of its problems” (Day, 2000, p. 582). Wellness groups in policing are not a new concept. However, they have not been explored before in NPD history. Employee engagement by the NPD Wellness Group is not only a recommendation I propose but one that is in line with NPD’s core values, namely “innovation” (Nelson Police Department, 2021, p. 2) and

with NPD's Strategic Plan Key Direction 2.2 "providing guidance, support and development of staff" (Nelson Police Department, 2021, p. 10).

Recommendation 6: Create a Safe Space to Resolve Personal Differences at NPD

I have made this recommendation as a result of the data collected from research participants, which identified a trend that I did not expect to be revealed in the research process. I do not find it surprising that personal differences exist at NPD; any police organization faces the challenges that arise out of problems requiring innovative solutions and a staff made up of innovative critical thinkers. In recommendation five, I highlighted the importance of the Wellness Group engaging the membership, central to the success of this recommendation is the resources that the Wellness Group can provide to the membership. The topic of resolving personal differences often begins with having what Stone et al. (2010) termed "difficult conversations" (p. xxviii). Of course, this is a broad application of the term but what I hope to capture in this recommendation is that resolution to personal differences is not simply achieved by discussion of differences between people. Perhaps what better captures where safe spaces at NPD begins is with "making a shift from a message delivery stance to a learning stance" (Stone et al., 2010, p. xxxii). During the analysis of data, conclusion and findings and even while exploring recommendations and implications; I realized that these recommendations are reliant on each other. Creating a safe space in an organization can be a direction given by leadership or management but it will be a direction that falls short of its desired future state if not modeled in the behaviour of those in the organization.

The importance of safe spaces is captured by Cotton and Hart's (2006) concept of occupational well-being. A study involving a sample of police officers revealed "that organisational climate exerted the strongest influence on morale, followed by positive

experiences” (Cotton & Hart, 2006, p. 122). This also supported the importance of how these recommendations function in relationship to each other. Dollard et al. (2019) used the term psychological safety climate (PSC) in relation to psychological health in police organizations and the importance of it relating to police employee well-being and productivity. This work also identified that “like safety climate, PSC emanates from top management levels” (Dollard et al., 2019, p. 172) and that PSC is expected to be transmitted throughout the organization largely via middle managers and supervisors (Cox & Cheyne, 2000; Dollard & Bakker, 2010). NPD is a smaller sized organization; with two members of senior management (chief constable and staff sergeant) and four members of middle management (sergeant rank). If there is a barrier due to personal conflict at the middle management level, the size of the management group dictates that a safe space, PSC or positive organizational climate cannot be fostered. Small working groups can become subject to the negative effects of low morale, this is why creating a safe space to resolve personal differences is key to the mental well-being of employees at NPD.

Out of the recommendations I have put forth, the ones that have the closest relationship to creation of safe spaces are Recommendations 1, 2, and 5. I recommended a focus on great communication in recommendation one; safe spaces require great communication to create them and continued great communication to maintain them. Communication creates inclusivity and the most effective leaders are able to extend the organizational circles of safety to the outermost edges of the organization (Sinek, 2014, p. 25). Every organization faces external threats. In the private sector, corporate takeovers and market competition can threaten a company where the individuals in the organization are forced to look out for their own well-being due to infighting in the organization. Aesop’s analogy of the four oxen that grazed a field with their hind ends facing each other so that the predatory lion in the field was met with horns each time it tried to attack

the oxen. Just as personal differences have led to division at NPD, so too did quarrelling among the oxen lead to them grazing separately in the field, until the lion made an end to all four. If safe spaces cannot be created at NPD and lines of communication kept open, then the proverbial lion will make an end to the well-being of those at NPD.

In Recommendation 2, I focused on recognition of members for the meaningful work they do in the organization and community. Absence of recognition of our employee's greatest moments can also be interpreted as a devaluation of hard work and accomplishment in the organization. If there is no incentive to improve and elevate performance standards at NPD and only a focus on discipline when employees make mistakes, a hostile environment evolves. Employees stop looking for opportunities to do better and simply begin to watch their backs for criticism and punishment that is certain to arrive if performance standards are not met. If allowed to become part of the organizational climate, eventually employees begin to actively search for shortcomings in others; because after all, one certain way to avoid being reprimanded is to ensure the focus of consequence is on someone else. Lack of recognition for great deeds results in blame culture within an organization. If allowed to persist, it manifests itself in toxicity that infects morale within the walls where a safe space should exist.

In Recommendation 5, I focused on the contributions of the NPD Wellness Group thus far and explored orientation to possibility for the group moving forward toward a desired future state at NPD. In relation to Recommendation 6, the Wellness Group has a tremendous opportunity to explore and reveal the potential in the individual employee to gain a better understanding of how they influence the outcome of their own actions. Specifically, how trauma impacts each person in a unique way and how the individual can gain understanding about themselves and others through a trauma-informed practice approach. Since my meeting with the

Wellness Group to discuss findings and develop recommendations, the group has launched two important training opportunities to enhance mental wellness at NPD. The Lifespeak (n.d.) digital wellness platform has been purchased and made accessible for all NPD employees and their families. This platform is aimed at “helping organizations keep employees present, productive and thriving, addressing all facets of well-being including physical fitness, mental health, financial success, children’s health and parenting, and personal and professional development” (Lifespeak, n.d., para. 1). The Wellness Group has also enrolled the entire sworn membership in the Canadian Police Knowledge Network’s (n.d.) online training for trauma informed practice. The aim of this training is to provide a knowledge base for police personnel to better understand the effects of traumatic experience on those they serve, those they serve with and on themselves. This training specifically addresses the effects of personal differences in the workplace and speaks about many of the experiences that research participants provided during both the survey and circle way portions of the research. Moreover, both resources provide knowledge and a resource to work through personal differences and gain both understanding and acceptance for the perspectives of others at NPD.

There is no absolute starting point in creating safe space within an organization. However, there are essential elements required to creating and maintaining personal safety in organizations. “Starting with where you are with whoever is there” (Senge, 2006, p. 292) is a key concept in how NPD can create safe spaces. There really is no recipe for achieving a desired future state in this regard. Galloway (as cited in Senge, 2006) noted, “If we waited around for top managers to drive every change that is needed, we would wait a long time” (p. 293). Due to the small size of NPD, the employee group not only outnumbered the ranks of senior management, they have a staggering ratio advantage as well when it comes to creating the positive change they

wish to see in the organization. Right now, senior management at NPD is outnumbered at a ratio of roughly 30 to two. This is not to imply hostile influence, rather to demonstrate the positive influence followers can have over their leaders with a collective voice that is hard to ignore.

Organizational Implications

This capstone thesis and research explored how employees at NPD might improve their own individual and collective mental health and well-being. This was accomplished by identifying positive aspects of their work that were present in their most impactful career moments. The research resulted in six organizational recommendations that are either in agreement with or explore orientations to possibility in the current NPD (2018) *Strategic Plan*. These recommendations have been developed in collaboration with the NPD Wellness Group, Nelson Police Board, retired Chief Constable Paul Burkart and current Chief Constable Donovan Fisher. Although NPD has undergone a change of command during my capstone process, Chief Fisher has early on identified “communication, officer safety and mental health” (D. Fisher, personal communication, March 30, 2012) as three priorities in his leadership approach. Chief Fisher has reviewed these recommendations and is in a role that can implement these recommendations and oversee their implications in the organization moving forward.

Recommendations that involve improving communication at NPD have already been made a priority by Chief Fisher (D. Fisher, personal communication, March 30, 2021). The NPD Wellness Group has already begun to engage the membership through purchasing and rolling out an online interactive mental and physical wellness resource program. The Wellness Group has also engaged the NPD membership by providing small financial grants to allow employees to pursue personal mental and physical wellness activities.

NPD senior management has conducted individual recognition ceremonies for long service awards as a result of the recommendations presented in this capstone thesis. Plans for conducting a larger recognition ceremony along with a fundraiser have been made but will be contingent on the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senior management has begun to identify training opportunities for members at NPD and once again send them on approved courses. Providing development and new roles in the organization empowers individuals to take ownership of their own well-being in the organization. Furthermore, Chief Fisher has identified an additional secondment position in the regional Integrated Road Safety Unit (D. Fisher, personal communication, May 18, 2021). This position will require hiring and training of two additional NPD members to offset the vacancy created by this secondment assignment.

Chief Fisher has begun to identify areas in the organization that allow people to be included in significant roles of responsibility and to take on additional responsibilities in the organization. This is in agreement with recommendation four of this chapter.

So far, the implementation of several of these recommendations has been well received by the employees I have had the opportunity to speak to. These discussions have not been conducted in a research approach and, as such, would require further exploration with a mind to research ethics to establish the actual implications of changes thus far at NPD.

Implications for Further Inquiry

During the course of this capstone journey, I have been part of many meetings and conversations regarding mental wellness at NPD. These conversations and the data derived from them could not be included in the research due to power over concerns and absence of informed

consent process. However, the topics in these conversations resonated with me and I feel hold potential for further exploration.

Physical Wellness Incentive Program

One subject for further inquiry that developed in the course of discussions stemming from the research was the importance of being in good physical shape as a person and in the role of police personnel. The Wellness Group has focussed on promoting physical well-being at NPD by organizing a “wellness challenge” (S. Perkins, personal communication, June 29, 2018) and, prepandemic, providing access to healthy snack alternatives in the common lunchroom area of the NPD offices. In my role of Nelson Police Association (NPA) President, I was approached by a small group of members who presented the idea of providing incentive programs for physical fitness as part of the upcoming collective bargaining negotiations. NPA and NPD have negotiated a similar incentive in the sick leave portion of the current *Collective Bargaining Agreement* (NPA, 2019). The agreement allocates a lump sum payout to an employee upon retirement should they maintain a balance in their sick leave bank until the end of their career. NPD and NPA have negotiated similar incentives in the *Collective Bargaining Agreement*, including pay increases for those who pass the acting sergeant qualification exam and to three members who meet the criteria for senior constable status based on years of NPD service and completion of training courses (NPA, 2019). The suggestion members had was to implement a similar incentive program for employees who meet certain standards of physical fitness. Given the presence of financial incentive to the employee and financial responsibility of the employer, this is an area of research that would need in depth focus prior to being implemented or discarded.

Officer Resilience Training

In my review of the literature, several authors discussed the topic of building emotional resilience to mentally prepare police officers for exposure to the traumatic events of their careers. Gilmartin (2002) proposed the idea of becoming an “emotional survivor” (p. 111) and offered a number of techniques to survive exposure to emotional trauma. The Wellness Group has acknowledged that NPD members are certain to encounter situations outside the expected normal range of human experience (Seligman, 2007). With this in mind, how might NPD better prepare employees to find mental and emotional resilience in dealing with traumatic situations? This question alone is well researched and presents a tremendous opportunity for improving mental wellness at NPD.

Officer Mindfulness Training

Mindfulness training shares a relationship with building emotional resilience in police personnel. I have only been exposed to this concept near the end of my capstone journey. I have had very little time to explore this topic but it tackles the reality of circumstances that are happening in a person’s life which may influence that person’s approach to a situation. Police personnel encounter all of the common stresses that other people encounter in their day-to-day lives. The loss of a loved one, the responsibilities associated with raising children, looking forward to a vacation, all will have an influence on how a police officer or dispatcher may approach a situation. Suttie (2016) offered,

Not knowing how to handle difficult emotions can take a toll on performance. A stressed-out police officer will be more likely to resort to intimidation or aggression when confronted with ambiguous situations, which can lead to inappropriate or even violent actions. (para. 8)

In light of recent increased public scrutiny of police actions following the murder of George Floyd, mitigating inappropriate reactions and ensuring proportionate responses are more important to maintaining public trust in police than they ever have been.

Succession Plan Development and Training

In recent years, the level of development training has seen a decline at NPD. There have been a number of contributing factors that have led to this taking place, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic and related travel restrictions. The importance of off-site training has been acknowledged by Chief Fisher who noted it provides an opportunity for NPD members to develop lasting professional relationships, improve their own knowledge, skills and abilities and provide the employee with a form of paid vacation (D. Fisher, personal communication, April 4, 2021). As travel restrictions from the pandemic are reduced, NPD could find an opportunity to once again explore off-site training. The subject of increased officer training has also been a topic of discussion following the public order events of 2020. Currently, NPD members are required to train basic use of force and verbal deescalation tactics once per calendar year. Some members at NPD have expressed concern that this frequency does not allow them to be as proficient as they would like to be in these tactics. There has been a shift in focus by our in-house trainers towards modern techniques and a push to increase the number of training opportunities that members can access (A. Sutherland, personal communication, May 12, 2021). I know from my own lived experience; high level use of force situations often results in a negative impact on the officer's mental health who use force during encounters with the public. In theory, providing officers with better training and advanced techniques will minimize the level of force required to resolve high risk situations, thereby reducing the negative impact on officers' mental health.

Opportunities for Other Police Organizations

The recommendations and implications that were developed from the data provided by research participants have potential benefits for other police organizations as well. The majority of the findings are what I see to be universal themes in all police organizations, the recommendations that I created out of them are also equally as accessible to any organization that chooses to explore them.

In Recommendation 1, I focused on the importance of great communication in police organizations. The importance of great communication is generally agreed upon as essential to the functioning of an organization. The findings in this research allowed me to find a nexus between great communication and improved mental health and well-being of employees in an organization. Moreover, in most cases engaging in great communication does not require an added financial cost to an organization nor does it require hiring additional staff or specialized training. Communication can be modelled by leaders in the organization and lead to positive change that is shared by all members of the organization. Communication sets clear expectations and maintains a shared vision for participants in the organization. Conversely, if communication is not well practiced in an organization, it provides an orientation to the possibility of improving the mental health and well-being of employees.

In Recommendation 2, I focused on the value that is found in employee recognition and its relationship to improving mental health and well-being of employees. As in Recommendation 1, this recommendation can be implemented by any police organization at a cost that can fit inside current budgets in place within the respective department. Recognition can be as simple as an independent acknowledgement of a job well done or as complex as an elaborately planned official dress ceremony. Regardless of the amount of effort an organization invests into these

events, the investment requires time on the part of leadership, time being the most valuable resource we have (B. Brown, 2018). It is this investment of time on the part of leadership that pays rewards to the individual receiving the recognition and demonstrates the value of the individual within the organization.

In Recommendation 3, I combined the positive impact of recognition and the use of great communication in the organization to help showcase the most alive moments in an employee's career at a public level. This brings me back to Peel's founding principle of the police being the public and the public being the police is a central theme to this recommendation (Ottawa Police Service, n.d.). The experiences that the police communicate to the public form the foundation of how the public perceive the police and how much the public trust the police. Contemporary society has seen how the lived experience of police officers can shape public trust in police. Calls for defunding police arose out of a horrific event in which police were deemed responsible for the death of George Floyd. This event has highlighted an orientation to the possibility for police to share the positive impact they have on their communities. While the positive stories do not make headlines as often, it is essential that they be shared for two primary reasons. In my experience, the moments of positive impact that police have on their communities far outweighs the moments of negative impact. Police seeing their most alive moments exist in the public forum create a looking glass self (Cooley, 1922) effect on the individual police employees. If police feel they are appreciated, they act as though they are appreciated and strive to live up to this positive standard. The positive change that can be achieved from this recommendation is accessible to all police agencies and is not just specific to NPD.

NPD's formation of the Wellness Group has been done in response to a growing trend in BC municipal policing. NPD formed this group from within its current employee group and did

so without putting excessive strain on the portfolios already carried by those employees. NPD has demonstrated that a group specifically tasked with supporting the improvement of employees' mental health and well-being is a possibility. The data I reviewed in the research showed that the Wellness Group has been of significant positive impact to the employees at NPD. Programs or committees such as the Wellness Group, that have a positive impact on the well-being of employees are an attainable reality for all police organizations.

Thesis Summary

The recommendations and implications I presented in this capstone thesis were identified through my analysis of the data provided by the research participants. This was combined with the consultation and guidance from the NPD Wellness Group and review of literature related to the findings I identified from the research. I relied on the principal inquiry question and subquestions to guide me towards identifying these recommendations. I also relied on a systems approach to identify how each of these recommendations had a relationship with each other so that implications would result in lasting positive change at NPD.

It was important to me to maintain an awareness of my own unconscious bias in developing these recommendations as ones that would be most in line with a collective desired future state (Stroh, 2015). I tried to maintain a focus on identifying positive change that could be implemented by NPD employees and leadership at minimal and in some cases no financial cost to the organization itself. Allowing the employee group to maintain ownership of these recommendations and not rely heavily on an outside consultant or group will empower individuals in the organization to engage in creating lasting positive change. This change will improve the mental health and well-being of all employees at NPD and influence other police organizations to identify basic functions that aim to improve the well-being of all police officers.

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Appendix A: Inquiry Team Member Letter of Agreement

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree at Royal Roads University, Nathaniel Holt (the Student) will be conducting an inquiry study at Nelson Police Department to determine *How might Nelson Police Department improve the mental health and well-being of its members?* The Student's credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by calling Dr. Catherine Etmanski, Director, School of Leadership, at [telephone number] or email [email address].

Inquiry Team Member Role Description

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

Confidentiality of Inquiry Data

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

Bridging Student's Potential or Actual Ethical Conflict

In situations where potential participants in a work setting report directly to the Student, you, as a neutral third party with no supervisory relationship with either the Student or potential participants, may be asked to work closely with the Student to bridge this potential or actual conflict of interest in this study. Such requests may include asking the Inquiry Team Advisor to: send out the letter of invitation to potential participants, receive letters/emails of interest in participation from potential participants, independently make a selection of received participant requests based on criteria you and the Student will have worked out previously, formalize the logistics for the data-gathering method, including contacting the participants about the time and location of the interview or focus group, conduct the interviews (usually 3-5 maximum) or focus group (usually no more than one) with the selected participants (without the Student's presence or knowledge of which participants were chosen) using the protocol and questions worked out previously with the Student, and producing written transcripts of the interviews or focus groups with all personal identifiers removed before the transcripts are brought back to the Student for the data analysis phase of the study.

This strategy means that potential participants with a direct reporting relationship will be assured they can confidentially turn down the participation request from their supervisor (the Student), as this process conceals from the Student which potential participants chose not to participate or simply were not selected by you, the third party, because they were out of the selection criteria range (they might have been a participant request coming after the number of participants sought, for example, interview request number 6 when only 5 participants are sought, or focus group request number 10 when up to 9 participants would be selected for a focus group). Inquiry Team members asked to take on such 3rd party duties in this study will be under the direction of the Student and will be fully briefed by the Student as to how this process will work, including specific expectations, and the methods to be employed in conducting the elements of the inquiry with the Student's direct reports, and will be given every support possible by the Student, except where such support would reveal the identities of the actual participants.

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

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

Statement of Informed Consent:

I have read and understand this agreement.

Name (Please Print)

Signature

Date

Appendix B: Email Invitation to Survey

Dear, Participant

I would like to invite you to be part of a research project that I am conducting. This project is part of the requirement for my Master's Degree in Leadership, at Royal Roads University. This project has been approved by the Nelson Police Department and Chief Constable Paul Burkart, and I have been given permission to contact potential participants for this purpose.

The purpose of my research is to create positive shared change at NPD by exploring how NPD might provide support for the mental health and well-being of its members.

Your name was chosen as a prospective participant because of your experience and knowledge relating to (specific employment position)

This phase of my research project will consist of an anonymous online electronic survey and is estimated to take 20 to 40 minutes to complete.

The attached document contains further information about the study conduct and will enable you to make a fully informed decision on whether or not you wish to participate. Please review this information before responding.

You are not required to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw up until the time that the survey is completed for submission without prejudice.

The researcher Nathaniel Holt and Nelson Police Department will not know who has participated, who has not participated, and who has withdrawn.

I realize that due to our collegial relationship, you may feel compelled to participate in this research project. Please be aware that you are not required to participate and, should you choose to participate, your participation would be entirely voluntary and anonymous. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw prior to completion and submission of the survey without prejudice. Your decision to not participate will also be maintained in confidence and will not be known due to the anonymity provided by the survey. Your choice will not affect our relationship or your employment status in any way.

Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have additional questions regarding the project and its outcomes.

[Survey Link]

Sincerely,
Nathaniel Holt

Appendix C: Research Information Letter for Survey

How might Nelson Police Department improve the mental health and well-being of its employees?

My name is Nathaniel Holt, and this research project is part of the requirement for a Masters of Arts in Leadership at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by contacting Dr. Catherine Etmanski, Director, School of Leadership Studies: [email address] or [telephone number].

Purpose of the study and sponsoring organization

The purpose of my research project is to explore and discover positive change related to the principle research question of: *How might Nelson Police Department improve the mental health and well-being of its employees?*

Your participation and how information will be collected

This anonymous electronic survey and is anticipated to last 20 to 40 minutes. The anticipated questions will be provided to potential participants.

Benefits and risks to participation

The intended outcome of this capstone project is to engage NPD employees in identifying shared and positive change for the mental health and well-being of all employees. The research you will be engaging in is a minimal risk form of research. The goal of this research is not to identify parties to blame or problems that need solutions. The goal of this research is to discover opportunities to include our best experiences at NPD in our daily lives. This online survey will be hosted on the software website Survey Monkey and data is stored in the USA. Data stored on servers in the USA may be subject to examination by the US government under the USA Patriot Act. While this likelihood is small, I am required to let you know this possible risk.

Inquiry team

Nelson Police Department Wellness Group

Confidentiality, security of data, and retention period

I will work to protect your privacy throughout this study. All information I collect will be maintained in confidence with hard copies (e.g., consent forms) stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Electronic data (such as transcripts or audio files) will be stored on a password protected computer on my home computer. Information will be recorded in hand-written, electronically typed, audio or video recorded format 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. Upon completion of this project, all data collected will be destroyed after one year of retention.

Sharing results

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 NPD and in a published thesis paper. This study may also be presented in a professional scholarly conference.

You are not required to participate in this research project. By replying directly to the email request for participation you indicate that you have read and understand the information above and give your free and informed consent to participate in this project.

Please keep a copy of this information letter for your records.

Appendix D: Questions for Survey

1. Share a story of when you felt most alive and engaged as part of Nelson Police Department or a previous police organization you were a part of.

Who was part of this experience? What contributed to it being so exciting and engaging?

(Please copy your answer from this question, we will refer to it in a subsequent session)

[Text box for response]

2. Describe one time that you feel we, as a team, have made a meaningful impact on the lives of others. (Please copy your answer from this question, we will refer to it in a subsequent session)

[Text box for response]

(follow up questions to be used in follow up Circle Way method)

- a. What was your role in this success?
 - b. How did our working together help achieve this?
 - c. What were the main elements contributing to our success?
 - d. How did you feel supported by others?
3. Ranking in order of importance to you, 1 being most important and 9 being less important; what do you value the most about how we work as a team?
 - a) Camaraderie among employees in the organization
 - b) Positive differences made in the community
 - c) Positive differences made in the organization
 - d) Establishing and fostering relationships with community stakeholders
 - e) Supporting each other during our work
 - f) Social bonding outside of the work environment
 - g) Sharing personal experiences that arrive out of the work we do
 - h) Being a visibly recognized member of the community
 - i) Other (please explain in text box below or use this option if you prefer not to answer)

(The order of these choices, with the exception of *other*, will be randomized by survey software if possible or neutral third party so as to eliminate my own unconscious bias. Once randomized each participant will receive the same order of randomized choices)

[Text box for response]

4. Ranking in order of importance to you, one being most important and seven being less important; What do you feel is the most important measure of success for NPD as a team?
- a) Apprehending offenders
 - b) Number of reports to crown council (more reports equals higher success)
 - c) Lower crime rates in the community
 - d) Positive connections with community members
 - e) Organizational recognition of noteworthy files
 - f) High level of morale amongst employees
 - g) Other (please explain in text box below or use this option if you prefer not to answer)

(The order of these choices, with the exception of *other*, will be randomized by survey software if possible or neutral third party so as to eliminate my own unconscious bias. Once randomized each participant will receive the same order of randomized choices)

[Text box for response]

5. If you had three wishes or hopes for improving mental wellness at NPD what would they be?

[Text box for response]

6. Together, we achieve things we couldn't do as individuals. What is it about the way we work together that makes this possible? When you're feeling great about the work we do together, what is it specifically that you value?

[Text box for response]

7. Ranking in order of importance to you, one being most important and six being less important; What do you see as our most important team values that we espouse as an organization?

- a) Integrity
- b) Accountability
- c) Respect
- d) Innovation
- e) Community
- f) Other (please explain in text box below or use this option if you prefer not to answer)

8. Ranking in order of importance to you, one being most important and six being less important; What do you see as our most important values to you personally as an individual.

- a) Integrity
- b) Accountability
- c) Respect
- d) Innovation

- e) Community
- f) Other (please explain in text box below or use this option if you prefer not to answer)

(The order of these choices, with the exception of *other*, will be randomized by survey software if possible or neutral third party so as to eliminate my own unconscious bias. Once randomized each participant will receive the same order of randomized choices)

9. Considering your response in question 8, how has that value you ranked the highest brought you fulfillment and purpose to your personal life?

[Text box for response]

10. What do you see as the three most desirable things that already exist in our organization, that we can build on for success?

[Text box for response]

11. Imagine that we're exactly where we want to be as an organization, in three years' time. What are the three biggest things we've accomplished between now and then?

[Text box for response]

12. Which initiatives or directions pursued by the Wellness Group so far has had the most positive an impact on you as a member of NPD? Examples of recent initiatives are:

- a) Capitol Theatre presentation on Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement by Flagstaff Arizona Deputy Chief Robert White.
- b) Rescue 1 Emergency Training; Survival Skills for the First Responder training session with Michael Swainson.
- c) Take Five reading initiative and implementation of reading library for employees.
- d) Monthly email message from the NPD Wellness Group
- e) Other (please explain in text box below or use this option if you prefer not to answer)

- 12b. Considering your response in question 12, how has that initiative you ranked the highest brought you fulfillment and purpose to your personal life? Please add your response in the provided text box.

[Text box for response]

(The order of these choices, with the exception of *other*, will be randomized by survey software if possible or neutral third party so as to eliminate my own unconscious bias. Once randomized each participant will receive the same order of randomized choices)

13. How would you rank your knowledge of the mental health support services available to you at NPD? (pick one choice:)

- (1) Unaware (2) Somewhat aware (3) Have an understanding of the services available to you (4) Have a strong understanding of the services available to you (5) Consider yourself to have a proficient understanding of the services available to you.

14. Is there anything else you would like to add?

[Text box for response]

Appendix E: Survey Preamble

Good evening everyone,

I am in the research phase of my Masters of Arts in Leadership Graduate Studies through Royal Roads University. **Please find attached supporting documents** which outline my capstone focus and the rules around informed consent for requirements under the Federal the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.

If you choose to participate in this research project, it is important you review these documents beforehand to proceed with this phase of the research. The first data collection method is an anonymous electronic survey. I will be following up with a group engagement method at the end of summer / beginning of fall as well.

Please let me know if you have any questions about my thesis or my academic journey thus far, I am happy to share what I've learned with anyone.

Research Information Letter for Survey

How might Nelson Police Department improve the mental health and well-being of its employees?

My name is Nathaniel Holt, and this research project is part of the requirement for a Masters of Arts in Leadership at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by contacting Dr. Catherine Etmanski, Director, School of Leadership Studies: [email address] or [telephone number].

Purpose of the study and sponsoring organization

The purpose of my research project is to explore and discover positive change related to the principle research question of: *How might Nelson Police Department improve the mental health and well-being of its employees?*

Your participation and how information will be collected

This anonymous electronic survey is anticipated to last 10 to 20 minutes. The anticipated questions include, **Appendix [G:]** which will be provided to potential participants. Potential participants may wish to preview these questions before clicking the URL link to the survey below. However, the questions will also be able to be previewed in the survey without being required to complete them.

Benefits and risks to participation

The intended outcome of this capstone project is to engage NPD employees in identifying shared and positive change for the mental health and well-being of all employees. The research you will be engaging in is a minimal risk form of research. The goal of this research is not to identify parties to blame or problems that need solutions. The goal of this research is to discover opportunities to include our best experiences at NPD in our daily lives. This online survey will

be hosted on the software website Survey Monkey and data is stored in the USA. Data stored on servers in the USA may be subject to examination by the US government under the USA Patriot Act. While this likelihood is small, I am required to let you know this possible risk.

Inquiry team

Nelson Police Department Wellness Group

Confidentiality, security of data, and retention period

I will work to protect your privacy throughout this study. All information I collect will be maintained in confidence with hard copies (e.g., consent forms) stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Electronic data (such as transcripts or audio files) will be stored on a password protected computer on my home computer. Information will be recorded in hand-written, electronically typed, audio or video recorded format 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. Upon completion of this project, all data collected will be destroyed after one year of retention.

Sharing results

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 NPD and in a published thesis paper. This study may also be presented in a professional scholarly conference.

You are not required to participate in this research project. By replying directly to the e-mail request for participation you indicate that you have read and understand the information above and give your free and informed consent to participate in this project.

Please keep a copy of this information letter for your records.

Appendix F: Email Invitation to Circle Way Group

Dear, Participant

We would like to invite you to be part of a research project that Nathaniel Holt is conducting. This project is part of the requirement for Nathaniel's Master's Degree in Leadership, at Royal Roads University. This project has been approved by the Nelson Police Department and Chief Constable Paul Burkart, and Nathaniel has been given permission to contact potential participants for this purpose.

The purpose of Nathaniel's research is to create positive shared change at NPD by exploring how NPD might improve the mental health and well-being of its members.

Your name was chosen as a prospective participant because of your experience and knowledge relating to (specific employment position)

This phase of my research project will consist of participating in a Circle Way storytelling group and is estimated to take 60 to 90 minutes to complete.

The attached document contains further information about the study conduct and will enable you to make a fully informed decision on whether or not you wish to participate. Please review this information before responding.

You are not required to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw up until the time that the survey is completed for submission without prejudice.

I will hold your decision whether or not to participate in confidence and the researcher Nathaniel Holt and Nelson Police Department will not know who has participated, who has not participated, and who has withdrawn.

We realize that due to our collegial relationship, you may feel compelled to participate in this research project. Please be aware that you are not required to participate and, should you choose to participate, your participation would be entirely voluntary. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw prior to completion and submission of the survey without prejudice. If you do not wish to participate, simply do not reply to this request. Your decision to not participate will also be maintained in confidence and will not be known due to the anonymity provided by the survey. Your choice will not affect our relationship or your employment status in any way.

Please feel free to contact me to receive joining instructions to the Circle Way or at any time should you have additional questions regarding the project and its outcomes.

Sincerely,
Barb Vincent on behalf of Nathaniel Holt

Appendix G: Research Information Letter for Circle Way

How might Nelson Police Department improve the mental health and well-being of its employees?

My name is Nathaniel Holt, and this research project is part of the requirement for a Masters of Arts in Leadership at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by contacting Dr. Catherine Etmanski, Director, School of Leadership Studies: [email address] or [telephone number].

Purpose of the study and sponsoring organization

The purpose of my research project is to explore and discover positive change related to the principle research question of: *How might Nelson Police Department improve the mental health and well-being of its employees?*

Your participation and how information will be collected

The research will consist of a Circle Way storytelling method and is anticipated to last 60-90 minutes.

Benefits and risks to participation

The intended outcome of this capstone project is to engage NPD employees in identifying shared and positive change for the mental health and well-being of all employees. The research you will be engaging in is a minimal risk form of research. The goal of this research is not to identify parties to blame or problems that need solutions. The goal of this research is to discover opportunities to include our best experiences at NPD in our daily lives.

Inquiry team

Nelson Police Department Wellness Group

Confidentiality, security of data, and retention period

I will work to protect your privacy throughout this study. All information I collect will be maintained in confidence with hard copies (e.g., consent forms) stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Electronic data (such as transcripts or audio files) will be stored on a password protected computer on my home computer. Information will be recorded in hand-written, electronically typed, audio or video recorded format 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. Upon completion of this project, all data collected will be destroyed after one year of retention. Please ensure the confidential nature of this process is maintained by not disclosing names of participants in this process.

Sharing results

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 NPD and in a published thesis paper and possibly a scholarly or professional conference presentation based on this inquiry.

Procedure for withdrawing from the study

Participants may withdraw from the study at any point, but if they leave in the course of the Circle Way event itself, they need to know that anything they have said prior to withdrawing has influenced the conversation and will remain as part of the anonymous data set of the inquiry.

You are not required to participate in this research project. By replying directly to the email request for participation you indicate that you have read and understand the information above and give your free and informed consent to participate in this project.

Please keep a copy of this information letter for your records.

Sincerely,
Nathaniel Holt

Barb Vincent (Third-Party Facilitator)

Appendix H: Research Consent for Circle Way

By signing this form, you agree that you are over the age of 19 and have read the information letter for this study. Your signature states that you are giving your voluntary and informed consent to participate in this project and have data I contribute used in the final report and any other knowledge outputs (articles, conference presentations, newsletters, etc.).

- I consent to the audio recording of the Circle Way storytelling method
- I consent to the video recording of the Circle Way storytelling method
- I consent to quotations and excerpts expressed by me through the Circle Way Method be included in this study, provided that my identity is not disclosed
- I commit to respect the confidential nature of the Circle way storytelling method by not sharing identifying information about the other participants

Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix I: Questions for Circle Way

1. Share a story of when you felt most alive and engaged as part of Nelson Police Department or a previous police organization you were a part of.

Who was part of this experience? What contributed to it being so exciting and engaging? If you participated in the survey prior to this session you may reflect back to the answer you provided and offer more detail in your discussion.

Describe one time that you feel we, as a team, have made a meaningful impact on the lives of others. If you participated in the survey prior to this session you may reflect back to the answer you provided and offer more detail in your discussion.

- a. How did you personally help make this possible?
 - b. How did our working together help achieve this?
 - c. What were the main elements contributing to our success?
 - d. How did you feel supported by others?
2. What do you value the most about how we work as a team?
 3. What do you feel is the most important measure of success for NPD as a team?
 4. If you had three wishes or hopes for improving mental wellness at NPD what would they be?
 5. Together, we achieve things we couldn't do as individuals. What is it about the way we work together that makes this possible? When you're feeling great about the work we do together, what is it specifically that you value?
 6. What do you see as our most important team values we espouse as an organization?
 7. Considering your response in question 6, how has that value you ranked the highest brought you fulfillment and purpose to your personal life?
 8. What do you value most about being part of this team?
 9. What's the *number one positive thing* about being a team member here? How has it brought fulfillment and purpose to your personal life?
 10. What do you see as the three most desirable things that already exist in our organization, that we can build on for success?
 11. Imagine that we're exactly where we want to be as an organization, in three years' time. What are the three biggest things we've accomplished between now and then?
 12. Which initiatives or directions pursued by the Wellness Group so far has had the most positive an impact on you as a member of NPD?

13. What do you think are the most positive elements of the mental health services available to NPD and how can we capitalize on these positive elements to arrive at our desired future state in the organization?

14. Is there anything else you would like to add?