Turnover and the Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations

by

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BBA, Capilano University, 2014
MPA, University of Victoria, 2018

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We acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the phenomenon of executive turnover within Indigenous organizations in Canada, addressing a critical gap in the literature on Indigenous leadership and governance. Drawing on mixed methods, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups with Indigenous executives and organizational leaders, the study examines the demographic and professional characteristics of Indigenous executives, the causes and impacts of turnover, and strategies for retention. It reveals that executive turnover is driven by factors such as lateral violence, burnout, inadequate compensation, and governance challenges, significantly affecting organizational stability and performance. Findings emphasize the importance of culturally grounded retention strategies, fair compensation, and improved governance practices to support Indigenous leadership. By identifying actionable insights and theoretical propositions, this work contributes to the development of effective policies and practices to strengthen Indigenous governance and self-determination.

Contents

Table of Tables

Table of Figures

Chapter 1
Introduction: Exploring the Causes and Impacts of Indigenous Executive Turnover

In the era of reconciliation, the formal adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) into Canadian legislation (The Government of Canada, 2021) and the formal recognition of First Nations' inherent rights to self-government (The Government of Canada, 2023) have marked significant milestones in acknowledging and supporting Indigenous governance. The increasing presence of Indigenous individuals in executive positions within First Nations and other Indigenous organizations reflects long-standing demand and interest in Indigenous leadership, predating the aforementioned developments, as can be seen by Chief Bill Wilson's quote on advocating for First Nations band administrators, back in 1998, because "European and Aboriginal cultures are so foreign from each other" (Barnsley, 1998, p. 2).

There has been significant progress in the hiring of Indigenous executives across various organizations, highlighting the growing recognition of the importance of Indigenous leadership. In a post-Truth and Reconciliation era, non-Indigenous organizations are increasingly competing to attract Indigenous talent. However, anecdotal evidence and my experience in British Columbia indicate a high turnover rate among Indigenous executives in Indigenous organizations. This turnover has profound impacts on the stability and continuity of First Nations and other Indigenous organizations, often leading to disruptions in governance and program implementation. The loss of experienced leaders can impede the advancement of strategic goals and affect community trust and engagement.

Despite the critical nature of this issue, there has been little systematic study of executive turnover within Indigenous organizations. This dissertation contributes to the literature by addressing this gap through exploring the factors contributing to turnover and its consequences on governance and organizational effectiveness. Through this research, I aim not only to contribute theoretically to the literature on Indigenous leadership and workplace dynamics but also provide practical recommendations that will inform policies and practices to enhance the retention and support of Indigenous leaders. This dual focus on both theory and practice is essential for ultimately strengthening the capacity and resilience of Indigenous governance structures. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive introduction to the study, which explores the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and strategies for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives.

Contextual Background

Prior to colonization, First Nations and other Indigenous groups had well-established traditional governing systems. Community members held important roles such as hereditary chiefs, appointed chiefs, and clan heads, who governed through a collectivistic approach that emphasized community well-being and consensus (Fox (Poucette), 2017). However, the imposition of the Indian Act in 1876 (Government of Canada, 1876) radically altered these governance structures. The Act introduced a system that enforced individualistic governance practices and empowered colonizers to regulate and oversee First Nations through Indian Agents (Upton, 1973; Satzewich, 1997).

The Indian Act's introduction marked a significant shift from traditional Indigenous governance. This legislation aimed to assimilate Indigenous peoples into colonial systems, effectively undermining their cultural practices and governance structures. The collectivistic

governance approach, which valued communal decision-making, was replaced with an individualistic model that often conflicted with Indigenous values (Bartlett, 1978). The role of Indian Agents further entrenched colonial control, stripping Indigenous communities of their autonomy and imposing foreign administrative systems.

In the 1960s, the Canadian government began to devolve certain responsibilities to First Nations, such as childcare, social assistance, and education (Prince & Abele, 2003). This shift aimed to provide Indigenous communities with greater control over their affairs. However, many Indigenous organizations initially relied heavily on non-Indigenous executives for support and advice. Having non-Indigenous executives lead Indigenous organizations poses a challenge to both the organization and the non-Indigenous executive as there may be a lack of person-organization fit due to the different culture, background and values. Additionally, the non-Indigenous executive may cost Indigenous organizations more money than what they would pay an Indigenous executive due to the higher hiring costs, such as housing, moving costs, and the competitive pay for highly educated and experienced executives.

In recent years, organizations have increasingly focused on hiring Indigenous executives as part of broader efforts to enhance diversity and representation. Despite these efforts, there is substantial anecdotal evidence indicating that turnover rates in these positions remain high. This turnover presents significant challenges for the executives themselves, who must navigate complex cultural and organizational dynamics, and for the organizations that depend on their leadership to drive meaningful change. High turnover disrupts organizational continuity, impedes the development of effective governance structures, and often leads to setbacks in initiatives aimed at supporting Indigenous communities. Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced

understanding of the factors contributing to turnover and the development of strategies to support and retain Indigenous executives in these vital roles.

As an Indigenous researcher from the Líl̓wat Nation in Mount Currie, British Columbia (BC), my interest in this research topic is deeply personal and has led me to pursue my PhD. My work experience as an Indigenous executive in two different First Nations communities has provided me with firsthand insights into the challenges faced by Indigenous executives, such as lateral violence, poor compensation, and capacity constraints, among other issues. This experience informs my research approach and underscores my commitment to finding solutions to reduce Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations.

The State of the Literature

There is virtually no literature on Indigenous executive turnover, which highlights a significant gap in our understanding of its causes and impacts. This lack of research can be attributed to the unique challenges Indigenous organizations face, including cultural differences, historical context, and systemic barriers that have not been fully explored or understood in existing studies. To address this gap, I have turned to the established literature on executive turnover in non-Indigenous settings. This research reveals several important themes: the impact of turnover on organizational stability, which includes disruptions to strategic initiatives and loss of institutional knowledge; the effects on performance, where frequent leadership changes can hinder progress toward organizational goals; and the influence on culture, where turnover can lead to a lack of cohesion and continuity. Although executive turnover has been well-explored in non-Indigenous contexts, research specifically addressing turnover within Indigenous organizations remains significantly underdeveloped. Understanding these themes within Indigenous contexts is crucial for developing effective strategies to support and retain Indigenous executives.

Indigenous organizations operate within unique cultural, social, and political contexts, facing distinct challenges that influence executive turnover rates and patterns. Understanding these factors is essential for understanding what causes Indigenous executive turnover, the impacts it has on Indigenous organizations, and developing strategies to support Indigenous executives. An initial search for "Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations" yielded limited results, leading to broader searches encompassing leadership, management, career progression, and organizational dynamics. Although the literature primarily focused on executives in non-Indigenous sectors, these insights provide valuable groundwork for understanding executive turnover in Indigenous contexts.

This dissertation addresses a critical gap in the existing literature by focusing on executive turnover within Indigenous contexts—a topic that has received limited scholarly attention. Despite the extensive research on leadership and organizational dynamics, there is a lack of understanding about how these factors specifically impact Indigenous organizations. This research aims to be the first of its kind to investigate the unique influences on executive turnover in Indigenous settings, examining causes, impacts, and retention strategies. By developing an analytical framework tailored to Indigenous contexts, this study seeks to provide insights that can inform culturally appropriate strategies for retaining and developing Indigenous executives. These findings will ultimately strengthen the capacity of Indigenous organizations to achieve their goals and serve their communities effectively and provide the basis for developing theoretical propositions about the nature and effects of Indigenous executive turnover, as well as the effectiveness of different proposed interventions to mitigate and anticipate such turnover.

Research Problem and Purpose

The primary problem addressed by this study is the high turnover rate of Indigenous executives within Indigenous organizations. This turnover not only disrupts organizational stability but also hampers the progress of self-governance initiatives. The purpose of this study is to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and identify strategies that Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop to hire and retain Indigenous executives effectively. This research aims to provide actionable insights that can support the sustainability and effectiveness of Indigenous leadership within these organizations.

Definitions and Scope

For the purposes of this dissertation, key terms are defined as follows:

- **Executive**: An employee that provides reports to leadership, is responsible for supervising staff, and overseeing a budget
- **Executive Team Members**: Employees that report directly to the executive. Some examples of executive team members include department directors/managers, coordinators, assistants, etc.
- **Indigenous**: First Nations (status and non-status), Métis, and Inuit. The participating BC Indigenous organizations will primarily focus on First Nations-serving organizations. The participating National Indigenous organizations will include First Nations, Métis, and Inuit serving organizations.
- **Indigenous Executive**: An executive who self-identifies as Indigenous based on the above Indigenous definition. Some examples of Indigenous executive positions include band manager, Tribal manager, CAO, CFO, COO, General Manager, Executive Director, etc.
- **Indigenous Organization**: An organization that serves an Indigenous population and has Indigenous leadership and employees. This dissertation will primarily focus on First Nations communities in BC, Indigenous non-profit organizations in BC, and National Indigenous nonprofit organizations.

The scope of this study focuses on Canadian Indigenous organizations and the specific dynamics of executive turnover within these contexts.

Research Questions

This dissertation explores key research questions related to Indigenous executive roles and turnover within Canadian Indigenous organizations:

1. Who occupies executive positions in Indigenous organizations?
    a. What are the demographic and professional characteristics of these executives?
2. What are the impacts of executive turnover in these organizations?
    a. How does turnover affect organizational stability and performance?
3. What factors contribute to Indigenous executive turnover?
    a. What are the main reasons for turnover, and what preferences do Indigenous organizations and executives have?
4. What strategies can be developed to improve hiring and retention of Indigenous executives?
    a. What effective practices are employed by various sectors, including Indigenous organizations, nonprofits, government, and the private sector?

These questions aim to provide insight into executive roles, the impacts of turnover, and strategies for enhancing retention in Indigenous organizations.

The Approach Taken for This Study

As a first of its kind study in this area, this research takes an exploratory empirical approach, guided by an analytical framework shaped by an extensive review of relevant literature and insights from interviews, focus groups, and surveys with both former and current Indigenous executives, as well as existing leadership.

Literature Review

The study began with a comprehensive literature review that delved into existing research on Indigenous governance, executive turnover, and organizational management. This foundational analysis was crucial for establishing the context of the study and identifying gaps in the current

body of knowledge. By examining prior studies, the review highlighted key themes and areas that required further exploration, setting the stage for the subsequent phases of research.

Interviews and Focus Groups

In-depth interviews and focus groups were conducted with Indigenous executives and organizational leaders to gather qualitative data. These methods provided rich, nuanced insights into their experiences and perspectives on executive turnover and retention strategies. The personal narratives and reflections collected through these discussions were instrumental in understanding the underlying factors influencing executive roles and the unique challenges faced by Indigenous leaders in their organizations.

Surveys

Quantitative data was collected via online surveys distributed to a broad sample of Indigenous executives and leaders. The survey aimed to quantify executive tenure within BC First Nations over the past decade and historically. By analyzing the number of executive positions held by Indigenous individuals and assessing the interest in these roles within First Nations communities, the survey provided valuable metrics on executive turnover and highlighted areas where further support and development might be needed to ensure sustained Indigenous leadership.

Key Findings

This study explores the dynamics of executive leadership within Indigenous organizations, revealing significant insights into the profiles of executives, the impacts of executive turnover, contributing factors to turnover, and strategies for improving hiring and retention. The findings indicate a complex landscape where Indigenous executives vary by region, gender, and experience, with BC respondents being younger and predominantly female compared to their national counterparts. Executive turnover is identified as a major challenge, marked by increased

staff uncertainty, business disruptions, and high costs. The average tenure of just over 3.5 years, along with the high variability in tenure lengths, underscores the need for targeted strategies to improve retention.

To address these challenges, the study identifies key factors contributing to turnover, including lateral violence, burnout, and inadequate compensation. Strategies such as ensuring fair compensation and delineating clear boundaries between politics and administration are emphasized as crucial for improving retention. Moving forward, this research aims to identify new retention strategies and expand the research agenda to further investigate the systemic issues affecting Indigenous executive leadership. By focusing on these areas, the study seeks to contribute to the development of more effective support systems and policies that promote long-term stability and success within Indigenous organizations and provide the basis for developing theoretical propositions about the causes and effects of Indigenous executive turnover, as well as the relative effectiveness of different proposed interventions.

Reflections on Personal Experience and Participant Insights

My previous executive experiences are both an asset and a limitation in this study. On the one hand, my experience allows me to understand how to connect with other research participants, where to find key grey literature, and how First Nations organizations are structured as well as the challenges they face. On the other hand, I may have biases from my executive experience. To manage these biases, I have only included my personal stories when a similar story arose from a participant, a means of triangulating the data. Otherwise, I have striven to remain as neutral as possible throughout the research process.

The stories shared by participants were troubling yet not entirely surprising. Unfortunately, many of these narratives echoed my own experiences as an Indigenous executive,

highlighting both the highs but primarily the lows. Indigenous executives have shown the most interest in this research topic, as reflected in their high participation rate compared to the elected leaders of Indigenous organizations, who were harder to recruit. However, the few leaders who participated strongly supported this research, recognizing the tremendous value of recruiting Indigenous executives into their organizations. They understand that addressing these issues is essential for change. Without addressing the underlying problems, Indigenous organizations will continue to experience high turnover among their executives.

Dissertation Structure

This dissertation is organized into three parts.

Part 1: Foundations includes four chapters that cover the foundations of the dissertation. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study, context, objectives, and structure, thereby setting the stage for the research by outlining key questions and goals. Chapter 2 offers a detailed historical and contemporary overview of governance, examining the profound impacts of colonization on governance structures, and highlighting the resilience and adaptation of communities over time. Chapter 3 delves into the impacts and causes of executive turnover, exploring career progression challenges, and retention strategies. This chapter develops an analytical framework that serves as a foundation for future research and interventions aimed at strengthening Indigenous leadership. Chapter 4 details the methodological approach and design of the research project, justifying the choice of methods and explaining how data was collected and analyzed to ensure the study's rigor and reliability.

Part 2: Findings and Analysis includes five chapters that cover the findings and analysis of the dissertation. Chapter 5 examines the demographics and career trajectories of those occupying executive roles in Indigenous organizations, shedding light on the diversity and

pathways that lead to executive positions. Chapter 6 presents a quantitative analysis, offering a descriptive analysis of executive tenure, hiring preferences, and practices of Indigenous organizations, and identifying patterns and trends that influence executive roles. Chapter 7 discusses the multifaceted impacts of Indigenous executive turnover on organizations and communities, including an increase in staff uncertainty. Chapter 8 explores the root causes of Indigenous executive turnover, considering both internal organizational factors and external pressures, such as political influences and lateral violence. Chapter 9 offers a reflection on turnover, synthesizing findings from previous chapters and highlighting key insights that inform understanding and future actions.

Part 3: Strategies and Conclusions includes three chapters that focus on the strategies proposed by the participants, followed by an appraisal of the strategies and concluding with the overall dissertation conclusion. Chapter 10 identifies strategies for retaining Indigenous executives as suggested by research participants, emphasizing culturally grounded approaches and support mechanisms that enhance executive stability. Chapter 11 appraises the proposed strategies by evaluating their feasibility and effectiveness, considering existing constraints and challenges within Indigenous organizations. Chapter 12 concludes the dissertation by discussing the implications for literature, future theoretically informed research, and practice, underscoring the importance of addressing executive turnover in strengthening Indigenous governance and leadership.

By following this structure, the dissertation aims to explore Indigenous executive turnover, opening up an important area of research, and offer practical strategies to enhance organizational stability and leadership within Indigenous settings.

Chapter 2
The Historical and Institutional Context of Indigenous Organizations in Canada

To understand the causes and impacts of Indigenous executive turnover in First Nations and Indigenous organizations in Canada, it is important to remind ourselves of the intricate and layered history of Indigenous governance and organizations in Canada. Indigenous governance systems, with roots extending over 12,000 years, were traditionally structured around hereditary chiefs, potlatches, and family clans. These systems played a central role in the social and political frameworks of Indigenous communities, fostering resilience and continuity over millennia. However, the arrival of European colonizers in the 1500s marked the beginning of profound disruptions to these established systems.

The narrative of Indigenous governance in Canada is punctuated by several pivotal events. The Royal Proclamation of 1763, which acknowledged certain land rights of Indigenous peoples, was a rare instance of official recognition amidst growing colonial encroachment. The Indian Act of 1876, however, signified a drastic shift, placing Indigenous affairs under federal control and instigating extensive socio-political upheaval. The introduction of the Canadian Residential School system in the late 1800s inflicted severe trauma on Indigenous communities, with lasting repercussions still felt today.

The 20th century brought some advancements through legal reforms and amendments, such as the 1951 changes to the Indian Act (Government of Canada, 2018), which offered First Nations some administrative control over their communities, and the 1982 Constitution Act (Government of Canada, 2024) and several important Supreme Court cases launched by Indigenous nations and groups, which recognized Aboriginal and treaty rights (Supreme Court of

Canada, 1973; Supreme Court of Canada, 1997; British Columbia Supreme Court, 2000; Supreme Court of Canada, 2004; Supreme Court of Canada, 2005; Supreme Court of Canada, 2014). Yet, many challenges persisted. This chapter also explores the modern landscape of Indigenous organizations, including over 630 First Nations communities and numerous nonprofit entities. Despite their critical roles in serving diverse needs across Canada, these organizations often face significant challenges, including funding shortages and staffing issues, which impact their effectiveness and sustainability.

Through a comprehensive examination of historical and contemporary contexts, this chapter aims to provide a deeper understanding of the enduring resilience and ongoing struggles within Indigenous governance and leadership in Canada. Later in this dissertation it will become apparent that this is reflected in the causes and impacts of Indigenous executive turnover.

Historical Context

This section will delve into the evolution of Indigenous governance in Canada, beginning with an exploration of traditional governance systems that thrived for thousands of years. It will then examine the profound impacts of colonization, highlighting key events and policies, such as the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the Indian Act of 1876, and the Indian Residential School system, which sought to dismantle Indigenous cultures and governance structures. Finally, it will cover significant 20th-century developments, including amendments to the Indian Act, the right to vote, constitutional changes, and key Supreme Court decisions which marked the gradual shift towards recognizing and affirming Indigenous rights and governance. This overview aims to provide a deeper understanding of the historical context and ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous communities in their pursuit of self-determination and governance

Traditional Governance

Academics argue that Indigenous people have been in what is now called Canada for over 12,000 years, having come across the Bering Strait land bridge from Asia (Wright, 1994; Onderková, 2015; Finkel, 2006). However, Indigenous people argue against the Bering Strait theory, stating they have been here since time immemorial (Hilleary, 2017; Native Circle, n.d.). Regardless, the key takeaway is that Indigenous people were present far longer than the colonizers of Canada.

Before contact with colonizers, there was a larger Indigenous population in Canada. In British Columbia (BC) alone had approximately 250,000-400,000 Indigenous people (Sandercock & Attili, 2013). Moreover, the Indigenous people had traditional forms of governance which included hereditary chiefs, potlatches (Sandercock & Attili, 2013), and family clans (Fox (Poucette), 2017; Poucette, 2018). These traditional forms of Indigenous government were seen as egalitarian, providing social equity, equal opportunity, and rights to each member of the community (Finkel, 2006; Fox (Poucette), 2017; Poucette, 2018). These structures helped the Indigenous communities survive and thrive for thousands of years, but were interrupted by the arrival of colonizers and their effort to assimilate Indigenous peoples.

Impact of Colonization

Colonizers first arrived in Eastern Canada in the 1500s and participated in trading with the local Indigenous people (Government of Canada, 2017), and by the 1600s, the colonizers created settlements in Eastern Canada (Government of Canada, 2017). In the first half of the 1700s, the local Indigenous groups joined French and English armies in war (Government of Canada, 2018). The Royal Proclamation was signed in 1763, which stated that the Western side of Canada was “Indian Territories” and that only the Indian department could negotiate and buy land from the Indians (Government of Canada, 2013). Starting in the 1820s, the position of Indian agents working on behalf of the government was created to assimilate the Indians into Christian British

society (Upton, 1973). In 1839, the Crown Lands Protection Act became law (Upper Canada, 1839). This Act protected Crown lands and classified Indian lands became the Crown's lands. The 1867 British North America Act granted the Dominion of Canada a federal responsibility for Indian Affairs (British North America, 1867). Treaties 1 to 7 were negotiated between 1871 and 1877 (Government of Canada, 2023). These treaties granted First Nations small parcels of land, annuity payments, and fishing and hunting rights in exchange for Aboriginal title (Government of Canada, 2023).

In 1876, the government introduced the Indian Act which stated that the Canadian federal government was responsible for Indian affairs (Government of Canada, 1876). In 1880, the Indian Act was amended to force a new band council and governance system onto First Nations, where the Indian Agent had the final say (Government of Canada, 1983). The new band council and governance system were polar opposite to the traditional governance structures: for example, they required elections and reported to the Federal government, whereas traditional governance was more egalitarian and responsible to the people (Poucette, 2018). This was another way to assimilate First Nations into British and Christian societies.

The most horrifying thing to happen in the 1800s was the introduction of the Canadian Indian Residential School system. These schools operated across Canada from 1857 to 1996 (Bombay, Anisman, & Matheson, 2014). Their purpose was to forcibly remove the children from their homes and bring them to school where they would "take the Indian out of the child" as Canada's First Prime Minister John A Macdonald stated when defending Canada's residential school system (Canadian Press, 2021). At these residential schools, children were abused (physically, sexually, mentally) by priests and other religious leaders when they practiced their language and/or culture, and in some cases, they were killed or died of malnutrition or disease

(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; Bombay, Anisman, & Matheson, 2014). This not only lead to intergenerational trauma but also compromised most Indigenous communities and, as we shall see, led to negative behaviours in contemporary Indigenous governments and organizations.

20th Century Developments to the Present

The 1951 amendment to the Indian Act provided First Nations with some control over the administration of their communities and the use of band funds, but the Government still maintained considerable control over First Nations communities (Leslie, 2002). In 1960, First Nations were granted the right to vote in federal and provincial elections (Leslie, 2002). In 1969, the Federal government introduced the White Paper, which would have repealed the Indian Act and transferred the jurisdiction of Indigenous people to the Canadian provinces, but it was rejected by both Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous public (Leslie, 2002). As a result, the Federal government became less paternalistic by removing Indian agents and instead funding national Indigenous organizations. In 1982, the Constitution Act included two amendments in Section 35, which affirmed that Aboriginal and treaty rights had not been extinguished and that the term Aboriginal includes Indian, Métis, and Inuit (Government of Canada, 2024).

Unfortunately, there is no clear definition of existing Aboriginal and treaty rights, so the courts have since been responsible for defining them and directing government programs to ensure Aboriginal and treaty rights are protected (Miller, 2009) Some of the important court cases that relate to Aboriginal and treaty rights include Calder v. British Columbia (Attorney General), 1973 (Supreme Court of Canada, 1973), Delgamuukw v. British Columbia, 1997 (Supreme Court of Canada, 1997), Campbell v. British Columbia (Attorney General), 2000 (British Columbia Supreme Court, 2000), Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Minister of

Forests), 2004 (Supreme Court of Canada, 2004), Mikisew Cree First Nation v. Canada (Minister of Canadian Heritage), 2005 (Supreme Court of Canada, 2005), and Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia, 2014 (Supreme Court of Canada, 2014).

The Calder case was instrumental in demonstrating the existence of Aboriginal title, which encouraged the emergence of Aboriginal law, and the restart of Treaty negotiations (Supreme Court of Canada, 1973). The Delgamuukw case demonstrated that Aboriginal title is related to exclusive interest in the land and resources of the community's territory and that the First Nation can choose how the land can be used, and that there is an economic component that First Nations are entitled to when Aboriginal title is infringed (Supreme Court of Canada, 1997). The Campbell case affirmed that the inherent right to self-government is included in and protected by Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution (British Columbia Supreme Court, 2000). The Haida case states that the Crown has a constitutional duty to consult and accommodate First Nations when an expected infringement on Aboriginal title is expected, even before Aboriginal rights are proven in court (Supreme Court of Canada, 2004). The Mikisew Cree case builds off the Haida case by stating that the Crown is required to consult and accommodate Treaty nations as well (Supreme Court of Canada, 2005). Finally, the Tsilhqot'in case was the first case to prove Aboriginal title in the Canadian courts, and it clarified the requirements for establishing Aboriginal title, which include occupation before sovereignty, a continuity between present and pre-sovereign occupation, and at sovereignty, that occupation must have been exclusive (Supreme Court of Canada, 2014).

Effects of Colonization

The effects of colonization on First Nations communities in Canada are profound and multifaceted, deeply influencing socio-economic conditions, cultural integrity, and governance.

These historical impacts may also contribute to the challenges of sustaining Indigenous leadership, influencing executive turnover within these communities.

Socio-Economic Impacts

The impacts of First Nations' relationship with the Government of Canada, the *Indian Act,* and colonialism are perhaps the most demonstrative when trying to grasp the gravity of the story being told by census statistics. As Bob Joseph (2022) pointed out, as would most researchers trying to understand the impacts:

> eight of the key issues of most significant concern for Indigenous Peoples in Canada are complex and inexorably intertwined, so much so that government, researchers, policymakers and Indigenous leaders seem hamstrung by the enormity. It is hard to isolate one issue as being the worst. (para. 1)

He lists the eight issues as poor health, lower levels of education, inadequate housing and crowded living conditions, lower income levels, higher rates of unemployment, higher levels of incarceration, higher rates of unintentional injuries and early deaths among children and youth, and higher rates of suicide. It is in this environment that First Nations communities are attempting to govern. Table 1 provides a high-level overview of two issues: income and education levels of Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal and First Nations peoples.

Table 1: Comparative Socio-Economic Table from 2011-2021

Socio-economic Type	**2011** (Statistics Canada, 2015)		**2016** (Statistics Canada, 2019b)		**2021** (Statistics Canada, 2022a)
	Aboriginal	**Non-Aboriginal**	**First Nations**	**Non-Indigenous**	**First Nations**
Low-Income Household	n/a	n/a	30%	n/a	31.4%
Unemployment	15%	n/a	18%	7.4%	n/a
Education (no certificate, diploma, or degree)	38%	n/a	38%	18%	n/a

Socio-economic Type	**2011** (Statistics Canada, 2015)		**2016** (Statistics Canada, 2019b)		**2021** (Statistics Canada, 2022a)
	Aboriginal	**Non-Aboriginal**	**First Nations**	**Non-Indigenous**	**First Nations**
Education (bachelor's degree)	5%	n/a	5%	16%	n/a
Education (university certificate, diploma, or degree above bachelor level)	2%	n/a	2%	8%	n/a

Income. According to Statistic Canada's 2021 Census, Indigenous people are much more likely to live in a low-income household than non-Indigenous people (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Specifically, 18.8% of Indigenous people lived in a low-income household compared to 10.7% in the non-Indigenous population in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022a). For the on-reserve First Nations, one in three (31.4%) lived in a low-income household (Statistics Canada, 2022a). In the 2016 Census, 30% of First Nations lived in a low-income household (Statistics Canada, 2019b), although the report does not state if that this for off-reserve, on-reserve, or both.

Education and Employment Levels. Unfortunately, disseminated information from Statistics Canada's 2021 Census on Indigenous employment and education levels will not be available until the summer of 2023 (Statistics Canada, 2022b). Therefore, information from the 2016 Census is used to understand the employment and education levels of First Nations, along with the 2011 Census to demonstrate the differences between the five years.

According to the 2016 Census, 18% of the non-Aboriginal population in Canada had no certificate, diploma, or degree, whereas 38% of the First Nations population in Canada had no

certificate, diploma, or degree (Statistics Canada, 2019a). Another big gap in the 2016 Census for education was for those who graduated from university. In 2016, 16% of the non-Indigenous population had a bachelor's degree, whereas only 5% of the First Nations population had a bachelor's degree (Statistics Canada, 2019a). As for the university certificate, diploma, or degree above bachelor level, 8% of the non-Indigenous population possessed this, whereas only 2% of the First Nations population possessed this.

Unfortunately, the 2011 Census did not separate the field "Aboriginal" into its subcategories (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit), and there were no comparison figures for non-Aboriginal people in Canada. According to the 2011 Census, 38% of the Aboriginal population in Canada had no certificate, diploma, or degree (Statistics Canada, 2015). Only 5% of the Aboriginal population had a bachelor's degree, and 2% had a university certificate, diploma, or degree above bachelor level (Statistics Canada, 2015).

According to the 2016 Census, the non-Aboriginal population had an unemployment rate of 7.4%, whereas the First Nations population's unemployment rate was 18% (Statistics Canada, 2019a). As mentioned above, the 2011 Census did not subcategorize Aboriginal. According to the 2011 Census, the Aboriginal population had an unemployment rate of 15%, but there was no information for the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2015).

Health and Cultural Impacts

The legacy of residential schools has had profound and lasting effects on Indigenous communities, manifesting in increased rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, and a deep-seated fear of practicing traditional languages and cultural practices (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). These issues extend beyond the survivors, impacting subsequent generations who continue to grapple with the intergenerational

trauma inflicted by these institutions. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to acknowledge and heal from this trauma, while also revitalizing cultural practices and community well-being as part of a broader resurgence and recovery process.

Impacts of Colonization on Socio-Economic Disparities and Indigenous Executive Turnover

Colonization has profoundly affected First Nations communities in Canada, resulting in significant socio-economic disparities and cultural trauma. High rates of poverty, low educational attainment, and elevated unemployment highlight the enduring impact of colonial policies and systemic inequities. These challenges reflect the historical injustices that have persisted despite efforts to improve conditions.

Additionally, the legacy of residential schools has caused intergenerational trauma and lateral violence, which undermine community cohesion and governance structures. This trauma may contribute to turnover among Indigenous executives, as leaders struggle to manage the complex socio-economic and cultural challenges facing their communities. Understanding these impacts is crucial for addressing the themes of governance and leadership in the context of Indigenous executive turnover, which will be explored further in the findings.

Contemporary Indigenous Governance

In Canada, Indigenous organizations include First Nations administrations, Métis organizations, Inuit organizations, nonprofit organizations, and economic development companies. This study focuses specifically on leaders and executives from First Nations administrations, BC-based nonprofits, and national First Nations and national Indigenous nonprofits. Understanding the organizational context of these leaders and executives is crucial, as it provides insight into the unique challenges and opportunities they face. This background information helps locate the study within the specific context of British Columbia while also considering the broader national

landscape. Although this dissertation centres on First Nations administrations, BC nonprofits, and national First Nations and national Indigenous nonprofits, future research could expand to include Métis organizations, Inuit organizations, and economic development companies across Canada.

First Nations

There are over 200 First Nations communities in BC, almost a third of the more than 630 First Nations communities in Canada (Government of Canada, 2024). There are about 78 Tribal Councils in Canada (Government of Canada, 2017), where First Nations communities voluntarily join together to provide services to the participating communities. First Nations administrations were created as a part of service devolution from the Federal government which typically have experienced challenges concerning funding, staffing, and infrastructure. First Nations administrations struggle to provide competitive compensation for their executives, governance, and other staff.

Indigenous Nonprofit Organizations

Indigenous nonprofit organizations are service providers to Indigenous communities across Canada, both inside and outside communities. Each Indigenous nonprofit organization has its own mission statement that drives it in delivering the services for intended outcomes. The First Nations Public Service Secretariat (FNPSS) (2019) provides an interesting analysis of about 20 First Nations organizations serving BC and Canada, although the list is not exhaustive. They variously provide the following services to First Nations administrations: health and education, lands management and infrastructure, economic development, political advocacy, technology, emergency services, governance, and finance.

Understanding the governance challenges faced by Indigenous leaders and executives in Canada is essential for improving organizational effectiveness and advancing reconciliation. This study highlights systemic issues, including funding constraints and infrastructure deficits, which could contribute to high executive turnover and organizational instability. Addressing these challenges is key to empowering Indigenous communities to manage their affairs sustainably. The next section will explore specific challenges, such as funding shortages, staffing issues, and infrastructure deficits, in greater detail.

Challenges and Barriers for Indigenous Organizations

First Nations communities face significant challenges and barriers that impede effective governance and sustainable development. A primary issue is the chronic shortage of funding, which limits their ability to invest in essential services and infrastructure. This lack of resources often results in staffing difficulties, as communities struggle to attract and retain skilled professionals needed for effective administration. Additionally, infrastructure deficits further complicate efforts to implement development initiatives and improve community well-being. These interconnected challenges create a complex environment that requires innovative solutions and increased support to empower First Nations communities in achieving their governance and development goals.

Funding Shortages

A recent study showed that First Nations administrations are severely underfunded when it comes to implementing effective governance (Ducharme et al., 2023). One significant reason for these funding shortages is the 2% funding cap the Government of Canada implemented on First Nations' budgets in 1996, despite the rapidly growing First Nations population and rising inflation costs (Collar, 2020; Brunet-Jailly, 2008; AFN, 2011b). According to Brunet-Jailly

(2008), an expert in Indigenous-Canada fiscal relations, the Government of Canada severely underfunds its First Nations compared to its non-First Nations citizens on a per capita basis, providing $9,000 for First Nations citizens versus $15,000-$16,000 for non-First Nations citizens.

Examples of this underfunding are evident across various sectors. For instance, in 2000, there was a 22% funding gap in First Nations Child and Family Services compared to services provides by the provinces and territories (McDonald et al., 2000). In 2016, First Nations on-reserve schooling faced a 30% funding gap when compared to provincial and territorial schools (Porter, 2016). As a result, many First Nations communities have incurred significant debt trying to fund services not prioritized by the Government of Canada, leading some into third-party management (Brunet-Jailly, 2008).

Brunet-Jailly (2008) also highlighted that Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) claims to be decentralized but operates in a de-concentrated manner, focusing on the conception, control, performance, and evaluation of centrally designed programs. This structure limits the financial, administrative, legislative, and judicial independence of First Nations governments, which true decentralization would provide (Brunet-Jailly, 2008). Prince and Abele (2005) argue that funding shortages also stem from the ineffective fiscal relationship between First Nations and the Government of Canada, compared to provincial-federal fiscal relations. Provincial governments receive equalized transfer funding that is multi-year and unconditional, whereas First Nations receive non-equalized, annual, and conditional transfer funding (Prince & Abele, 2005; AFN, 2011b).

In 2015, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) released a document titled "Closing the Gap: 2015 Federal Election Priorities for First Nations and Canada," which outlined the

disparities affecting First Nations governance in Canada (AFN, 2015). It focused on strengthening families, equitable funding, upholding rights, respecting the environment, revitalizing Indigenous languages, and upholding truth and reconciliation. A significant takeaway was the call to remove the 2% cap on federal funding to First Nations and establish a new fiscal relationship with equitable, ongoing funding (AFN, 2015). This advocacy led to the 2016 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between AFN and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), which established the First Nations-Canada Joint Committee on the Fiscal Relationship to propose a new fiscal relationship (AFN & INAC, 2016). In June 2017, First Nations in BC identified principles for a new fiscal relationship with Canada, including expanded tax powers, economic incentives, and institutional support (First Nations Tax Commission, 2017).

In July 2017, the AFN passed a resolution supporting these principles, which were provided to the Joint Committee for consideration (AFN, 2017a). Engagement sessions held across Canada gathered feedback on the new fiscal relationship, emphasizing the need to replace the First Nations Financial Transparency Act (FNFTA) with a mutual accountability framework (Government of Canada, 2021b). While the FNFTA has not been repealed, these sessions led to the Joint Committee's report, "A New Approach: Co-Development of a New Fiscal Relationship Between Canada and First Nations," and the introduction of the 10-Year Grant (AFN & INAC, 2017a). Introduced in 2019, the 10-Year Grant provides block core funding over ten years but is considered an interim step (AFN, 2019). Meanwhile, programs such as Band Support Funding and Professional & Institutional Development continue to support governance capacity in First Nations communities (Government of Canada, 2022a). The governance modernization initiative aims to reform program designs and funding models to enhance First Nations governance (AFN,

2022). Despite some progress since 2005, such as the 10-Year Grant, funding remains conditional and limited to certain eligible communities.

Staffing Issues

First Nations communities have faced significant staffing issues for years, primarily due to a lack of funding. These human resources shortages are particularly severe in critical administrative positions, which are essential for effective governance and service delivery. For instance, from 2017 to 2018, the Wei Wai Kum First Nation had vacancies in six of their 16 full-time Band employee positions, including key roles such as Band Manager and housing administrator. Similarly, in Tsleil-Waututh Nation, there was a more than 25% increase in employee turnover from 2019 to 2020 (FNPSS, 2022). Job listings further highlight the shortage; as of January 24, 2023, Nak'azdli Whut'en had 15 open positions, Lil'wat Nation had 12, and Little Shuswap Lake Indian Band had nine jobs posted, with some positions marked as "urgently hiring."

Various factors contribute to these staffing issues, many of which are linked to inadequate funding. Challenges reported by First Nations communities include recruitment, retention, succession planning, non-competitive salaries, limited training availability, job insecurity, community remoteness, negative work culture, high turnover, and historical trauma. Specifically, the Band Administrator role experiences high turnover due to its demanding nature, broad scope, isolation, inadequate training, and lack of mentors (Nye & Gelb, 2021; FNPSS, 2020; Government of Canada, 2003).

Inadequate, inefficient, and short-term funding, which is not aligned with capacity development for good governance and sovereignty, exacerbates these issues. This funding misalignment hampers recruitment and retention, contributes to an unsupportive work culture, and creates instability in service delivery (Nye & Gelb, 2021; Casey, 2021; Missens, 2008).

The impact of these staffing issues on First Nations communities is profound. Effective governance, program delivery, long-term planning, relationship building, and capacity building are all compromised when human resources are insufficient. For example, the Wei Wai Kum First Nation's Comprehensive Community Plan (2019) identified the lack of human resources as a major impediment to progress, stalling administrative activities and hindering service expansion. In Tsleil-Waututh Nation, high turnover led to increased recruitment costs, lack of continuity, decreased staff knowledge, and higher orientation costs (FNPSS, 2022). Additionally, addressing housing shortages in Indigenous communities requires investment in recruitment, retention, infrastructure, capacity training, and education (Garneau, 2022).

Infrastructure Shortage

Good governance in First Nations communities requires a suitable meeting place and robust infrastructure, including housing, public works, roads, and community facilities. The First Nations Infrastructure Institute (FNII) emphasizes that high-quality public infrastructure is crucial for the health and sustainability of Indigenous communities, serving as places of learning, belonging, sustainment, and healing. However, building and maintaining infrastructure in these communities presents significant challenges. Infrastructure on reserves takes too long to develop, costs too much to build, and doesn't last long enough. Additional issues include poor access to financing, lack of local capacity, small-scale projects that deter investors, federal policy limitations, unclear jurisdiction, and lengthy project delays (Baird & Podlasly, 2020).

The infrastructure deficit in First Nations communities in BC is significant, with acute funding shortages exacerbating the problem. The BC Assembly of First Nations (2017), the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (2018), and the First Nations Summit (2018) have all highlighted the gap in housing and infrastructure conditions between First Nations and other British Columbians.

Poor infrastructure conditions negatively affect development, health, education, and other social conditions. At the national level, the Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships estimated in 2020 that closing the First Nations infrastructure gap would require up to $30 billion in investment. Despite some available funding from the Government of Canada, the Province of BC, and various organizations, it is often limited, inflexible, unsustainable, and complicated to access. The current funding approach is unsustainable, and First Nations and Indigenous organizations expect and deserve better results (FNII, n.d.; Calla, 2022).

To address this gap, initiatives are underway. As of September 30, 2022, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) has invested $8.04 billion in 7,875 projects benefiting Indigenous communities. ISC is also working on transferring infrastructure service delivery to First Nations. The BC First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Council (FNHIC-BC), created in 2017, aims to assume authority and control for First Nations housing and infrastructure program delivery in British Columbia.

Historical Marginalization in Indigenous Executive Roles

From the 1830s to the 1960s, the role of Indian Agents—non-Indigenous representatives—was central to administering the Indian Act and managing the daily operations of First Nations reserves. This role, however, is contested in its origins; Upton (1973) suggests that Indian agents were first hired in the 1820s to secure Indigenous alliances in the event of war, while Satzewich (1997) asserts they were introduced in the early 1870s and disbanded in the late 1960s.

Regardless of their exact inception, the Indian agents' mandate evolved from overseeing early Treaties to exerting social control and imposing transformative policies on Indigenous communities (Satzewich, 1997). This institutional framework was steeped in racial bias, grounded in the belief that Indigenous peoples were incapable of self-management and required

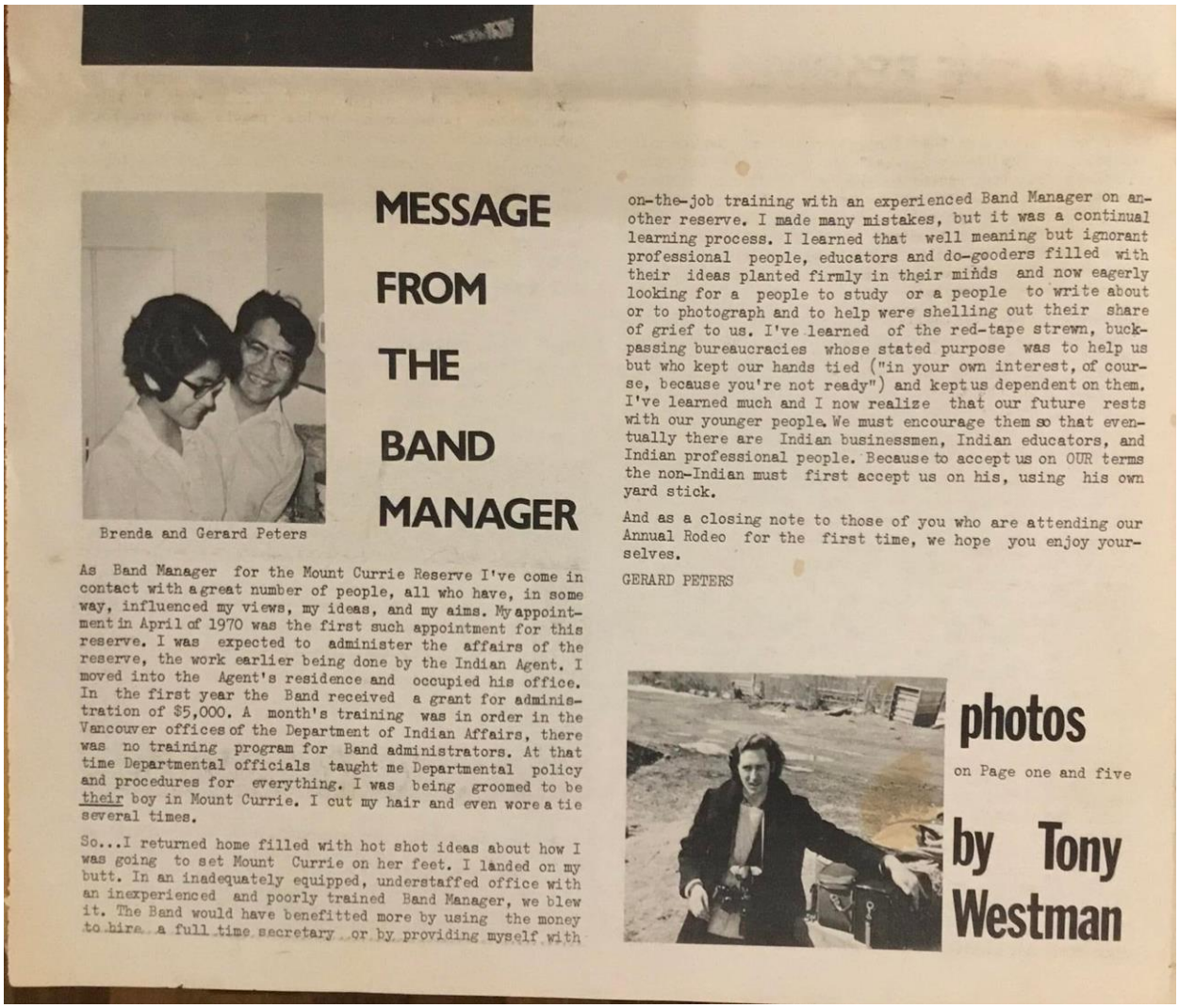
government oversight (Satzewich, 1997). The Crown Lands Protection Act of 1839, which classified Indian lands as Crown lands, and the 1867 British North America Act, which assigned federal responsibility for Indian Affairs to Canada, further entrenched colonial control. The introduction of the Indian Act in 1876, and its subsequent amendment in 1880, established a Band Council structure with the Indian Agent holding ultimate authority, effectively undermining traditional governance systems and reinforcing assimilationist policies (Bartlett, 1978).

This historical context set the stage for significant shifts in governance. The transition to the Band Manager role, which remains under-explored in the literature but is notably discussed in an article by my great uncle Eppa Gerard Peters (1971) on his experience as a band manager (see Figure 1, see next page). It is interesting to read that my great uncle's experience as a band manager rings similar to my experience, even though I was a band manager over 43 years after he had been a band manager. For example, my great uncle mentions that when he assumed the role the office was inadequately equipped, understaffed, and he was not properly trained into the role, but was rather provided a pile of policies and procedures from Indian Affairs (former name of Indigenous Services Canada). It is sad to hear that not a lot has changed for the last five decades of devolution.

Over 27 years after my great uncle's article arose another article about the Band Manager's experience, titled, The Band Administrator: A one-person bureaucracy by Paul Barnsley (1998) – a well-known author on First Nations issues in Canada. As Barnsley's article title suggests, the Band Administrator (formerly known as the Band Manager) role is quite burdensome, and at times, feels like a one-person bureaucracy due to the limited capacity of chief and council, and the other band staff (Barnsley, 1998). As stated by my great uncle, there are a lot of policies and procedures that band administrators are responsible for, and Barnsley

makes light of this with a comic that showcases the number of policies and procedures that exist (see Figure 2). While Barnsley (1998) provides a lot of rich information in such a short article, the main takeaway points are that the band administrator role is demanding, highly political, extremely stressful, and that even back in 1998, First Nations leaders like Chief Bill Wilson was advocating for First Nations band administrators because "European and Aboriginal cultures are so foreign from each other" (p. 2).

Figure 1: Article Excerpt about Band Manager Experience



MESSAGE FROM THE BAND MANAGER

Brenda and Gerard Peters

As Band Manager for the Mount Currie Reserve I've come in contact with a great number of people, all who have, in some way, influenced my views, my ideas, and my aims. My appointment in April of 1970 was the first such appointment for this reserve. I was expected to administer the affairs of the reserve, the work earlier being done by the Indian Agent. I moved into the Agent's residence and occupied his office. In the first year the Band received a grant for administration of $5,000. A month's training was in order in the Vancouver offices of the Department of Indian Affairs, there was no training program for Band administrators. At that time Departmental officials taught me Departmental policy and procedures for everything. I was being groomed to be their boy in Mount Currie. I cut my hair and even wore a tie several times.

So...I returned home filled with hot shot ideas about how I was going to set Mount Currie on her feet. I landed on my butt. In an inadequately equipped, understaffed office with an inexperienced and poorly trained Band Manager, we blew it. The Band would have benefitted more by using the money to hire a full time secretary or by providing myself with on-the-job training with an experienced Band Manager on another reserve. I made many mistakes, but it was a continual learning process. I learned that well meaning but ignorant professional people, educators and do-gooders filled with their ideas planted firmly in their minds and now eagerly looking for a people to study or a people to write about or to photograph and to help were shelling out their share of grief to us. I've learned of the red-tape strewn, buck-passing bureaucracies whose stated purpose was to help us but who kept our hands tied ("in your own interest, of course, because you're not ready") and kept us dependent on them. I've learned much and I now realize that our future rests with our younger people. We must encourage them so that eventually there are Indian businessmen, Indian educators, and Indian professional people. Because to accept us on OUR terms the non-Indian must first accept us on his, using his own yard stick.

And as a closing note to those of you who are attending our Annual Rodeo for the first time, we hope you enjoy yourselves.

GERARD PETERS

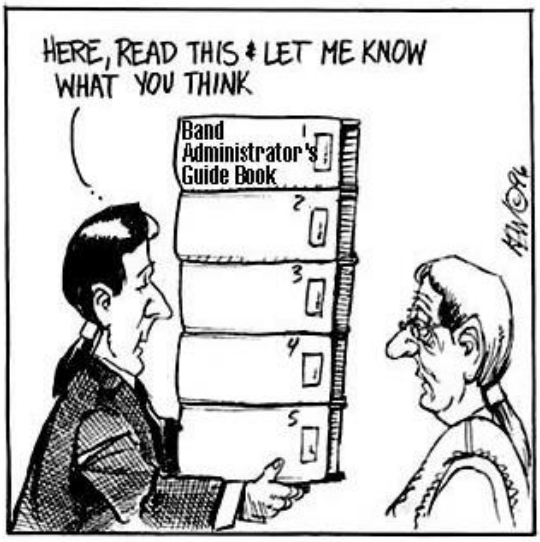
photos

on Page one and five

by Tony Westman

Note. By Eppa Gerard Peters, 1971, located in The First Citizen

Figure 2: Comic about the Band Administrator's Guide Book



Note. By Barnsley, B (1998). Comic. Windspeaker. https://windspeaker.com/teachings/canadian-classroom-source-documents/the-band-administrator-a-one-person-bureaucracy

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have traversed the complex and often painful history of Indigenous governance in Canada, from the ancient and sophisticated traditional systems to the profound disruptions caused by European colonization. We have examined the significant milestones that have shaped the course of Indigenous governance, including key legislative changes, the introduction of the Residential School system, and various 20th-century developments that have impacted Indigenous rights and self-determination.

Furthermore, we have delved into the contemporary landscape of Indigenous organizations in British Columbia, highlighting the over 630 First Nations communities and a myriad of nonprofit organizations that address diverse needs across the province. Despite their critical roles, these organizations grapple with substantial challenges, such as chronic funding shortages, staffing difficulties, and infrastructural deficits.

Amidst these historical and contemporary contexts, it is crucial to emphasize the central focus of this research: the retention of Indigenous executives within these organizations. The

retention of Indigenous leaders is not merely a matter of organizational stability; it is a vital component of sustaining and strengthening Indigenous governance systems that have long endured despite immense challenges. Indigenous executives play a pivotal role in guiding their communities through the ongoing struggles and opportunities of modern governance, ensuring that traditional values and contemporary needs are harmoniously integrated.

By understanding the factors that influence the retention of Indigenous executives, this research aims to contribute valuable insights into enhancing the effectiveness and resilience of Indigenous organizations. The findings will not only inform strategies for improving leadership stability but also support the broader goal of reinforcing Indigenous self-determination and governance across British Columbia and beyond.

Chapter 3

Literature Review and Analytic Framework

Introduction

Executive turnover significantly impacts organizational stability, performance, and culture. While extensive research exists on executive turnover in non-Indigenous settings, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding Indigenous organizations. Indigenous organizations operate within unique cultural, social, and political contexts, facing distinct challenges that influence executive turnover rates and patterns. Understanding these factors is essential for developing strategies to support Indigenous executives.

An initial search for "Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations" yielded limited results, leading to broader searches encompassing leadership, management, career progression, and organizational dynamics. Although the literature primarily focused on executives in non-Indigenous sectors, these insights provide valuable groundwork for understanding executive turnover in Indigenous contexts.

This literature review aims to bridge this gap by examining research on executive turnover with a focus on Indigenous contexts. By drawing on broader literature related to leadership and organizational dynamics, this review seeks to establish a foundation for understanding executive turnover in Indigenous organizations and identify relevant influencing factors.

The review explores the impacts and causes of executive turnover, career progression, and retention strategies. It aims to develop an analytical framework to guide future research and interventions, enhancing organizational stability in Indigenous settings. The insights gained will support culturally appropriate strategies for retaining and developing Indigenous executives,

thereby strengthening Indigenous organizations' capacity to achieve their goals and serve their communities.

The Positive and Negative Impacts of Executive Turnover: Fiscal, Social, and Performance

It is common to think of the negative impacts of executive turnover, but there are also some positive impacts. The negative impacts are usually associated with voluntary turnover when the executive chooses to leave the organization, however, there are instances where involuntary turnover can result in negative impacts on the overall organization and its staff. The positive impacts can emerge during involuntary turnover when an executive is terminated from a position, such as when the executive is not a good fit for the organization. The three primary themes associated with the impacts of executive turnover include fiscal, social, and performance.

A. *Fiscal*. A common observation about the impact of executive turnover is the high cost associated with it. The high costs include generous severance packages, acting salary, recruiting costs, and replacement costs estimated at 2.5 times the outgoing executive's annual salary (Duffield, Roche, Blay, Thoms, & Stasa, 2011; Messersmith, Lee, Guthrie, & Ji, 2014). These high costs can be associated with voluntary (less severance package) and involuntary executive turnover.

B. *Social*. The social impact of executive turnover is felt in involuntary and voluntary turnover circumstances. When an executive leaves an organization, there is an immediate impact in the social workplace, which can cause conflict, uncertainty, and insecurity among staff, and therefore a decline in morale (Grusky, 1960; Kesner & Sebora, 1994; Haveman, 1993; Abbasi & Hollman, 2000; McKee & Driscoll, 2008; Duffield, Roche, Blay, Thoms, & Stasa, 2011; Stewart, Exploring Nonprofit Executive Turnover, 2016). The loss of an executive can have a short-term impact on stakeholders outside of the

workplace due to a loss of social capital, which includes the external relationships and networks the executive maintains (Haveman, 1993; Messersmith, Lee, Guthrie, & Ji, 2014). Finally, there is the loss in human capital, which includes the skills and history the executive possessed (Carley, 1992; McKee & Driscoll, 2008; Duffield, Roche, Blay, Thoms, & Stasa, 2011; Messersmith, Lee, Guthrie, & Ji, 2014).

C. *Performance*. The impact of executive turnover on organizational performance can be either positive or negative depending on the circumstances. Some negative performance impacts include: interrupted reporting relationships (Haveman, 1993); disrupted business operations (Haveman, 1993; Abbasi & Hollman, 2000; Duffield, Roche, Blay, Thoms, & Stasa, 2011; Stewart, Exploring Nonprofit Executive Turnover, 2016); decreased staff performance; changes in strategy and structure (Kesner & Sebora, 1994); and decreased quality and innovation of services delivered, which affects the satisfaction of stakeholders (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000). These negative impacts can be felt with voluntary and involuntary executive turnover. The positive impacts on performance are primarily experienced after involuntary executive turnover has taken place, including improved performance under a more skilled replacement (Eitzen & Yetman, 1972), and newly introduced perspectives and innovation, which is especially needed when executives become stagnant (Messersmith, Lee, Guthrie, & Ji, 2014).

These factors and their subfactors are included as the potential impacts of executive turnover in organizations and are captured in the Analytic Framework (discussed in forthcoming sections) with the themes of staff uncertainty, disruption of business operations, high costs, interrupting reporting requirements, improving innovation and performance, and improved person-organization fit.

Causes of Executive Turnover: From Workplace Aggression to Poor Governance

The following section explores the causes of executive turnover in Indigenous organizations, from workplace aggression to governance issues. Workplace aggression is a key contributor to turnover, and lateral violence—defined as oppressed individuals directing frustration and anger toward their peers rather than the oppressor (Whyman et al., 2021)—is a significant form of such aggression, particularly in Indigenous contexts.

Lateral violence is often a manifestation of colonial oppression and social hierarchies enforced within Indigenous communities (Whyman et al., 2021). This type of violence takes many forms, including verbal, emotional, psychological, and even physical abuse (Major et al., 2013; Whyman et al., 2021). It also manifests in overt behaviors such as gossiping, bullying, shaming, and family feuding (Whyman et al., 2021), and covert actions like exclusion, backstabbing, and defamation (Whyman et al., 2021). These behaviors, particularly in the workplace, can be destructive, leading to decreased job satisfaction, increased stress, and ultimately higher turnover intentions.

This mirrors findings by Callier (2020) who defined workplace aggression as any employee's efforts to intentionally harm others in an organization, physically or non-physically. Lateral violence fits this definition, especially when it occurs horizontally—among peers in Indigenous organizations. Some acts of workplace aggression include intimidation and exclusion, whereas, some acts of lateral violence can include verbal abuse (gossiping, shouting, etc.) (Whyman et al., 2021; Ceravolo et al., 2012), emotional manipulation (undermining, spreading rumours, etc.), and physical violence (Whyman et al., 2021). Workplace aggression can be *horizontal* (co-worker to co-worker) or *vertical* (manager to employee or employee to manager).

Lateral violence and workplace aggression don't just create a hostile work environment; they breed anxiety, sleeplessness, and low self-esteem in those subjected to them (Ceravolo et al., 2012; Jaber et al., 2023). These forms of aggression contribute to job stress, which Callier (2020) highlights as a key factor that harms job satisfaction and increases turnover intention. The impacts are both personal and organizational. On a personal level, executives may experience depression, feelings of rejection, and a deep sense of shame and guilt for not being able to "stick it out" (Jaber et al., 2023). Furthermore, as Kim (2015) notes, job stress, burnout, and psychological instability are major causes of turnover intention. On an organizational level, job satisfaction plummets, team cohesion deteriorates, and turnover becomes inevitable as employees and executives leave for healthier work environments (Ceravolo et al., 2012). As an Indigenous executive, I have witnessed firsthand the vertical workplace aggression from leadership that led me to resign from a position.

Good governance is especially important for executives as they work closely with the leadership of the organization. However, when good governance is in short supply, such as in the case of the portfolio system in First Nations communities, increased executive turnover may result. The portfolio system is when chief and council members are assigned a portfolio to "oversee" such as health, youth, finance, etc. The portfolio system for chief and council does not allow for Indigenous communities to practice good governance because councillors believe they are in charge, which causes issues with department managers and band managers, the politicization of service delivery, and encouraging councillors to question the decisions of the council as a whole (Graham, 2007). As a result, department managers and band managers quit, having felt they were mistreated, and this in turn undermines the council. Graham (2007) suggests that councils put in place a policy that reminds councillors with portfolio oversight that

they are not department managers and do not direct staff: they only provide advice and make policy decisions with the council. Graham emphasizes the importance of good governance and the damaging effects of politics in administration.

Executive turnover has increased in the 21st century in non-Indigenous for-profit organizations when it comes to meeting shareholder expectations in the UK private sector and perceptions of declining executive turnover (Gregory-Smith, Thompson, & Wright, 2009). The top three avenues for executive exit from 1996-2005 were: retirement (27.63%); change of control (17.87%); and ousted (13.71%). Retirement is self-explanatory; however, 'change of control' and 'ousted' deserve more explanation. A change of control occurs when an organization is acquired by a new company, which replaces top executives with new leaders (Gregory-Smith, Thompson, & Wright, 2009). Getting “ousted” occurs when an executive leaves due to pressure from the board or shareholders (Gregory-Smith, Thompson, & Wright, 2009). In an Indigenous context, a change of control would happen when an election occurs, which results in new leadership being elected and they decide to replace the executive and senior leadership team. As for ousting, an Indigenous executive could feel pressures from the leadership to leave their executive position.

The Natural Turnover: Career Progression?

Natural career progression refers to the organic and step-by-step advancement within one's profession or field, often marked by increasing responsibilities and skills development over time. Four themes were identified that related to executive career progression and development:

A. *Education*. Much of the literature considered what education was required at an executive level in the nonprofit and public sectors, concluding that the minimum level of education necessary for the executive position was a graduate-level or undergraduate degree

without a specified field of study (Barber, 1988; Watson & Hassett, 2004; Stewart & Kuenzi, 2018). Based on my experience reviewing band administrators and other Indigenous organizational job postings, Indigenous organizations seek applicants with a graduate degree; however, typically, smaller organizations will make exceptions and accept applicants with undergraduate degrees.

B. *Skills*. In addition to required education, certain skills are necessary for executive positions. The skills most mentioned included accounting, finance, budgeting, and human resources (Fannin & Moore, 1983). As someone with executive experience in Indigenous organizations, I can attest that these skills are critical in fulfilling executive roles and responsibilities. Lesser mentioned skills included urban policymaking, civil works, and communication.

C. *Career Path*. The career paths to executive roles can be vastly different. However, the literature identified two main paths: moving up the same company's organizational ladder (Watson & Hassett, 2004; Stewart & Kuenzi, 2018); and applying for an executive position in a different company (Bozeman & Ponomariov, 2009; Barber, 1988). The former is the most popular option, whereas the latter is the second most popular option.

D. *Mentorship*. Once their executive position is secured, executives require development to ensure that they are aware of the latest best practices. Here a recurring theme in the literature review concerned the importance of mentorship (Landles-Cobb, Kramer, & Milway, 2015; Fannin & Moore, 1983). As a former executive, I cannot overemphasize the importance of a mentor because it can feel quite lonely in the executive role. Other possible development opportunities mentioned included learning on the job with stretch opportunities and formal training (Landles-Cobb, Kramer, & Milway, 2015).

Together, these themes suggest that ‘natural career progression’ might be a cause of executive turnover and that encouraging mentorship is a strategy for retaining executives.

Diversifying the Workplace to Retain Diverse Executives

The literature on retaining executives and diverse employees primarily focuses on the benefits of diversity, what the organization can do in terms of its culture, hiring practices, and developing a good working relationship between the executive and leadership. While these strategies are applicable to a wide range of organizations, they are particularly significant in the context of Indigenous organizations, where retaining Indigenous executives requires specific consideration of cultural and governance factors.

A. *Benefits of Diversity*. The role diversity and organizational culture play in creating a safe environment for an organization’s executives and employees is vital. Some of the benefits of diversity in the workplace include reflecting a representative democracy (Thomas & Ely, 1996; Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020), the ability to enter a niche market (Thomas & Ely, 1996), and learning from diverse cultures (Thomas & Ely, 1996). While these are beneficial, an organization should see that achieving and embracing diversity requires changing its recruiting strategies and its leadership and aligning with what is important to the diverse workforce (Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020). In the context of Indigenous organizations, embracing diversity can also mean ensuring that leadership reflects the Indigenous communities they serve, promoting self-governance and cultural resurgence.
B. *Organizational Culture*. Creating and maintaining an organizational culture is essential to attracting and retaining staff and executives. For Indigenous organizations, this involves creating culturally safe spaces where Indigenous values, traditions, and governance structures are respected and integrated. To develop and maintain an organizational culture

that attracts and retains staff and executives, an organization should consider doing the following: encourage social connections (Wagner, Pfeffer, & O'Reilly III, 1984), create psychologically safe workplaces (Lundberg, 1986), create meaningful positions (Vianen, 2000; Morven & Cunningham, 2020; Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020), create a sense of belonging for all employees (Vianen, 2000; Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020), and address workplace aggression, bullying, and racism, particularly those that may arise from colonially influenced attitudes (Morven & Cunningham, 2020; Caillier, 2020).

C. *Supportive Hiring Practices*. Hiring practices are important in retaining executives (Downey, March, & Berkman, 2001). Although, it's not just the hiring practice of the executive that is important. The organization must hire supportive supervisors and employees of the executive (Vianen, 2000; Morven & Cunningham, 2020; Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020). Additionally, before hiring, leadership must ensure that the executive role is meaningful and aligned with the broader mission of the organization, including its governance and cultural responsibilities (Vianen, 2000; Morven & Cunningham, 2020; Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020). This might involve adapting job descriptions to better reflect Indigenous governance models. Furthermore, it is critical to hire executives based on organizational fit (Nelson, 2011), ensuring that they are representative of the community they serve, such as hiring Indigenous executives in Indigenous organizations (Morven & Cunningham, 2020; Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020).

D. *Good Working Relationship Between the Leadership and Executive*. The executive typically reports to the leadership as a whole. Given that the supervisor relationship influences executive turnover (Vianen, 2000), it is important to explore what a good relationship looks like between the two groups. There are two important primary working

relationship factors: shared goal setting, and good governance. It is important for the leadership and executive to make shared goals together (Vianen, 2000), typically at planning retreats which help communicate the expectations of one another. Lastly, good governance is important as it empowers the executive to do the work, meaning the workplace does not mix politics with administration (Graham, 2007).

These four factors—diversity benefits, organizational culture, supportive hiring practices, and strong leadership-executive relationships—are potential strategies for retaining executives, particularly within Indigenous organizations. They align with key elements of the analytic framework of this dissertation, which emphasize hiring based on organizational fit, creating mentorship roles, and fostering shared goals that respect both governance and culture.

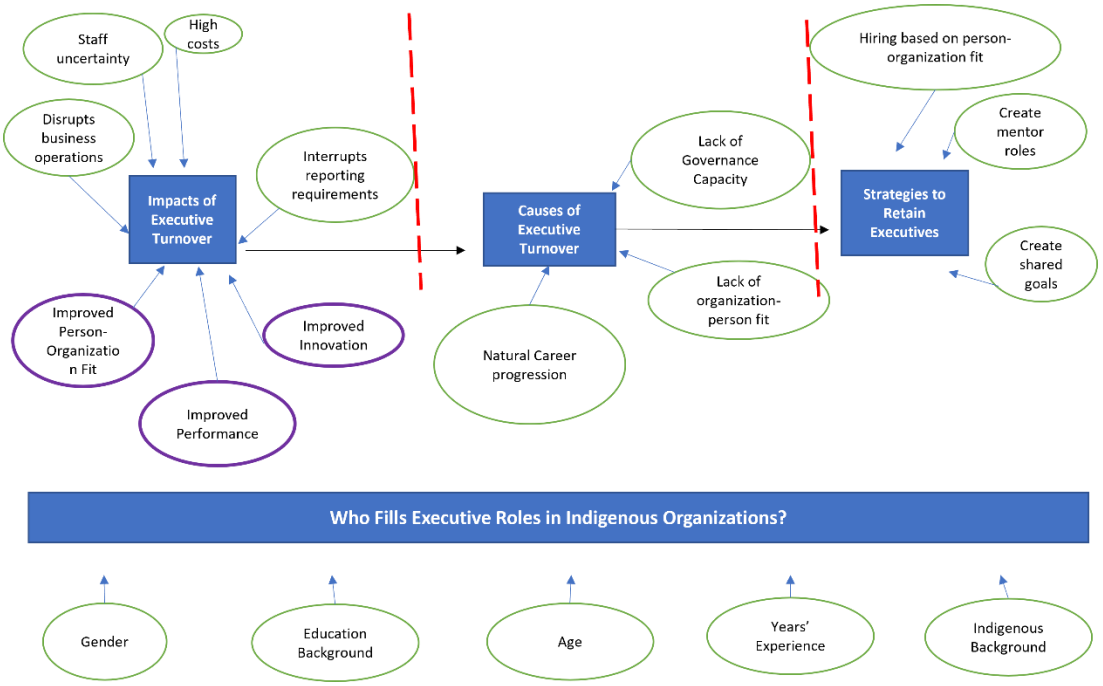
Analytical Framework

My research focuses on who occupies the executive roles in Indigenous organizations, the specific impacts and causes of Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations, and the strategies Indigenous organizations can implement to retain their Indigenous executives. However, concepts from the literature such as the impacts of executive turnover (staff uncertainty, high costs, disruption of business operations, etc.) will be applied to the analytic framework.

To demonstrate what the Western academic literature outlines so far, please see Figure 3. Figure 3 is what Western academic literature argues are the impacts and causes of executive turnover, as well as strategies for retaining executives in organizations, while not taking into consideration if the executives are Indigenous, and the organizations are Indigenous. A forthcoming analytical framework will compare and contrast what new themes and factors may

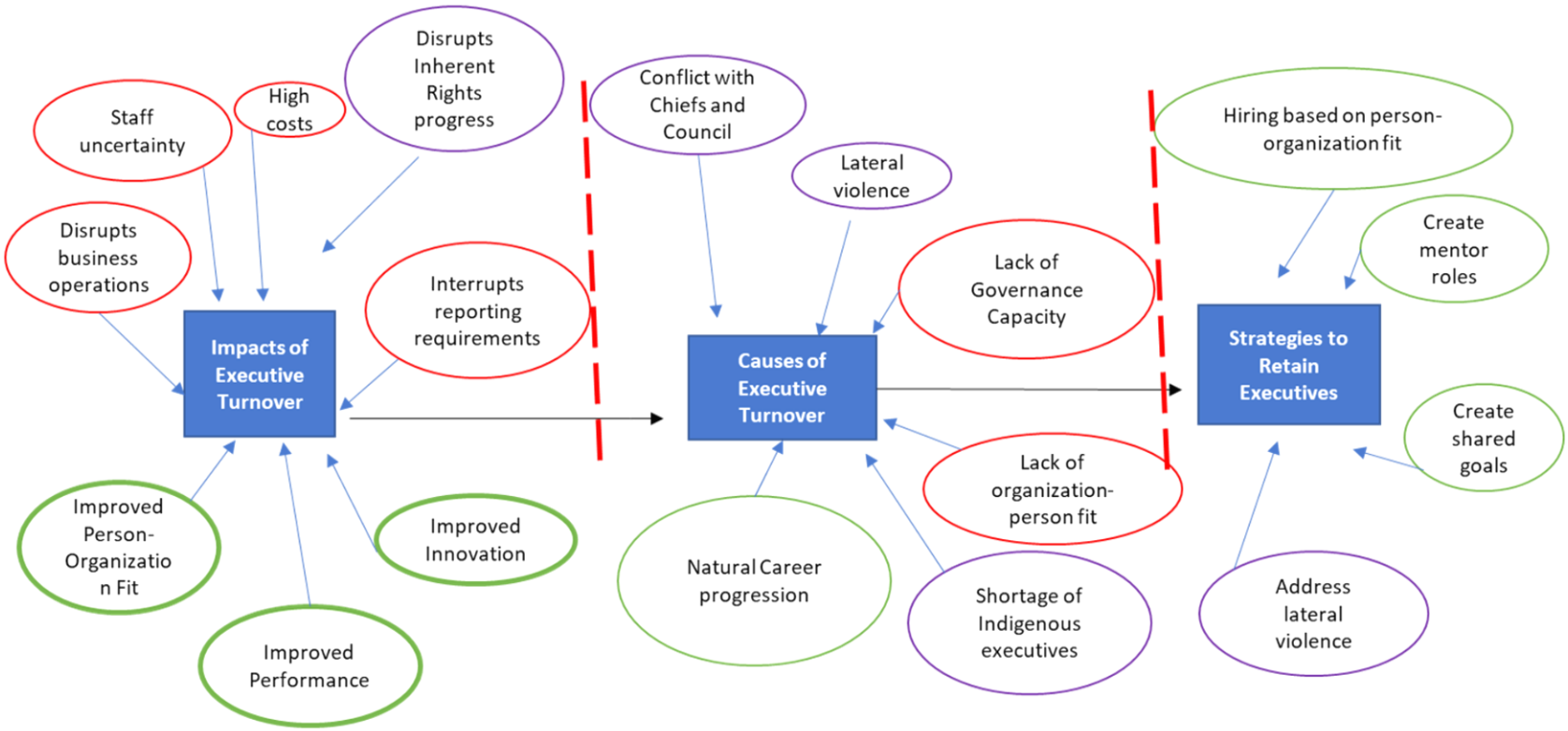
emerge from the Indigenous aspect of this, based on the author's experience as an Indigenous executive in Indigenous organizations.

Figure 3: Western Analytical Framework



Based on my experience, I supplemented these concepts by adding Indigenous-specific variables into the analytic framework, including impacts of executive turnover (disrupts inherent rights progress), and causes of executive turnover (lateral violence, conflict with Chief and Council, and shortage of Indigenous executives). Figure 4 below presents this framework. The green (positive) and red (negative) circles are the variables covered by the general executive turnover literature. The purple circles are the Indigenous-specific variables that I anticipated would emerge from the interviews of Indigenous executives with experience in Indigenous organizations. The framework centres on the impacts of executive turnover, the causes of executive turnover, strategies to retain executives, and who occupies these executive roles. What follows provides more detail on each.

Figure 4: Analytic Framework ➔ next page!



Who Fills Executive Roles in Indigenous Organizations?

Gender | Education Background | Age | Years' Experience | Indigenous Background

Impacts of Indigenous Executive Turnover

The impacts of executive turnover will be similar to what the literature predicts given my lived experience as an Indigenous executive. However, there will be one addition not documented in the current literature: disruption of progress in realizing inherent rights. Under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, Canada recognizes and affirms the existing Aboriginal and Treaty rights of the Aboriginal people in Canada (Canada, 2024). Realizing the inherent right to self-government for First Nations people in Canada can be achieved in multiple ways such as negotiating a modern-day treaty in BC, or seeking recognition through the court system. Inherent rights progress has similar challenges to organizational change, but there is no research on how Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations disrupts inherent rights progress. Since the Tsilhqot'in Supreme Court decision (Supreme Court of Canada, 2014) and *Truth and Reconciliation* report (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), many Indigenous organizations are working towards moving out of the *Indian Act* so they can start exercising their inherent rights through tools such as Bill C-92 (recognizing the rights of Indigenous communities to exercise jurisdiction over child and family services), the education jurisdiction agreement, modern-day treaties, and the court system. Given this movement, there is a desire to employ Indigenous people in executive roles in these Indigenous organizations.

Causes of Indigenous Executive Turnover

Because of my experience as an Indigenous executive, I anticipated that half of the causes of Indigenous executive turnover would be directly related to the existing research. However, the other half is unique to Indigenous communities with loose ties to the current literature. For example, there is research on workplace aggression and conflict between the board and executives (Watson & Hassett, 2004; Caillier, 2020); however, there is no research on conflict

with Chief and Council and lateral violence towards Indigenous executives. I have experienced firsthand the lateral violence that occurs in Indigenous organizations and the communities that they serve, and based on conversations with other Indigenous executives, I know my experience was not unique. I resigned from my Indigenous executive position after bullying by community members and organizational leadership. Lastly, there is no literature on the supply and demand of Indigenous executives, so there is a shortage of both Indigenous executives and opportunities, which can influence executive turnover in Indigenous communities.

Strategies to Retain Indigenous Executives

Strategies to retain Indigenous executives will be rooted in the non-Indigenous literature. However, one major difference will be a strategy to address lateral violence, which is linked to addressing workplace aggression.

Conclusion

This literature review explores executive turnover with a focus on Indigenous organizations. Although direct research on Indigenous executive turnover is limited, insights from broader studies on leadership, management, career progression, and retention strategies provide valuable groundwork. The review identifies critical themes affecting executive turnover, such as fiscal costs, social impacts, performance outcomes, workplace aggression, and governance issues. It emphasizes the need for education, skills development, mentorship, and supportive organizational cultures to retain diverse executives.

The review also highlights strategies for reducing executive turnover, including fostering a positive organizational culture, implementing supportive hiring practices, and establishing good relationships between leadership and executives. An analytical framework was developed

to guide future research and practical interventions, covering themes like staff uncertainty, business disruption, high costs, innovation, performance, and executive-organization fit.

This review contributes to academic research and practical policy-making by addressing executive turnover challenges and opportunities in Indigenous organizations. It positions the dissertation as a foundational contribution to the growing literature on Indigenous governance and administration, with a dual purpose: advancing theoretical understanding and offering practical recommendations. By focusing on Indigenous leadership and workplace dynamics, this work supports the development of culturally appropriate strategies for retaining and developing Indigenous executives, ultimately strengthening these organizations' capacity to achieve their goals and serve their communities. The next chapter will detail the study's methodology, including research design, data collection methods, and analytical procedures, providing a clear framework for investigating executive turnover within Indigenous organizations.

Chapter 4

Methodology and Research Design

The retention of Indigenous executives within Indigenous organizations is a critical yet underexplored issue. These leaders are essential in shaping policies and strategies that affect the socio-economic development and self-governance of Indigenous communities. However, high turnover rates disrupt organizational continuity and impede long-term planning. This dissertation investigates the reasons behind this turnover and identifies best practices for retention through a mixed-methods approach, primarily grounded in qualitative methodologies.

Guided by a light transformative-constructivist epistemological stance, this research employs key informant interviews, focus groups, and surveys to uncover the underlying causes of executive turnover. The study centres Indigenous voices and experiences, aligning with the research objective to develop a theoretical framework based on the lived experiences of Indigenous executives across British Columbia and Canada. The findings will provide actionable insights for Indigenous organizations, policymakers, and scholars, contributing to more resilient and effective leadership within Indigenous organizations.

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in this study, beginning with the research design. It details the primary qualitative approach used, guided by exploratory methodology, and explains the rationale for incorporating a minor quantitative component. The chapter provides an overview of the data collection methods, including focus groups, interviews, and surveys, along with the participant recruitment processes. It also describes the data analysis techniques, highlighting the use of thematic analysis and NVivo software to ensure validity and reliability in the findings.

Research Design

This study employs a primarily qualitative approach, complemented by a minor quantitative component. This mixed-methods design allows for a comprehensive exploration of the retention of Indigenous executives within Indigenous organizations, capturing both the depth of individual experiences and the breadth of organizational practices.

Participants and Data Collection Methods

The participants for this study were carefully selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the retention of Indigenous executives within Indigenous organizations. The study utilized a combination of focus groups, interviews, and surveys to gather diverse perspectives and data.

Focus Groups

Three focus groups were conducted to capture a broad range of perspectives on the retention of Indigenous executives. All participants in these focus groups were current or former Indigenous executives, ensuring that the discussions were grounded in relevant, firsthand experiences (See Appendix A for a sample of focus group questions). The focus groups were segmented to include participants from different contexts:

- one group comprised executives from off-reserve Indigenous non-profit organizations in British Columbia (BC);
- another group included executives from the Metro Vancouver area; and
- the third group featured Band Managers from across BC.

This segmentation allowed for a nuanced exploration of the distinct experiences and challenges faced by different groups within the broader Indigenous governance context. The focus groups provided a dynamic environment for participants to discuss and debate key issues, leading to the emergence of new insights and collective reflections on the topic.

Interviews

Qualitative data were gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a total of 45 participants. This included 34 interviews conducted in British Columbia and 11 on a national level across Canada. The participant pool included a mix of current and former Indigenous executives, along with leaders from First Nations band offices and Indigenous nonprofits, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives on the retention of Indigenous executives (See Appendix B for a sample of interview questions).

In British Columbia, 53% of participants were current executives, while 32% were former executives. On a national level, 73% of interviewees were current executives, with 18% holding dual roles as both executives and leaders (e.g., Chief, Chair, or President). Most participants were affiliated with First Nations band offices (59% in BC) or Indigenous nonprofits (41% in BC, 36% nationally). The geographic distribution in BC spanned Vancouver Island, Vancouver Coast & Mountains, Thompson Okanagan, Cariboo-Chilcotin Coast, and Northern BC.

A significant majority of the BC participants were female (76%), while nationally, 73% of respondents were male. Most participants fell between the ages of 45-54, with 53% in BC and 36% nationally, and a high proportion held advanced educational qualifications—44% in BC and 64% nationally had a master's degree or higher. Participants also had considerable experience, with 52% in BC and 64% nationally reporting over 10 years of Indigenous executive experience.

This diversity in both participant background and regional representation provided a rich foundation for exploring the challenges and strategies related to Indigenous executive retention. A detailed breakdown of participant demographics can be found in Chapter 5: Career Trajectories (See Tables 2 and 3 for specifics). These demographics offer insight into the depth of

leadership experience, educational attainment, and the distinct regional contexts that influence executive retention in Indigenous organizations

Key informant interviews were chosen as the primary method due to their effectiveness in probing for detailed insights and clarifications, which is crucial for exploratory research. Interviews enable a deep understanding of participants' experiences, beliefs, and opinions, aligning with Creswell's recommendation that at least twenty to thirty interviews are necessary to develop a theory (2007, p. 128; Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 186). The homogeneity of the interviewees, all of whom had relevant experience, was essential for validating the conditions under which the theoretical model applies (Creswell, 2007, p. 128).

Participants were initially recruited through direct emails obtained from organizational websites, with additional recruitment via snowball sampling (See Appendix C for Recruitment Emails). Each interviewee was asked to suggest other potential participants, enhancing the breadth of perspectives. Interviews were conducted primarily via Zoom, with some held face-to-face. They lasted between 30 minutes and two hours, depending on the depth of the interviewee's responses. All interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure accurate capture of the data.

Surveys

The survey was designed to capture quantitative data on executive and executive team turnover rates in Indigenous communities across British Columbia from 2012-2022 (See Appendix D for the survey questions). To collect this data, the survey was distributed to current executives and leaders within First Nations and Indigenous non-profit organizations. In some instances, recipients forwarded the survey to Council members or human resources professionals for completion.

Distribution was managed using a comprehensive database of BC First Nations chiefs and band managers, compiled from publicly available email addresses and direct outreach for non-publicly listed addresses. The survey was sent to all 203 First Nations in BC, with the goal of achieving a 60% response rate for robust and representative data (See Appendix E for Survey Recruitment Emails). A total of 35 completed responses were received for the 2022-2023 survey period, representing a 17.2% response rate. Given the small sample size, the findings are interpreted as a descriptive analysis rather than a fully representative overview. These quantitative results complement the qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of executive turnover in Indigenous organizations.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of executive turnover in Indigenous organizations.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups was analyzed using thematic analysis, following the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was chosen for its flexibility and effectiveness in identifying and interpreting patterns within the data. Initially, the analysis employed codes from an established analytical framework, but additional codes were developed as new themes emerged during the review of the transcripts. Codes that garnered significant support (over 50%) from participants were prioritized in the analysis to reflect the most salient and widely supported themes.

The analysis followed the detailed process outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018), which includes the following steps:

1. Organize and Prepare the Data: Interviews were transcribed and printed for detailed review. Transcriptions were read and annotated to capture initial impressions and key insights.
2. Read and Familiarize with the Data: The transcriptions were reviewed thoroughly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content.
3. Start Coding: Data was coded using an open-coding approach. Codes were generated inductively, reflecting the language and perspectives of the participants.
4. Generate Descriptions and Themes: Themes were developed based on the frequency and significance of codes, with a focus on those that provided a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences.
5. Represent and Analyze: The findings were organized into a narrative that integrates descriptive accounts with thematic analysis. This narrative includes direct quotes from participants to substantiate the themes and enrich the analysis.

A grounded theory approach was used to guide the coding and analysis process. This approach supports the development of a conceptual framework based on the lived experiences of the participants (Gehman et al., 2018). Two levels of coding were employed: first-order coding, which captures participants' experiences in their own words, and second-order coding, which links these experiences to academic theories (Gehman et al., 2018; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012). This dual-coding process enhances the rigor of the analysis and contributes to the development of a robust data structure.

NVivo software was utilized to assist with the organization and management of codes and themes. The qualitative analysis culminated in a detailed findings section, where each theme is explained with a focus on newer and emerging themes. The findings are presented through a narrative that blends intellectual analysis with emotional insights, supported by participant quotes to validate the narrative (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012).

Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative data collected via the online survey was analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize and describe the patterns observed in the responses. The survey data, which included information on turnover rates and organizational demographics, was input into statistical analysis

software (Excel). Key metrics such as turnover rates, population size of Nations, and the number of subordinates reporting to executives were calculated to provide a quantitative overview of the trends.

To enable a more nuanced analysis, the data was categorized based on several key variables. These classifications are detailed below:

Size of First Nation:
This categorization was inspired by the 2020 BC AFOA Salary Survey Report, though with slight adjustments in the ranges. The titles remain consistent with the original report:

- Small (Less than 500 members)
- Medium (501-1,500 members)
- Large (Over 1,501 members)

Geographic Zone:
The geographic classificationwas based on categories found on the Indigenous Services Canada website:

- Zone 1 (Urban First Nation)
- Zone 2 (Rural First Nation)
- Zone 3 (Semi-Isolated First Nation)
- Zone 4 (Remote and Isolated First Nation)

Financial Resources:
These categories were inspired by the 2018 BC AFOA Salary Survey Report:

- Under $10 Million
- $10 Million - $20 Million
- Over $20 Million

Governing System:
This variable relied on classifications from the Indigenous Services Canada website:

- Custom Electoral System
- Indian Act Electoral System
- Treaty (Modern Treaty)

Subordinate Staff Size:
This categorization was newly developed for the purposes of this study. Research suggests that the effectiveness of a supervisor tends to decrease after overseeing more than seven subordinates. Therefore, the following categories were created to reflect this:

- 0-6 Staff (Subordinates reporting to the executive)
- 7-12 Staff
- Over 12 Staff

The survey received a response rate of 17.2%, with 35 completed responses out of 203 distributed surveys. Although this sample size was smaller than initially desired, it still offered valuable insights into turnover trends and hiring preferences.

Descriptive statistics such as means, medians, and frequencies were utilized to present the data clearly and to highlight notable trends. Due to the limited sample size, the analysis was focused on providing a descriptive overview rather than inferential statistics, which might be less reliable with a smaller dataset. The anticipated outcomes included an average executive tenure of approximately 3 years and a high preference for hiring Indigenous executives over non-Indigenous executives. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the executive turnover and hiring practices within Indigenous organizations, complementing the qualitative findings from interviews and focus groups.

Ethical Considerations

This research adheres to stringent ethical standards to ensure the protection and respect of all participants. Approval from the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) team was obtained prior to initiating the study. The researcher submitted a comprehensive application to the HREB, and completed the TCPS2 CORE certificate and The Fundamentals of OCAP® training program to meet ethical responsibilities.

The study follows the guidelines set forth in TCPS Chapter 9, which specifically addresses research involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples of Canada. This ensures that the research practices are culturally appropriate and respectful. The OCAP® principles were rigorously applied throughout the study. This means that the participating First Nations' leaders and executives have ownership, control, access to, and possession of their data. Participants were

provided with copies of their transcribed interviews, allowing them to maintain control over their information.

For the survey component, a letter of information outlining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality was sent to respondents. This letter served as an implied consent document, informing participants of their rights and the study's procedures (See Appendix F for Letter of Information for Implied Consent). This approach allowed respondents to understand the scope of the research and make an informed decision about their participation.

Participants were assured of confidentiality, and informed consent was obtained before conducting interviews and focus groups (See Appendix G for Participant Consent Forms). They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. To honor Indigenous protocols, a small thank-you gift was given to each participant. These steps are crucial to upholding the ethical standards of research and ensuring that the study is conducted with respect and integrity.

Limitations

This study, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, encountered several limitations that must be acknowledged, such as sample size and generalizability, geographic and organizational scope, exploratory mixed methods approach considerations, survey research limitations, and descriptive analysis focus.

Sample Size and Generalizability

The survey achieved a response rate of 17.2%, with 35 completed responses out of 203 First Nations in British Columbia. This relatively low response rate limits the generalizability of the findings and suggests that the results may not fully represent the diverse experiences of all First

Nations. Despite the smaller sample size, the responses provided valuable insights, though the findings should be interpreted with caution.

Geographic and Organizational Scope

The qualitative data were collected predominantly from participants in BC, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions of Canada. Additionally, while the study included a mixture of Inuit, Métis, and First Nations participants, the organizations represented were primarily First Nations nonprofits and band offices, excluding Métis and Inuit organizations. This could affect the breadth of the findings concerning different Indigenous groups.

Qualitative Data Constraints

The focus on current and former Indigenous executives and leaders provided rich data, but the small number of leader participants (e.g., Chiefs, Presidents, Board Chairs) may limit the comprehensiveness of the qualitative insights. The reliance on Zoom for most interviews, with only a few conducted in person, might also have influenced the depth of engagement.

Exploratory Mixed Methods Approach Considerations

Although an exploratory mixed methods approach could offer additional insights, it was not pursued for this dissertation due to several concerns. According to Creswell (2018), limitations of this approach include difficulties in creating a robust psychometric tool, potential loss of meaningful qualitative data, and the exclusion of qualitative participants from the quantitative phase. Furthermore, the constraints of completing a Ph.D. within a five-year timeline and the issue of survey fatigue among Indigenous communities—particularly among busy Indigenous executives—were significant factors in this decision.

Survey Research Limitations

The survey research has several potential limitations. Sampling bias may occur if the sample does not fully represent the entire population, which can lead to skewed results. Response bias is another concern, as respondents might provide answers they believe are socially acceptable or desirable, rather than reflecting their true experiences. Recall bias could affect the reliability of responses due to inaccuracies in recalling past events or experiences. Additionally, survey fatigue can impact the quality of responses, as long or complex surveys may lead to incomplete or rushed answers due to participant fatigue.

Descriptive Analysis Focus

Given the small sample size, the analysis was limited to descriptive statistics, such as means, medians, and frequencies, to provide a general overview rather than inferential statistics. This approach aimed to highlight notable trends and offer initial insights into the phenomenon under study.

These limitations highlight the challenges and constraints faced during the research process, underscoring the need for careful interpretation of the findings and consideration of these factors in future research efforts.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the study's methodology and methods, which integrates a predominantly qualitative approach with a minor quantitative component. By employing semi-structured interviews and focus groups, the research captures in-depth insights into the experiences and challenges of Indigenous executives. Interviews with 45 participants and focus groups with various stakeholders provided a comprehensive view, while an online survey gathered additional quantitative data, despite a 17.2% response rate. This mixed-methods

approach aligns with the research objectives, offering a robust exploration of executive retention in Indigenous organizations.

The chapter also addressed key ethical considerations, including the research approval process and adherence to OCAP® principles. Despite limitations, such as a small sample size and geographic focus, the adopted methodology provided valuable insights into the retention of Indigenous executives.

The next chapter will examine the career trajectories and demographics of these executives, further contextualizing the findings and enhancing our understanding of the factors impacting executive retention within Indigenous organizations.

Chapter 5
Career Trajectories

This chapter commences with an in-depth examination of the demographics of the respondents, providing a comprehensive overview of their backgrounds, including age, gender, education, and ethnicity. It also categorizes the respondents into distinct types based on their roles and experiences within Indigenous organizations, defined as organizations that serve an Indigenous population and have Indigenous leadership and employees. This foundational section sets the stage for a nuanced understanding of the diverse individuals contributing to the data, ensuring that subsequent analyses are grounded in the specific contexts and characteristics of the respondents.

All the respondents self-identified as Indigenous, some stating which community they are from, or which Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) group they belong to. The sample of the respondents included former Indigenous executives, current executives, defined as executives who self-identify as Indigenous and hold positions such as band manager, Tribal manager, CAO, CFO, COO, General Manager or Executive director, leaders (e.g. chiefs, presidents, etc.), and current executives and leaders (including a combination of CEOs and Presidents) (Table 2). The respondents worked with First Nations Band offices, Indigenous nonprofit organizations, and First Nations nonprofit organizations. Unfortunately, there were no Inuit or Métis nonprofit organizations represented in this study. The BC respondents represented five of the six unique regions in BC; unfortunately, there were no respondents from the BC Rockies region (Table 2).

Interestingly, though, the sample of the Indigenous executives in B.C. primarily consist of female respondents (75%) compared to males (25%), whereas on the National level, it was the opposite with the majority being male respondents (73%) and the remaining being female (27%)

(Table 3). The median age group of the BC respondents was 45-54 years of age, whereas the National respondents' median age group was 55-64 years of age. The education level of the respondents indicated that most respondents had a Master's degree. The years of Indigenous executive experience of the BC respondents demonstrate that most respondents had 6-10 years of experience and more than 21 years of experience, whereas the National respondents mostly had more than 21 years of experience.

The subsequent sections build on this demographic foundation by delving into the career trajectories of the respondents, illuminating the paths they have taken within their professional lives and their preferences regarding work environments. This exploration is followed by a critical discussion on the impact of executive turnover on Indigenous organizations, reflecting the respondents' insights and experiences. Finally, the chapter concludes by addressing potential strategies to mitigate executive turnover, incorporating the respondents' suggestions on creating more stable and sustainable leadership structures within Indigenous organizations. Together, these sections provide a holistic view of the challenges and opportunities faced by Indigenous executives and offer practical recommendations for fostering long-term leadership stability.

Different Career Trajectories of Indigenous Executives

Many of the Indigenous executives did not intend to hold executive positions in Indigenous organizations. Their career paths were vastly different from one another. For example, two of the former Indigenous executives held specialized roles in education and accounting prior to becoming an Indigenous executive later in life. In one instance, a respondent held multiple summer jobs in their community while completing their undergraduate degree, decided to apply for the band manager position in their community shortly before graduation, and was successfully awarded the position.

Table 2: Respondent Type

Respondent Type	BC %	National %	Organization Type	BC %	National %	BC Region	BC %	BC #
Former Executive	32%	0%	First Nations Band Office	59%	0%	Vancouver Island	21%	7
Current Executive	53%	73%	Indigenous Nonprofit Office	41%	36%	Vancouver Coast & Mountains	44%	15
Leader (Chief, Chair, President, etc)	15%	9%	First Nations Nonprofit Office	0%	64%	Thompson Okanagan	9%	3
Executive and Leader	0%	18%	Métis Nonprofit Office	0%	0%	BC Rockies	0%	0
			Inuit Nonprofit Office	0%	0%	Cariboo, Chilcotin Coast	6%	2
						Northern BC	21%	7
Total	100%	100%	Total	100%	100%	Total	100%	34
	N=34	N=11		N=34	N=11		N=34	

Table 3: Respondent Demographics

	BC %	National %	Age Group	BC %	National %	Educational Background	BC %	National	Years of Indigenous Executive Experience	BC %	National %
Female	76%	27%	25-34	12%	0%	Master's	44%	64%	Under 2 Years	4%	0.00%
Male	24%	73%	35-44	24%	9.09%	Advanced Degree or Professional Degree	6%	9%	2-5 years	11%	9.09%
			45-54	53%	36.36%	Bachelor's	28%	27%	6-10 years	26%	18.18%
			55-64	12%	27.27%	Diploma	22%	0%	11-15 years	19%	9.09%
			65-74	0%	27.27%	High-school	0%	0%	16-20 years	15%	18.18%
									21+ years	26%	45.45%
Total	100%	100%	Total	100%	100%	Total	100%	100%	Total	100%	100%
	N=17	N=11		N=17	N=11		N=17	N=11		N=27	N=11

In most cases, the Indigenous executives held their first executive position in their home community. In some cases, the respondents held middle management positions in their community prior to assuming the executive role, whereas mostly in smaller communities, the respondent was placed directly in the executive position. In no instances was there clear succession planning from previous executives to include the respondents in the executive role when they left.

When the Indigenous executives left their roles, their career trajectories also varied from one another. In instances where the executives left for a natural career progression, they moved into another executive role, often for a bigger First Nation, Tribal Council, or a National Indigenous non-profit organization, which would naturally include a larger compensation package and great responsibilities.

However, in instances where the Indigenous executive left for negative reasons such as lack of governance capacity, lateral aggression, burnout, and poor compensation, they would move to middle management positions in Indigenous organizations, pursue a career in a different level of government, such as the Federal government, work in an executive role for a smaller First Nations community, or offer consulting First Nations through their own consulting company. None of those respondents returned to Indigenous executive roles; however, in one instance, a respondent stated that they missed the role:

> "I'm starting to miss it, I just, but it's more the strategical thinking and understanding and, Okay, what are our shortfalls, what are really the strengths that we carry, and where is it that we want to get to, and looking and developing that plan and making those adjustments and then implementing the proper change that we need to have to get there, and it's like that's what I miss and it's, like . . . Well, like I said I was recently head-hunted again, and this time I did put my application in." (Participant #2)

The above quote resonates with the researcher on a personal level. The researcher has shared the exact experience, although the researcher is not ready to be a recovered band manager yet.

Surprisingly, the researcher touched base with the person who coined the term, “recovering band manager,” and they informed the researcher that they have recovered now, and are ready to do the good work again.

Career Trajectory Types for Indigenous Executives

Inspired by the respondents’ diverse career paths showcased in the interviews, the researcher created six different career trajectories. These six career trajectories include:

(1) *The Recovering Band Manager*: The person moves to a middle management position, a different sector, or becomes a consultant.

(2) *The Voluntold Leader*: The person receives their first executive role by either being encouraged to apply or placed in the role by another member of the organization.

(3) *The Corporate Ladder Climber*: The person that works their way up the organization, or moves onto a bigger organization.

(4) *The Homecoming Leader:* The person applies for the position after getting work experience and education from outside the community.

(5) *The Stay-at-Home Leader:* The person chooses to stay in their executive position in their home community for an extended period.

(6) *The Emerging Public Leader:* The person applies for an executive position after leaving their role in private or non-Indigenous public service sectors.

What follows provides more detail on each career trajectory, and later considers the fact that many of those leaders interviewed had career trajectories involving more than one trajectory.

The Homecoming Leader. In First Nations communities, there is an adage the elders tell the youth: "Go get an education and experience, then come home to work for your community." The homecoming leaders are those people who listened to their elders. In some instances, these

people also occupied summer jobs in their community throughout post-secondary, then decided to apply for their executive roles upon graduation. These people are highly motivated to return to their community to share their education and experience as a way of giving back to their community.

The Stay-at-Home Leader. The stay-at-home leader is the executive who has occupied an executive role in their community for a great length (i.e. over 10 years). They are motivated to do good work for their community and have the willpower to turn down job offers that try and take them away from their community. These types of leaders are rare, especially given the high demand for Indigenous executives in Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations.

The Corporate Ladder Climber. The corporate ladder climbers are the executives who actively pursued an executive role in a National Indigenous organization. There were a few different pathways that were identified. The first pathway is where an executive worked for a First Nations band office and then applied to a National Indigenous organization. The second pathway is when a person held a senior manager role in a National Indigenous organization for an extended period and they sought out further education to be promoted to the executive role. The final pathway included those who work for government and grew frustrated with the slow career progression, so they decided to leave their government role for an executive role in an Indigenous organization.

The Emerging Public Leader. The emerging public leaders have diverse work and educational backgrounds. Some of their backgrounds included being an accountant from the private sector, being a lawyer from the public (i.e. non-Indigenous) and private sectors, an Aboriginal-specific director from academia, and a manager of Aboriginal affairs from a private sector company. Most of them went straight to the National Indigenous executive role after

leaving their previous roles, although one of them went to a First Nations band office as a CFO before moving into the National executive role. The emerging public leaders were motivated to pursue executive roles in Indigenous organizations because they were passionate about Indigenous-related issues, had a desire to become an executive, and had the drive to build an organization from the bottom-up.

The Recovering Band Manager. The recovering band manager does not seem very common in National Indigenous organizations, although it is still important to paint a picture of the experience as it does exist. An interviewee shared the following quote about being a band manager for a First Nation:

> "I'd been band manager for three years, and I swore myself off of ever being a band manager under the *Indian Act* system, forever and ever, so help me Creator." (National Participant #6)

Since then, the participant has worked in executive-like roles in National Indigenous organizations but sees themselves more as an advisor than an executive. The participant argues that the executive role is far too concerned with people and systems, which do not interest them, however, they do not mind advising executives on these areas, and occasionally stepping into an acting executive role, when needed.

The Voluntold Leader. The voluntold leader is the executive who was encouraged to apply for a position or assume the acting executive role and was then promoted on a permanent basis. In most cases, the voluntold leader had no set plans to become an executive, however in one instance, a thoughtful person reflected on how by a young age they noticed the struggles in their community and vowed to make a positive difference if the opportunity was provided. Later on in life, that person was voluntold to become their Nation's band manager as can be seen in their story:

> "And one day the chief called me up and he said, he asked, he started talking to me about my, the way I thought about things and what I was saying. And he said, well, if you think you can make a difference, why don't you come home and be our band manager? And then I agreed. That's how it happened. I went there and was welcomed by them and also by some of the hereditary chiefs because they wanted me to help them work on what became an important title action. So It all happened at once." (National Participant #5)

National Participant #5 then went on to become an executive for a National Indigenous organization on their own accord. Another interviewee had a vastly different experience when they were voluntold into an executive role for a National Indigenous organization as can be seen in their story:

> "I was put into executive management when the COO left and they didn't have anyone, and the board and executive really pushed me to take on the role. So I did that for two years, stepped outside of being an advisor, and it just underscored my opinion that, no, I don't wanna be in executive management anymore. It was fine for a couple of years, but now I wanna step out." (National Participant #5)

The two quotes contrast the vastly different voluntold leader experiences that can occur. Now that there is a better understanding of the different career trajectories, we will explore the organizational preferences of the interviewees, which will help us better understand what motivates them more deeply.

To help better understand the career trajectories, see Figure 5 (see next page). The common element is that to become an Indigenous executive, one must attain work experience and education. How a person becomes an executive is where things start to vary. The person receives their first executive role through different avenues. Depending on the executive's experience, what they do after their first executive role also varies.

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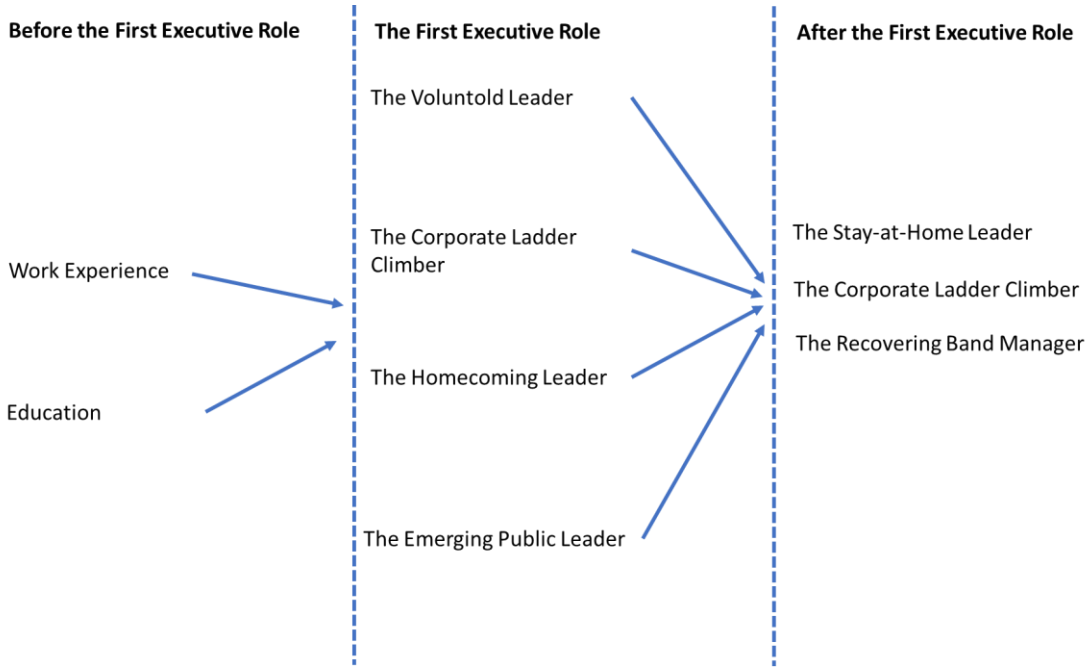
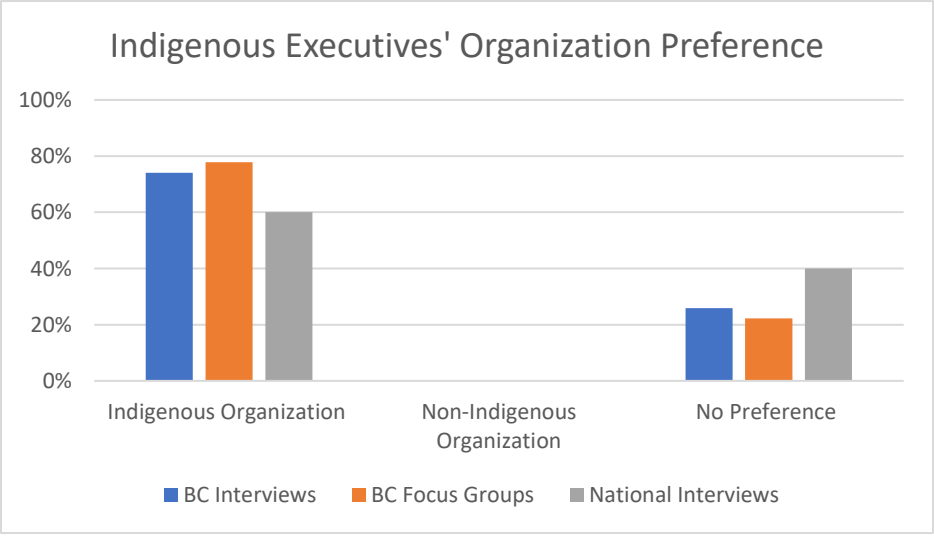
Figure 5: Career Trajectories of Indigenous Executives



Organization Preference

When asked if they preferred to work in Indigenous or non-Indigenous organizations, the majority of the Indigenous executives stated they preferred working in an Indigenous organization, whereas the other Indigenous executives had no preference (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Indigenous Executives' Organization Preferences



Executive's Indigenous Organization Preference

Executives who favored Indigenous organizations cited a range of reasons, including alignment with Indigenous values, engagement in meaningful work to uplift their community's socioeconomic status, involvement in self-governance and decolonizing efforts, fostering cultural safety in the workplace, contributing to a better future for generations to come, and experiencing the immediate impact of their efforts. Their preference stemmed from contrasting experiences in non-Indigenous organizations, where they felt disconnected from their values and lacked the sense of fulfillment derived from serving the community. Multiple interviewees shared negative experiences working for provincial and federal governments, Crown Corporations, and academia, attributing their dissatisfaction to feelings of tokenization, exploitation, and over-extension. Non-Indigenous workplaces were criticized for prioritizing policy over relationships and being overly structured.

A participant who preferred working for an Indigenous organization shared their experience of working for Indian Affairs as a comparison of the two worlds:

> "That's an easy answer. I only worked for one non-Indigenous organization. It was Indian Affairs. I worked there for two years and I could not stand the job because you do something on reserve, you see a result. You build the subdivision, it makes you happy. You see people moving into these houses. You do something at Indian Affairs and what I called myself is a raindrop in a lake. You don't make a splash. You're a number. You don't get many accomplishments. It was a really good pay, but a really boring job and I couldn't hack it. I didn't like it. I'd rather see some results." (Participant #19)

The researcher relates to the above quote, as he had a similar experience where he worked with the Province of BC's government prior to accepting an executive role in an Indigenous organization. There is a great satisfaction in witnessing the tangible results in your work, which is more common to witness in an Indigenous organization versus a larger government entity.

Some of these executives were quick to admit that there are issues with Indigenous organizations, such as lateral aggression, and having to enforce policies in your own community,

but they were still adamant about selecting an Indigenous organization over a non-Indigenous organization. The Indigenous values they mentioned included reciprocity, strong relationships, the importance of family first, gratitude, acknowledgement, and collaboration. Despite acknowledging issues within Indigenous organizations such as lateral aggression and the challenge of enforcing policies within their own community, many executives remained steadfast in their preference for Indigenous organizations over non-Indigenous counterparts. They emphasized the significance of Indigenous values like reciprocity, strong interpersonal connections, prioritization of family, gratitude, acknowledgment, and collaboration. These values, which are central to Indigenous organizational culture, set them apart from their non-Indigenous counterparts. Interviewees highlighted additional Indigenous values such as collectivism, humor, respect, preservation of traditional language, community-centeredness, consensus-building, and unwavering commitment. Some of these values may be present in non-Indigenous organizations, but the unique story shared by an interviewee underscores the distinct appreciation and recognition of individual contributions within Indigenous organizations:

> "And plus, there's a recognition of what I bring in terms of my history, my identity, my relationships, my network, and my language. A lot of those are not as transferable to non-indigenous organizations." (National Participant #2)

The above quote highlights that Indigenous organizations are generally more appreciative of Indigenous peoples in comparison to non-Indigenous organizations.

Finally, there is a meaningfulness associated with working for an Indigenous organization. The meaningfulness is linked to working for our people to create a better future. One interviewee shared their total commitment to the role given a promise they had made to their people:

> "I'm totally committed to the Indigenous side. I've been offered many, many times to chase the money out there in business and industry and government. But I made a

> promise to our chiefs and elders. And I promised that I would keep working on it until we succeeded. And I keep that promise." (Participant #5)

The above quote is a powerful message. We will now explore the reasoning behind those interviewees who do not have a preference in working for non-Indigenous organization types.

Executive's Non-Indigenous Organization Preference

No Indigenous executives preferred non-Indigenous organizations over Indigenous organizations. This is surprising, especially given some of the negative experiences that the respondents shared in their interviews and focus groups. Although, the interviewees responses suggest that the participants are motivated to work in areas that benefit Indigenous peoples, and they believe that the best way to do so is outside of a non-Indigenous organization.

Executive's No Organization Preference

The executives who did not indicate their preference to working for an Indigenous organization or non-Indigenous organization were strongly hesitant to provide a definite answer. Instead, the executives shared that they had no preference and outlined the benefits and challenges of working for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations.

Some respondents argued that the type of organization is not important; rather, what matters most is if the organization serves Indigenous peoples and if the role is empowering. Moreover, a participant who worked in a non-Indigenous organization observed:

> "I would say it depends. It depends on the position, it depends on the position. What often happens I find in non-Indigenous organizations is that we have a lot of responsibility but no authority. And that's really frustrating." (Participant #9)

While the researcher does not have much experience working in non-Indigenous organizations, he has witnessed the frustrations of his colleagues who work in those types of organizations, such as academia, where they have a lot of responsibilities as they are representing the Indigenous population, usually by themselves.

When it comes to Indigenous organizations, these interviewees indicated the organizations' benefits included a friendlier culture, meaningful work, and the opportunity to build organizations from the ground up. Compared to non-Indigenous organizations, some of the challenges for Indigenous organizations included not having stability, no pension and benefit plans, a personality-driven workplace, and a limited scope.

As for non-Indigenous organizations, there was discussion that the benefits included better compensation, more work variety, and greater diversity in the workplace. According to the interviewees, some of the challenges include frustration with the pace where people are slow to act, react, and create something new.

Each organizational type has its own unique worldview. It is equally important to have Indigenous representation in all organizations. One of the interviewees shared this inspiring story about Indigenous inclusion in non-Indigenous organizations:

> "We need people outside of our communities. We need people inside corporate Canada. We need people inside government. So, you are doing stuff that is benefiting communities, you're benefiting Indigenous people, you're benefiting the government and corporate Canada… So, you're not abandoning, just the opposite. It takes, I think, more courage to be the only Indigenous leader in corporate Canada or in that bank, right? So that's my answer there is that you need people everywhere." (National Participant #7)

The above quote is powerful because it empowers our people to pursue a career that interests them and reminds them that they are courageous. With a better understanding of who occupies these executive positions, we will now focus on the impacts of executive turnover.

Conclusion

The exploration of the first research question delved into the intricate dynamics of executive roles within Indigenous organizations. By unraveling the demographic, career trajectory, and organization preference aspects, we have gained valuable insights into the individuals who occupy these pivotal positions.

As we move forward, Chapter 6 will shift its focus to a descriptive analysis of executive tenure in Indigenous organizations.

Chapter 6

A Descriptive Analysis of Executive Tenure

This chapter provides a comprehensive descriptive analysis of Indigenous executive tenure from 2013 to 2023, offering valuable insights into the patterns and trends of leadership within this period. It includes a detailed examination of the historical extremes of tenure, highlighting both the shortest and longest durations served by executives. The chapter further differentiates between the number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous executives within this decade, shedding light on the Nation's hiring preferences towards Indigenous leaders. A cross-analysis is conducted using various variables such as the Nation's population size, geographic location, revenue budgets, governance structure, and the number of subordinates. This multifaceted approach aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing executive tenure and the representation of Indigenous leaders in executive positions.

Executive Tenure and Interviewees and Focus Groups

Based on the qualitative methods (i.e. interviews and focus groups), the National interviewees and BC focus groups experienced longer executive tenure when compared to their BC interviewee counterparts (Figure 7). It is surprising to see that the average executive tenure is a high 5.47 years, although, the high 10-year tenure for the BC focus group and National interviews influenced this high average (Figure 8). It is important to note that those who have had a 10-year tenure noted that they are approaching or have exceeded the age of retirement in Canada (i.e. 65 years old), and some have shared their intentions to retire shortly. Upon exploring the average executive turnover based on the qualitative groups, the National interviews led the way with an average of 8 years, followed by the BC Focus Groups at 5.87 years, and the BC interviews at 2.73 years (Figure 8).

Figure 7: Comparative Size Executive Tenure from 2013-2023

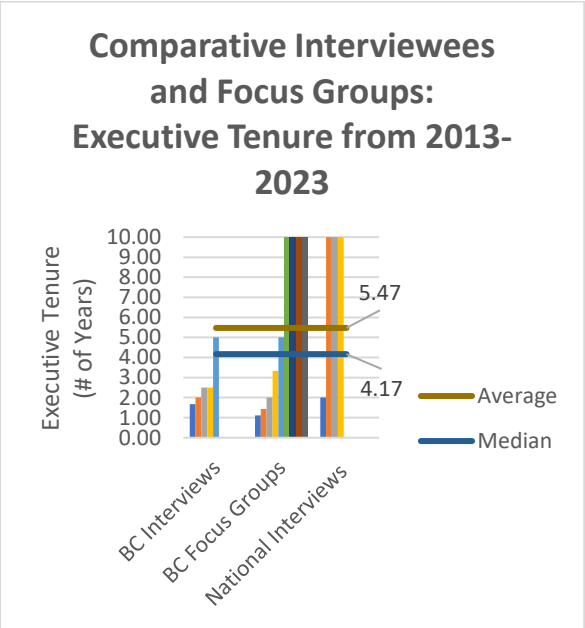
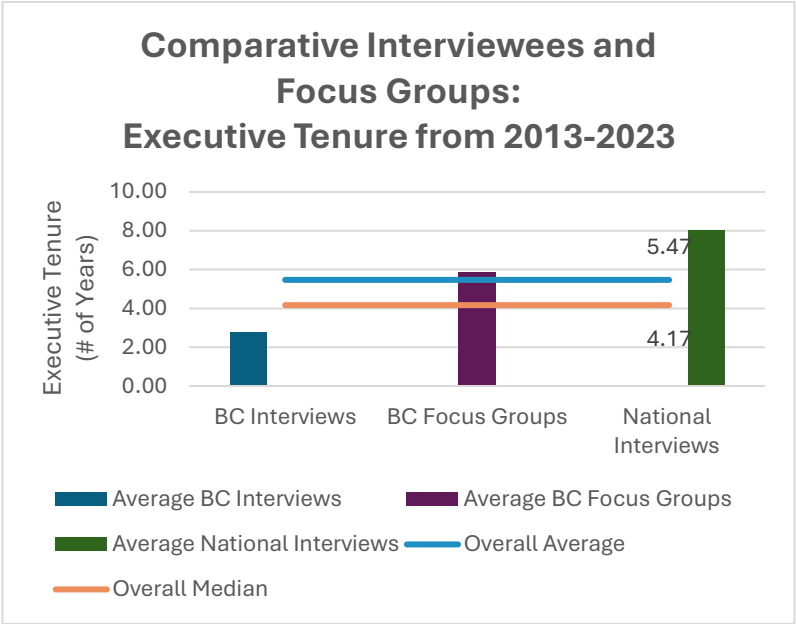


Figure 8: Comparative Size Executive Tenure from 2013-2023



Executive Tenure and Band Size

Based on the survey sample, small First Nations indicated that they had two communities where their executive tenure from 2013-2023 was 10 years, followed by the medium and large First Nations, which both had multiple communities where their tenure was 5 years (Figure 9). On an average basis, the small First Nations executive tenure was 4.98 years, followed by the medium First Nations with 3.16 years, and the large First Nations with 2.81 years (Figure 10). Surprisingly, the average executive tenure decreases as the size of the First Nation increases.

Figure 9: Comparative Size Executive Tenure from 2013-2023

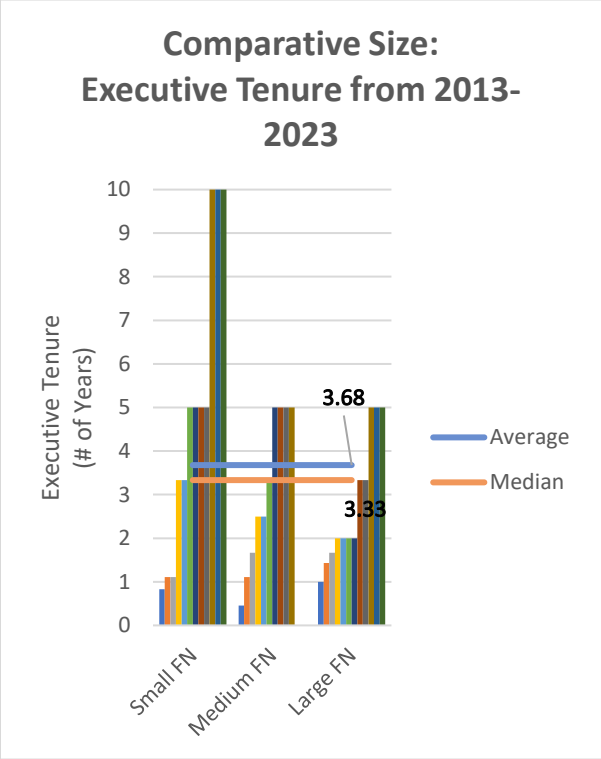


Figure 10: Comparative Size Executive Tenure from 2013-2023

Over the last 10 years, six small First Nations communities, two medium First Nations, and three large First Nations have hired 100% Indigenous executives (Figure 11). Equally interesting, the medium and large First Nations had one community where their executives were 100% non-Indigenous over the last 10 years (Figure 11). On average, the smaller First Nations hired more Indigenous peoples into their executive roles at a representation rate of 78% compared to the medium First Nations which had 61% and large First Nations which had 62% (Figure 12).

Figure 11: Comparative Size Indigenous Representation in Executive

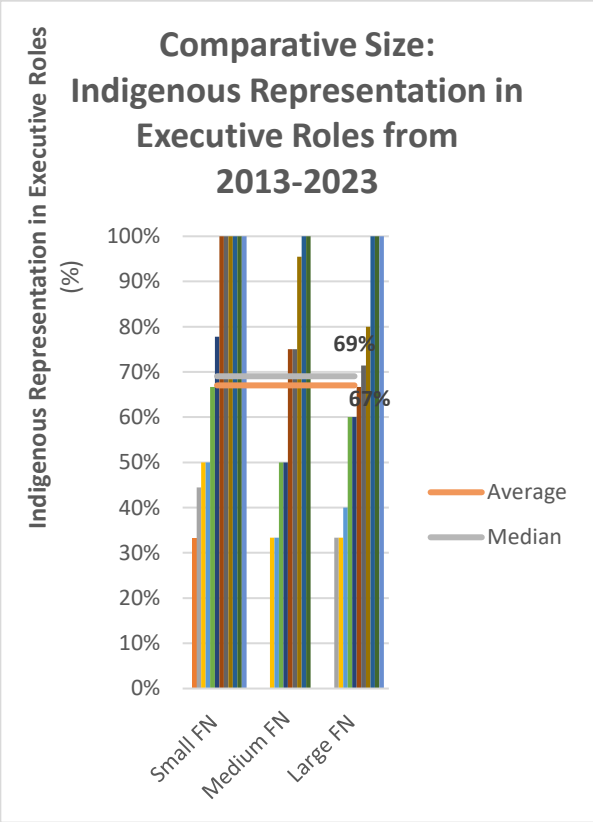
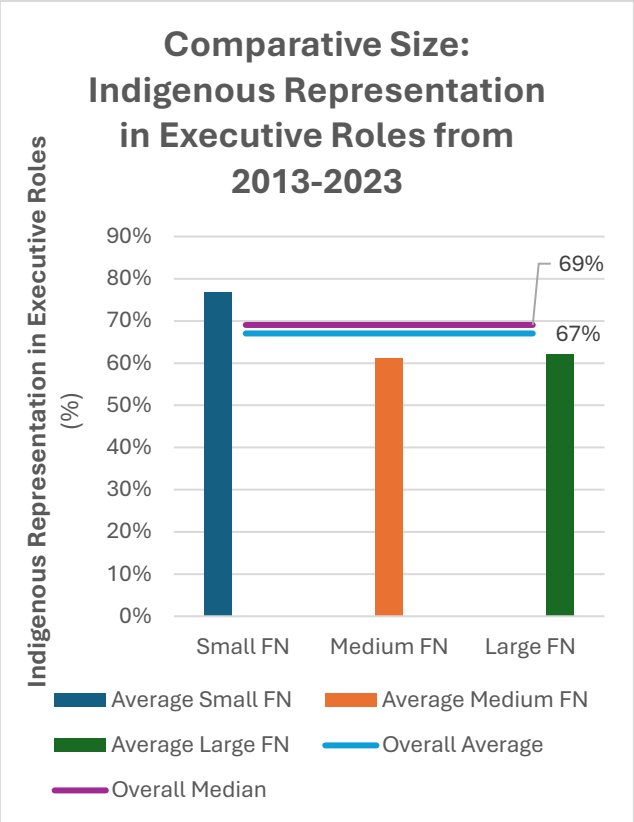


Figure 12: Comparative Size Indigenous Representation in Executive



Expanding beyond the 10-year tenure analysis from above, we now consider the historical executive tenure of the participating First Nations, primarily the longest and shortest tenure for their executives. When it comes to shortest executive tenure, the medium-sized First Nations have the highest and lowest tenures with executives, ranging from as low as one day (i.e. the lowest) and 7 years (i.e. the highest), although their shortest average is the lowest when compared to small and large First Nations (Figure 13). The lowest shortest time for an executive in a medium First Nation is one day. Otherwise, 2 days in large First Nations and 1 month in small First Nations. This suggests that there are complex factors at play influencing executive tenure dynamics within First Nations communities, warranting a thorough investigation into the

underlying causes and implications of short tenures observed, particularly among medium-sized First Nations. On average, the larger First Nations lead the way with the longest shortest tenure at 1.72 years, followed by the smaller First Nations at 1.5 years and the medium First Nations at 1.26 years (Figure 14)

Figure 13: Comparative Size Historical Executive Tenure (Shortest)

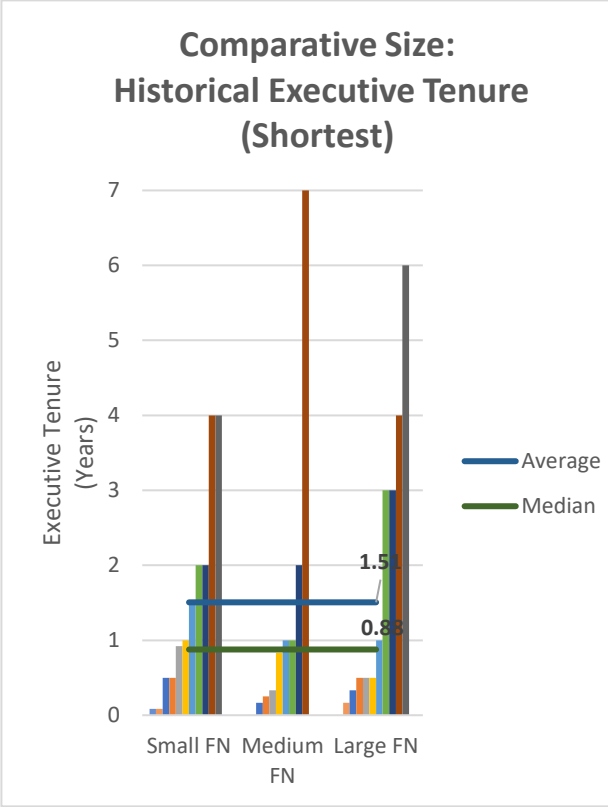


Figure 14: Comparative Size Historical Executive Tenure (Shortest)

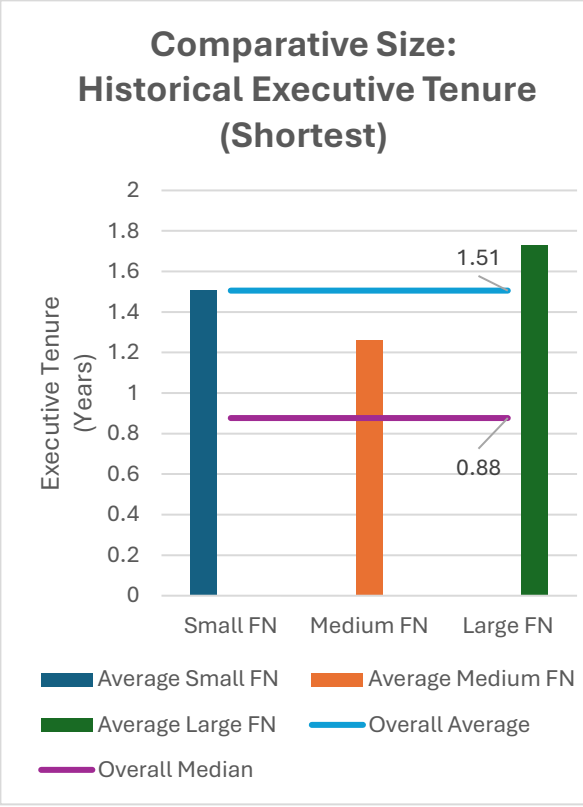


Figure 15 shows that medium First Nations had a community with a historical executive tenure of 35 years, followed by the two small First Nations communities with 30 years, and the large First Nations with one community that had 25 years. On average, the medium First Nations had a longer historical executive tenure at 11.7 years, followed by small First Nations at 11.33 years, and large First Nations at 10 years (Figure 16).

Figure 15: Comparative Size Historical Executive Tenure (Longest)

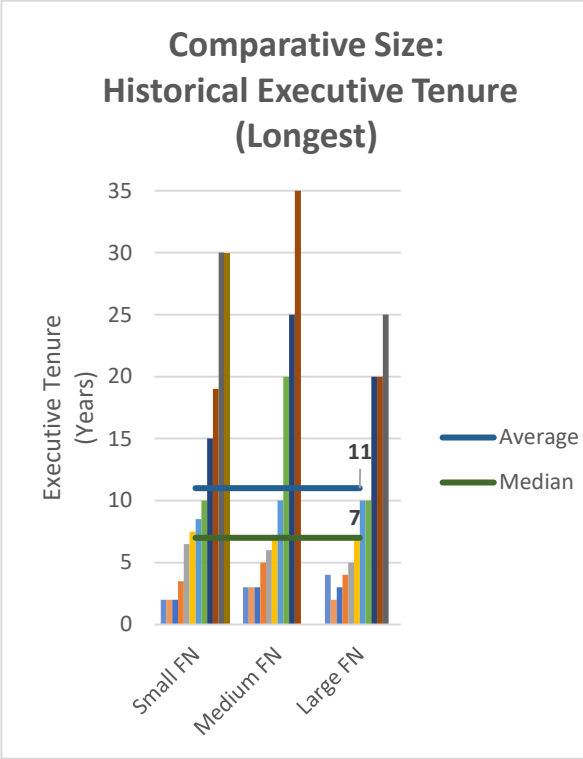
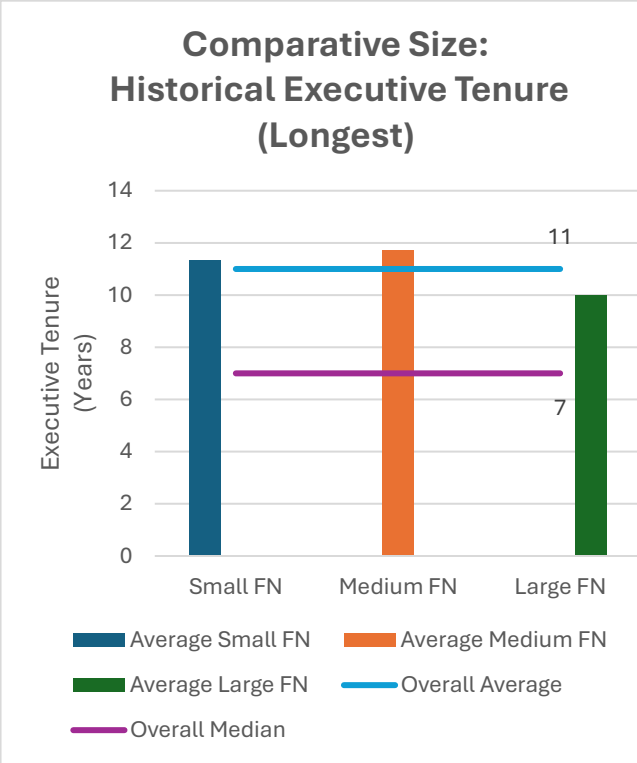


Figure 16: Comparative Size Historical Executive Tenure (Longest)



Executive Tenure and Geography

First Nations are granted a geographic zone number by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) based on the First Nations location. These geographic zone numbers range from Zones 1 to 4, with Zone 1 being the most urban, Zone 2 being rural, Zone 3 being semi-isolated, and Zone 4 being the most isolated.

Zones 1 and 4 First Nations have done better in retaining their executives when compared to Zones 2 and 3 First Nations, as can be seen with Zones 1 and 4's ability to retain an executive for the past 10 years (Figure 17). Surprisingly, the average executive tenure is the highest for Zone 4 at 4.49 years, followed closely by Zones 1 (4.19) and 3 (4.17), and lastly Zone 2 at 2.71 years (Figure 18).

Figure 17: Comparative Geography: Executive Tenure from 2013-2023

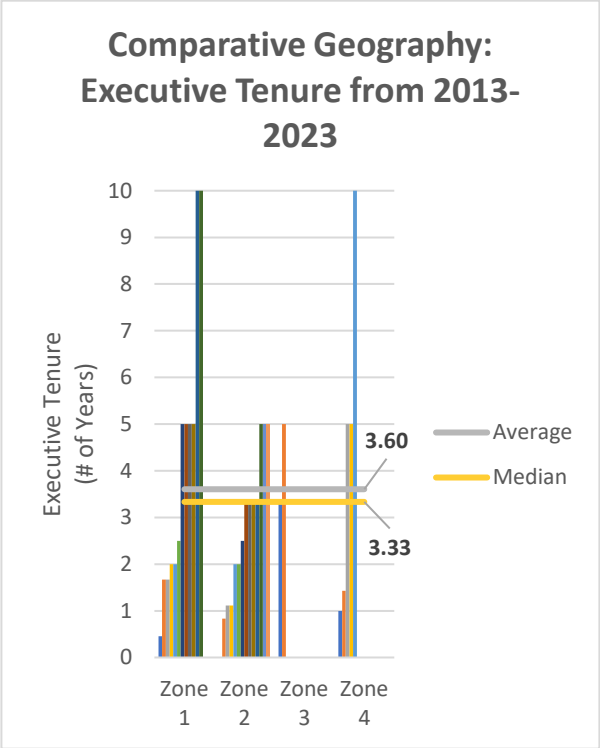
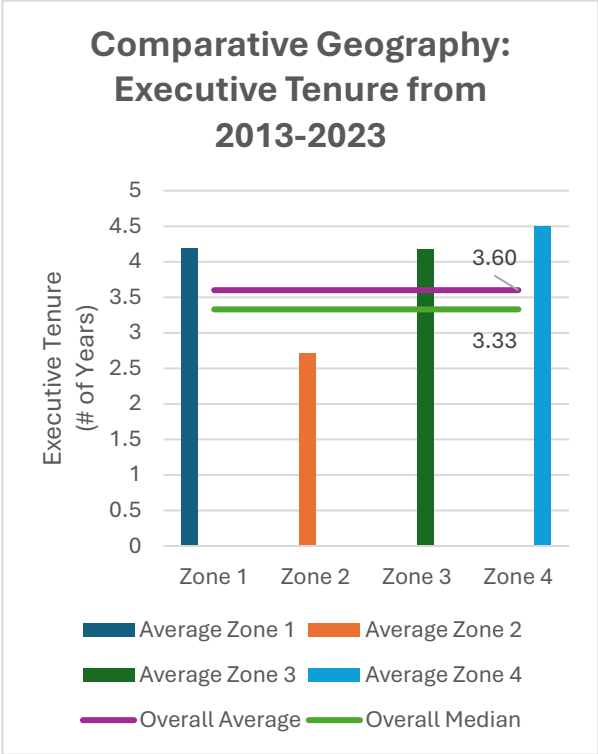


Figure 18: Comparative Geography: Executive Tenure from 2013-2023



All Zones experienced at least one community with a 100% Indigenous representation in the executive position, and each zone also had at least one community where there was 0% Indigenous representation (Figure 19). Interestingly, the Indigenous representation in the executive roles increases the more isolated the communities are (Figure 20).

The interesting differences in the historical executive tenure of First Nations by zone with respect to the longest and shortest tenures of their executives. When it comes to shortest executive tenure, the Zone 1 First Nations have the highest and lowest time with executives at one day (i.e. lowest) and 7 years (i.e. highest) (Figure 21). Zone 1 had the shortest average at 1.3 years when compared to Zones 2 (1.66), 3 (2.25) and 4 (1.4) Nations (Figure 22).

Figure 19: Comparative Geography: Indigenous Representation in Executive Roles in the Last 10 Years

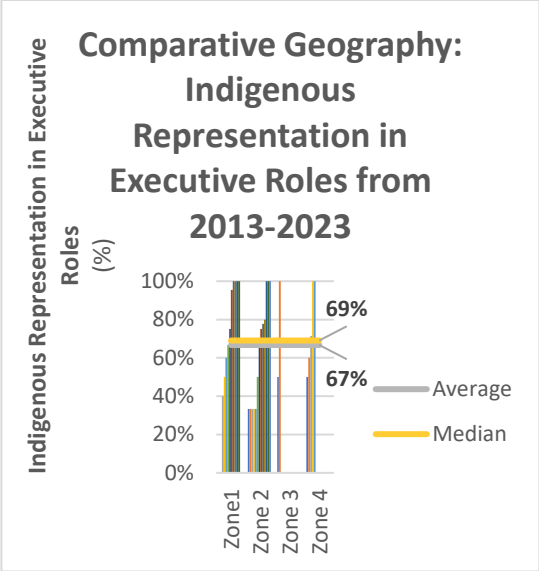
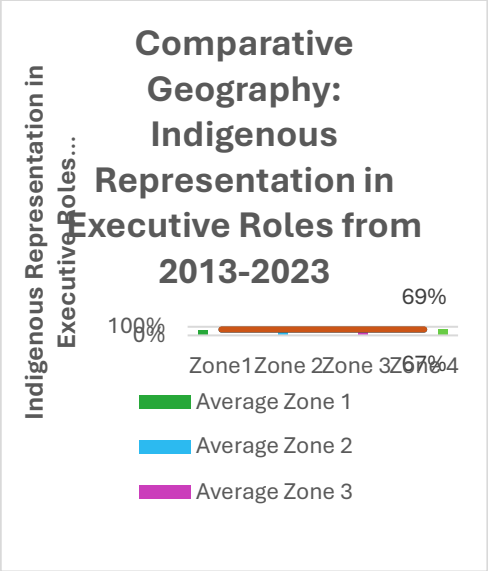


Figure 20: Comparative Geography: Indigenous Representation in Executive Roles in the Last 10 Years



A community from the Zone 3 First Nations had an executive for 35 years, followed by a community in each Zones 2 and 4 that had an executive for 30 years, and lastly, the Zone 1 community that had an executive for 20 years (Figure 23). The longest average executive tenure ranges from 9.95 years (Zone 1 First Nations) to 18.25 years (Zone 3 First Nations) (Figure 24).

Figure 21: Comparative Geography: Historical Executive Tenure (Shortest)

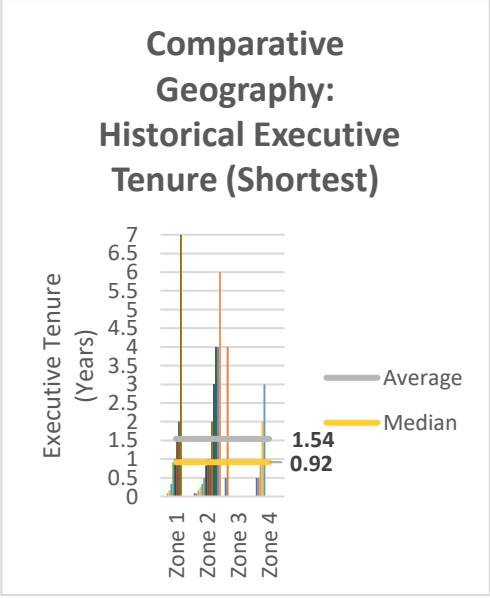


Figure 22: Comparative Geography: Historical Executive Tenure (Shortest)

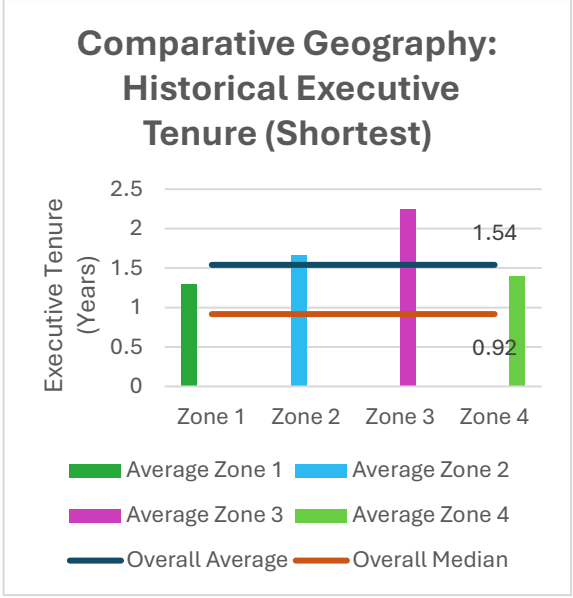


Figure 23: Comparative Geography: Historical Executive Tenure (Longest)

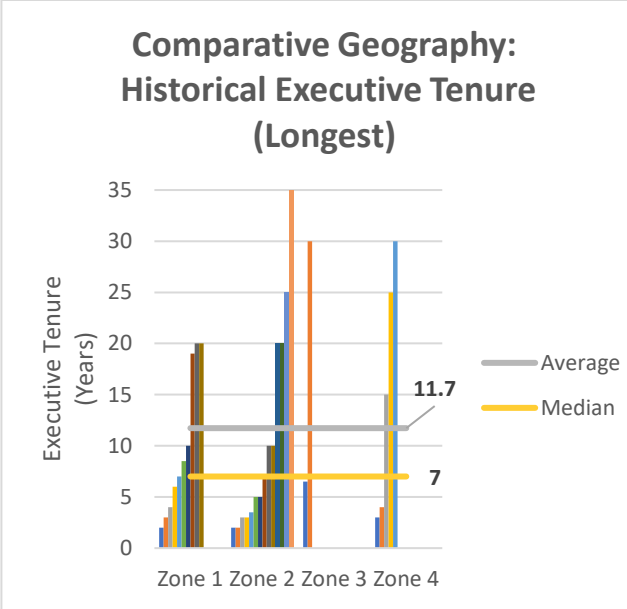
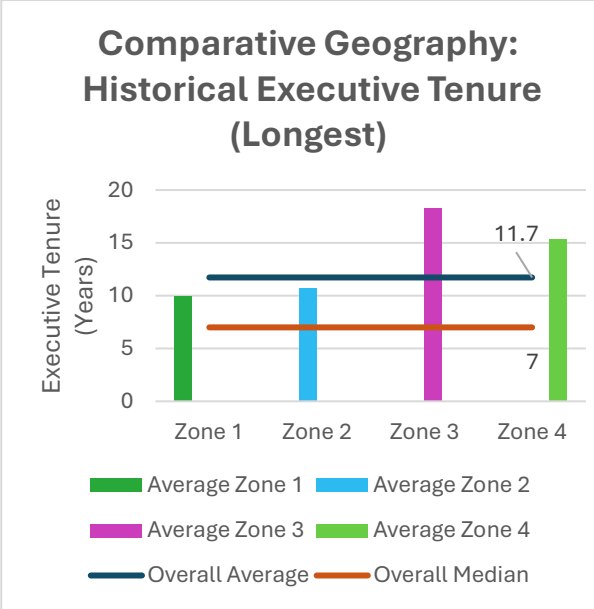


Figure 24: Comparative Geography: Historical Executive Tenure (Longest)



Executive Tenure and Budgets

Looking at executive tenure for the last 10 years specifically, and using First Nations' budgets as variables, there is a big variance. Figure 25 indicates that the First Nations that have under $10 million in revenue, and First Nations with over $20 million in revenue experienced longer executive tenures as both had at least one community with an executive tenure of 10 years, whereas the First Nations that have $10-$20 million only had their executives at a maximum of 5 years. Although one of the over $20 million communities experienced an average executive tenure of 0.45 years, which means that they had 22 executives in the last 10 years (Figure 25). On an average basis, the under $10 million in revenue First Nations led the way with an executive tenure of 4.37 years, followed by the over $20 million First Nations at 3.6 years, and finally the $10-$20 million First Nations at 3.06 years (Figure 26).

Communities that had revenues of $10-$20 million experienced a shorter tenure, but surprisingly they experienced greater Indigenous representation in executive roles with over four

communities having 100% Indigenous people occupy their executive role in the last 10 years, when compared to the other two groups (Figure 27). Both the under $10 million and over $20 million community groupings had one community that had 0% Indigenous people in their executive roles in the last 10 years (Figure 27). On an average basis, the $10-$20 million in revenue First Nations led the way with 76% Indigenous representation in the executive roles, followed by the over $20 million First Nations at 64%, and finally the under $10 million First Nations at 61% (Figure 28).

Figure 25: Comparative Funding: Executive Tenure from 2013-2023

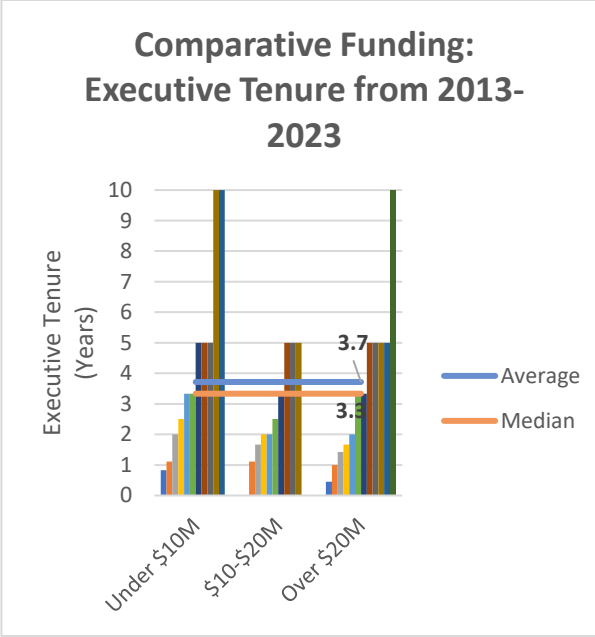


Figure 26: Comparative Funding: Executive Tenure from 2013-2023

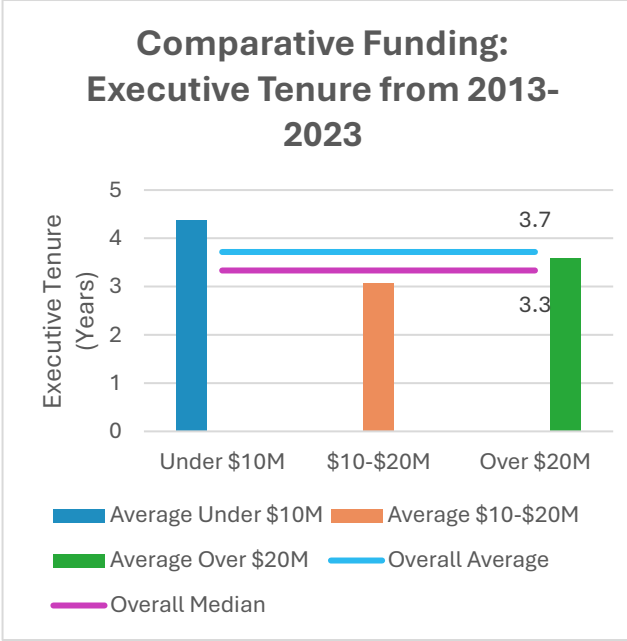


Figure 27: Comparative Funding: Indigenous Representation in Executive Roles from 2013-2023

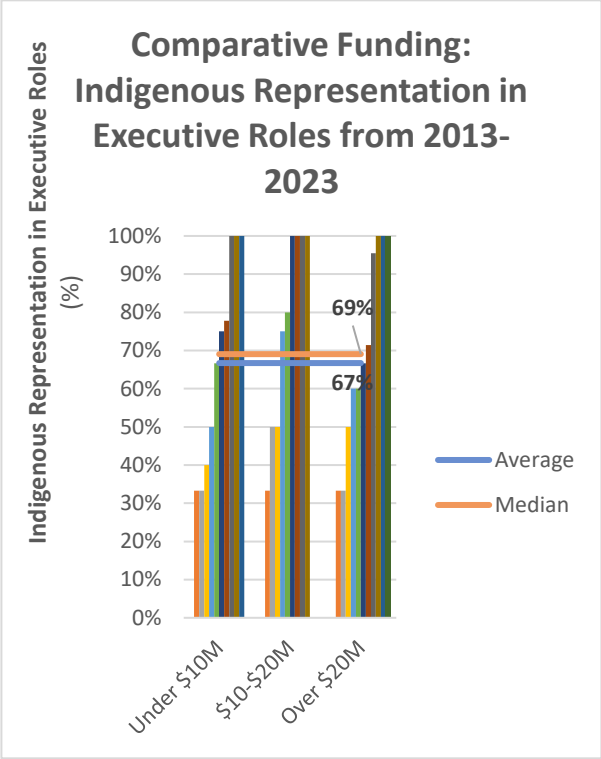
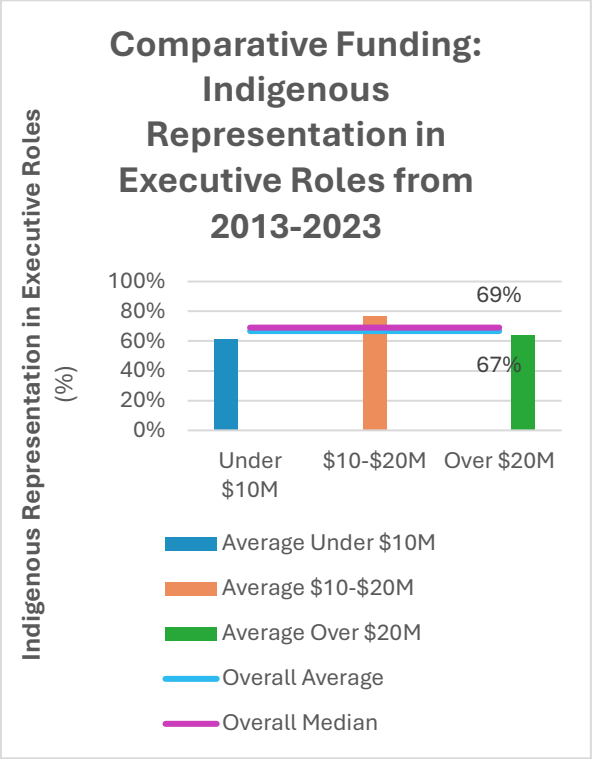


Figure 28: Comparative Funding: Indigenous Representation in Executive Roles from 2013-2023



Looking even further back than 10 years, the communities were asked what the longest and shortest time they had an executive. While Figure 29 cannot capture it, the $10-$20M and over $20M groups both experienced the shortest tenure of 1 day ($10-$20M) and 2 days (over $20M). On an average basis, the under $10 million First Nations experienced the shortest executive tenure at 1 year, followed by the $10-$20 million First Nations at 1.54 years, and finally, the over $20 million at 1.9 years (Figure 30). Figure 31 paints a different picture with the longest historical executive tenure, with the $10-$20M groupings leading the way with a community stating they had an executive for 35 years. On an average basis, the $10-$20M groupings led the way with the longest executive tenure of 14 years, followed by the over $20M groupings at 13.54 years, and finally, the under $10M groupings at 8.45 years (Figure 32).

Figure 29: Comparative Funding: Historical Tenure (Shortest)

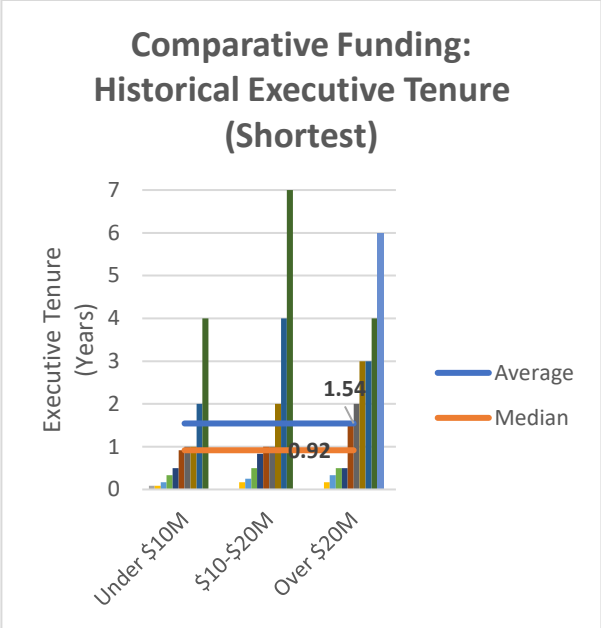


Figure 30: Comparative Funding: Historical Tenure (Shortest)

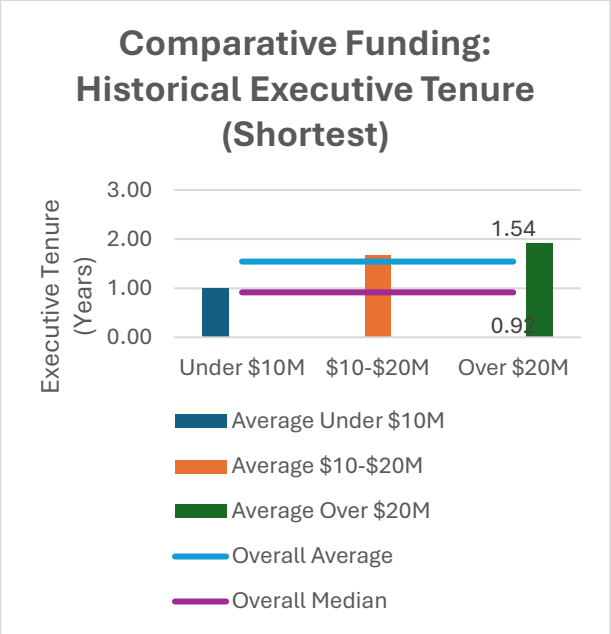


Figure 31: Comparative Funding: Historical Executive Tenure (Longest)

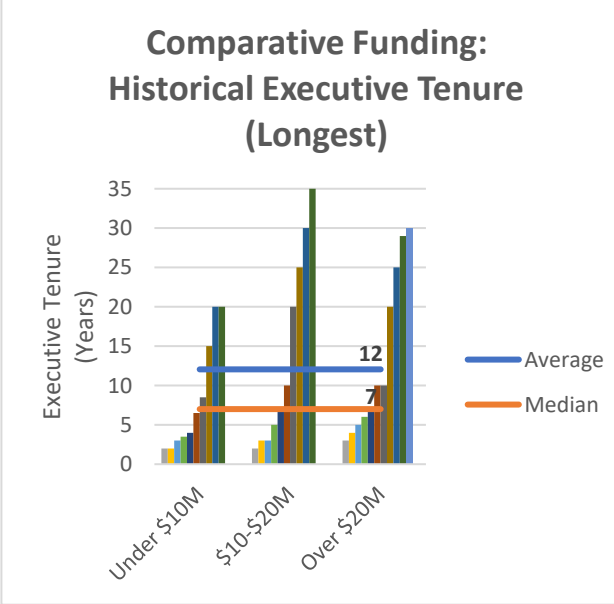
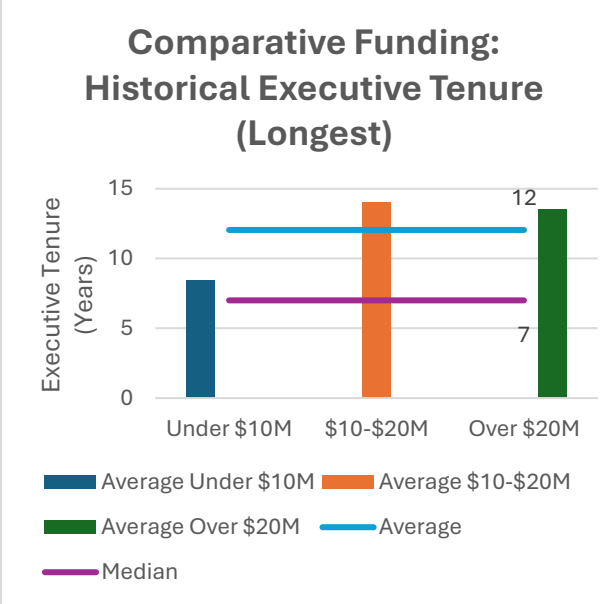


Figure 32: Comparative Funding: Historical Executive Tenure (Longest)



Executive Tenure and Governance

Using governance structures as variables, the executive tenure for the last 10 years paints an interesting picture. Two communities under the Custom Electoral System had an average

executive tenure of 10 years, and one community under the Indian Act electoral system also had an average executive tenure of 10 years (Figure 33). The Custom Electoral System also had a community that had the lowest average executive tenure of 0.45 years, which equates to 22 executives over a 10-year period (Figure 32). On an average basis, the Treaty First Nations led the way with an executive tenure of 5 years, followed by the Custom Electoral System at 3.7 years, and finally, the Indian Act at 3.5 years (Figure 34).

Each governance grouping had at least one community that experienced 100% Indigenous representation in their executive role(s) for the last 10 years (Figure 35). The Custom Electoral System had two communities that had 0% Indigenous peoples in their executive positions in the last 10 years (Figure 35). On an average basis, the Treaty First Nations led the way with 100% Indigenous representation in the executive roles, followed by the Indian Act at 74%, and finally, the Custom Electoral System at 63% (Figure 36).

Figure 33: Comparative Governance: Executive Tenure from 2013-2023

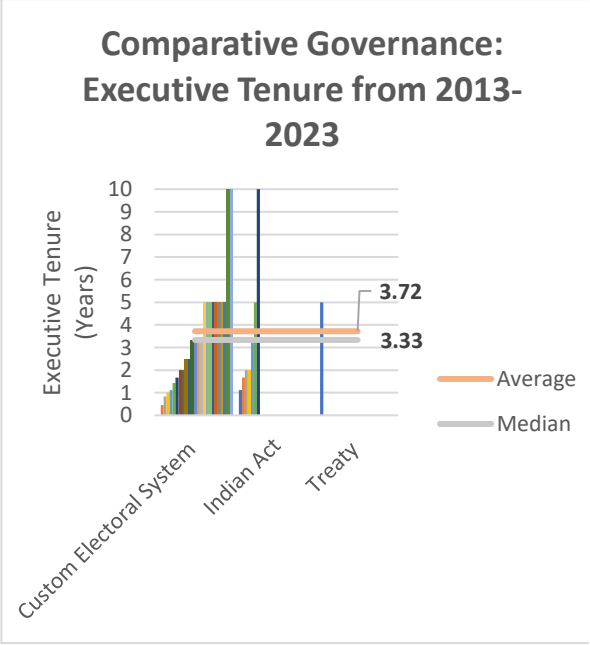


Figure 34: Comparative Governance: Executive Tenure from 2013-2023

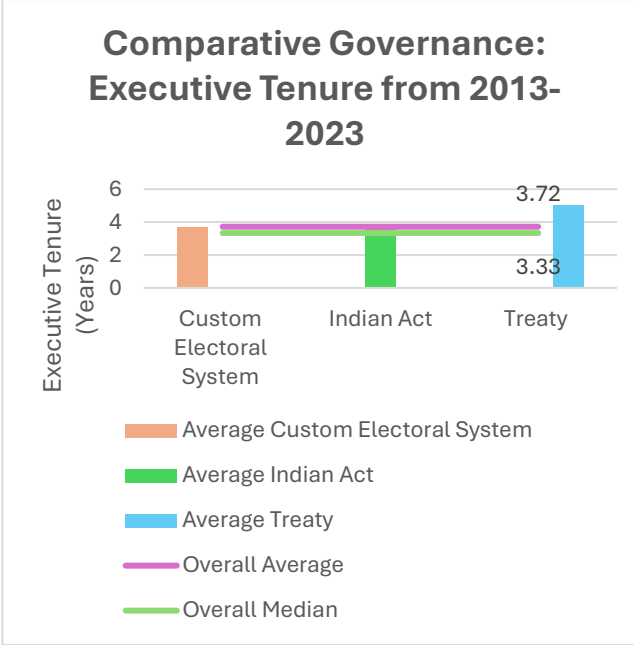


Figure 35: Comparative Governance: Indigenous Representation in Executive Roles from 2013-2023

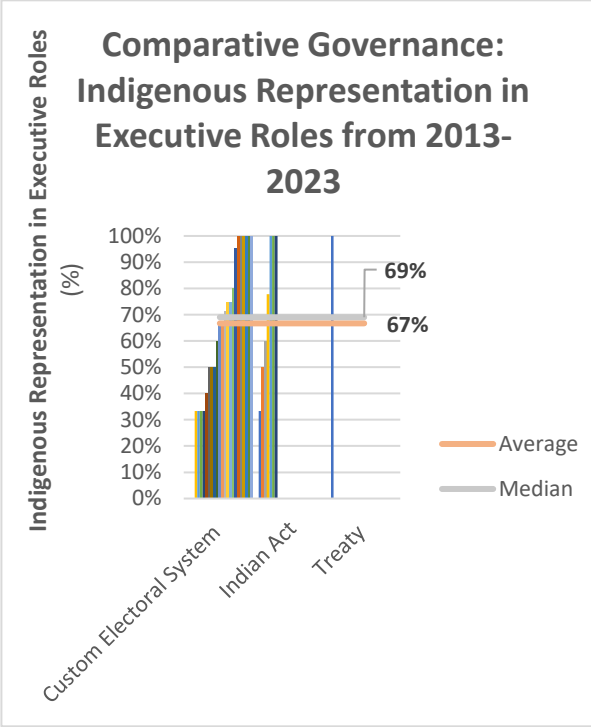
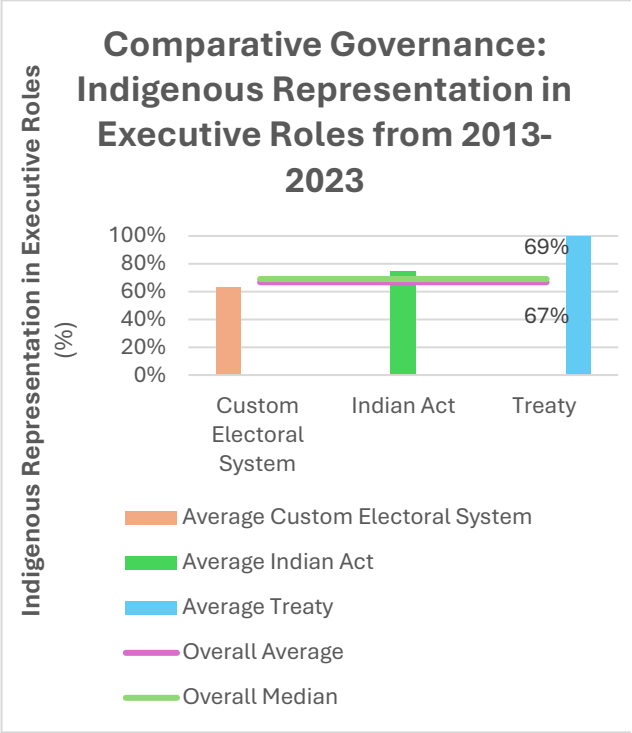


Figure 36: Comparative Governance: Indigenous Representation in Executive Roles from 2013-2023



While Figure 37 cannot capture it, the Indian Act and Custom Electoral System both experienced the shortest tenure of 1 day (i.e. Indian Act) and 2 days (i.e. Custom Electoral System). On an average basis, the Indian Act grouping had the shortest executive tenure at 1 year, followed by the Custom Electoral System at 1.7 years, and finally, the Treaty grouping at 6 years (Figure 38). Figure 39 paints a different picture with the longest historical executive tenure, with the Custom Electoral System groupings leading the way with five communities stating they had an executive for 25-35 years. On an average basis, the Custom Electoral System led the way with an executive tenure of 12 years, followed by the Indian Act at 10.8 years, and the Treaty at 10 years (Figure 40).

Figure 37: Comparative Governance: Historical Executive Tenure (Shortest)

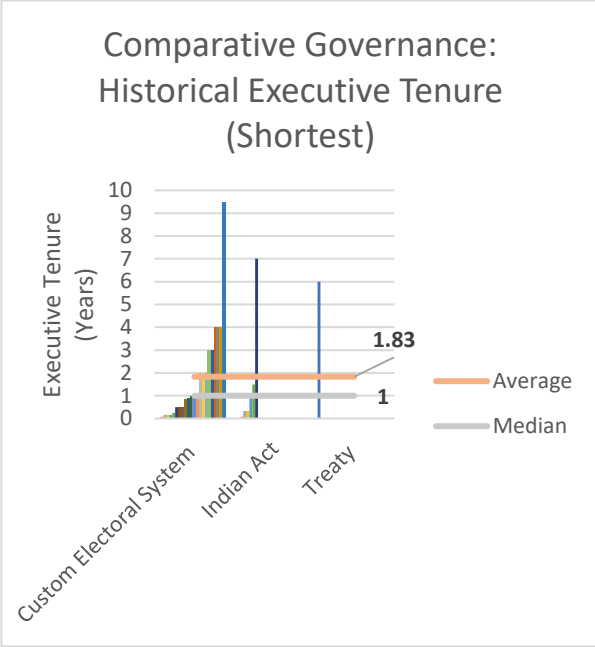


Figure 38: Comparative Governance: Historical Executive Tenure (Shortest)

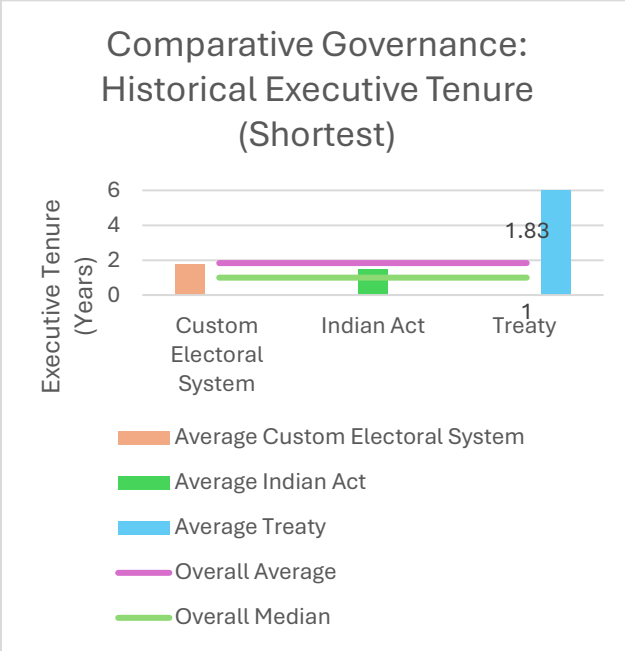


Figure 39: Comparative Governance: Historical Executive Tenure (Longest)

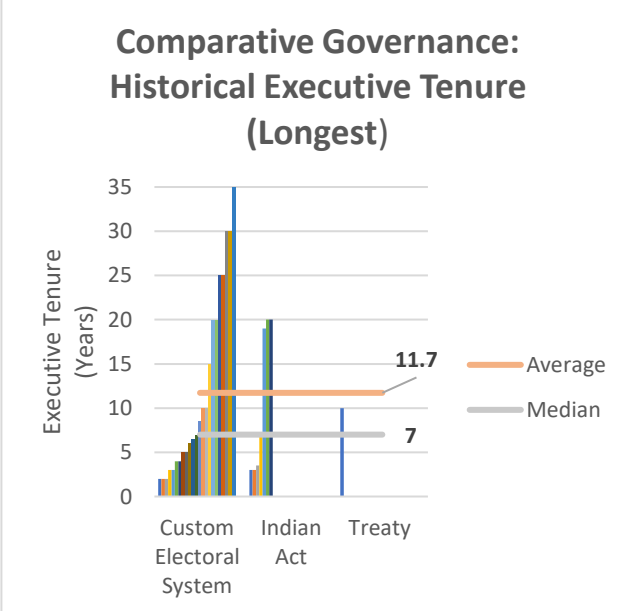
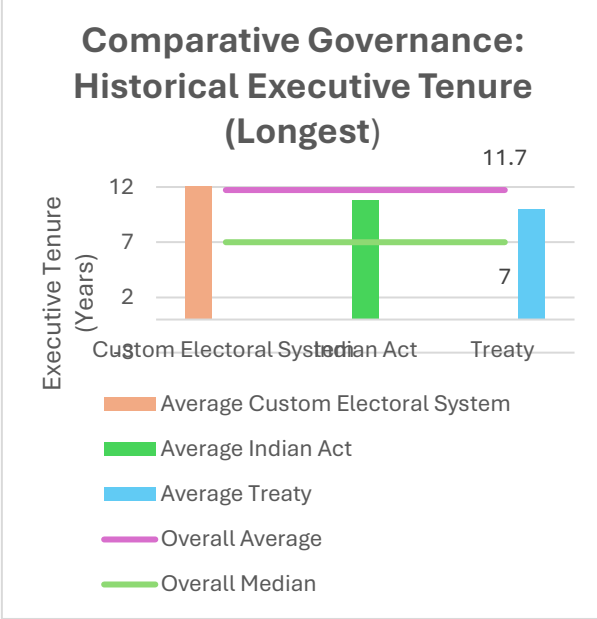


Figure 40: Comparative Governance: Historical Executive Tenure (Longest)



Executive Tenure and Subordinates

Using subordinate sizes as variables, it demonstrates a potential influence that subordinate sizes have on executive tenure. Two communities who had 0-6 subordinate sizes experienced executive tenures of 10 years, and one community who had 7-12 subordinate sizes experienced a 10-year executive tenure, whereas the highest executive tenure experienced in the over 12 subordinate sizes experienced was a 5-year executive tenure (Figure 41). Switching from a distribution model to an average model, it becomes apparent that the communities who have 7-12 staff subordinates have the highest average executive tenure, followed closely by the 0-6 staff communities, leaving the over 12 staff communities in last – well under the overall median and overall average (Figure 42).

Figure 41: Comparative Subordinates: Executive Tenure from 2013-2023

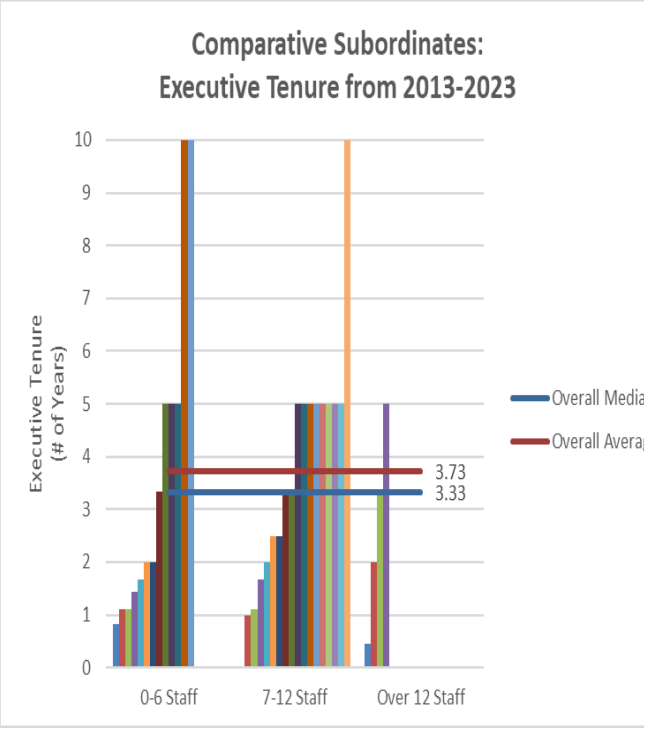
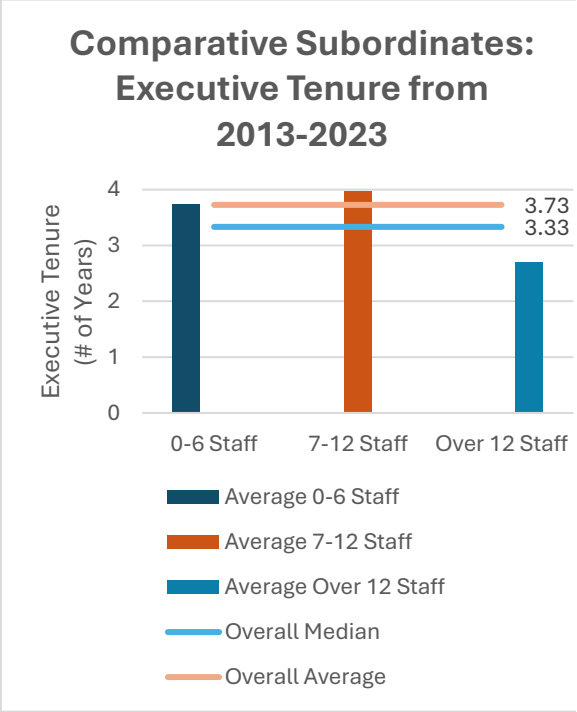


Figure 42: Comparative Subordinates: Executive Tenure from 2013-2023



Each of the subordinates categories had at least one community that experienced 100% Indigenous representation in the executive role, although, the 7-12 staff grouping had five communities, followed by the 0-6 staff grouping which had four, and the over 12 staff grouping had one (Figure 43). Furthermore, when it came to 0% Indigenous representation, both the 0-6 staff and 7-12 staff groupings had one community each where none of their executives were Indigenous. The averages of the Indigenous representation among the three subordinates groupings were close with the over 12 staff groupings' communities having a 72% Indigenous representation in executive roles, followed by 0-6 staff groupings at 68%, and the 7-12 staff groupings at 66% -- below the overall median and overall average (Figure 44).

Figure 43: Comparative Subordinates: Indigenous Representation in Executive Roles from 2013-2023

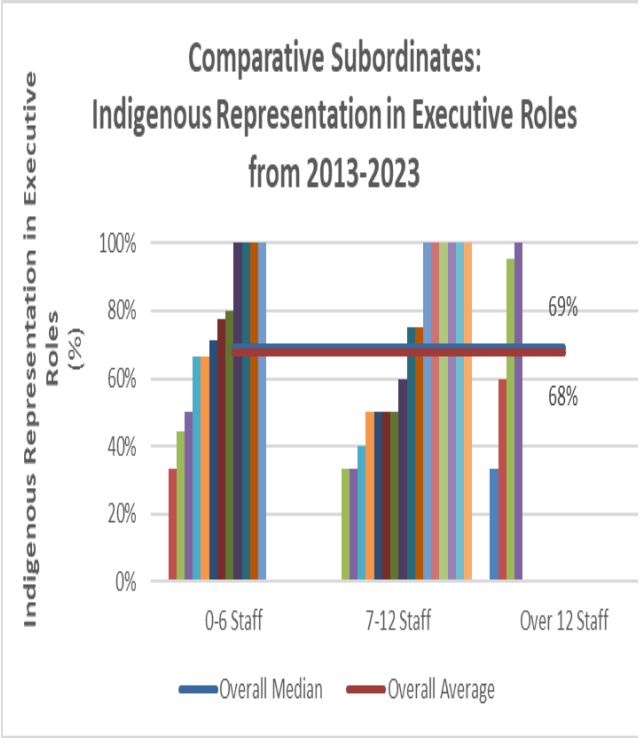
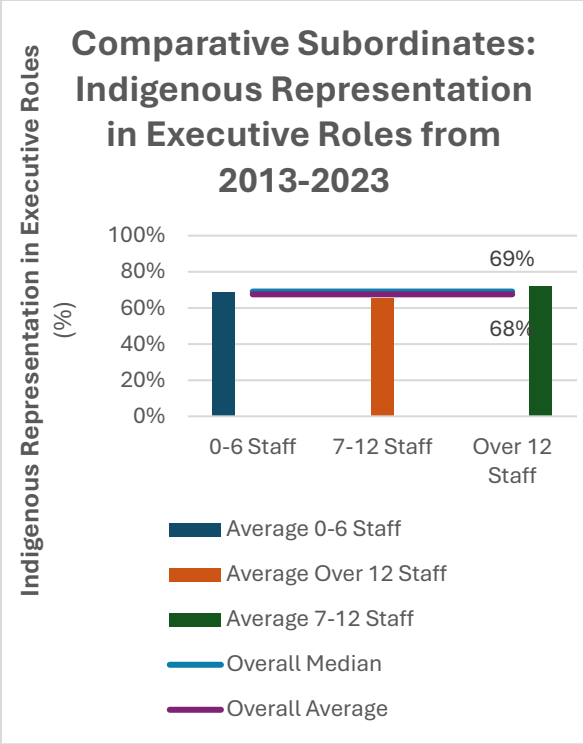


Figure 44: Comparative Subordinates: Indigenous Representation in Executive Roles from 2013-2023



When it comes to the shortest historical tenure, there was a huge variance between the different subordinates groupings, where the shortest tenure was one day for a 7-12 staff groupings

community, followed by one month for a 0-6 staff groupings community, and four months for a 7-12 staff grouping (Figure 45). Upon exploring each groupings average executive tenure through a historical shortest lens, the 7-12 staff grouping led the way with an average executive tenure of 1.5 years, followed by the over 12 staff grouping at 1.44 years, and the 0-6 staff groping at 1.13 years (Figure 46).

Figure 45: Comparative Subordinates: Historical Executive Tenure (Shortest)

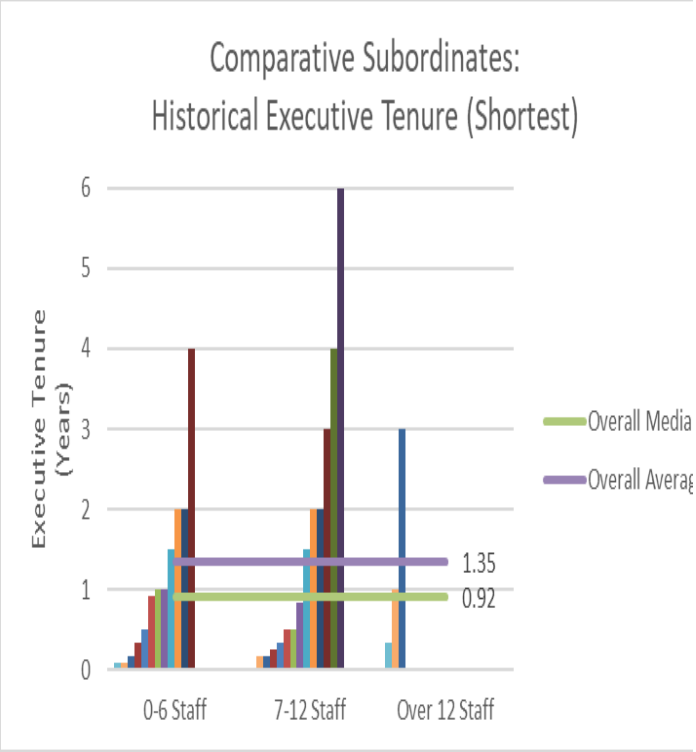
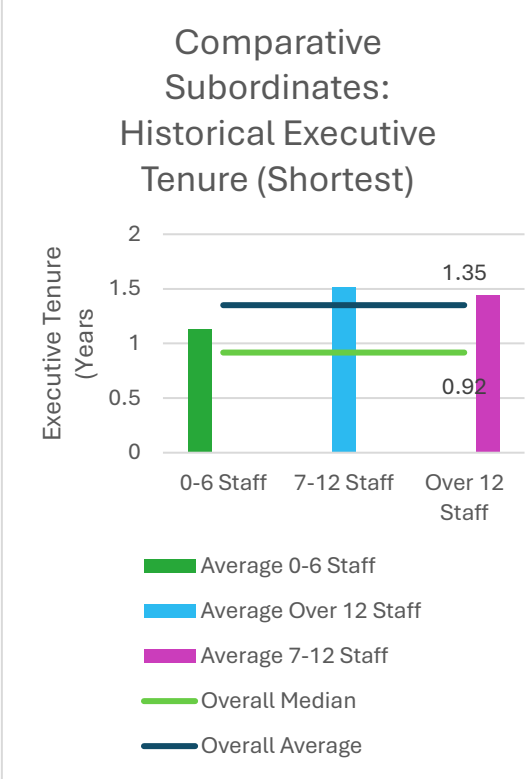


Figure 46: Comparative Subordinates: Historical Executive Tenure (Shortest)



The 7-12 staff grouping leads the way by having a community that has had an executive for 35 years tenure, followed by the 0-6 staff grouping which had two communities that had executives for a 30-year tenure, and finally the over 12 staff grouping which had a community with an executive tenure at 25 years (Figure 47). Equally eye-opening are the communities that reported that some of their historical longest executive terms were 2 or 3 years long, which included those in the 0-6 staff and 7-12 staff groupings (Figure 47). On an average basis, the over 12 staff

grouping had the longest historical executive tenure at 14 years, followed by the 7-12 staff grouping at 12.9 years and the 0-6 staff grouping at 12.6 years. Interestingly enough, only the over 12 staff groupings exceeded the overall average of 13 years (Figure 48).

Figure 47: Comparative Subordinates: Historical Executive Tenure (Longest)

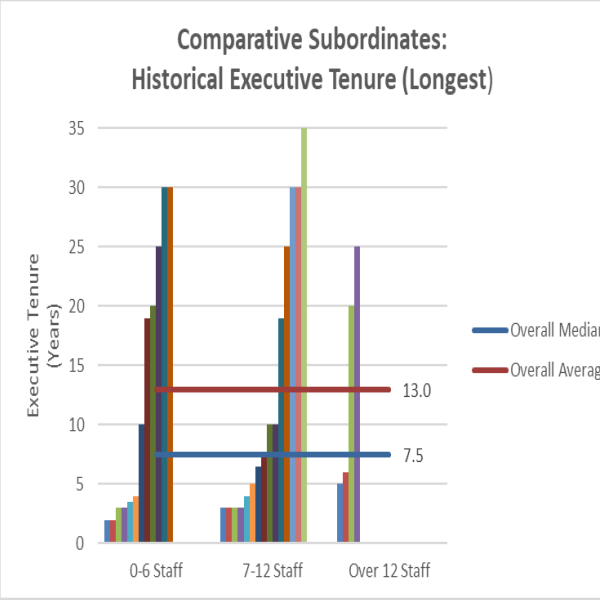
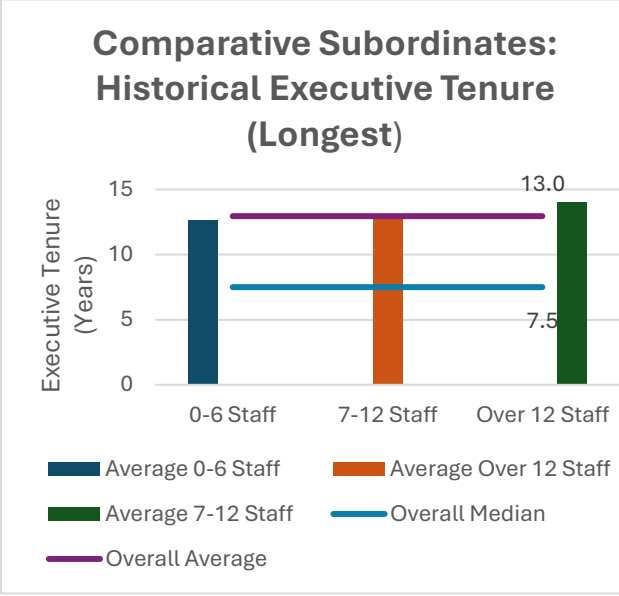


Figure 48: Comparative Subordinates: Historical Executive Tenure (Longest)



Concluding Thoughts on Executive Tenure

Regardless of the variables compared, the average executive tenure for the last 10 years of just over 3.5 years is valuable information to understand as it indicates that there is a challenge with the retention of Indigenous executives in Indigenous organizations. Another key finding is that across all variables, on average 67% of the executives in the last 10 years were Indigenous. This is important because it demonstrates a strong desire to hire Indigenous peoples in these important executive roles. Some of other key findings from this section include:

- The strong Indigenous executive hiring practice of Treaty First Nations in the last 10 years (100%);
- The shortened executive tenure of First Nations that had revenues of $10-$20M for the last 10 years;

- The alarming nature of the historical shortest executive tenure, where some Nations had executives for only 1-2 days;
- The impressive nature of the historical longest executive tenure, where some Nations had executives for over 30 years;
- The short average executive tenure for First Nations that have over 12 staff subordinates from 2013-2023;
- The strong Indigenous executive tenure for the last 10 years for Zone 1 (Urban) and Zone 4 (Remote and Isolated) First Nations; and
- The strong Indigenous executive tenure for the last 10 years for Small First Nations.

Now that there is a solid understanding of the executive tenure in First Nations communities, we will turn to the First Nations' communities hiring preference of their executives based on executive's background (i.e. Indigenous or non-Indigenous), again through the lens of the different variables such as qualitative method collection (i.e. interviews), the First Nation's population size, geographic location, funding levels, and governing structures.

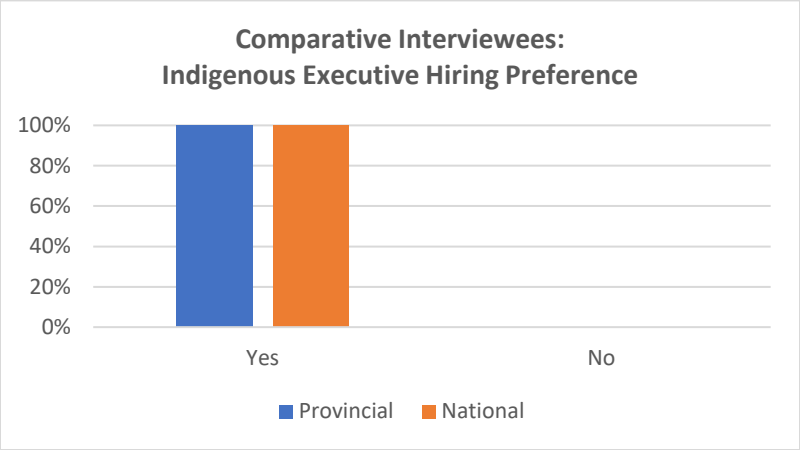
Executive Hiring Preference and Interviewees (National and Provincial)

There was a unanimous preference among the interviewed leaders in BC and National Indigenous organizations for hiring Indigenous people into executive roles, as evidenced by Figure 49. This preference is grounded in the belief that Indigenous executives establish trust and legitimacy within communities due to their shared lived experience and perspective. This perspective enables them to communicate with communities in a manner akin to trauma-informed practice, acknowledging the historical injustices Indigenous peoples have faced. The leaders emphasized prioritizing community members for executive roles, followed by fellow Nation and Tribal members, and then Indigenous individuals outside of the community, tribal grouping, and Nation. The value of Indigenous executives lies in their unique understanding and perspective, which facilitates meaningful engagement with community members, rooted in shared experiences. Participant #17 articulated the preference for hiring Indigenous peoples in executive roles:

> "Because they bring an experience and a perspective that can't be gained if you're not part of a community. And I think that we have to be . . . Our senior leadership team needs to be seen by our communities as being Indigenous. As you well know, if you go into a community meeting and you haven't lived in that community and you don't know how to approach it, they smell you out real quickly. And we can't afford to go into a community and ask them to embrace systemic change if they don't understand we've come from where they are. We do not want to be seen as just another branch of the government telling people what to do. We want them to understand we've been in their environment, we've been in their shoes, and we believe that we're bringing the solutions that they can look at that won't compromise their integrity as Indigenous people." (Participant #17)

This quote showcases that Indigenous executives bridge the gap between systemic change and community needs, ensuring solutions are tailored to preserve Indigenous integrity and foster genuine collaboration.

Figure 49: Comparative Interviewees: Indigenous Executive Hiring Preference



Executive Hiring Preference and Size

Survey respondents were asked if the First Nations preferred hiring Indigenous executives, and the responses were positively affirming by small, medium, and large First Nations. Leading the Indigenous executive hiring preference was the medium First Nations at 91%, followed by large First Nations at 83% and concluding with small First Nations at 75% (Figure 50). One respondent from the small First Nations group chose to skip this question.

The data was cross analyzed to see if the average Indigenous executive hiring preferences and average Indigenous executive hiring practices aligned with one another. According to Figure

51, only the small First Nations have exceeded their hiring preference (75%) with their hiring practice (77%). As for the medium and large First Nations, their hiring practices fell short from their hiring preferences by 21% (i.e. large First Nations) and 30% (i.e. medium First Nations). This indicates that there is a huge demand for hiring Indigenous executives, but there could be a supply issue.

Figure 50: Comparative Size: Indigenous Executive Hiring Preference

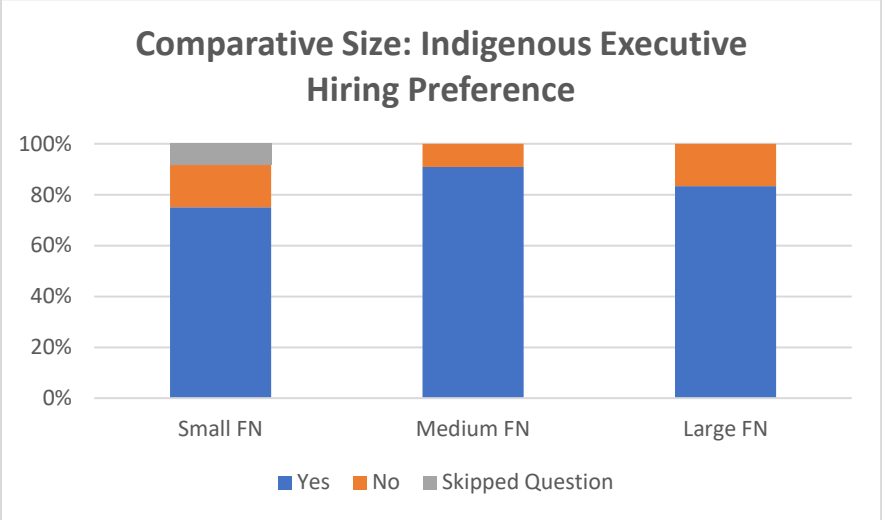
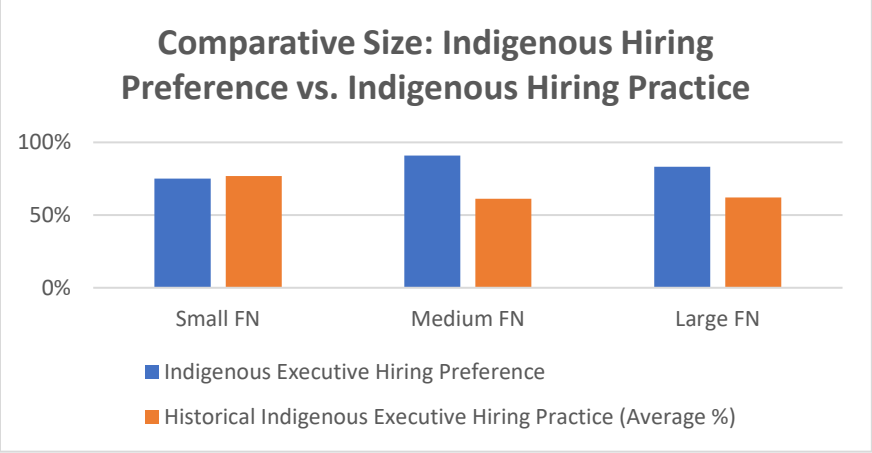


Figure 51: Comparative Size: Indigenous Executive Hiring Preference



Executive Hiring Preference and Geography

Leading the Indigenous executive hiring preference was the Zone 3 First Nations at 100%, followed by Zone 1 First Nations at 92%, Zone 2 Nations at 86% and concluding with Zone 4 First Nations at 80% (Figure 52). According to Figure 53, none of the geography zones First Nations have exceeded their hiring preference, although, Zone 4 First Nations come close with the demand being 80% and the supply being 76%.

Figure 52: Comparative Geography: Indigenous Executive Hiring Preference

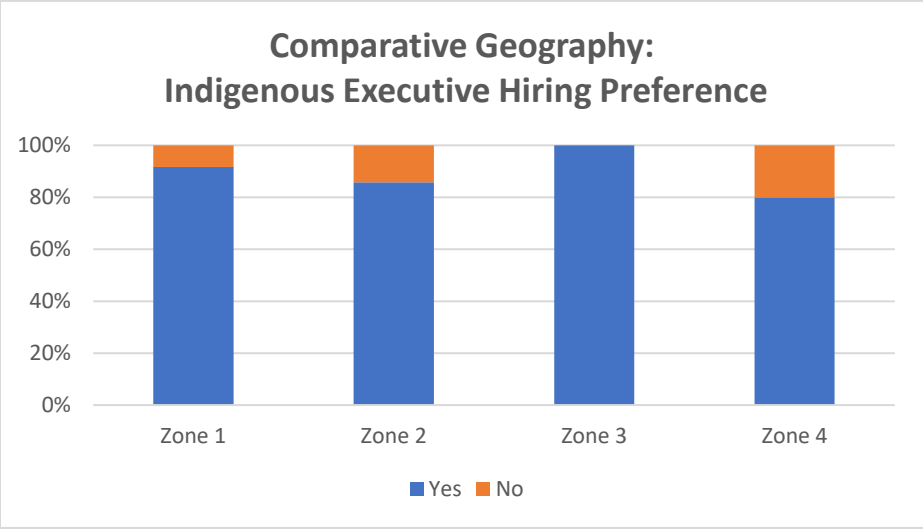
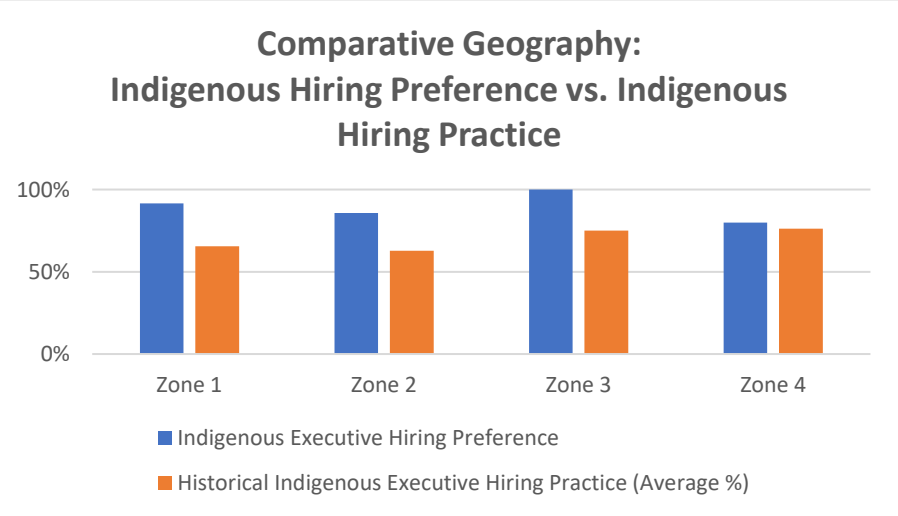


Figure 53: Comparative Geography: Indigenous Hiring Preference vs. Indigenous Hiring Practice



Executive Hiring Preference and Budget

The funding group First Nations preferred hiring Indigenous executives. Leading the Indigenous executive hiring preference was the under $10M First Nations at 91%, followed by the $10-$20M First Nations at 90%, and concluding with over $20M First Nations at 83% (Figure 54).

According to Figure 55, none of the funding grouping First Nations have exceeded their hiring preference, although the $10-$20M First Nations come close with the demand being 90% and the supply being 76%.

Figure 54: Comparative Funding: Indigenous Hiring Preference

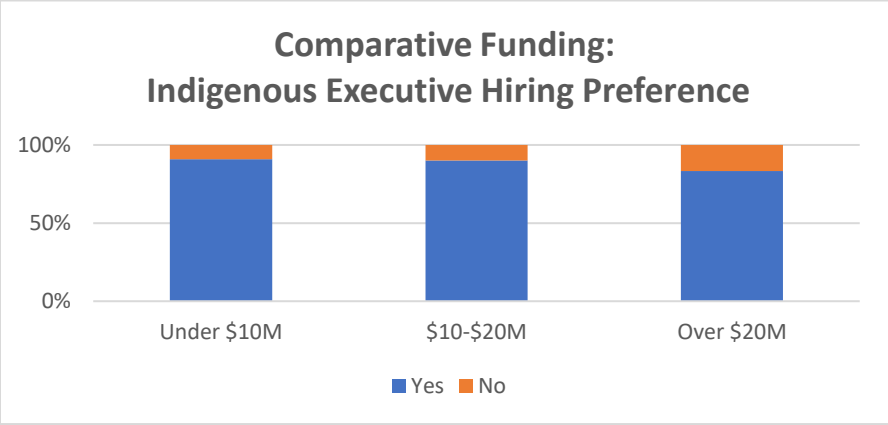
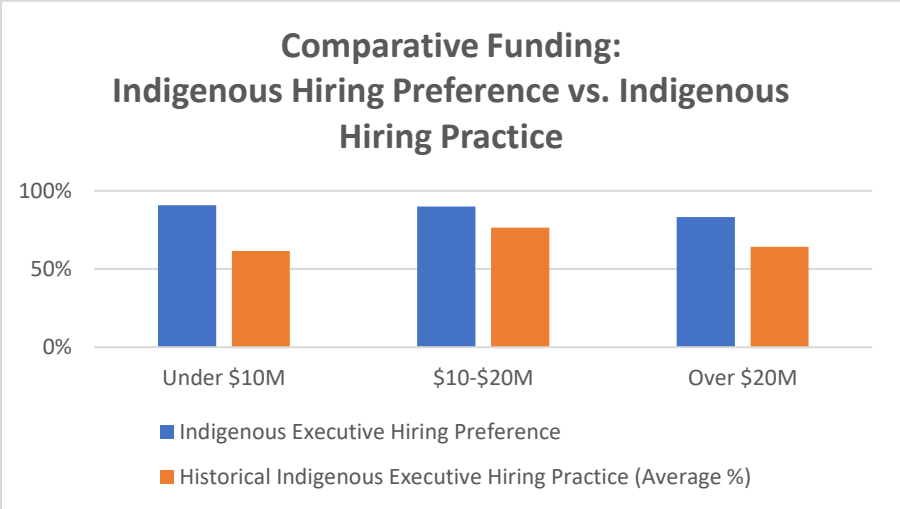


Figure 55: Comparative Funding: Indigenous Hiring Preference vs. Indigenous Hiring Practice



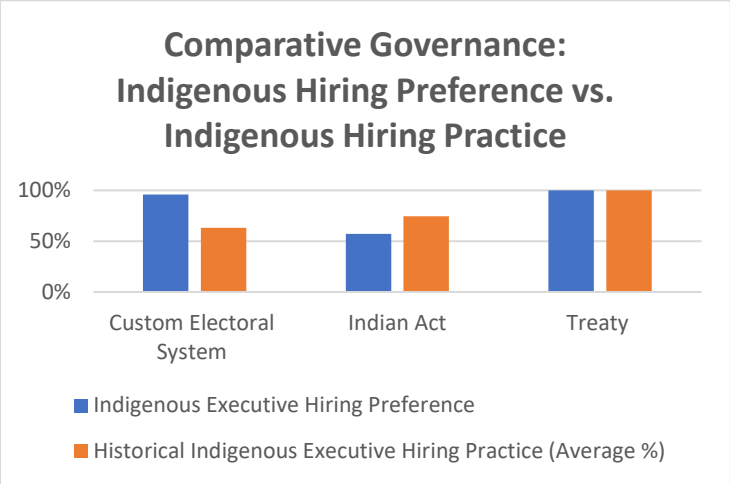
Executive Hiring Preference and Governance

All governance system First Nations preferred hiring Indigenous executives, although *Indian Act* grouping showed almost an equal split in their executive hiring preference. Leading the Indigenous executive hiring preference was the Treaty First Nations at 100%, followed by the Custom Electoral First Nations at 96%, and concluding with *Indian Act* First Nations at 57% (Figure 56).

Figure 57 shows the Treaty First Nations grouping was able to meet its demand of 100% Indigenous executive hiring preference by hiring only Indigenous executives for the last 10 years. The Custom Electoral System grouping First Nations strongly preferred hiring Indigenous executives (96%), and for the last 10 years only 63% of their executives were Indigenous. Most surprisingly are the *Indian Act* First Nations grouping. *The Indian Act* grouping had a low Indigenous executive hiring preference (57%), although in the last 10 years 74% of their executives were Indigenous.

Figure 56: Comparative Governance: Indigenous Executive Hiring Preference

Figure 57: Comparative Governance: Indigenous Hiring Preference vs. Indigenous Hiring Practice



Executive Hiring Preference and Subordinate Sizes

All Subordinate groupings preferred hiring Indigenous peoples in their executive positions, although, the 12+ staff grouping led the way with a 100% preference rate, followed by the 7-12 staff at 83%, and finally the 0-6 staff at 77% (Figure 58) – this is interesting because as the number of subordinates increases, so does the Indigenous hiring preference.

According to Figure 59, none of the Subordinate grouping First Nations have exceeded their hiring preference, although the 0-6 staff First Nations come close with the demand being 77% and the supply being 68%.

Figure 58: Comparative Subordinates: Indigenous Executive Hiring Preference

Figure 59: Comparative Subordinates: Indigenous Hiring Preference vs. Indigenous Hiring Practice

Concluding Thoughts on Executive Hiring Preference

Regardless of the variables compared, the majority of First Nations preferred hiring Indigenous people in executive roles. Some of the other key findings from this section include:

- Treaty First Nations prefer hiring Indigenous executives, and all of their executives from the past 10 years were Indigenous;
- *Indian Act* governing system First Nations are divided on their Indigenous executive hiring preference, although, they were one of the few groups who were able to surpass their hiring demand in the last 10 years;
- Zone 3 First Nations 100% preferred hiring Indigenous executives, although for the past 10 years only 75% of their executives were Indigenous;
- Only three groupings (*Indian Act*, Treaty, and Small First Nations) were able to meet or exceed their Indigenous executive hiring preference and demand, which accounts for 23.07% of the overall groups; and
- As the number of subordinates increases, so does the Indigenous hiring preference
- 76.94% of the groupings were not able to meet or exceed their Indigenous executive hiring preference and demand, which indicates a possible supply shortage.

Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, the descriptive analysis of executive turnover from 2013 to 2023 reveals crucial insights into the tenure and hiring practices within Indigenous organizations. The average

executive tenure of just over 3.5 years underscores a significant challenge in retaining Indigenous executives. Notably, 67% of the executives during this period were Indigenous, reflecting a strong preference for Indigenous leadership across various Nation groups. Key findings highlight the consistent practice of hiring Indigenous executives among Treaty First Nations (100%) and the concerningly short tenures in Nations with revenues of $10-$20M. Historical extremes in tenure, ranging from mere days to over 30 years, further emphasize the variability and challenges in executive retention. Additionally, First Nations with over 12 staff subordinates experienced notably short tenures, while Zones 1 (Urban) and 4 (Remote and Isolated) and Small First Nations demonstrated robust Indigenous executive tenures. Despite the strong preference for Indigenous executives, only a few groupings, including Treaty and Small First Nations, met or exceeded their hiring demands, suggesting a potential supply shortage. This analysis underscores the importance of addressing retention challenges and enhancing support for Indigenous executives to foster stable and effective leadership in Indigenous organizations.

Chapter 7

Impacts of Executive Turnover

The questions related to the impacts of executive turnover were written for leaders (e.g. chiefs, board chairs, etc.) as they were the most likely to experience the impacts of executive turnover, although, some executive interviewees (i.e. National and Provincial) shared their observations, as well as the BC focus groups of executives. The majority of the respondents indicated that executive turnover has resulted in an increase in staff uncertainty, a disruption in business operations and progress, and high costs. Other minor impacts were identified, such as increased workload for other staff, community uncertainty, demoralization, disruption of relationships, improved person-organization fit, interruption of reporting requirements and direction, lags in communication, retooling and finding replacements, and staff being scared to take risks. This chapter delves into the significant majorly supported impacts of executive turnover. This research is crucial for fostering sustainable governance and effective management within Indigenous organizations, ultimately contributing to their long-term success and resilience.

Increased Staff Uncertainty: A Call for Stability

Many respondents indicated that staff uncertainty was prevalent once an executive left their role. Some of these respondents were former executives who maintained contact with their former colleagues. One respondent chief witnessed this impact directly over multiple executive turnover scenarios. These are two vastly different groups, former executives and current chiefs, but they share similar stories. Due to human resource confidentiality requirements, when an Indigenous executive leaves a position, the Nation often does not communicate why the Indigenous executive left. As a result, staff across the First Nation face an increase in uncertainty, largely

because staff do no feel secure in their positions given that the former administrative head of the organization has left. One respondent stated:

> "There's big changes in administration here, whether it's the most senior executive, the CEO or below, there's always a sense of uneasiness to what's happening or what's next? Is everything gonna be okay?" (Participant #18)

The researcher has shared this feeling of uneasiness when he was a director who reported to a Nation's executive who recently departed from their role. The researcher was not worried about being terminated, he was worried about being asked to replace the executive on an acting or permanent basis.

It is no secret that change can be a reason people experience uncertainty. When an executive leaves their role, staff can become uncertain. According to the interviewees, staff uncertainty can feel paralyzing, panic-inducing, and bring up feelings of insecurity. An interviewee shared what they meant when it comes to a paralyzing feeling as it relates to staff uncertainty:

> "You feel paralyzed when you're in the middle of a conflict, and things aren't resolved, and you can't do a good job. You can't maintain a level of productivity that you would normally have under normal circumstances because it's distracting, it's scary, it's worrying, it's all those things that create dysfunction when there's problems on your governance or with your executive." (National Participant #1)

In addition to these feelings, there are some actions that occur as a result of staff uncertainty, such as staff turnover if the staff were loyal to the executive and have other employment opportunities. Finally, it is important to highlight that staff uncertainty is situational, meaning that if the outgoing executive creates a succession and transition plan staff uncertainty will be alleviated; although, when the executive turnover is quick with little-to-no communication, the risk of staff uncertainty increases.

A respondent provided a fascinating observation on what influences staff turnover when an executive leaves. The first influence is that staff feel job instability when their executive

leaves because they worry that they will be fired next. The second influence is the relationship the staff had with their executive. If they feel loyal to their recently departed executive, they may consider resigning from their position, too. A respondent added a caution about the influences of joint resignations, stating that certain factors need to be in place, such as financial freedom, and other career opportunities. If these factors are in place, then it can increase the likelihood of staff turnover when executive turnover occurs, although one respondent highlighted that it's less likely in smaller organizations compared to larger organizations because, "they have their whole lives surrounding their position, their families, routines, the level of salary, all surrounds this organization that's bringing food to the table," (National participant #2). As a former executive of a smaller organization, the researcher can attest that it's more difficult for those in smaller organizations to resign from their positions for said reasons. The concerns for additional turnover of staff were supported by focus group participants.

Disrupts Business Operations and Progress: Rebuilding Amidst Turbulence

A key starting quote is, "the more turnover you have, the more you're starting over again, then you're starting over again, then you're starting over again," (Participant #16). While the quote was only from one respondent, the sentiments of the quote were echoed by this group of respondents. Current and former executives (i.e. interviewees and focus groups) and leaders, agree that executive turnover disrupts business operations and progress. These executives experienced these impacts when they took up the executive position vacated by their predecessor. Some examples of disruption in progress and business operations included the loss of corporate knowledge, loss of social capital, loss of trust with community, outstanding funding reports, and management of unnecessary crises. One executive recalled that when they started their executive role:

> "Again, there was no collective vision by the health directors, there was no . . . There was a real big gap in understanding the contract between the funder and the flow through funding to communities. They didn't really want to seem to have to be responsible to report on the flow through funding. The budget was way off. So a lot of cleanup crisis management, I call it. There's a lot of crisis management, and there's been no paper trails to discipline anybody. So quite generally, when you go in as a new director, you're left to deal with the stuff that they didn't wanna deal with." (Participant #8)

This quote was echoed by multiple BC focus group executive participants, where they shared their task of having to completely clean up the mess of their predecessors. The researcher also had a similar experience as it related to having to create structure, policies, annual budgets, and annual reports to membership. In Indigenous communities, it is not uncommon to hear executives use the term "putting out fires" when they are managing crises in their community.

In addition to starting over, executive turnover also disrupts progress when it comes to the work of the former executive being halted or discontinued by the new executive. One sentiment is that executive turnover resulted in a loss of time as the projects were at a standstill. One person stated that this disruption of progress was the result of a:

> "perception of things that the new leadership was going to come in. They're going to try to sweep everything that the old leadership was going to try. And that's what their election promises were." (Participant #23)

A BC focus group participant built on the above quote by stating, "So if they're bringing on a new executive it's a pivot moment," (Focus Group Participant). Both these quotes demonstrate the impacts a new executive can have when it comes to disrupting progress and business operations. In the researcher's experience, he has noticed that a newly elected leadership has terminated an executive and replaced them with a new person, resulting in a disruption in progress and business operations.

This disruption of business operations and progress includes program and service delivery, the lack of continuity, impact of funding and reports, and decreases productivity. An interviewee eloquently describes the disruption which comes from a newly elected leadership:

> "New chiefs and council would get elected and they'd go in and they'd clean house. Without regard. And then of course, what happens then is the administration suffers, the operation suffers and vision gets distorted and cracked and blurred, and to the point where sometimes it's not even there anymore." (National Participant #5)

The above quote is an extreme example where a new council cleans house (terminates everyone), although the impacts are unsurprising. The same interviewee argues that the cause of the staff uncertainty is the *Indian Act*. Finally, one participant argues that an organization experiences a greater disruption in progress and business operations in instances where the executive is synonymous with the organization. In these instances, they recommended more branding around the organization and less around the executive, as well as bringing in more of a diverse workforce. There are many National Indigenous organizations where people automatically associate it with their executive since they have a long and influential tenure.

Finally, executive turnover results in a disruption of progress and business operations, more specifically, within relationships. In Indigenous culture, relationships are paramount. There is an old Indigenous adage that says, "Relationship comes before business." When an executive leaves an organization, they take their relationships with them, which is detrimental to an Indigenous organization and the people they serve. Two BC focus group participants shared stories about the importance of relationships. The first story talks about how a former executive still has their former partners reaching out to them after their departure:

> "The ball gets dropped and there's no transition. We lose that connection. In the CEO position, we lose the connection with the partnerships. The old partners are calling and texting me, with no communication on me leaving. They don't have anyone there to manage the corporation." (BC Focus Group Participant)

Unfortunately, the above quote is not a unique experience. It is not common practice in Indigenous organizations to communicate the departure of its executives. If the former executive was terminated, there is no opportunity for the executive to inform the partners of the transition,

either. This practice can lead to a loss of trust between stakeholders as can be demonstrated by this respondent's story:

> "And then, yeah, the residual as far as turnover, as far as I mean, every aspect of the organization, I mean, the clients had . . . We had, we had to rebuild trust, we're just now, especially with not just clients, but with our funders, with our community, there had been . . . I just actually had a meeting with the social worker for the school district, that she came in, and she had, she said to me, "This is the first . . . What you've done over the last few years. We're actually able to refer people to your organization now, because we know that you are there, and that there's some consistency now," because previously, they didn't know who to talk to, who to contact, who was employed. It was such high turnover with the organization that there was no consistency. So nobody felt comfortable or confident in referring any clients to the organization for anything. And so it was a real eye opener that that has been a huge roadblock and barrier for a lot of people in our community accessing our services is just because nobody felt confident coming here, because they didn't know what they were going to get." (BC Focus Group Participant)

In addition, another BC focus group participant shared that the lack of community engagement develops into community backlash, which is inherited by the incoming executive. Finally, another BC focus group member shares that the internal relationships with staff are also disrupted when an executive departs their role.

High Costs: Navigating Financial Strain

It is no surprise that there is a large cost to having an executive leave an organization. One BC focus group participant shared that when they assumed the executive role, they inherited the accumulated debt from their predecessors, and their role was to recoup these costs. One of the respondents indicated that wrongful dismissal or dismissal without cause costs the organizations because the terminated executives would seek remedy and protection under the Canadian Labour Laws to successfully sue the organizations. Further to the cost related to wrongful dismissal, there is another impact, which is third party management. A respondent indicated that when some organizations are sued, they are forced to take from the limited funds that they have and as a result are placed on third party management due to financial mismanagement. Finally, one

respondent shared that you get what you pay for, i.e., when you hire a cheaper executive, it ends up costing the organization money by putting the organization into a debt spiral. This sentiment is supported by a BC focus group participant who stated:

> "So the residual impact on our organization was that the government had to intervene to identify the board members that could govern the organization. So the government had selected the board members at the time of the greatest crisis and so the residual impact was third-party management. It wasn't third-party management in the same terms of reference as Indian and Northern Affairs but essentially it was their form the provincial governments because this is a very critical organization it's a legislated organization." (BC Focus Group Participant)

It is not uncommon to hear about third-party management when it comes to First Nations communities, although it is uncommon to hear about it from an Indigenous nonprofit organization. Typically, the third-party management results in First Nations being assigned a third-party management executive whose task is to get the First Nations back on track with its budgets, service delivery, and reporting. It is surprising to hear that the third-party management of Indigenous nonprofits allows for the government to replace the organization's governors.

In conclusion, the impacts of executive turnover within Indigenous organizations are experienced throughout their operations, affecting staff certainty, business continuity, and financial stability. These findings underscore the vital importance of understanding the dynamics of executive turnover. Transitioning from the extensive analysis of the impacts of executive turnover on Indigenous organizations, it becomes evident that understanding executive tenure is crucial in grasping the dynamics of leadership stability within these communities. By delving into the tenure data across various parameters such as First Nation's population size, operating budget size, geographic location, and governing structure, we can shed light on the implications and concerns surrounding executive tenure over the past decade. This exploration serves to deepen our understanding of the challenges faced by Indigenous organizations.

Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, the profound impacts of executive turnover within Indigenous organizations are felt across their operations, significantly affecting staff certainty, business continuity, and financial stability. As we transition to the next chapter, we will delve deeper into the underlying causes of Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations. Through this exploration, we aim to illuminate the root factors contributing to turnover.

Chapter 8

Causes of Executive Turnover

The high turnover rates among executives in Indigenous organizations present a significant challenge that demands urgent attention. Understanding these root causes is crucial, as high turnover rates can significantly impact the stability and effectiveness of these organizations. By identifying and addressing the underlying issues, we can work towards creating more supportive and sustainable environments for Indigenous executives. The majority of the respondents indicated that executive turnover is driven by lateral violence, burnout, lack of governance capacity, poor compensation, conflict with leadership, and involuntary termination.

As we anticipate the findings, it becomes evident that the factors contributing to executive turnover are multifaceted and complex. Readers will encounter a detailed exploration of these interconnected issues, shedding light on the intricate dynamics at play. First, we will explore the root causes of executive turnover in Indigenous organizations. Then, we will examine the number of subordinates reporting to executives and the turnover rate among them in 2020. We'll analyze various factors, including the Nation's population size, governing structure, budget size, and geographical zones.

Lateral Violence: Unveiling the Hidden Wounds of Indigenous Leadership

Unsurprising to the author, based on his experience working in Indigenous organizations, lateral violence was one of the top causes of Indigenous executive turnover. This subsection will explore how the respondents define lateral violence, where the lateral violence comes from, and how the lateral violence makes the respondents feel like quitting.

The term lateral violence is defined as when an oppressed group oppresses others in their group, instead of their oppressor. Several interviewees indicated that lateral violence stems from

colonization. The respondents did not produce a common definition for lateral violence. Rather, the respondents illustrated various manifestations of lateral violence within Indigenous organizations, including:

- Gossiping
- Triangulating
- Bullying
- Insubordination
- Cliques
- Aggressive communication (both written and verbal)
- Actual violence
- Harassment
- Infighting
- Blaming
- Shaming
- Deliberately dimming one's light for fear of termination
- Instances of sexual harassment
- Profanity, passive-aggressive conduct
- Negative body language
- Rumor-mongering, sabotage
- Jealousy, and
- Disparities in valuing individuals within our community compared to those of white ethnicity.

While there was no common definition, there was a common phrase that emerged from a few respondents, which was the “crabs in the bucket” story:

> “I think that we still have a lot of lateral violence and crabs in the bucket where we don't want to see other people earn a lot of money. We get like, 'Oh, why should they earn that much money? We're poor.' I think that that's unhealthy.” (Participant #4)

The lateral violence is coming from all directions. For example, the respondents indicated that they experience lateral violence from inside the organization, specifically from staff, although more often than not they experience lateral violence from the leadership. In addition to facing lateral violence in the organization, they also experience it from outside the organization, primarily from the membership that they serve. See Table 4 below for quotes from respondents (i.e., BC, National, and BC Focus Group) that relate to the lateral violence experience they have experienced from leadership, staff, and their membership:

Table 4: Lateral Violence Examples

Leadership	Staff	Membership
"There's so much lateral violence from our chief and council, directors dread going to see them because they start attacking either the director or one of the director's staff or they start suggesting in a vicious manner, 'You better get this program started. What the heck is going wrong with you?'" (BC Participant #8)	"The person who hired me was let go and then I was let go, too. Undermining occurred. Chiefs of the tribal council was friends with the underlings, which caused the executive to be terminated." (BC Focus Group Participant)	"It's sort of the lateral violence within the organization. It's the top-down violence in the organization. It's the bottom-up violence. It's going into community meetings and everybody's sitting there focused on one thing. Watching the sparring between those five band members that wanna fight with chief and council and the administrator. People come there to watch the sport of it, which is why I think we need to change our systems of engagement with the community and get them more involved. Because you neutralize the voice. (National Participant #5)

Now that we have a better understanding of what lateral violence looks like and where it comes from, let's look at statements from respondents on how lateral violence makes executives want to quit their positions. One of the common words that arise from respondents when talking about lateral violence is the term 'toxic work environment'. One of the participants stated:

> "The things like lateral violence, things that our Indigenous people are still going through, their own healing, their own anger. Having people say you're not doing enough. Those are hard things to walk through when you're an executive of a non-profit anyways. So, there are a lot of reasons to leave." (Participant #24)

In addition to working in a toxic work environment, some of the respondents indicated that the lateral violence impacts their family and personal life. One of the respondents shared their horror story about their family being impacted:

> "It was really tough. We're tough, we're mean, we're tough on our own people. And I didn't know a lot of this stuff at the time. My family suffered the most. Because they thought they were getting all this, we were getting everything for free and we're ripping the band off. And my kids got ostracized and targeted. Even by our own family, which I thought was our own family. And just that it wasn't good. It wasn't a nice fit. Cause we were always considered you work for the band office, you're one of them. You're not one of us." (Participant #1)

In other instances, people's professional and personal reputations and relationships are put on the line when gossiping spreads in the community. One of the respondents shared a story where the community started to gossip about a potential affair with a contractor:

> "So you recall that I talked about getting a lot of infrastructure happening at home. So we were building the school and as I . . . As the tribe's project manager, you always interact with the contractors, so a lot of interaction was taking place between me and the contractor, obviously because the school had to be built. And then [chuckle] someone came into my office and said "[Redacted Name]?" And I said, "What?" said "They say, you're having an affair with so and so." (Participant #2)

One of the most eye-opening commonalities of the respondents is the shared belief that lateral violence will continue indefinitely. For example, one of the participants stated:

> "If I leave they're going to attack the next person, they're going to wear down the next person, and the people below me, my team in my department aren't nearly as strong or as vocal or resilient as I am." (Participant #19)

While the author has not had the exact thought as above, the author has experienced worries in the past about how his team would do under new leadership, especially with lateral violence being prominent in the organization and community. The author remains hopeful that one day lateral violence will be mitigated, and no longer normalized in communities.

In conclusion, here is a quote from an interviewee that showcases how lateral violence contributes to their personal experience of wanting to quit:

> "We suffer from lateral violence and colonization where our people don't recognize the capacity of our people, they'd rather pay a white person to do the job. People like me struggle with our governance structure, where someone always gets jealous and wants to sabotage you. That's why I find myself moving on." (National Participant #8)

The author shares the sentiment of the above quote. In the author's experience, he has noticed that jealousy is rampant in the organizations and communities that he has served. He has also noticed that non-Indigenous executives are treated better than their Indigenous counterparts, which is an overt lateral violence practice. As a result of these lateral violence practices, the author has resigned from an executive role in the past and is hesitant to return.

Burnout: The Silent Struggle of Indigenous Executives

Much like the executive positions in municipalities and other levels of government, burnout is one of the leading causes of Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations, as shared by all participating groups (i.e., National, BC, and BC Focus Groups). This subsection will explore how the respondents define burnout, where the burnout comes from, and how burnout makes the respondents feel like quitting.

Defining Burnout

Burnout is often best showcased with a candle. When lit for too long, the wick becomes shorter, and the flame grows smaller, eventually diminishing to nothing. Indigenous executives typically have a longer wick when first starting their careers or a new job, although the roles eventually burn the wick down to nothing resulting. They burn out and develop related health symptoms.

The Origins of Burnout

Burnout arises from a multifaceted array of factors, encompassing job design, high travel requirements, limited organizational capacity, and demanding expectations from key stakeholders such as Chiefs, Council members, and community constituents. This strain is compounded by the pressure of maintaining staff employment, reporting burdens, and the profound impact on executives' families, alongside frustrations stemming from extended work hours, managing competing interests and priorities, temporarily assuming subordinate roles during transitions, navigating the complexities of the *Indian Act*, and shouldering excessive responsibilities.

Compassion Fatigue

Indigenous executives take on a large sense of responsibility to address some of the socio-economic concerns of the community that they serve while ensuring that they can continually

employ their staff to offer important programs and services. These Indigenous executives have a strong sense of compassion to improve Indigenous peoples' lives as a whole. Unfortunately, this strong sense of compassion can expose Indigenous executives to compassion fatigue, which then leads to symptoms of burnout. One participant eloquently shared some of the stress as it relates to the compassion fatigue they experienced during COVID:

> "I've got 220 [employees] and during COVID, I was trying to keep our staff safe and employed. And that is huge, right? So you know, there's those stressors as well around your staff, but the stressors around our clients as well, because the issues that are happening for our people, while many of them are still the same as they were 50 years ago, there's increased mental health and addictions issues. There's the opioid crisis. There's the increased situation of homelessness . . . all of those create ongoing pressures as you're trying to think of ways to put programming and supports in place that will support the most vulnerable in your community through those particular issues." (BC Focus Group Participant)

While the author has not experienced all of the concerns shared by the BC Focus Group Participant, he has experienced his own version of compassion fatigue. Similar to the above quote, being an executive during COVID was a stressful experience for the author as he also wanted to deliver typical programs and services while maintaining staffing levels. Thankfully, the author was able to achieve the said goal, although it was still a stressful and burnout-inducing event for the author, and most likely others.

Available 24/7

Multiple interviewees indicated that the executive role is a very demanding role where they had to be available 24/7, including evenings, weekends, and vacations. An example of 'working hard' included being available 24/7 to their Chiefs and membership via their work phone. Sometimes the Indigenous executives voluntarily make themselves available, and other times, it is forced upon them by policy, which can be seen in one respondent's story, "And then one of the policies was, General Manager wasn't allowed to turn her phone off. It had to be on 24/7," (Participant

#2). In another situation, an Indigenous executive stated that members messaged them on their personal social media profile:

> "So it's like always an ongoing job. You never end. It doesn't end here when you, when you leave at 4:30. I'm getting messages on my personal Facebook messenger. 'Hey, what about this? What about that?' People stop me and ask me questions." (Participant #11)

While the author was not required to have his phone on 24/7, he was messaged frequently on his personal social media with work-related inquiries. As a result of this activity, the author felt like there was no sanctuary from work, which contributed to a feeling of burnout.

Job Design Challenges

The job design aspect is most concerned about how the executive position has so many responsibilities that fall onto one person, which is overwhelming to the executive, as can be seen with a respondent's experience:

> "I remember when I was an early executive, I felt very overwhelmed because I wanted to stop youth from doing suicide and I wanted to stop addictions and I wanted to stop domestic violence and I wanted to stop kids going into care, and Indigenous people going to prisons and all these things. And sometimes I'd feel very overwhelmed and I'd have to remind myself to focus on what I can do today in my current role. And that's how I got through the turmoil or the conflict that I had as an Indigenous person wanting to make a difference." (Participant #13)

Another respondent indicated that there were concerns about the number of people who reported to them in an organizational chart by stating:

> "So really, I end up doing way too much work, and the other part is just structurally, I had 17 direct reports. And just looking at that, it takes three months outta a year just to deal with that, and so it was just not enough upper management." (Participant #1)

While the author did not have 17 direct reports, he did have experiences where he started an executive role and everyone in the organization reported directly to him. In these instances, the author felt overwhelmed by having so many direct reports, which required a lot of time to check in with the reports and evaluate them.

Excessive Travel Requirements

The excessive amount of travel for work was a leader when it came to executives feeling burnout. Traveling is a significant commitment for executives in Indigenous communities, particularly if they are situated away from major city centers, often necessitated by meetings and conferences hosted by external stakeholders, aimed at building capacity and exploring opportunities alongside their leadership and staff. For some of the respondents, the excessive travel put a strain on those executives who had a family, as can be seen in this participant's story:

> "When you're an executive, it's not 9:00 to 5:00, and there's a lot of travel involved usually. And so, it takes a toll on us both physically, but also in our relationships, our family, like sometimes we're leaving our kids home and that type of thing." (Participant #3)

This does not come as a surprise to the author, as the author was required to travel almost once every two weeks for work when he was an Indigenous executive, and this constant traveling impacted the author's health from the sedentary lifestyle and limited dining options on the road.

Limited Capacity of the Senior Leadership Team

In scenarios where Indigenous executives had a senior leadership team, there were concerns about the capacity of the team as can be seen in this respondent's story:

> "Yeah, it's a big situation and it's a human problem more so than any other, I think that sometimes we get so caught up, and I think you will find that many administrators, because of that personality type that you need to be an administrator and effective administrator that you become that person who is hard to let somebody else do a job when you feel like you could do it that much better, and when the capacity doesn't exist in the community you're forced into that position." (Participant #28)

Another participant shared similar sentiments where they felt a huge burden of responsibilities in their role, although, they hesitated to delegate some of the tasks to their subordinates:

> "So the pressure and the stress of trying to find that balance between delegating and giving up some of those tasks, but also keeping an eye on them, finding that balance not to micromanage, I guess, and to put your trust in your employees, but yet still keep an eye on it. It's a very, very interesting balancing act for sure." (BC Focus Group Participant)

The author has had the opposite issue from the BC Focus Group Participant. Instead of hesitating to delegate to employees, the author has freely delegated to employees. Unfortunately, the author over-delegated to the point where items were dropped as the employees did not have the capacity and motivation to take the tasks on. This demonstrates that there is a delicate balance as the above quote delicately shares.

Unrealistic Expectations from Leadership and Community

The demanding nature of the Indigenous executive role becomes apparent in the high expectations placed upon them by both Chiefs and community members. As vividly expressed by one participant:

> "So I think a lot of our family time and our work time get blurred together and I think we're held to a higher accountability. People want us to be everywhere all the time and don't understand. They assume we get paid these big bucks and that we're on 24 hours a day. I even get chiefs calling me like all hours of the night, sending me different articles that they want me to read and or just sending me straight articles and then saying "Well, what did you do with it?" assuming that I know what they want to be done after sending me the article. I don't know if it's a media release or reaching out to the community but I think they have higher expectations of our own people." (Participant #33)

There have been times in the past when the author experienced these blurred lines between home time and work time, where work would continually interrupt home time. This continued practice resulted in feelings of burnout for the author as it felt like he could not get the rest needed to recuperate from work.

Overburdened with Responsibilities

There is an adage that says if you do a good job, you will be rewarded with more responsibilities. Sadly, that is the truth in Indigenous organizations, where they are often under-resourced and do not have a high capacity. In these instances, if an executive is productive, they are granted with more responsibilities until it burns them out. In one interviewee's words, "I've seen that many, many times. I have friends who have suffered from that. And it's hard to come back from, you

damaged the psyche of people," (National Participant #5). A BC Focus Group participant shared that people are being overburdened with responsibilities as a result of the recruitment and retention issues in BC where staff are having to do overtime to make up for the shortage of workers.

Overburdened with Reporting Requirements

Many BC Focus Group participants shared that burnout was linked to the burdensome reporting requirements their organizations have with funding agencies. One of these participants shared their reporting experience, "I'm in the office on weekends to get that done . . . if you've been delivering the same programs for 20 years, why are you having to report out four times a year?"

The Indian Act

The insightful narratives shared by interviewees shed light on a critical aspect of executive burnout—the profound impact of the *Indian Act*. One interviewee shared the following quote on the *Indian Act* and its link to burnout:

> "And I think that really plays hard on people who are trying to do a good job. So I think we wear our own people out. Because it's hard to stay in those positions, even though you have a belief and a vision yourself to go there. And that, I've seen that many, many times. People go there because they believe and they want to make a difference. And they get there and realize that this systemic monster of the *Indian Act* continues to have its way. Notwithstanding very bright, brilliant young, well-educated leaders, people with good experience coming in these positions, and then they just burnout within one term or two terms." (National Participant #5)

The above quote is powerful and indirectly shares that while people are quick to start these executive roles with a beautiful vision of making a difference, they are limited by the *Indian Act* and all of its limitations. This feeling is heightened by another interviewee's story on how they would never assume a band manager role unless the organization moved out of the *Indian Act*:

> "No, I was a band manager for about three years. That burned me out too. Seriously, psychologically and physically, it burned me out. It was truly exciting. And I do have fond memories, but that was 24/7. I wouldn't wish that on anyone. And that was many, many years ago. But no, I wouldn't do it again if you quadrupled my annual salary, no

> conceivable way at all. Now, if it was a new system, I would gingerly go up and smell the corners of the room. But under that old system, no, not a prayer." (National Participant #6)

The above quote resonates with the author because of the author's recent work experience where he is assisting First Nations communities in transitioning out of the *Indian Act* system to exercising their inherent rights to self-government.

Impact on the Executive and their Family.

The demanding nature of the executive role not only takes a toll on the individual but also has profound effects on their family life and overall well-being. A participant from the BC Focus Group highlighted the far-reaching consequences, stating:

> "I think the final thing is that it does impact your personal life. We live in small communities and I don't know how many times my kids will say to me, 'How come every time we go to the mall and you end up counseling somebody for 45 minutes in the food court?' Because you can't really go anywhere without people knowing who you are. I mean, [redacted name] I'm the Friendship Center to everybody. So I mean, we don't . . . My husband and I never go out anymore, all of that kind of thing because somebody's crying or they want to borrow money or whatever it is. So it really impacts your personal health and wellness as well, especially in small communities because everyone knows you." (BC Focus Group Participant)

Furthermore, the challenges extend beyond community interactions to encompass the strain of constant travel, particularly for executives with families. As expressed by a National Participant:

> "But if you have families and if you have something that's going on . . . It's not fun to live out of your suitcase, it's not fun to constantly have no routine or to be constantly on the move. So that might be something that people just decide, you know what, 'I'm done.'" (National Participant #9)

The stress and pressure experienced by executives also impact their family dynamics. Another participant from the BC Focus Group shared:

> "The pressure and the stress that it puts on your family, because they're the ones that sort of have to, not necessarily, I try my best not to vent to them necessarily, but they can tell when I've had a hard day and it wears on them as well. And my kids go to my husband, 'Is mom okay?' [chuckle] And they have to sometimes tiptoe around a little bit and that's not fair. So it's that guilt that you feel trying to wear all of the hats. As a mother, as a wife,

> as my husband, he calls me even at home, he's like, 'You're my executive director at home too. You never really take that hat off.'" (BC Focus Group Participant)

While the author was not a parent during his time as an executive, he can reflect on how hard it would be to carry on the burdensome executive responsibilities, at the same time as being an active and present dad.

The Decision to Quit.

One of the interviewees shared a story on how this lifestyle led them to quit their job, "People run out of energy and they eventually have to quit for health reasons or families breaking down," (National Participant #2). When Indigenous executives continue to face burnout with no remedy, they tend to look elsewhere for a job that will appreciate them more with higher compensation and fewer responsibilities. A participant shared their thoughts on this matter by stating:

> "I think what's the point when you start to notice your days are starting to come real long then the sacrifice isn't worth it anymore. And they can get a job down the street and they can probably get paid more and it'd be half the work." (Participant #1)

Another Indigenous executive stated that burnout was the cause of Indigenous executive turnover:

> "Burnout, 100%. Because communities will use you till they lose you. And you will work yourself, I think, to the bone until you can't anymore, because you just want to give so much. That's how I feel in this role. I feel I know for sure. The only reason I'll leave is because of burnout. And I know that that will be my exit. When I'm done here is when they've completely burned me out." (Participant #29)

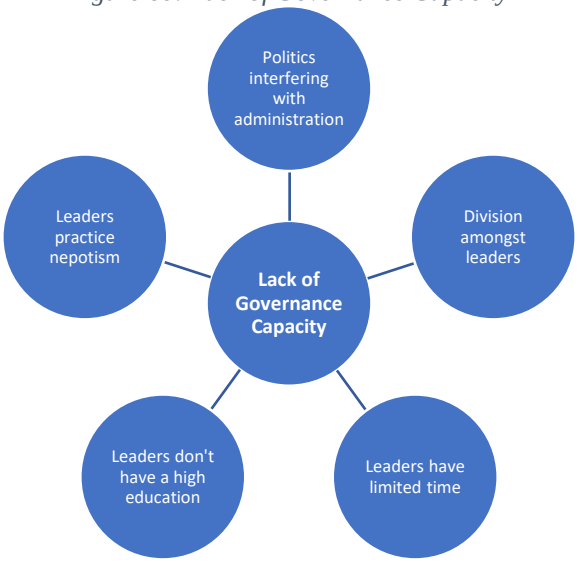
The author is recovering from a recent burnout that occurred in an executive role. The author tried to balance school, work, and family and ultimately burnt himself out. As a result, the author knew he had to remove himself from school, work, or family, and he chose to resign from his job to focus on completing his PhD while being an active and involved dad.

Lack of Governance Capacity: Structural Challenges in Indigenous Leadership

The lack of capacity of governance is a leading cause of Indigenous executive turnover, shared by all participating groups (i.e., BC, National, and BC Focus Groups). While it sounds like a critical statement, the lack of governance capacity covers a range of areas related to governance. This subsection will explore how the respondents define lack of governance capacity as an issue, and how the lack of governance capacity makes the respondents feel like quitting.

A lack of governance capacity is a loaded statement that contains many elements. The participants provided examples of a lack of governance capacity by stating that the elected leaders interfered with administration and human resources decisions, leaders were divided on issues on the Chief and Council, leaders practiced nepotism, leaders had very limited time, and leaders were not highly educated. Figure 60 provides a graphic representation of the complexities linked to the lack of governance capacity.

Figure 60: Lack of Governance Capacity



As a former Indigenous executive, the author is not surprised by most of the lack of governance capacity concerns, with the exception of division amongst leaders. In most First Nations communities, there is a solid understanding of the importance of not having politics

interfere with the administration, given their understanding of the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development (Harvard Project), which states that politics should not interfere with business and administration, as was shared by a respondent:

> "So what they teach in the Harvard Project is the separation of the political from the administrative and business. And they had an exhaustive study on what makes First Nations successful. And separating those areas is an important thing." (Participant #12)

Despite speculation about the applicability of the Harvard Project's findings to Canada and their relevance to band administration, given their original focus on economic development, it is reassuring to observe a discernible connection emerging from the insights gleaned through these interviews.

Political Interference with Administration and Nepotism

Unfortunately, political interference in administration was one of the most highly cited reasons for Indigenous executive turnover, as can be seen in this one respondent's quote, "Political interference is the biggest challenge that administrative leaders have," (Participant #2). Several BC Focus Group participants echoed their concern about political interference and its contribution to the Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations. The types of political interference ranged from human resources, supervision, and revoking decisions that the administration made. When it comes to human resources, there were times when the leadership asked the administration to fire someone, as can be seen in this quote, "Yeah, I had one councillor come up to me while I was the executive director and she wanted me to fire somebody because she didn't like them," (Participant #12). In other instances, human resource political interference included nepotism which can be seen in the following story:

> "And I think that a lot of the pains that I felt as an Executive Director here was me trying to release those ties of nepotism, not my nepotism, but like the chief's nepotism within the organization. And realizing those people are not fit for those jobs, but because they're related to the chief, that's why they're there, right? And that kind of thing. And I think it's like, dealing with those things is like stepping on a bomb. Sometimes you may blow your

> own leg off just trying to be an administrator, and just trying to do your job. And so politics plays a huge part in why lots of people leave because they're just like, 'I'm not going to deal with this anymore.'" (Participant #29)

One of the respondents shared a powerful quote when it comes to political interference with human resource matters, "You shouldn't have your governors involved in HR matters," (Participant #1).

The structure of the governance also plays a factor in the governance capacity. In one instance, a respondent stated their board is a working board, and shared some of the difficulties associated with an operating board versus a strategic board:

> "And the way that my organization is structured, having an operating board means that it's a little bit challenging for me to figure out what the authorities are for any particular act we need to do. And there's a lot of the board and the board committees end up giving a lot of direction to staff. And that becomes a bit confusing because I prefer less of an operating board and more of a strategic board, oversight board, where I could work closely with the chair, but all that decision-making ultimately comes through me. And that's sometimes the case, but not sometimes the case." (Participant #31)

In one instance, a respondent shared a story of how political interference occurred when a chief constantly overturned a decision made by the executive:

> "There's been lots of times where I've said no, because we don't have the funding or it's something that I'm like, no, because if we do it for this person, we got to do it for everybody. And we don't have the funding to do that. The people will turn around and go to the chief. And the chief will say, yeah, okay, we'll do that. And then he overrules me. And sometimes when that happens, like, it makes it really hard to do the job. Because they're like, well, what am I doing here? You're just going to make all the decisions for me." (Participant #29)

Sadly, the author has had this exact experience occur many times before the author had enough. This type of interference contributed to tension that grew between the author and the leader to the point where it resulted in a strained relationship that led the author to seek employment elsewhere.

Division Amongst Leaders

A division amongst leaders shouldn't be too surprising given the experiences of those working in the municipal, provincial, or Federal governments. However, according to one of the respondents, their experiences of a division amongst leaders is as follows, "You had some council members who had their agenda and others who had another agenda. It was like having the NDP work with the Conservative Party," (Participant #2). To complicate matters further, executives feel that they have multiple bosses when they report to a large governing structure, such as this one respondent's experience:

> "And, you know, if you're working for an indigenous organization and you've got, you know, Chief and Council or board of directors, you've got, you know, five or six bosses, or seven or eight or 11 bosses and it just becomes unwieldy." (Participant #7)

The above quote resonates with the author because there were times in the author's executive experience when he felt overwhelmed by the number of 'bosses' that he reported to daily, and each one had their own agenda.

Limited Time and Limited Education

Leadership roles in Indigenous organizations are very demanding in terms of time and technical capacity. One of the respondents shared their story that outlines the lack of time and technical capacity of some leaders:

> "But our decision makers like the decision makers for the health advisory in the area was the chiefs. So as the health administrator, I would go report to the chiefs, but they don't have enough time, they don't have enough background to understand the intricacies of health and all the elements we're dealing with. And they didn't know how to manage what I brought to them." (Participant #8)

While this story is an eye-opener, it comes as no surprise to the author. Based on the author's understanding of the *Indian Act*, anyone from that community over the age of 18 years old can be nominated and seconded by community members to run for a Chief and Council role in the community. Unless the community has an election code that requires further qualifications as a

pre-requirement, anyone of the age of majority can run regardless of qualifications. One of the respondents shares an insightful story of how anyone can run for elections under the *Indian Act*:

> "Let's take my dad, for example. My dad was a high steel worker, a language speaker. That was his first language. Very humble, he was a residential school survivor. So let's say he got elected to council and they assign him the portfolio of finance. Now, how is a lifelong iron worker going to give any words of wisdom to an accountant or to a financial person? So the system where, let's say, a councillor wants to have their influence on the bad administrator. Where are you coming from? Were you like a construction worker or a laborer? And what authority do you think you have or what knowledge can you possibly provide to someone that has a public administration degree or that has . . . Let's take your membership clerk. Your membership person might have taken the Lens program out of Saskatchewan and they went through the couple year program so they have a certification." (Participant #12)

To build on the above quote, another participant shares their experience witnessing how the elections are based on a popular vote, which can cause headaches for the Indigenous executives when the newly elected leaders act like bullies:

> "Effectively what we have is people that are elected to office through popularity vote. All but one is uneducated there's no education it's just who's been around the longest who's the most popular who's the biggest bully who can garner the votes I don't know what it is but we've got a series of bullies at the table that are sticking their nose . . . They're giving direction to the educated people which is which is fine, give direction but then stay out, give direction give the expectations give the timelines give the deliverables, all of that, fine." (Participant #19)

Regarding educational shortcomings, specific examples include a limited grasp of Roberts Rules of Order (i.e., a guide for conducting organized and fair meetings), insufficient formal education in areas such as business, policy-making, and human resources, as well as a fundamental misunderstanding of governance principles and their respective roles and responsibilities.

Similar to executives, governing bodies have very tight time constraints. Some of the governing body roles are voluntary, and done in the leader's spare time, outside of their full-time job(s). As a result, there is a concern about the incentives of the governing body, as can be seen in one interviewee's story:

> "They're not remunerated and they're not a professional board. So, there's little incentive to make that role a priority in their list of priorities. All of our directors have a lot of stuff going on. They have big responsibilities and roles, and this is just one of many, being a governing committee member of our organization. But because of the situation and the circumstances, they can't commit more than they already are. And so that creates a lot of challenges for the organization." (National Participant #1)

The above quote applies to those who serve on boards of Indigenous non-profit organizations, although in Indigenous organizations such as First Nations communities, there is often an honorarium for council members.

Finally, one of the respondents builds on the concern of the lack of education and capacity of the leadership when it comes to effectively managing the band administrator, "How do they evaluate us? How can they carry out a performance evaluation? Because really, they may not have the capacity to do that," (BC Focus Group Participant). Several BC Focus Group participants echoed this concern about the governing body's inability to conduct performance evaluations and added that body lacked ongoing compensation reviews and professional development support capacity, too.

Equity Deferred: The Toll of Poor Compensation on Indigenous Executive Retention

When one thinks of compensation, they may automatically think of salary. Although, our respondents expanded on more than just salary, but also the benefits package, and especially the pension plan (or lack of) when it comes to Indigenous executive turnover.

Feeling Undervalued

A common theme that emerged from almost all respondents was the feeling of being undervalued, as one respondent states, "I don't like that we're undervalued and that we feel like we don't deserve to earn money or to have benefits," (Participant #4). The feeling of being undervalued is exasperated when the Indigenous executives consider the huge efforts they put into their work, and they compare the level of their work with their non-Indigenous predecessors,

as stated by a respondent, “Our people don't like to pay our people what they would pay non-indigenous people,” (Participant #33). To further build on that quote about pay inequity amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous executives, a respondent provides an Indigenous feminist lens with their story of non-Indigenous men making more money than Indigenous women:

> “So, I would say as Indigenous women, we really struggle because we're not paid as well as men. I would say this at the table sometimes when we would talk about HR. We'd talk about different studies they'd want to do on retention of band members or this or that, or some other things. I would say, 'Hmm, why don't we do a study on pay equity for women and men?' Because the man who was previously in the role that I had in one of my jobs had less education than me, less experience, was non-Indigenous, and got paid more than me.” (Participant #4)

The executives find out that the work is extensive and they are being severely underpaid when they look at how much the private sector and bigger First Nations are paying for an equivalent role. One interviewee estimates that private sector jobs can offer two to three times (2-3x) more than their current role in an Indigenous organization.

Another frustration executives have is they believe that non-Indigenous peoples are compensated better than their Indigenous counterparts in Indigenous organizations as can be seen by one interviewee’s story, “You have the same education as a white person, but you get less than the white person. They devalue their own people,” (National Participant #3). Sadly, that is not a surprising statement, as most Indigenous organizations will make the flawed argument that a non-Indigenous worker has to pay taxes, whereas the status First Nations executive is tax-exempt if the organization is located on-reserve. In addition to considering a career in the private or government sector, some executives consider pursuing a consultant career where they make more money and are more selective in the projects that they pursue. A BC Focus Group participant also shared that since Indigenous non-profits cannot compete with the private sector, they are often viewed as a training ground for individuals to be headhunted by other organizations.

Pension Plans

Moving away from a salary-focussed lens, many of the respondents indicated that the lack of a competitive pension plan, or not offering any pension plan was a huge concern when it came to a lack of compensation that led to Indigenous executive turnover. Some of the executives are considering employment at the Provincial and Federal governments given their competitive pension plans, which an interviewee dubbed "the golden handcuffs," (National Participant #11).

One executive who was close to retirement age shared their story of how they will likely have to continue working and not enjoy retirement due to the lack of pension plans in Indigenous organizations:

> "I don't like how we're not valued. When you work for . . . I'm 57 and I'm sure there's going to be a day where I'm going to retire, and I'm going to have to work still. I'll probably have to do consulting because I have no pension." (Participant #4)

Participant #9 offered a heartbreaking story related to the lack of pension plans in Indigenous organizations and how it caused a respected elder to work until the day she passed away:

> "Pension is really big, it's something that I realize now that we really need to work on towards with our organizations. I know so many women my age and older who've spent their lifetime working at these organizations for our people and don't have a pension, don't have a pension at the end of the day and they gave their whole life. I think about Kat Norris who died without a pension, had to continue on working." (Participant #9)

Sadly, the above stories are not uncommon in First Nations communities and non-profit organizations in BC. When the author first assumed an executive role, there was no pension plan in place, but before he left the position, he implemented one for all staff to enjoy, so they would hopefully get to retire comfortably one day.

Affordable Housing

For those Indigenous organizations that are located in areas with high living costs, either in big urban centres like Vancouver, or more rural and touristy locations like the Tofino and Whistler areas, there is a concern about affordable housing. In situations where the Indigenous organization cannot offer competitive salaries, it becomes difficult to retain their Indigenous

executives when the rental and housing market is so high and volatile, as can be seen in one respondent's story:

> "And even having one of them like say, I have to move out at the end of this month because my landlord has chosen to move back into their home and, I'll go and buy a small fifth wheel and rent a campsite if I have to. So it's pretty bad. And like, I think it's okay now, but even still the cost of rent, as I'm sure it is everywhere, it's really expensive. And I guess it all just comes back down to fair compensation." (Participant #22)

Affordable housing is a huge concern in BC right now, and not just in the Indigenous communities. When the author was an executive, he was lucky enough to be provided with staff housing on the reserve, although that is rare for some communities, and almost controversial given the limited housing supply in the communities.

Funding Constraints and Underfunding

In closing, many of the Indigenous executives feel that they are offered poor compensation given their high workload, and when comparing what other organizations are offering for salary and pension plans. However, it is important to note that it may not be the Indigenous organization purposefully offering a non-competitive compensation package. Some of the respondents indicate that Indigenous organizations are not properly funded to offer a competitive compensation package, as can be seen in this respondent's comment:

> "Especially in today's world, I don't know that you would have the funding to offer to an administrator at the level that you want them to be at, to function in that first community, not a whole lot of those people left in the world at that level for that kinda pay." (Participant #28)

Participant #2 also delves deeper into the complexities of underfunding when it comes to the smaller First Nations communities, and provides a creative solution:

> "Quite frankly, for some First Nations you can only afford what you have within your budget, right? So, some community with let's say 100 people, will able to afford a good administrator, a senior administrator probably a couple of days a week but as you know . . ." (Participant #2)

As a former executive in an Indigenous organization, the author can relate to the experiences of working within a tight budget. Additionally, based on the author's previous research, it is not uncommon for executives to be severely underfunded, especially when compared to their non-Indigenous government counterparts like the Provincial or Federal Governments.

Conflict with Leadership: Navigating Turbulent Waters

"There's a saying out there that a person doesn't leave an organization, they leave their boss. That is a bit of an analogy or an example as to why there would be a revolving door," (National Participant #2). In the Indigenous executive context, their boss is the governing body as a collective. When there is a conflict between the executive and the governing body, it can result in turnover, as was identified by the National interviewees and the BC Focus Groups. According to the interviewees and focus group participants, the conflict between Indigenous executives and council members can stem from various sources, including friction, compatibility (or fit), power struggles, differences in policy interpretation and enforcement, as well as disparities in expectations. Additionally, issues such as falling out with the chief, navigating a new direction set by a newly elected council, inadequate conflict resolution mechanisms, diminishing support from the council for adhering to established policies, power dynamics influenced by council members, particularly in the lead-up to elections, and ethical concerns also contribute to tensions between the two parties.

Exploring Involuntary Turnover: Understanding Indigenous Executive Termination

"Either you leave on your own or you get turfed out," (National Participant #5). This quote indicates that executive turnover is either voluntary or involuntary. Up until this point, the turnover has been focused on voluntary turnover. Involuntary termination is linked to involuntary turnover, in which the organization has decided to let their executive go. When it comes to

termination, there is termination with cause or without cause. This section includes both examples, although involuntary termination without cause seems to be more utilized in Indigenous organizations, as expressed by the National interviewees and the BC Focus Groups.

Involuntary termination with cause is when an organization can legally terminate a staff member based on what they have done. In one instance, an interviewee shared that they terminated one of their executives after the organization discovered discrepancies in key documents. In these instances, executive turnover is positive because risk is being mitigated to protect the best interests of the organization.

Involuntary termination without cause is when an organization does not have legal grounds to terminate a staff. In these instances, the organization often offers the executive a severance package or risks being taken to court for wrongful dismissal. In one case, an interviewee disclosed that they were terminated following a chain of events initiated by their advocacy for service recipients, which clashed with a public statement made by a council member. This led to a hostile environment between the interviewee and the Council, prompting the interviewee to pursue employment elsewhere. Subsequently, when the Council learned that the interviewee was seeking employment elsewhere, they terminated their employment immediately. Unfortunately, when it comes to wrongful termination, many First Nations do not have a solid understanding of the *Indian Act* and how it makes the Canadian labour standards applicable in their communities, which poses many risks such as being sued for wrongful dismissal.

Now that we've gained a thorough understanding of the root causes of Indigenous executive turnover, our focus shifts to exploring quantitative data. This will involve examining the number of subordinates reporting to executives and the turnover rate among them in 2020. We'll analyze various factors, including the Nation's population size, governing structure, budget size, and

geographical zones. As highlighted by one participant, concerns about job design, particularly regarding the overwhelming number of subordinates reporting to executives, demand further investigation.

Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, the myriad challenges faced by Indigenous executives within Indigenous organizations underscore the complex dynamics at play. Lateral violence, burnout, lack of governance capacity, poor compensation, conflict with leadership, and involuntary termination emerge as prominent causes of turnover, highlighting systemic issues that demand attention and resolution.

As we venture into the next chapter, we anticipate reflections on the recurring patterns of turnover, the persistent desire to foster Indigenous leadership within Indigenous organizations, and the potential for meaningful change. It is evident that while the challenges are formidable, they are not insurmountable, and concerted efforts to address these issues hold the promise of creating more supportive and sustainable environments for Indigenous executives.

Chapter 9

Reflections on Turnover

The survey respondents in this study voiced a resounding concern regarding the issue of Indigenous executive turnover within Indigenous organizations, defined as organizations that serve an Indigenous population and have Indigenous leadership and employees. Over the span of 2012 to 2022, the average tenure for executives, who hold positions such as band manager, Tribal manager, CAO, CFO, COO, General Manager, or Executive Director in 34 different BC First Nations was approximately 3.5 years. This statistic underscores a persistent and troubling trend that many within these communities have experienced firsthand. The short tenure of executives has profound implications not only for the organizations they serve but also for the broader communities that depend on their leadership. It is crucial to delve deeper into these implications, as they offer insights into the unique challenges faced by Indigenous organizations and the executives who lead them.

The majority of research participants—many of whom are current or former executives—highlighted the negative impacts of such turnover. They pointed out several critical issues, including increased staff uncertainty, the high costs associated with replacing an executive, and the disruption of business operations and progress. These challenges are not merely administrative hurdles; they can significantly impede the long-term goals and stability of an organization. For communities that rely on consistent leadership to drive initiatives, the frequent turnover of executives can stall progress, create uncertainty, and erode trust among staff and community members alike.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the negative impacts of executive turnover, while significant, are not the sole perspective on this issue. The literature, particularly from non-

Indigenous contexts, often presents turnover as a multifaceted phenomenon that can also bring about positive change. Turnover is sometimes viewed as an opportunity for organizations to rejuvenate, bringing in new ideas, energy, and approaches that can propel the organization forward. This perspective is especially relevant when considering the complex dynamics within Indigenous organizations, where change can be both a challenge and a necessity. Understanding turnover as a potential catalyst for positive transformation allows for a more nuanced discussion on how to manage it effectively, rather than merely viewing it as a problem to be solved.

In this context, it is also crucial to revisit the top causes of Indigenous executive turnover identified in this study. These include lateral violence, burnout, lack of governance capacity, poor compensation, conflict with leadership, and involuntary termination. Each of these factors contributes to a challenging work environment that can push executives to leave their positions prematurely. Addressing these underlying issues is essential not only for reducing turnover rates but also for fostering a healthier and more sustainable organizational culture.

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on the broader implications of turnover, moving beyond its immediate negative impacts to explore how it can be managed and potentially leveraged for organizational benefit. By considering both the challenges and opportunities associated with turnover, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive analysis that is grounded in the specific experiences of Indigenous organizations, while also drawing on broader insights from the literature. Through this reflection, the chapter seeks to offer strategies for effectively managing turnover in a way that supports the long-term goals and resilience of Indigenous organizations.

Understanding Turnover in Indigenous Organizations

The academic literature on turnover in Indigenous organizations in Canada is non-existent. There is some grey literature that exists from organizations, such as the First Nations Public Service Secretariat (FNPSS), which is a BC First Nations non-profit organization, whose goal is to strengthen and build capacity in First Nations communities. In 2021, FNPSS conducted held focus group sessions with executives, program staff and Chiefs and Council members from BC First Nations to understand what FNPSS can do to support and build capacity in communities (Nye & Gelb, 2021). As a result of this engagement, FNPSS learned many things, although, the two key points related to this dissertation, include that the unhealthy and demanding work culture contribute to employee turnover in BC First Nations, and that employee recruitment and retention is a critical challenge for BC First Nations (Nye & Gelb, 2021).

Lateral Violence

In terms of unhealthy and demanding work cultures, Nye and Gelb (2021) indicate that some BC First Nations expressed that the work environments can be toxic, or emotionally draining. Following up with this claim, many BC First Nations indicated that they would like support to develop healthy work cultures, where there is trust and accountability and work boundaries are established and respected (Nye & Gelb, 2021). This aligns with the findings of this dissertation, suggesting that the toxic environments Nye and Gelb (2021) describe may be a manifestation of lateral violence, a phenomenon sadly prevalent in Indigenous organizations.

Lateral violence, as described by Whyman et al. (2021), occurs when oppressed people direct their frustration and anger toward their peers rather than the oppressors, stemming from the long-lasting impacts of colonization and the trauma of Indian Residential Schools. The colonial systems enforced in these schools fostered environments where lateral violence was

normalized, leading to cycles of verbal, emotional, psychological, and even physical abuse within communities (Whyman et al., 2021; Major et al., 2013).

The effects of lateral violence are profound, leading to anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, and low self-esteem, which severely impact people's ability to thrive (Ceravolo et al., 2012; Jaber et al., 2023). These personal impacts inevitably affect the organization as well. Job satisfaction plummets, team cohesion deteriorates, and executives are pushed toward turnover, seeking healthier work environments (Ceravolo et al., 2012). These findings emphasize that the causes of lateral violence are deeply embedded in the historical trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples, such as loss of land, removal of traditional roles, and the oppressive control of colonial institutions (Whyman et al., 2021).

While some may see these behaviors as merely toxic, they are often symptomatic of the broader, intergenerational trauma that Indigenous peoples continue to navigate. The need for healthy work cultures, as expressed by BC First Nations, reflects the broader necessity to address these cycles of lateral violence through decolonization, healing, and the creation of workspaces that foster respect, self-determination, and positive role models who can challenge these harmful dynamics (Whyman et al., 2021; Jaber et al., 2023).

Burnout

Similar to this dissertation's findings, Nye and Gelb (2021) share that BC First Nations' band administrators experience a demanding workload as a result of the broad scope of responsibilities and having to be available on a 24/7 basis to respond to urgent issues, when they arise. According to this dissertation's findings, this best aligns with the burnout causes for Indigenous executive turnover, which showcased the 24/7 availability leading to burnout, and how executives being overburdened with responsibilities leads to Indigenous executive turnover in

Indigenous organizations. This dissertation adds to the literature by including additional causes of burnout, which include compassion fatigue, job design challenges, excessive travel requirements, limited capacity of the senior leadership team, unrealistic expectations from leadership and community, and overburdened with reporting requirements.

Poor Compensation

Nye and Gelb (2021) contribute pay inequity as a contributing factor to employee recruitment challenges and employee turnover in Indigenous organizations, especially when First Nations are not able to offer competitive compensation when compared to other governments and the private sector. While the Nye and Gelb (2021) study does not go into detail on what the compensation includes, this dissertation's findings focus on the total compensation package, which not only includes the salary and wages, but also the health and dental benefits, the pension plan, and other benefits that are often lacking in Indigenous organizations.

Another FNPSS report, by Ducharme, et al. (2023) quantifies the gap between First Nations, Provincial and Federal governments' salaries. First Nations salaries range from 15% to 84% of those in comparable federal and provincial government roles. (Ducharme, et al., 2023) For instance, a First Nations leader typically earns 15% of what their federal government counterpart makes, while a building maintenance worker earns about 84% of a provincial government salary (Ducharme, et al., 2023). On average, governance positions within First Nations receive roughly 49% of the compensation offered to federal and provincial employees (Ducharme, et al., 2023). Specifically, First Nations executives earn only 22% of what federal executives make and 32% of what provincial executives receive (Ducharme et al., 2023).

Housing Shortage

Nye and Gelb (2021) share that a lack of housing in or around the community results in employee attraction and retention issues. This dissertation's findings support this claim, and further states that it is not just the lack of housing, but the lack of affordable housing. First Nations communities are located in various geographic locations, either urban, rural or remote. Regardless of the geographic location, the housing and cost of living costs are astronomical in BC, making it hard to recruit and retain Indigenous executives, especially, in instances where a competitive total compensation package is offered. While some First Nations offer staff housing, some of the research participants cautioned providing staff housing as there are community members who would be upset that non-members receive housing before the community members.

Frequent Turnover: Challenges and Opportunities

As mentioned in this chapter's introduction, the average executive tenure from 2012-2022 was approximately 3.5 years. However, historical data reveals a wide range of tenures, from as short as 1 day to as long as 35 years. Significant observations emerge when considering factors such as a First Nation's population size, annual budget, governing system, executive subordinate size, and geographic location. For example, First Nations with revenues of $10-$20 million over the past decade have seen shortened executive tenures, with some executives remaining only 1-2 days. Conversely, the longest tenures have exceeded 30 years, reflecting notable stability. Additionally, First Nations with more than 12 staff subordinates have experienced shorter average executive tenures between 2013 and 2023. Nevertheless, Indigenous executive tenures have been notably strong over the last decade in both Zone 1 (Urban) and Zone 4 (Remote and Isolated) First Nations, as well as in smaller communities.

The Challenges and Opportunities of Turnover

The term 'turnover' often evokes feelings of loss and difficulty, particularly with voluntary departures. Executive turnover imposes significant fiscal costs, including severance, recruitment, and replacement expenses, often estimated at 2.5 times the outgoing executive's annual salary (Duffield, Roche, Blay, Thoms, & Stasa, 2011; Messersmith, Lee, Guthrie, & Ji, 2014). Socially, it disrupts the workplace, lowering morale and creating uncertainty among staff (Grusky, 1960; Kesner & Sebora, 1994; Haveman, 1993; Abbasi & Hollman, 2000; McKee & Driscoll, 2008; Duffield et al., 2011; Stewart, 2016). Additionally, it results in a loss of social capital, such as external relationships, and human capital, including the skills and institutional knowledge the executive brought to the organization (Carley, 1992; McKee & Driscoll, 2008; Duffield et al., 2011; Messersmith et al., 2014).

Despite these challenges, turnover can also present opportunities for organizational improvement. Involuntary turnover, especially when an executive is not a good fit, can lead to improved performance with a more skilled successor (Eitzen & Yetman, 1972) and introduce fresh perspectives and innovation, countering stagnation (Messersmith et al., 2014). As noted in the literature review and analytical framework, these positive outcomes demonstrate that turnover, while often difficult, can drive beneficial changes within an organization.

Opportunities for Rejuvenation and Strategies for Management

In cases where research participants replaced an involuntarily terminated executive, they often encountered disarray, such as unmet reporting requirements and key business continuity responsibilities. The turnover allowed for positive change when the new executive addressed these gaps effectively. Another strategy highlighted by research participants is succession planning, where the current executive identifies and develops a successor from within the

community, preparing them for future leadership roles. This approach, particularly supported by First Nations communities, helps mitigate negative impacts and leverage turnover as an opportunity for growth and development. By implementing these strategies, organizations can manage turnover more effectively and turn challenges into opportunities for improvement.

A Strong Desire to Hire Indigenous Peoples

There is a strong preference for hiring Indigenous executives, with most First Nations survey respondents favoring the appointment of Indigenous individuals to these roles. Treaty First Nations, in particular, demonstrate a robust commitment to culturally relevant governance by prioritizing Indigenous leadership. However, First Nations governed under the Indian Act show a more divided stance, yet they have exceeded their hiring demands, illustrating their flexibility and resourcefulness. Zone 3 First Nations also prefer Indigenous executives but have only succeeded in filling 75% of these positions with Indigenous individuals over the past decade, highlighting a gap between preference and actual hiring. Furthermore, only 23.07% of First Nations groups (Indian Act, Treaty, and Small First Nations) have met or exceeded their Indigenous executive hiring preferences, suggesting a shortage of qualified Indigenous candidates. Interview participants from BC and National Indigenous organizations also expressed a unanimous preference for hiring Indigenous people into executive roles.

Representation and Self-Governance

This hiring preference is rooted in the belief that Indigenous executives establish trust and legitimacy within communities through their shared lived experiences and perspectives. This connection allows them to communicate in a way that resonates deeply with communities, similar to trauma-informed practices that recognize the historical injustices Indigenous peoples have endured. Leaders emphasized the importance of prioritizing community members for

executive roles, followed by individuals from the same Nation or Tribal group, and then Indigenous people from outside the community. The unique value of Indigenous executives lies in their ability to engage meaningfully with community members, grounded in shared experiences. Participant #17 highlighted the importance of hiring Indigenous individuals for executive roles:

> "Because they bring an experience and a perspective that can't be gained if you're not part of a community. And I think that we have to be . . . Our senior leadership team needs to be seen by our communities as being Indigenous. As you well know, if you go into a community meeting and you haven't lived in that community and you don't know how to approach it, they smell you out real quickly. And we can't afford to go into a community and ask them to embrace systemic change if they don't understand we've come from where they are. We do not want to be seen as just another branch of the government telling people what to do. We want them to understand we've been in their environment, we've been in their shoes, and we believe that we're bringing the solutions that they can look at that won't compromise their integrity as Indigenous people." (Participant #17)

This quote underscores how Indigenous executives bridge the gap between systemic change and community needs, ensuring that solutions are not only aligned with the community's values but also preserve Indigenous integrity. This approach reinforces broader themes of representation and self-governance by empowering Indigenous leadership to drive change that is both authentic and culturally relevant.

Indigenous Executive Turnover's Impact on Representation and Self-Governance

Indigenous executive turnover in an Indigenous organization can significantly affect the representation and alignment of that role within the community, especially if the departing executive is replaced by a non-Indigenous person or an Indigenous person from outside the community or Nation. This change may lead to a misalignment between the individual and the organization, creating stress for the leadership, staff, and the broader community. Furthermore, turnover disrupts ongoing initiatives, particularly those related to self-governance, which require

consistent and committed leadership. According to Satsan Herb George, a leading expert on First Nations inherent rights to self-government:

> "Inherent Rights work takes considerable time and a deep commitment from leadership at all levels, including the executive role. When an Indigenous executive leaves their role voluntarily or involuntarily, it can significantly hinder, or even halt, Inherent Rights work within the Nation." (p. 1, 2022)

To address this challenge, it is crucial to consider how turnover impacts the realization of self-governance goals and to develop strategies for effectively managing these transitions to sustain progress.

Desire by Indigenous Peoples to Work for Indigenous Organizations

While it is clear that there is a strong desire from Indigenous organizations to hire Indigenous peoples in executive roles, it is just as important to understand the Indigenous peoples desire to work for Indigenous organizations. There is a strong desire by the majority of the research participants to work for Indigenous organizations, over non-Indigenous organizations. There is a small minority of these participants that do not have an organizational preference. This section is focused on those that prefer to work in Indigenous organizations to better understand the motivations behind Indigenous individuals seeking employment in Indigenous organizations, and how these motivations intersect with turnover, and how positive turnover can be supported.

The Motivations to Work in Indigenous Organizations

While there is extensive literature on workplace motivation, there is little to none focused specifically on Indigenous workplace motivation. The research participants indicated that they preferred to work in Indigenous organizations because of a strong alignment with Indigenous values and the fulfillment derived from contributing to the socioeconomic betterment of their communities. They found meaning in their involvement in self-governance, decolonization efforts, and fostering cultural safety in the workplace. Many valued the opportunity to witness

the immediate impact of their work, often contrasting this with experiences in non-Indigenous organizations, where they felt disconnected from their values and lacked fulfillment.

Negative experiences in non-Indigenous workplaces—such as provincial and federal governments, Crown Corporations, and academia—were common. Many executives cited feelings of tokenization, exploitation, and dissatisfaction with the overly structured, policy-driven environments that prioritized processes over relationships. One participant shared a vivid comparison between working for Indian Affairs and an Indigenous organization, emphasizing the lack of tangible results and fulfillment in the former.

Despite challenges within Indigenous organizations, such as lateral violence and the difficulty of enforcing policies within their own communities, these executives remained committed to Indigenous organizations. They emphasized the importance of core values such as reciprocity, strong relationships, family prioritization, and collaboration. Indigenous organizations were also noted for their appreciation of individual contributions, such as the recognition of personal history, identity, language, and community connections.

For many, the decision to work in Indigenous organizations was driven by a deep sense of commitment and a promise to create a better future for their people. As one executive shared, the meaningfulness of their role stemmed from a promise made to their chiefs and elders, driving their continued dedication to Indigenous governance and leadership.

Reflections on Motivation and Turnover

The motivations of executives working in Indigenous organizations intersect with turnover in complex ways. For those motivated by alignment with Indigenous values and the ability to contribute meaningfully to their communities, staying in these roles can provide immense fulfillment. However, this motivation must be balanced with the realities of organizational

limitations, such as a lack of benefits, stability, and clear advancement opportunities. Turnover, often seen as negative, can also be positive when it facilitates career advancement, skill-building, and broader contributions to Indigenous governance. Supporting positive turnover requires Indigenous organizations to foster pathways for growth, skill enhancement, and mentorship, encouraging employees and managers to advance without feeling disconnected from their communities.

Executives who expressed no strong preference for working in Indigenous or non-Indigenous organizations were quick to outline the pros and cons of both settings. While some valued the flexibility and innovation opportunities in Indigenous organizations, others appreciated the stability, compensation, and structure offered by non-Indigenous organizations. However, both types of organizations can support positive turnover by creating environments that are empowering, culturally relevant, and growth-oriented.

One of the primary challenges noted in non-Indigenous organizations is the imbalance between responsibility and authority. Executives expressed frustration with their roles, where they often carried significant responsibilities as representatives of Indigenous populations but lacked the decision-making power to effect real change. In contrast, Indigenous organizations, while offering a friendlier culture and the chance to build something from the ground up, faced constraints such as limited resources, personality-driven dynamics, and fewer opportunities for career progression. These barriers can contribute to turnover when executives feel that their growth is limited or that their contributions are not being maximized.

Supporting positive turnover, especially for career advancement, means ensuring that employees and managers are not constrained by the limitations of any one organization. Mentorship, leadership development programs, and cross-organizational collaborations can

empower employees and executives to advance in their careers without abandoning their communities. As one participant noted, Indigenous representation is needed not only within Indigenous organizations but also in corporate Canada, government, and other sectors. By encouraging Indigenous leaders to pursue diverse career paths, positive turnover can contribute to building a stronger network of Indigenous executives across sectors.

Ultimately, the key to managing turnover lies in recognizing that career advancement does not have to mean leaving behind one's community. Whether in Indigenous or non-Indigenous organizations, executives should feel supported in their professional development and empowered to pursue opportunities that benefit both themselves and the broader Indigenous population. Positive turnover, when properly managed, can allow for growth and renewal within Indigenous organizations, bringing in fresh perspectives while supporting those who advance to new roles.

The Partially Fixable Nature of Turnover Causes

Turnover within Indigenous organizations can often feel inevitable due to a variety of factors that are deeply rooted in external conditions, such as historical underfunding, structural inequities, and resource limitations. However, while some causes may seem out of immediate reach, many of the factors contributing to turnover are fixable with concerted effort, strategic investment, and collaboration across multiple levels of government, including First Nations, provincial, and federal levels.

One of the most pressing causes of turnover is poor compensation. Many Indigenous executives face wage disparities compared to their counterparts in non-Indigenous organizations, which not only leads to dissatisfaction but also reduces the ability to retain skilled leaders over time. Addressing this issue requires a holistic approach, beginning with a fundamental shift in the

fiscal relationship between First Nations and the federal government. If the financial agreements were restructured to allow for greater flexibility and increased funding, First Nations governments could offer more competitive total compensation packages, including salaries, benefits, and pensions. Ensuring that Indigenous executives are compensated fairly and equitably is a critical step in reducing turnover rates and maintaining leadership continuity.

Burnout is another significant factor that drives turnover within Indigenous organizations. The overextension of Indigenous leaders, often due to limited human resources capacity, exacerbates this issue. Many executives are tasked with juggling multiple roles and responsibilities due to staffing shortages, which can lead to exhaustion and eventual resignation. To combat this, Indigenous organizations could benefit from increased staffing, which would distribute workloads more evenly and reduce burnout. This requires investment in human capital through funding and capacity-building initiatives that enable the hiring of additional staff, while also providing opportunities for professional development. With more support, executives are less likely to experience the overwhelming burdens that lead to turnover.

A third cause of turnover, lateral violence, is an issue that is often not discussed but is prevalent in many Indigenous organizations. Lateral violence, which refers to the harm inflicted within peer groups or communities through behaviors like bullying, undermining, or gossip, can create toxic work environments. Addressing lateral violence is essential to fostering a workplace culture where leaders and staff alike feel supported, respected, and safe. One way to tackle lateral violence is through the implementation of workplace policies that promote lateral kindness, encouraging collaboration, mutual respect, and open communication. Developing these policies, coupled with conflict resolution training and mentorship programs, can help reduce the harmful effects of lateral violence and create a more positive and inclusive organizational culture.

Finally, the housing shortage is another key issue that impacts the retention of Indigenous executives, particularly in remote communities. Limited housing availability often forces leaders to seek opportunities elsewhere, where affordable and adequate housing is more accessible. Investments in building more housing units within First Nations communities are crucial to ensuring that leaders have stable and affordable living arrangements. This requires collaboration between Indigenous, provincial, and federal governments to prioritize housing development as part of the broader effort to address turnover. By creating more housing options, communities can not only retain their leaders but also attract new talent, further enhancing their human resource capacity.

Addressing Turnover Through Strategic Solutions and Best Practices

The argument that turnover causes can be addressed is supported by the implementation of strategic solutions and best practices designed to reduce turnover. One successful initiative is the development of competitive compensation packages for Indigenous executives. Some First Nations have already begun to restructure their compensation frameworks, offering salaries and benefits that rival those of non-Indigenous organizations. This shift has allowed these communities to retain top talent and reduce the frequency of executive turnover. Another best practice is the creation of employee wellness programs that focus on mental health, work-life balance, and professional development. These programs help reduce burnout by providing leaders with the resources they need to manage stress and maintain their well-being.

In addition, some Indigenous organizations have implemented housing initiatives, partnering with federal and provincial governments to build affordable housing units for their leaders and staff. These efforts have not only helped address the housing shortage but also contributed to the retention of executives who might have otherwise left due to housing

instability. By prioritizing housing as a key factor in reducing turnover, these communities have demonstrated the importance of holistic solutions that address the broader needs of their leaders.

While the causes of turnover within Indigenous organizations may appear daunting, they are not insurmountable. By addressing poor compensation, burnout, lateral violence, and the housing shortage, Indigenous organizations can make significant strides in reducing turnover and retaining their executives. These issues require collaboration and investment from all levels of government, as well as the implementation of best practices that prioritize the well-being and stability of leaders. With a concerted effort to fix the fixable, Indigenous organizations can create environments where executives can thrive, ultimately strengthening governance and leadership within their communities.

The Inevitability of Turnover

Turnover is not always something that can be fully prevented, even with strategic retention efforts. While the previous section highlighted that some causes of turnover can be mitigated, there are scenarios where turnover is inevitable. People are constantly seeking employment opportunities that better align with their evolving needs, values, and expectations. It is a natural part of career progression for individuals to outgrow roles and organizations. In many cases, employees, including executives, begin to feel a sense of stagnation or boredom when they have fully mastered their current responsibilities or no longer find the work fulfilling. At this stage, they may seek out new opportunities that offer fresh challenges and a sense of purpose.

Some of the interviews conducted in this study reflect this reality, as participants shared that their primary motivation for taking on executive roles was the opportunity to address problems and establish order in areas lacking structure. These individuals are often drawn to executive positions that allow them to "fix" organizational inefficiencies and implement systemic

changes. Once they feel they have accomplished what they set out to do, it is not uncommon for them to experience a desire to move on to another organization where their skills are needed, viewing this as an extension of their ability to serve. This highlights a particular dynamic within the executive turnover landscape—executives are often driven by a need for challenge and impact. When that sense of challenge diminishes, or when they feel they have maximized their contributions, they may begin to explore other opportunities.

Beyond personal motivations, there are external factors that can also contribute to turnover. In some instances, executives are recruited by head-hunters or external agencies they regularly interact with, offering new opportunities that align with their expertise. This form of recruitment is particularly prevalent in today's age of reconciliation, where there is an increasing demand to hire Indigenous leaders to help fulfill organizational commitments to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action, as well as equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) goals. Many Federal and Provincial regulations require organizations to meet specific diversity targets, further driving the demand for Indigenous executives. As a result, Indigenous executives may be pulled away from their current roles by offers from organizations eager to meet these goals, reflecting the growing value placed on Indigenous leadership in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts.

Additionally, within Indigenous organizations, there is high demand for Indigenous executives, creating a competitive market for their skills and leadership. This pull toward other Indigenous organizations adds another layer to the turnover puzzle. Indigenous executives may leave one organization for another because they believe their expertise and leadership are needed elsewhere. This movement between organizations is often seen as a form of service to different communities, aligning with cultural values of reciprocity and stewardship.

Succession Planning to Anticipate and Address Inevitable Turnover

While turnover is not always preventable, Indigenous organizations can proactively address this inevitability by implementing strategies that anticipate and manage turnover. One key approach is succession planning, where an outgoing executive identifies and mentors a potential successor. This practice not only mitigates the disruption caused by turnover but also aligns with Indigenous traditions of capacity-building, where experienced leaders actively prepare the next generation to step into leadership roles. By cultivating leadership within the organization, Indigenous executives can ensure continuity and stability, even in the face of turnover. Succession planning respects the long-standing Indigenous value of passing knowledge and responsibility to future leaders, and its incorporation into modern organizational structures can help Indigenous organizations adapt to turnover while preserving the integrity of their leadership.

In sum, while turnover can be a challenge, particularly in the competitive market for Indigenous executives, it is a reality that organizations must navigate. By embracing strategies such as succession planning, Indigenous organizations can both honor traditional practices and build resilience to the inevitability of turnover.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the multifaceted nature of executive turnover within Indigenous organizations, highlighting the inevitability of turnover, the importance of succession planning, and the need to address turnover through strategic solutions and best practices. While some turnover causes are partially fixable, a nuanced approach is essential to ensure that turnover does not detract from the overarching goals of Indigenous governance and leadership. The reflections on motivation, particularly the desire by Indigenous peoples to work for

Indigenous organizations, underscore the importance of representation in leadership and its connection to self-governance.

Managing turnover effectively requires recognizing both its challenges and its opportunities. While frequent turnover can disrupt organizational stability, it also offers potential for rejuvenation and the infusion of new perspectives. By embracing a balanced approach to managing turnover, Indigenous organizations can mitigate its negative impacts while leveraging opportunities for growth. This balance is particularly crucial for maintaining the integrity of Indigenous representation in leadership roles, which directly influences the broader goals of self-governance.

Ultimately, effective turnover management is not just about retention but about strengthening the future of Indigenous governance and leadership. By implementing strategic solutions that anticipate turnover, nurture motivations, and address challenges, Indigenous organizations can continue to build resilient leadership structures that reflect their values, aspirations, and commitment to self-determination. In the next chapter, the focus will shift to exploring the solutions to executive turnover as proposed by the research participants, delving into practical strategies that can enhance leadership retention and strengthen organizational resilience.

Chapter 10

Strategies to Retain Executives

In the dynamic landscape of Indigenous organizational leadership, unlocking the secret to the retention of Indigenous executives sparked a flurry of diverse suggestions and surprising consensuses among respondents. The consensus predominantly centered on two key tactics: ensuring fair compensation for Indigenous executives and delineating a clear boundary between politics and administration. Additionally, a cluster of two strategies garnering support (36%-49%) will be scrutinized: providing capacity-building opportunities and instituting recognition programs. This section will provide examples related to each of the aforementioned strategies.

Compensate Fairly

The primary approach advocated by all groups (i.e., National, BC, and BC Focus Groups) for retaining Indigenous executives within Indigenous organizations revolves around ensuring fair compensation, as one executive observed, “You need to be compensated fairly for the value of the position, role, and function. You need to be compensated the same as a white person,” (National Participant #6). This encompasses various elements such as salary, benefits, and pension plans, with a recurring emphasis on competitive pay.

Recommendations emerged for conducting regular salary reviews and establishing distinct executive compensation policies to mitigate turnover and discourage poaching from external entities. This stands in alignment with Chapter 8, addressing the root causes of Indigenous executive turnover, where inadequate compensation was a prevalent theme. Drawing from personal experience as an Indigenous executive, the author reflects on the discrepancy between his compensation and market standards, highlighting the significance of fair remuneration encompassing salary, benefits, pension plans, staff housing, vacation days, and

bonuses, as echoed by respondents. The following subsections will explore various approaches for improving compensation for Indigenous executives, including the creation of competitive salary scales, offering annual wage increases, implementing reduced workweeks, and introducing bonuses and enhanced benefits packages to better attract and retain executive talent in Indigenous organizations.

Salaries and Wages

Indigenous executives feel like they are being compensated poorly. One respondent indicated that they contrasted their pay to their non-Indigenous incumbents' pay; it revealed that the non-Indigenous executives were making about twice as much as the Indigenous executive. Another respondent recalled an executive position in a neighboring Nation was paying approximately twice as much as their community:

> "Our community is the same as another community on the peninsula, same population. So similar budgets. For that one community, they offered $114,000 to start as an administrator, right? In my community, when they've diverted the advertising and I'm saying it's because . . . they publicly advertised it. My nation was offering $60,000." (Participant #2)

These two examples demonstrate that there is a salary and wage discrepancy in First Nations communities, with regards to the salary they offer and the salary the Indigenous executives are worth.

How do we move towards offering salary and wages that respect what Indigenous executives are worth? What follows considers four potential solutions, which include creating a competitive salary scale, offering salary and wage increases every year, offering reduced workweeks, and offering bonuses.

Competitive Salary Scales

It is becoming common practice in First Nations communities to undergo salary reviews to create a competitive salary scale to attract and retain professional talent, including executives (CAOs,

CFOs, etc.). Research interviews undertaken for this dissertation indicate that many First Nations see the importance of a competitive salary scale, with an outstanding example coming from an Indigenous executive who specializes in finance:

> "I think keep on top of the compensation, what the market compensation is. So committing, you know, [Redacted Organization] just spent a lot of money and went through a very long comprehensive process with a very large consulting firm who specializes in developing compensation structures and benchmarking and identifying compensation ranges. So I know it's very time consuming. I know we probably paid quite a lot of fees, but it was necessary. Like it was really necessary to get the confidence to instill the confidence in not only the executives but the rest of the workforce that we have objective, reliable information to base salaries on because and we realized, you know, how far apart we were." (Participant #13)

While creating a competitive salary scale is a great first step, a salary scale is difficult to implement if the Indigenous organization does not have the resources to properly compensate its staff, as Participant #16 shares, "Agencies like ours, we're in a unique position where we can pay equitable wages to what provincial and federal government offers and our communities are not in that same position."

Annual Salary and Wage Increases

The years 2022 and 2023 demonstrated the importance of annual salary and wage keeping up with inflation, as reflected in the 2023 Canadian federal public sector strike. A former executive shared a story of how they've received multiple pay increases since they started their role 2.5 years ago, "So for my union position, since I started, which was a little over two and a half years ago, I have got an increase in my wages four times," (Participant #2). In most Indigenous organizations, especially in First Nations communities, this is unheard of. In one instance, a respondent who was an acting health director recalls that they, "Never ever got a raise. I never ever got evaluated in that position ever," (Participant #8). Based on the author's experience, even when someone requests a performance evaluation, there is often no system in place, and if one

does exist, the evaluation may be delayed by several months. One inspiring insight related to annual salary and wage increases:

> "We do a living wage practice now which is up to the current standard of being an executive manager, I guess, really, in our tribe. So that's kind of . . . And this is the thing, all our employees now have a living wage, which is kind of cool, really, for a small tribe like us to be in that position to actually have an increase every year. I don't know what the percentage is, but it's significant anyway." (BC Interviewee)

The impactful quote demonstrates a Nation's commitment to taking care of its staff. Other Nations, when trying to implement a similar system, may face significant resourcing challenges deriving from the existing and inadequate Federal-First Nations fiscal agreements.

Reduced Workweeks and Bonuses

Not all First Nations can afford to pay an Indigenous executive what they are worth, consider a reduced workweek. One respondent shared their proposed solution for a reduced workweek:

> "So a larger First Nation of somewhere between 500 to a couple thousand, they can afford an executive. If it's a smaller First Nation, even the executives would have to admit, well, they can't really afford me for five days. How about we went with four and you paid me $100,000 or something like that? Then you could do a consulting on the side or something like that."

The proposed four-day workweek is becoming a norm in some international countries such as Iceland. This approach would likely be new in First Nations communities, but there is a possible benefit to those smaller communities to attract good quality executives, especially if they cannot afford to offer a competitive salary.

Another potential strategy is to offer bonuses. When asked how Indigenous organizations can retain Indigenous executives, one respondent indicated the following: "I'll go back to fair compensation, maybe you know there's like maybe added perks like bonuses maybe. It all comes back to maybe time off and money," (Participant #22). To many First Nations, this may come as a surprise given that it is not common practice to offer bonuses in First Nations communities.

However, it is common practice in other levels of government and the private sector. Bonuses can be included in their employment agreement as part of their total compensation package.

Benefits and Pension Plans

Many of the respondents indicated that they also evaluate the benefits and pension plan when considering places of employment. While there is no detailed information on the benefits packages offered was shared, there was a desire to have the benefits package be comparable and competitive when compared to other organizations. For one respondent, it was important to ensure that their benefits package was equitable to the Province's benefits package, and according to them:

> "So we make sure that all of our wages and benefits are equitable to what the provincial government offers. And so we have probably one of the best benefits plans in BC. As a matter of fact, I had a former MCFD [Minister of Children and Family Development] employee tell me just the other day, and it shocked me, is that our benefits plan was better than theirs. And our goal was to make it at least equal. And she's like, 'Nope, it's better.' So I was really proud of being able to offer that to our employees." (Participant #16)

Benefits packages typically include health and dental care, but also includes vacation time and pension plans. One respondent argued that fair compensation can have a positive trickle-down effect to their staff, too:

> "They need to be compensated for time off as well too. So I like that when I did work with Vancouver Coast Health that they, we get a month off, a month vacation and I think that it would be, it would be good for Indigenous organizations also to look at that because as an executive your time is not 9:00 to 5:00, you're doing weekends, you're doing evenings, all of that stuff. And so I think that they need to be compensated fully for all the work that they're doing. And yeah, so the time off is important, really important as well as the compensation and the benefits and pension just to be treated really, really well and to lift them up. 'Cause I think, yeah, that all the workers need to be lifted up. But, if the boards can lift up the executive directors, then the executive directors can lift up their staff." (Participant #9)

This quote emphasizes the importance of providing comprehensive benefits, including adequate time off, to fairly compensate Indigenous executives for their demanding roles. By ensuring

executives are well-compensated and supported, organizations can create a positive ripple effect, uplifting the entire workforce and fostering a more motivated and dedicated team.

Some organizations create a pension plan and match the employee's contributions, but, that is quite rare in Indigenous organizations due to inadequate funding. Another respondent shared a creative way to provide funding to their staff in lieu of a pension plan:

> "What we did is we implemented an RSP. So what happens is that the employee contributes up to 4% of their salary; we match it. But they can contribute 2% if they like, but we continually match it. So to us, it was kind of like a pension, if you will.
>
> The only thing is that if an employee leaves us, they're actually allowed to cash that out. So if it gets used because they need it, then they don't have that towards their later years. But just providing the types of benefits that say we can take care of you so that you can participate in taking care of us." (Participant #25)

Another suggestion included not only offering a pension plan, but also making it a 10% matching pension plan, or greater, even to the extent of the provincial and federal governments' pension plan's levels. One interviewee made the following argument for a competitive pension plan:

> " If you're in government in a Nation and you're working for the band, so you're working for government, and yet the benefits are not the same as the feds." (National Participant #11)

The quote indirectly refers to the service devolution that occurred in the 1970s, when responsibilities were transferred from the federal government to First Nations, but without providing the same benefits as those received by federal government employees.

Staff Housing and Relocation

A respondent indicated that compensation can also look like providing the successful candidate with housing and a reallocation allowance. Given that some First Nations are located in areas with a high cost of living, this would be a great additional incentive to recruit and retain Indigenous executives in Indigenous organizations.

However, based on the author's experience, this practice may be difficult for some First Nations to implement if they are struggling already in providing housing to their members, let alone consider providing housing to non-members. A potential solution could be to designate dedicated staff housing within the community, giving priority to staff, and if the housing is not needed by staff, it can then be made available to community members.

Compensation in Perspective

Ensuring fair compensation is a key strategy for retaining Indigenous executives in Indigenous organizations. This includes offering competitive salaries, benefits, and pension plans that match or exceed market standards. Regular salary reviews, creating compensation policies, and exploring alternative incentives like reduced workweeks, bonuses, and staff housing can help address the compensation discrepancies many Indigenous executives face, ultimately reducing turnover and strengthening leadership retention.

Balancing Autonomy and Support

The National interviewees and BC Focus Group participants emphasized the crucial balance between autonomy and support for Indigenous executives. They underscored that empowering executives is pivotal for fostering innovation and swift decision-making to benefit the organization. This hinges on a foundation of mutual trust between the executive and the governing body, where both parties have confidence in each other's capabilities and are open to course corrections when necessary.

Moreover, flexibility and freedom are essential components, allowing executives the space to navigate challenges effectively. As one participant reflected:

> "So they're allowing me that flexibility and freedom which also allows us to grow into new areas that are largely unmet. So different organizations need different boards to be good at different things and it depends on where they are in that life cycle too," (BC Focus Group Participant).

This sentiment highlights the importance of adapting to the unique needs and growth stages of Indigenous organizations. Additionally, an interviewee shared a simple yet thought-provoking question that the governing body can ask their executive, “What can we do to help support you in your role as you take on this position?” (National Participant #9). This simple yet profound inquiry epitomizes an open-ended and collaborative approach dedicated to fostering a supportive relationship between executives and their governing bodies, such a position is vital for organizational success.

Offer Capacity-Building Opportunities

Offering capacity-building opportunities is a crucial strategy for retaining Indigenous executives. “We are happy to pay for this, knowing it's an investment in your leadership,” (National Participant #9) reflects the strong commitment of Participant #9’s governing board to supporting executive development. Capacity-building efforts often emphasize education, training, networking, mentorship, and opportunities to engage with language and culture, all of which play a significant role in enhancing leadership and ensuring long-term retention. For training, one of the interviewees shared a specific example of paying for an executive’s Institute of Corporate Directors (ICD) training in an effort to retain their executive. Another executive mentioned the support they received to attend the University of Victoria’s Master’s of Business Administration in Advancing Reconciliation (MBAAR). Another executive shared the importance of a network of executives, especially when there are opportunities to attend gatherings together:

> “And I think that's something that might filter somewhere into your work as this idea of, 'We can show up and do our jobs and that's fine, but we really need that external connection and direction and support from people that really understand what it's like.'” (National Participant #9)

The above quote addresses one of the issues that executives share, which is that the executive role is a lonely role. Having a network of executives you can tap into alleviates some of the loneliness and creates a support network.

Finally, some of the BC Focus Group participants offered interesting decolonized capacity-building opportunities. These participants mentioned the support of the organization in helping them practice their language and culture, and have access to elders. One participant's story of having access to elders can be seen as follows:

> "I do have a group of elders that really are my guides and provide me with lots of supports and surround me with different teachings. And so that for me is really, really a valuable gift that I've gotten from this organization where elders have adopted me as their granddaughter." (BC Focus Group Participant)

The author appreciates the decolonized approaches to capacity building, as they are often overlooked in non-Indigenous settings, even though they can be so powerful for Indigenous peoples to experience. While the author did not have access to these two capacity-building opportunities, he can see the tremendous value they would bring in helping executives nourish their culture and spirit, as they take on very stressful roles.

Recognition

People crave recognition for what they do, whether it is in a personal or professional setting. The interviewees believed that recognition should be part of a strategy to retain executives. While recognition was the most common term identified, respondents also used terms such as acknowledgement, appreciation, a sense of feeling good, and respect. An interviewee shared an inspirational quote, exemplifying the power of acknowledgement:

> "We provide staff with recognition. I monthly speak at a meeting of all members. And I always tell them that I stand on their shoulders, that it's their work that allows me to do what I do. If they weren't bringing people through the door, if they weren't supporting capacity development at the community level, we wouldn't be able to expand the scope of opportunities at our organization." (National Participant #10)

While the quote is about what an executive does to show appreciation and recognition, a similar approach from a governing body to an executive could be very inspirational to their executive: it not only provides recognition but demonstrates the important role that an executive plays.

Additionally, another participant from the BC Focus Group highlighted the significance of long-standing board members, expressing gratitude for their enduring support: “And my board, there have been a couple of board members that have been with me since the beginning when I came on and the gratitude that is shown from them.” Lastly, an interviewee indicated that while recognizing the results is important, it is equally important to celebrate those successes.

Chapter Conclusion

Finding ways to keep Indigenous executives is a big challenge. Unsurprisingly, most interviewees and focus group participants agree that paying executives fairly and keeping politics separate from administration are the key things to focus on. But there's more to it. We've heard suggestions about creating fair salary scales, providing opportunities for education and training, and showing appreciation for their hard work. These strategies reflect a commitment to supporting Indigenous executives. As we learn from these insights, we need to remember the challenges Indigenous organizations face every day. The next chapter connects how these solutions fit into the real world.

Chapter 11

Appraising Strategies to Retain Indigenous Executives and Preparing for Executive Turnover

The retention of Indigenous executives in Indigenous organizations is a significant challenge for many as seen in Chapter 6, which indicated that the average executive tenure was about three and a half (3.5) years. Chapter 7 also addresses that when an executive leaves, there are major impacts to an Indigenous organization's progress and business operations, high costs to an organization, and an increase in staff uncertainty. On the other hand, there are positive impacts of executive turnover, such as an increase in person-organization fit, an increase in innovation, and an increase productivity.

While turnover can be preventable at times, it is also inevitable given the motivations of executives to face new challenges and a highly competitive labour market. Not only do Indigenous organizations compete to hire Indigenous peoples, but so do non-Indigenous organizations, such as schools, governments and businesses as they try to fulfill the TRC's call to actions and address their EDI goals. First Nations are also struggling with executive retention due to other challenges such as resource and capacity constraints and the poor First Nations-Federal fiscal relationship.

This chapter examines how resource constraints influence executive retention and turnover in Indigenous organizations. It explores strategies such as fair compensation, capacity-building initiatives, and fiscal reforms, including enhanced benefits and staff housing, to support retention and manage transitions. Additionally, it addresses the competitive market and offers approaches to position Indigenous organizations as attractive employers, concluding with reflections on the importance of retaining Indigenous executives.

Capacity Challenges and Turnover

Capacity issues within Indigenous organizations, particularly those of First Nations, significantly contribute to both turnover and transitional challenges. Literature on the subject emphasizes the complex relationship between capacity constraints and staff turnover, illustrating how inadequate resources create unsustainable workloads while simultaneously offering an opportunity for structural transitions. Below, key themes from the literature are explored in relation to these dynamics.

Inadequate Funding

One of the most critical capacity constraints is insufficient funding, which hinders the ability of First Nations leadership to create and maintain necessary positions. Without adequate financial resources, Nations are forced to consolidate multiple roles into a single position or stretch a small staff across several critical functions (Ducharme et al., 2023). This leads to burnout, sickness, and ultimately, staff turnover. Employees often leave due to the overwhelming demands of their roles, while the organization struggles to retain institutional knowledge and continuity.

Human Resources Challenges

Human resource shortages further complicate these capacity issues. Due to low funding, First Nations are unable to offer competitive salaries, making it difficult to attract and retain employees (Ducharme et al., 2023). As a result, Nations are consistently short-staffed, and existing staff must fill multiple roles. This leaves employees unable to adequately perform their duties, causing frustration and dissatisfaction. Senior staff, often burdened with their own workload, are left without the time or capacity to train junior staff, contributing to high turnover rates as talented employees seek better opportunities elsewhere (Ducharme et al., 2023).In some cases, the lack of qualified staff is exacerbated by geographic isolation, as Nations attempt to

build capacity within the community. While the development of local talent is crucial for long-term sustainability, many community members lack the necessary qualifications to take on leadership or management roles, particularly at the senior level (Ducharme et al., 2023). This gap in experience and expertise further stresses the organization, limiting its capacity to deliver on essential services.

Structural Issues and Silos

Another key theme from the literature involves the challenges of continuity and the presence of silos within organizations. Capacity issues often result in insufficient staffing to create interconnectedness between different departments. This lack of coordination can lead to inefficiencies, as staff in one department (e.g., economic development) may not collaborate effectively with staff in other critical areas (e.g., housing and lands), despite the interconnectedness of their work. This siloed approach undermines organizational cohesion, exacerbating the stress on staff and leading to further turnover (Ducharme et al., 2023).One solution proposed in the literature is the role of a "connector"—a staff member responsible for bridging gaps between different areas of an administration (Ducharme et al., 2023). However, funding limitations make it challenging to fill this position, leaving the organization fragmented and perpetuating turnover.

Contractor Reliance

In an attempt to address staffing shortages, many Nations turn to contractors to fill gaps. However, contractors are typically engaged on a short-term basis and may lack the long-term vision and commitment to the Nation's interests. While contractors can provide temporary relief, they do not offer the same continuity or community investment as permanent staff, creating a

cycle where turnover remains high, and organizational stability is elusive (Ducharme et al., 2023).

Professional Development and Succession Planning

Finally, the lack of professional development, performance management, and succession planning contributes to ongoing turnover (Ducharme et al., 2023). Without these mechanisms in place, employees have little opportunity for growth, and transitions between roles are not adequately planned for. The absence of structured development programs leaves staff undertrained for critical governance functions, which weakens the organization's overall capacity and leads to further staff departures.

Reflections on Capacity Challenges and Turnover

Capacity challenges within Indigenous organizations, particularly First Nations, are deeply intertwined with staff turnover and organizational transitions. Inadequate funding, human resource shortages, and structural silos create unsustainable workloads, which ultimately lead to burnout and high turnover rates. While short-term solutions like contractor reliance offer temporary relief, they fail to address the long-term needs of the organization. To improve retention and foster stability, there is a clear need for greater investment in professional development, succession planning, and strategies that build organizational capacity from within. Addressing these challenges will be essential for sustaining strong Indigenous leadership and ensuring the continuity of vital services.

Capacity-Building as a Retention and Transition Strategy

Building organizational capacity is critical to fostering both employee retention and smooth transitions in Indigenous organizations. Key strategies involve human resource development, leadership training, and the balance of autonomy with support.

Human Resources and Recruitment

Participants in the Ducharme et al, (2023) study highlighted the challenges of human resource capacity, with one participant asking, “When we talk about not being able to recruit a CFO, why don’t we ask ISC [Indigenous Services Canada] to come in and do the bookkeeping, deliver the child and family services, and take their own problems back?” (p. 56). This statement underscores the frustration over recruitment and the need for external support. To address human resource gaps, organizations can:

- Provide funding for new positions: Nations should advocate for adequate funding to support governance roles and internal capacity-building. For instance, one Nation successfully hired an internal administrative officer who manages work plans, policy review, and infrastructure projects (Ducharme et al., 2023).
- Increase retention by building trust: Improved relationships with Chief and Council (C&C) can increase retention (Ducharme et al., 2023). Creating transparent, accountable governance structures enhances staff morale and organizational loyalty.
- Hire the right people: Hiring staff who are well-trained, educated, and aligned with the Nation’s values is essential. A shared cost approach with ISC can help attract qualified professionals while ensuring the Nation has a vested interest in employee success (Ducharme et al., 2023).

Addressing human resource challenges is crucial for the long-term stability of Indigenous organizations. By securing adequate funding, building trust within governance structures, and hiring staff aligned with the Nation's values, organizations can create a more sustainable workforce. These strategies, when implemented effectively, not only improve retention but also foster a more resilient and capable leadership team.

Leadership Development

Leadership development plays a critical role in retaining staff and ensuring a smooth transition during turnover. Nations recommended increased funding for leadership training in areas such as law and government development and succession planning. Key strategies include:

- Mentorship programs: Providing mentorship opportunities encourages emerging leaders to develop the skills needed to step into key positions. Mentorship fosters continuity and provides a structure for knowledge transfer, ensuring that future leaders are equipped to navigate organizational complexities (Ducharme et al., 2023).
- Succession planning: Hiring external consultants for strategic planning and promoting internal staff into higher leadership roles, such as moving employees to a part-time (0.5 FTE) position dedicated to succession planning, can ensure the organization maintains leadership continuity (Ducharme et al., 2023).

Investing in leadership development is essential for building strong, future-ready Indigenous organizations. By implementing mentorship programs and succession planning, Nations can ensure leadership continuity and effectively manage transitions, fostering long-term organizational stability and growth.

Balancing Autonomy with Support

Organizations must balance autonomy with external and internal support to retain staff and facilitate seamless transitions. Giving employees the freedom to grow while providing essential resources ensures they feel valued and supported. To achieve this balance:

- Offer autonomy with structured support: Staff should have the autonomy to manage their roles but must be backed by adequate training and organizational support. Offering

competitive salaries and benefits and providing space for capacity-building help staff feel empowered.

- Provide performance evaluations and feedback: Regular performance reviews encourage staff development by providing them with clear goals and growth opportunities. This also allows for structured transitions when leadership changes occur, ensuring that any gaps are promptly addressed.

Striking the right balance between autonomy and support is crucial for fostering staff empowerment and organizational resilience. By providing employees with both the freedom to excel and the necessary resources for success, organizations can enhance retention and ensure smooth transitions during periods of change.

Training and Development

Training is essential for both capacity building and staff retention. Nations identified the need for increased funding to support training, including professional development tailored to the Nation's specific needs (Ducharme et al., 2023):

- On-the-job training: ISC should fund in-community training programs in areas such as financial management and public administration, tailored to meet the specific needs of the community (Ducharme et al., 2023).
- Training and motivation: Encouraging staff participation in professional development helps build confidence and reduces feelings of inadequacy. Creating an environment that supports and incentivizes ongoing learning will build long-term capacity within the organization.

Investing in targeted training and development is key to building long-term organizational capacity and retaining skilled staff. By providing tailored, community-specific training and

fostering a culture of continuous learning, Nations can strengthen their workforce and enhance overall organizational effectiveness.

Reflections on Capacity-Building as a Retention and Transition Strategy

By investing in human resources, leadership development, and appropriate training, Indigenous organizations can address capacity challenges, retain key staff, and ensure smooth transitions during times of turnover. Implementing these strategies will build a more resilient and effective governance structure that supports both the employees and the communities they serve.

Navigating Fiscal Relationships

Fiscal Constraints and Turnover

The fiscal relationship between First Nations and the federal government remains highly inadequate and arguably discriminatory, especially when compared to the more stable and equitable Provincial-Federal fiscal relationship, exacerbating executive turnover in Indigenous organizations by hindering executive retention and the ability to offer competitive salaries and benefits. While provinces benefit from multi-year, fiscally autonomous, equalized, and annually increased funding with limited reporting requirements, First Nations often experience the inverse (Brunet-Jailly, 2008). Unless First Nations participate in the 10-year grant initiative known as the "New Fiscal Relationship Transfer" (AFN & INAC, 2017), they remain bound to short-term, restrictive funding structures.

This inadequate fiscal relationship directly contributes to severe staffing shortages in First Nations communities. Many communities struggle to fill critical administrative roles necessary for effective governance and service delivery. For example, from 2017 to 2018, the Wei Wai Kum First Nation had vacancies in six of their 16 full-time positions, including key roles like Band Manager and Housing Administrator. Similarly, Tsleil-Waututh Nation saw a 25% increase

in employee turnover from 2019 to 2020 (FNPSS, 2022). As of January 2023, numerous positions remained vacant in First Nations, with Nak'azdli Whut'en, Lil'wat Nation, and Little Shuswap Lake Indian Band posting urgent job openings.

Various staffing challenges, including difficulties with recruitment, retention, succession planning, non-competitive salaries, job insecurity, and community remoteness are, at root, tied to inadequate funding. The demanding Band Administrator role, in particular, sees high turnover due to its wide scope, isolation, and lack of training or mentorship (Nye & Gelb, 2021; FNPSS, 2020). Without adequate and stable funding aligned with capacity development, First Nations governance remains under-resourced, limiting efforts toward sovereignty, good governance, and stable service delivery (Missens, 2008; House of Commons, 2021).

Fiscal Reforms for Stability and Transition Management

The need for reforms in fiscal relationships to support recruitment and retention in Indigenous governance is critical. Many Indigenous Nations face significant staffing challenges due to underfunded core governance functions, leading to issues such as non-competitive compensation, lack of benefits, inadequate housing, and employee burnout. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that enhances benefits, pension plans, staff housing, and overall funding for governance operations.

A national movement towards a new fiscal relationship between First Nations and the Federal government has been underway since 2015. Recent studies, including one funded by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), aimed to quantify the necessary funding increases to support effective governance (Ducharme et al., 2023). Although limited to five BC First Nations, it found that funding levels need to increase by 12 to 46 times to address current gaps (Ducharme et al., 2023), illustrating the severity of the funding shortfall and the urgent need for action.

The consequences of underfunding core governance functions are particularly dire for human resources and leadership. Many First Nations are unable to offer competitive salaries and benefits, for example, First Nation salaries range between 15% and 84% of comparable positions in federal and provincial governments (Ducharme et al., 2023). For instance, a First Nations Chief earns just 15% of what a Prime Minister makes, while even a building maintenance worker earns only 84% of their federal counterpart's salary (Ducharme et al., 2023). On average, First Nations governance positions receive just 49% of the salary of equivalent provincial and federal roles (Ducharme et al., 2023). For example, a Councillor earns 18% of what a Member of Parliament receives. Similarly, operational staff, such as Finance Officers, earn 42% of their federal counterparts' pay, highlighting the significant disparity in compensation across various leadership and administrative roles (Ducharme et al., 2023).This significant pay gap makes it difficult for First Nations to compete in a highly competitive labor market, where better compensation is readily available elsewhere.

To address this, fiscal relationships must include provisions for competitive pay scales and enhanced benefits packages. Without these changes, Nations will continue to struggle with recruitment and retention, with employees often poached by neighboring communities or non-Indigenous organizations that offer better compensation (Ducharme et al., 2023). Long-term, sustainable funding must be provided to allow for competitive salaries, annual wage increases, and benefits such as health insurance and pension plans. Such improvements would make positions more attractive, reducing turnover and creating greater stability in Indigenous governance.

As mentioned in Chapter 10, a key factor in retention is providing housing for executives. Many Nations, especially those in rural or remote areas, face significant challenges in recruiting

governance staff due to a lack of available housing. By incorporating executive housing infrastructure into funding agreements, Nations can improve recruitment and retention (Ducharme et al., 2023). This could include investment in rental housing on-reserve, housing subsidies, or building new staff accommodations. Staff housing projects would alleviate one of the most pressing barriers to attracting skilled workers to Indigenous communities.

Another critical issue is the insufficient number of staff positions in First Nations organizations. Due to underfunding, many leadership roles are either left vacant or filled by individuals who must take on multiple responsibilities, leading to burnout and high turnover. The inability to staff important positions forces a few individuals to cover several roles, often resulting in sickness, overwork, and eventual departure. To counteract this, fiscal agreements should provide funding for new positions, enabling Nations to create and staff the roles necessary for effective governance (Ducharme et al., 2023).

Reflections on Navigating Fiscal Relationships

Improving fiscal relationships between First Nations and the federal government is essential for addressing the recruitment and retention challenges in Indigenous governance. By increasing funding for competitive salaries, benefits, housing infrastructure, and additional staff positions, Nations can create more sustainable governance systems. These reforms are not just about enhancing compensation but are crucial to building resilient, self-sufficient First Nations governments that can effectively manage their governance and support their communities over the long term.

Navigating the Competitive Market

There are multiple reasons why non-Indigenous organizations compete to employee Indigenous peoples. Some of the reasons include complying with the truth and reconciliation calls to action,

access to a rapidly growing youth population, and legal compliance. While the last two are important, they will not be the focus of this section, as they typically result in creating entry level jobs, which do not draw Indigenous executives aways from Indigenous organizations.

As noted in Chapter 6, there is a shortage of Indigenous executives: The demand for Indigenous executives among Nations far outpaced their ability to hire, except in the case of Treaty Nations, where hiring practices were more aligned with demand. As recommended in the in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to actions:

> "Aboriginal peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that Aboriginal communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects." (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 10, action #92 (ii)).

This section of the TRC report calls on the corporate sector to hire Indigenous peoples, in the spirit of reconciliation. Although, the TRC report also mentions educating and training the public and public officials on truth and reconciliation of Indigenous peoples, it implicitly encouraged post-secondary institutes and governments at all levels to hire Indigenous peoples, too (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

With this much demand for Indigenous talent, it is not surprising that the Indigenous employee labour market has changed markedly. Indigenous executive talent have many options if they experience a negative work environment; they can leave their job and know that they will be in demand elsewhere, given the very limited supply of Indigenous talent.

Case Studies and Best Practices for Executive Retention

While there is limited academic literature on case studies and best practices as they relate to Indigenous executive retention, there is some grey literature on activities that occur on a First Nations, provincial or federal scale. To align with the research participants' proposed solutions,

this section will be divided up among each of the proposed strategies, with the exception of balancing autonomy and support, which does not have many published case studies on it.

Fair Compensation using the BC AFOA Salary Survey

While there are not many publicly available salary scales for First Nations, there is one specific to BC. Every few years, the BC Aboriginal Financial Officers Association (BC AFOA) publishes their *BC First Nations Salary Survey*, which identifies the pay ranges for key positions in First Nations communities based on the survey respondents' answers. While the survey does not usually have a large response rate, it provides enough information to determine if a Nation is competitive compared to BC First Nations. If BC First Nations were the only organizations poaching Indigenous executives, this would be the only tool required. But, as mentioned earlier, there is a huge network of Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations competing to hire Indigenous talent. Unless these organizations are part of the public sector, their salaries and compensation levels are not always public. Therefore, many First Nations commissioning salary scale reviews by external consultants with a view to create a competitive salary scale for the First Nation, rather than for different organizations.

Offering Capacity Building Opportunities like the UVic MBAA

While there are many examples of organizations offering capacity building opportunities, the most interesting is the BC Aboriginal Association of Friendship Centre's (BCAAFC) co-development of UVic's Master of Business Administration in Advancing Reconciliation (MBAAR) (BC Aboriginal Association of Friendship Centres , n.d.). This MBAAR is available to workers of a BC Indigenous Friendship Centre, social service sector agency, or government agency providing social services to Indigenous peoples. Students participate in meaningful dialogues and knowledge sharing to move towards Indigenous-informed organizational models

(BC Aboriginal Association of Friendship Centres , n.d.). The program was funded to encourage more culturally safe and inclusive services from social services providers to Indigenous peoples, and to encourage succession planning in Indigenous organizations (The Government of BC , 2022). One of the fascinating requirements of this program is that the student remains employed with their current organization while enrolled, otherwise, the program seat is dropped if the student leaves their position (BC Aboriginal Association of Friendship Centres , n.d.) – this is a good way to retain talent.

Providing Recognition through the BC AFOA Band Administrator Award

On an annual basis, the BC AFOA hosts a band administrators conference. At this conference, there is a BC AFOA band administrator recognition award ceremony, where an executive (Indigenous or non-Indigenous) is recognized for their display in "excellent and quality in their work with First Nations communities over a period of time" (BC AFOA, 2023, p. 1). In order to be eligible for this prestigious award, the band administrator must be nominated with a 1-2 page letter outlining their excellence areas, provide a biography or resume of the nominee, identify how long the nominee has worked with the band office, and a 1-page letter of support from chief and council (BC AFOA, 2023). If the nominee is selected, they will be awarded with an all expenses paid trip to the conference, receive a memorable plaque and $1,500 towards BC AFOA products, conferences and workshops (BC AFOA, 2023).

Reflections on Case Studies and Best Practices for Executive Retention

In reviewing these case studies and best practices, several insights emerge regarding Indigenous executive retention. First, fair compensation, as demonstrated by the BC AFOA Salary Survey, is essential for ensuring that Nations can remain competitive in retaining top talent, especially in a market where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations are vying for skilled

executives. Additionally, offering capacity-building opportunities, such as the UVic MBA in Advancing Reconciliation, highlights the importance of ongoing professional development that ties employees to their organizations while fostering leadership skills and cultural competency. Finally, recognition programs like the BC AFOA Band Administrator Award emphasize the need for acknowledging and rewarding long-term dedication and excellence, which can strengthen loyalty and morale in Indigenous governance. These cases show that retention strategies must be holistic, combining fair compensation, development opportunities, and recognition to effectively address the challenges faced by Indigenous organizations in retaining their leadership talent.

Conclusion

The retention of Indigenous executives within Indigenous organizations is a pressing issue, as revealed in the quantitative findings of this study, which show that the average tenure of executives is approximately 3.5 years. The departure of an executive often results in substantial disruptions, including delays in organizational progress, high turnover costs, and increased uncertainty among staff. While these negative impacts are significant, it is important to acknowledge that turnover also presents opportunities, which First Nations and Indigenous organizations can exploit by strategically improving person-organization fit, fostering innovation, and boosting productivity through proactive succession planning and leadership development. These positive effects highlight that while turnover is sometimes preventable, it is also inevitable due to various factors, including the competitive labor market. Indigenous organizations not only compete with one another to retain executives, but also with non-Indigenous organizations that are keen to fulfill their TRC Calls to Action and EDI objectives.

Resource and capacity constraints, compounded by the inadequate fiscal relationship between First Nations and the federal government, further challenge executive retention. This

chapter underscored the importance of addressing these issues through strategic resource management, capacity-building initiatives, and fiscal reforms. By investing in fair compensation, flexible resource allocation, and leadership development, Indigenous organizations can not only mitigate the impacts of turnover but also foster smoother transitions. Ensuring that executives are supported with adequate resources, both financial and organizational, is critical to their retention and the overall stability of the organizations they lead.

This chapter reaffirms the importance of retaining Indigenous executives, as well as preparing for turnover, not just for continuity but for the long-term success of Indigenous governance. The strategies outlined offer a roadmap for organizations seeking to navigate the complexities of executive turnover and retention in a competitive landscape. The next chapter will provide a comprehensive conclusion to this dissertation, synthesizing key findings and reflecting on their broader implications for Indigenous governance, while offering avenues for future research and practice.

Chapter 12

Conclusion: Key Findings, Implications, Reflections

The primary aim of this dissertation was to address the persistent issue of high turnover among Indigenous executives within Canadian Indigenous organizations. For the purposes of this study, an executive is defined as an employee who reports to leadership, supervises staff, and oversees a budget. An Indigenous executive is an executive who self-identifies as Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit) and holds an executive-level position such as band manager, CAO, CFO, COO, or Executive Director. Indigenous organizations are defined as organizations that serve Indigenous populations and have Indigenous leadership and employees. Executive turnover significantly affects the stability and progress of these organizations, especially in their efforts toward self-governance. By examining the factors that lead to executive turnover, this study sought to uncover the root causes and develop effective strategies to improve both the hiring and retention of Indigenous executives. The overarching objective was to provide Indigenous organizations with actionable recommendations that will strengthen leadership continuity, thereby supporting the sustainability of self-governance initiatives.

The study was guided by key research questions that focused on understanding who occupies executive roles in Indigenous organizations, the impacts of turnover on organizational performance, the factors contributing to turnover, and strategies that can mitigate these issues. Findings from this research address these questions by identifying demographic and professional characteristics of Indigenous executives, revealing the detrimental effects of turnover, and offering strategies to improve retention through competitive compensation, capacity building, and organizational support.

This concluding chapter synthesizes the major findings of the study, answering the research questions and highlighting contributions to the field of Indigenous governance. It begins with a summary of key findings from each chapter, followed by a discussion on how these findings align with the initial research questions. Unexpected insights and new areas of inquiry are also considered.

The chapter further explores the implications of the study for existing literature, offering some theoretical propositions to consider, and identifying areas for future research. Methodological reflections are provided to suggest improvements for future studies, alongside interdisciplinary opportunities that expand the reach of the research. Finally, the chapter outlines practical applications of the findings, offering recommendations for practitioners and reflecting on how this research can positively impact Indigenous organizations and broader communities. The chapter concludes with personal reflections and a forward-looking statement on the future of research in Indigenous leadership retention.

Summary of Key Findings

To best understand the summary of key findings, it is important to examine them by reviewing them against the four major research questions, which look at the demographics and professional characteristics of the Indigenous executive, the impacts of Indigenous executive turnover, the causes of Indigenous executive turnover, and the strategies to retain Indigenous executives in Indigenous organizations.

Demographics and Professional Characteristics of the Indigenous Executive

The key findings reveal that in British Columbia (BC), Indigenous executives are predominantly female (75%), in contrast to the national level, where the majority are male (73%). The median age of BC respondents is younger, at 45-54 years, compared to 55-64 years nationally. Most

respondents in both groups hold a Master's degree. In terms of experience, BC executives have a more varied range, with most having 6-10 years or more than 21 years of experience, while nationally, the majority have over 21 years of experience. It is surprising to the author that there was such a difference between the BC and National executives, especially when considering gender representation, number of years experience and median age.

The Impacts of Executive Turnover

The analysis of executive turnover from 2013 to 2023 presents several critical findings that highlight the challenges faced by Indigenous organizations in maintaining leadership stability. With an average executive tenure of just over 3.5 years, the issue of retention stands out as a significant obstacle. Notably, 67% of the executives during this period were Indigenous, reflecting a consistent preference for Indigenous leadership, especially among Treaty First Nations, where 100% of the executives were Indigenous. However, challenges in executive retention were more pronounced in Nations with revenues of $10-$20 million and those with larger staff teams (over 12 subordinates), where tenures were notably shorter. While some Nations, particularly those in Zones 1 and 4, and Small First Nations, demonstrated strong Indigenous executive tenures, the overall findings suggest a potential supply shortage in meeting the demand for Indigenous executives, especially in larger or higher-revenue communities. The most surprising part of the descriptive analysis of the executive tenure was that both urban and isolated communities performed the best with retaining executives for a longer term, especially when one would assume that the more remote and rural you are, the harder it would be to attract and retain executives.

The impacts of executive turnover further amplify these challenges. As highlighted by leaders and executives, turnover leads to increased staff uncertainty, disruptions in business

operations, and significant financial strain. The loss of corporate knowledge, the severing of crucial relationships, and increased costs associated with hiring and transitioning executives create lasting effects on the organization's governance and management. These findings emphasize the need for Indigenous organizations to develop more robust strategies for retention and succession planning to ensure stability, continuity, and resilience in their leadership structures.

The Causes of Executive Turnover

The key findings reveal that high executive turnover in Indigenous organizations is largely driven by a combination of systemic issues. Lateral violence, burnout, and conflicts with leadership are frequently cited as contributing factors. Lateral violence, which refers to aggression or bullying among peers, fosters a hostile work environment that undermines leadership stability. Burnout is another critical factor, as many Indigenous executives face overwhelming workloads and responsibilities, often without sufficient support or resources. Furthermore, conflicts with leadership and involuntary termination add to the pressures, creating an environment where executives feel unsupported or forced out of their roles.

Other key drivers of turnover include poor compensation and a lack of governance capacity. Indigenous executives often experience lower pay compared to their counterparts in other sectors, contributing to dissatisfaction and the desire to seek better opportunities elsewhere. The lack of governance capacity, particularly in developing effective decision-making processes and support structures, further exacerbates the issue. These findings highlight the need for systemic changes, such as improved compensation, stronger governance frameworks, and a focus on addressing lateral violence, to retain Indigenous executives and promote organizational stability.

Strategies to Retain Executives

The key findings indicate that fair compensation and maintaining a clear separation between politics and administration are viewed as crucial strategies for retaining Indigenous executives. The consensus on these two tactics suggests that addressing financial equity and preventing political interference in administrative roles are vital for ensuring executive satisfaction and longevity. This insight highlights the importance of creating a stable work environment where executives can focus on their roles without the complexities of political dynamics undermining their efforts.

In addition to these core strategies, capacity-building opportunities and recognition programs are also identified as essential, though with slightly less consensus. Providing Indigenous executives with opportunities for professional growth through education and training, alongside formal recognition of their contributions, can foster a sense of value and investment in the organization. These findings underscore the need for a holistic approach to retention, one that balances fair compensation, political neutrality, capacity development, and acknowledgment of the hard work of Indigenous executives. It is surprising to the author that the inverse of the causes was not proposed as the solutions from the participants, such as addressing lateral violence, conflict with chief and council, and preventing burnout.

Implications for the Literature and Future Research

Contribution to Theory

The findings from this research both extend and challenge existing theories of executive turnover, particularly in Indigenous organizations. Previous non-Indigenous turnover models, such as Mobley et al. (1979), highlighted factors like job dissatisfaction and compensation, but this study reveals unique dynamics within Indigenous organizations, such as lateral violence and

governance policies, which have not been sufficiently explored in the broader management literature. By introducing the concept of lateral violence, commonly discussed in nursing and international Indigenous research (Vessey & Williams, 2021), this study adds a new dimension to turnover theories by examining how interpersonal conflict within Indigenous organizations exacerbates turnover. Moreover, the findings challenge the assumption that turnover stems predominantly from career progression and person-organization misfit. Instead, the results suggest that governance and compensation structures in Indigenous organizations play a pivotal role in turnover rates.

The study has also laid the groundwork for developing competing theories of Indigenous executive turnover, offering three distinct lenses through which turnover can be analyzed: lateral violence, career opportunities and motivation, and organizational readiness. Each theory provides a partial explanation of turnover dynamics, but their interplay highlights the complexity of the issue within Indigenous organizations. The lateral violence perspective emphasizes the detrimental effects of interpersonal conflict and power struggles on workplace cohesion. The career opportunities and motivation theory align with traditional turnover models, suggesting that executives may leave due to career progression or external opportunities. Meanwhile, the organizational readiness perspective underscores the critical role of governance structures and institutional capacity in either mitigating or exacerbating turnover. By integrating these frameworks, this research provides a holistic view that recognizes the socio-cultural, economic, and governance-specific factors influencing turnover, thereby broadening the scope of both Indigenous and mainstream turnover theories.

This study introduces new theoretical insights by linking gender dynamics and compensation disparity to turnover. The female dominance in Indigenous executive roles, as highlighted by the

study's findings, opens avenues for further research into gendered experiences in leadership within these organizations, a topic largely underrepresented in current management theories. Additionally, the research extends the discourse on executive turnover by integrating concepts from the lateral violence literature, presenting opportunities for future theoretical expansion to include culturally specific challenges faced by Indigenous executives.

Relationship to Existing Studies

The research contributes significantly to existing literature on executive turnover by filling gaps related to Indigenous organizations. While previous studies (Messersmith et al., 2014; Vianen, 2000) examined turnover's impact on organizational performance, they did not account for the unique sociocultural and governance factors influencing Indigenous executives. The findings on lateral violence align with research on interpersonal conflict in other sectors, such as nursing (Roberts, 2015; Whyman et al., 2023), but introduce a unique perspective by showing how lateral violence within Indigenous communities differs in source and impact.

In terms of compensation, the study corroborates earlier findings on the importance of fair compensation in mitigating turnover (Delfgaauw & Dur, 2008), but also addresses a gap in the literature regarding the intersection of compensation and gender disparities. The higher representation of women in Indigenous executive roles, as revealed by this study, contrasts with trends in the broader public and private sectors (Aarts, 2023), signaling the need for further investigation into how Indigenous organizations may offer different pathways to leadership for women. This research also addresses limitations in previous studies by examining the negative impacts of turnover within Indigenous contexts, offering insights into the broader disruptions caused by turnover that are not well-documented in mainstream turnover literature.

In sum, this research fills important gaps in understanding the sociocultural, gendered, and organizational dynamics of executive turnover in Indigenous organizations, extending the applicability of traditional turnover models while challenging their limitations.

Areas for Further Exploration

The findings of this study open several avenues for further research on executive turnover in Indigenous organizations. One critical area for exploration is the deeper investigation into lateral violence and its impact on executive turnover. While this study found lateral violence to be a key contributor, more research is needed to explore the prevalence and specific manifestations of lateral violence in different Indigenous contexts, including Métis and Inuit organizations. Comparative studies that examine lateral violence across Indigenous organizations and other sectors could provide a clearer understanding of its unique drivers and consequences in these environments. Additionally, the relationship between lateral violence and governance structures within Indigenous organizations warrants further investigation to identify how leadership styles and organizational policies may either mitigate or exacerbate this issue. Given the central role of leadership in shaping organizational culture, understanding how leaders can address lateral violence is essential for fostering healthier work environments.

Another key area for further exploration is the gender dynamics revealed by the study, particularly the female dominance in Indigenous executive roles. The finding that 76% of respondents identified as female raises questions about the factors that contribute to this trend. Future research should explore whether this dominance is consistent across other provinces, territories, and types of Indigenous organizations. Understanding the pathways that lead Indigenous women into leadership roles, as well as the challenges they face once there, could offer critical insights into gender equity in Indigenous governance.

Research into compensation disparities in Indigenous organizations also needs to be expanded. While this study highlighted the non-competitive compensation as a significant factor in turnover, further research should delve into the trade-offs between intrinsic motivation (e.g., serving the community) and extrinsic factors (e.g., pay, benefits). Additionally, a more granular examination of pay disparities between Indigenous men and women in executive roles could shed light on broader issues of gender equity in Indigenous organizations, especially considering the high proportion of female executives.

Lastly, this study's findings on the positive and negative impacts of turnover suggest a need for deeper exploration of how turnover can be managed to enhance its potential positive effects. While turnover often results in disruption, it may also lead to better person-organization fit or organizational rejuvenation. Further research should examine the conditions under which turnover leads to positive outcomes in Indigenous organizations. Additionally, gathering data from Indigenous leaders, who were underrepresented in this study, could offer more comprehensive perspectives on the potential benefits of turnover and how to strategically manage it. Empirical research designed to test the three theoretical frameworks – lateral violence, career opportunities and motivation, and organizational readiness – could provide valuable insights into the nuanced interplay of these factors and their influence on turnover dynamics in Indigenous organizations.

In sum, future research should investigate lateral violence, leadership strategies to address lateral violence, gender dynamics, compensation, and the dual nature of turnover to build a more holistic understanding of the factors influencing executive turnover in Indigenous organizations.

Methodological Considerations

This study's methodological approach offers valuable insights but also presents several limitations and opportunities for improvement. First, the study's focus on British Columbia (BC) and the national-level limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions. Future research should expand the geographical scope to include Indigenous executives from other provinces, territories, and the United States. This would help to identify whether similar factors influence turnover in different contexts or whether region-specific dynamics exist.

Second, this study relied heavily on interviews and focus groups with current and former Indigenous executives. While this provided rich qualitative data, future research should aim to include the perspectives of Indigenous leaders, such as chiefs or board members, who were underrepresented in this study. This could offer a broader understanding of turnover from leadership's perspective, potentially revealing different insights or validating existing findings.

The data collection for this study included surveys, interviews, and focus groups, providing a multi-method approach. However, despite these efforts, the survey response rate was relatively low, which may have affected the representativeness of the quantitative data. Incorporating more extensive surveys in future research could help achieve a larger sample size and more generalizable results. To improve response rates, offering incentives like gift cards, along with personalized follow-ups, could encourage greater participation. This approach would strengthen the quantitative data, complementing the rich insights gathered from interviews and focus groups, and providing a more comprehensive understanding of executive turnover.

Lastly, the focus on First Nations administrations and Indigenous nonprofits means the experiences of those working in First Nations economic development corporations were not fully explored. Future research should include this group to understand whether their turnover experiences align with or differ from those in other Indigenous organizations. This expansion

would provide a more comprehensive view of turnover across various types of Indigenous organizations.

Revisiting the Analytical Framework

How did the original analytical framework hold up against the dissertation's findings? Overall, it proved to be quite useful as an exploratory framework for identifying the causes and impacts of executive turnover, particularly regarding issues such as lateral violence and conflicts with chiefs and councils, which emerged as key contributors to Indigenous executive turnover (See Figure 61). The green circles in Figure 61 represent verified variables from the original Western analytical framework (Figure 3, Chapter 3), such as high costs and staff uncertainty, which align with common turnover impacts seen across sectors. The red circles reflect key factors verified through the Indigenous analytical framework (Figure 4, Chapter 3), notably lateral violence and conflict with chiefs and councils, highlighting unique challenges faced by Indigenous executives. These red variables indicate that Indigenous governance-specific issues contribute heavily to turnover and, looking forward, might form the basis for a theoretical framing of Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations.

However, the framework fell short when it came to the strategies for retaining executives. The original framework's focus on hiring based on person-organization fit, mentorship roles, and shared goals—while valid—did not align with the strategies emerging from this research. The updated framework now focuses on fair compensation, capacity-building opportunities, recognition, and balancing autonomy with support, as seen in the blue variables in Figure 61, which emerged through the dissertation's findings. As noted earlier, this analytic framework holds promise for being converted into a theoretical framework that not only incorporates competing theories to explain Indigenous executive turnover but also informs the design of

interventions to mitigate its effects and prepare Indigenous organizations for such turnover. This would, in turn, enable empirical testing of the effectiveness of these interventions, further strengthening the framework's applicability and impact.

One unexpected finding was that while lateral violence (in red) was a major cause of turnover, addressing it did not emerge as a key strategy for retaining Indigenous executives. This was surprising, given its prominence as a challenge. Furthermore, none of the original framework's proposed solutions—such as hiring based on person-organization fit or addressing lateral violence—were reflected in the strategies identified through the research. Instead, emergent variables (in blue) such as fair compensation and addressing burnout now feature prominently in retention strategies.

In reflecting on Table 5, it is particularly striking that neither burnout nor inadequate compensation were originally included as causes or solutions in the Western or Indigenous frameworks, despite being well-documented issues. The author's own experiences as an Indigenous executive underscore the significance of these omissions, having worked to the point of burnout while being undercompensated relative to public sector and industry standards. The inclusion of these emergent variables in the updated framework underscores the importance of grounding analytical models not just in theoretical frameworks, but in lived experiences as well.

Figure 61: Final Analytical Framework - next page!

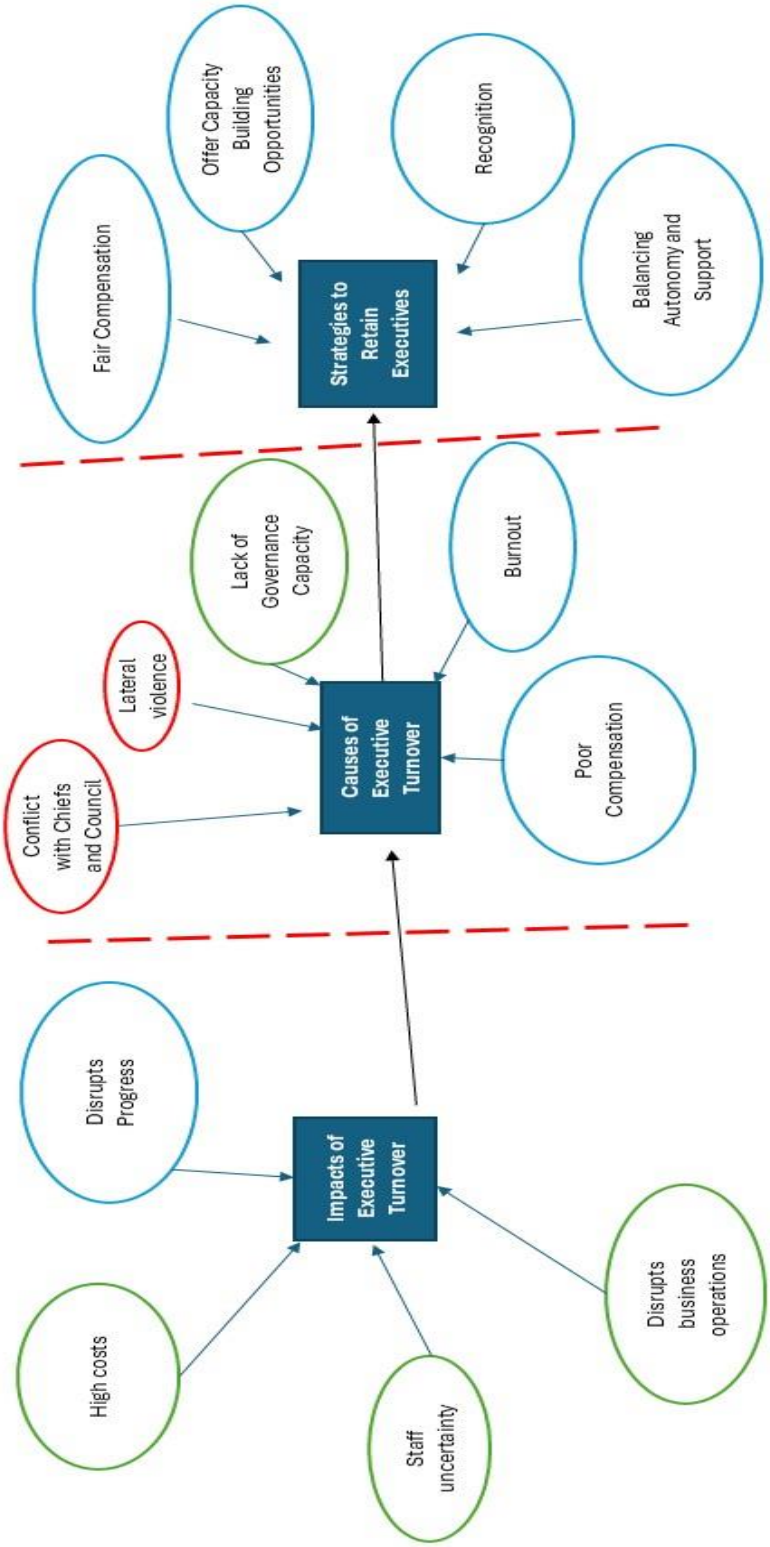

Offer Capacity Building Opportunities
Recognition
Fair Compensation
Balancing Autonomy and Support
Strategies to Retain Executives
Lack of Governance Capacity
Burnout
Lateral violence
Causes of Executive Turnover
Poor Compensation
Conflict with Chiefs and Council
Disrupts Progress
Impacts of Executive Turnover
High costs
Staff uncertainty
Disrupts business operations

Table 5: Revising the Analytical Framework

	Western Analytical Framework	*Indigenous Analytical Framework*	*Validated Variables*	*Emergent Variables*
Impacts of Executive Turnover	• Staff Uncertainty • High Costs • Disrupts Business Operations • Interrupts Reporting Requirements • Improved Person-Organization Fit • Improved Performance • Improved Innovation	• Disrupts Inherent Rights Progress	• Staff Uncertainty • Disrupts Business Operations • High Costs	• Disrupts Progress
Causes of Executive Turnover	• Lack of Governance Capacity • Lack of Person-Organization Fit • Natural Career Progression	• Conflict with Chiefs and Council • Lateral Violence • Shortage of Indigenous Executives	• Lateral Violence • Conflict with Chief and Council • Lack of Governance Capacity	• Burnout • Poor Compensation
Strategies to Retain Executives	• Hiring Based on Person-Organization Fit • Create Mentor Roles • Create Shared Goals	• Address Lateral Violence	• n/a	• Fair Compensation • Offer Capacity Building Opportunities • Recognition • Balancing Autonomy and Support

Interdisciplinary Opportunities

The findings of this study on executive turnover among Indigenous organizations offer significant potential for application and exploration in related fields. For example, the concept of lateral violence could inform research in psychology, organizational behavior, and conflict resolution. In these fields, the study's insights could enhance understanding of workplace dynamics and the psychological effects of lateral violence, particularly in marginalized groups. Researchers in management and human resources could also benefit from examining the study's findings on compensation disparities and gender dynamics, offering a deeper understanding of how to retain executives in nonprofit and mission-driven organizations where intrinsic motivation often competes with financial realities.

Moreover, cross-disciplinary studies involving Indigenous governance, public administration, and health sectors could explore how the turnover of executives in Indigenous organizations affects broader organizational and community outcomes. Collaboration with health researchers could investigate the potential mental health impacts of turnover, such as burnout and stress, on Indigenous leaders. By fostering interdisciplinary partnerships across governance, psychology, sociology, and health disciplines, future research could generate holistic solutions to address executive turnover and build capacity in Indigenous organizations.

Implications for Practice: Reducing Executive Turnover and Anticipating Turnover

Practical Applications of Findings

The findings of this research provide important insights for Indigenous organizations in Canada, offering actionable strategies to address the issue of executive turnover. A key practical implication is the need for a proactive strategy that anticipates and addresses turnover as a central issue affecting organizational stability. This involves recognizing and tackling underlying

causes such as lateral violence, burnout, and inadequate compensation. Indigenous organizations can use these insights to initiate candid discussions about turnover and implement solutions that foster executive well-being and leadership continuity.

Specific practices and policies that could benefit from these findings include the creation of competitive compensation packages, addressing both financial and non-financial aspects of compensation. Additionally, implementing lateral violence policies and offering related training can create safer, more respectful workplaces. The study also suggests that organizations focus on offering capacity-building opportunities and fostering strong relationships between staff and leadership to promote a sense of belonging and professional growth. By applying these strategies, Indigenous organizations can not only anticipate and reduce turnover but also strengthen overall organizational performance and cohesion.

Recommendations for Practitioners

Based on the research, Indigenous organizations should consider implementing the following actionable recommendations:

1. *Design a Competitive Total Compensation Package:* Ensure that compensation reflects the value of Indigenous executives by offering competitive salaries, benefits, and retirement plans, tailored to the specific financial realities of Indigenous organizations.
2. *Offer Capacity-Building Opportunities:* Provide ongoing professional development and mentorship programs to help executives and staff build skills and feel invested in the organization's future.
3. *Implement Recognition Programs:* Regularly acknowledge staff achievements through formal and informal recognition programs, fostering a culture of appreciation and motivation.
4. *Balance Support and Autonomy:* Create a work environment where executives are empowered to make decisions, but also have access to support and guidance when needed.
5. *Develop a Lateral Violence Policy:* Introduce policies to prevent lateral violence and offer training that equips staff and leaders to recognize and address toxic behaviors early on.

6. *Design Roles That Avoid Burnout:* Ensure workloads and responsibilities are manageable, and encourage healthy work-life balance by offering flexible working hours or a reduced workweek.
7. *Foster Relationship-Building Between Staff and Leadership*: Promote regular communication and team-building activities that strengthen relationships, trust, and cohesion across all levels of the organization.

By following these recommendations, practitioners can create more resilient, supportive, and sustainable Indigenous organizations, ultimately retaining top Indigenous talent and fostering a more positive organizational culture.

Potential Impact on Communities and Organizations

This research has the potential to significantly improve Indigenous organizations by addressing and mitigating the negative impacts of executive turnover. Reducing turnover will lower the high costs associated with recruiting and onboarding new leaders, minimize disruptions to operations and organizational progress, and foster a more stable and positive work environment. Indigenous organizations can redirect the savings from reduced turnover into essential programs and services that support vulnerable Indigenous populations. By maintaining continuity in leadership, these organizations will be better able to pursue long-term goals, such as transitioning away from the Indian Act and exercising their Inherent Rights under Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution.

Beyond the immediate organizational benefits, this research holds broader societal implications. Stable leadership in Indigenous organizations will support the advancement of self-governance, contributing to the closure of socio-economic gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in Canada. As Indigenous communities strengthen their governance and achieve greater autonomy, the positive ripple effects will be felt across the broader Canadian society, promoting equity, social justice, and reconciliation. The enhanced capacity of Indigenous organizations to serve their communities will ultimately contribute to a healthier, more prosperous, and inclusive nation.

Final Reflections: Reflections on a Research Journey

Research is hard. A PhD student starts with a dissertation proposal as guide for the next few years and learns that things change. What once seemed feasible and doable, turns out to be different. For example, I envisioned that leaders would be keen to participate in this important research, but that was not the case. It was extremely hard to recruit Indigenous leaders, they almost seemed busier than their executives. Additionally, this research journey taught me patience and understanding. There were more than a few times where I was just sitting in a Zoom room waiting for a participant to show up, but they never did. This indicated that they likely had a fire to put out that was more urgent than my interview – I get it, I was once a band manager.

What really amazed me was my learning journey through this research journey. While doing my PhD, I also did a Learning and Teaching Higher Education (LATHE) graduate certificate at UVic, and a Co-Active Coach Training at the Co-Active Training Institute (CTI). These additional programs helped me navigate and keep the momentum necessary to complete this PhD in a timely manner. I noticed that I was slowly moving along the Conscious Competency Learning Model, and was even empowered to do so in my roles as a Research Advisor for the First Nations Public Service Secretariat, where I led an important research project on quantifying how underfunded First Nations were in implementing effective governance, and in my role as the National Community Research Director for the Rebuilding First Nations Governance (RFNG) at Carleton University, where I lead a team of Inherent Rights Fellows and research assistants in community action research.

Most recently, I was presenting in a community on chief and council roles and responsibilities, as part of my duties as the Centre for First Nations Governance's co-executive director, and I was able to share some of my research and do so in a way where I could

confidently say, “Trust me, I’m the leading expert in Canada on Indigenous Executive Retention in Indigenous organizations.” That was a great and unusual feeling, which indicated not only my growth as a researcher, but as an Indigenous person – I exerted confidence, when we as Indigenous peoples, are typically humble.

In short, this dissertation provides a critical contribution to the understanding of executive turnover in Indigenous organizations, offering new insights into the unique dynamics that influence leadership stability. By extending traditional turnover models to include concepts such as lateral violence and gender dynamics, this research challenges existing theories and introduces new theoretical perspectives relevant to Indigenous contexts. The findings not only fill gaps in the literature but also highlight the importance of tailored strategies for retaining Indigenous executives. This research has practical implications for Indigenous organizations, providing actionable strategies to address turnover, enhance leadership stability, and improve organizational performance.

Looking forward, there is significant potential for future research to build on these findings. Investigating lateral violence and gender dynamics in broader contexts, exploring the impact of compensation disparities, and examining the dual nature of turnover could further enhance our understanding of executive retention in Indigenous organizations. Additionally, interdisciplinary collaborations could offer holistic solutions and deepen insights into how turnover affects broader organizational and community outcomes. As the field evolves, ongoing research will be crucial in refining strategies and supporting the continued growth and resilience of Indigenous organizations.

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Appendix A: Focus Group Questions

1. How long have you been in your current executive role?

2. How many executives has your organization gone though in the last ten years?

3. What residual impacts of executive turnover did you experience when you joined your organization?

4. What has caused you to leave an executive position in the past?

5. What does your leadership do well in retaining you in your executive role?

6. Do you have a preference for working in an Indigenous or non-Indigenous organization?

7. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience as an Indigenous executive in an Indigenous organization?

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview Questions for the Chief

1. How long have you been the Chief for your Nation?
2. What inspired you to take a leadership role?
3. Approximately, how many band members/citizens does your Nation have?
4. Approximately, how many employees does your Nation have?
5. What are some challenges and opportunities that you see for your Nation?
6. How many executives have you seen in the past 10 years?
    a. How many were Indigenous?
    b. How many were non-Indigenous?
7. Does your Nation have a preference in hiring Indigenous executives over non-Indigenous executives? Why?
8. When an executive leaves your Nation, what are the impacts that you notice?
9. Is executive retention important to you? Why or why not?
10. What do you think causes executives to leave their role?
11. What does your organization do to retain its executives?
12. Do we have permission to interview your current executive?
13. Do you know of any Indigenous executives outside of your Nation that may be interested in being interviewed about Indigenous Executive Turnover in Canadian Indigenous Organizations?

Interview Questions for the current Executive

1. What were you doing in your previous job?
2. What inspired you to take an executive role?
3. What are some challenges and opportunities that you see for the Nation you serve?
4. How many years experience do you have as an Indigenous executive?
5. Do you self-identify as Indigenous?
6. What is your age?
7. What is your gender?
8. What is the highest level of education that you possess?
9. How long have you been in your current role?
10. Do you prefer to work an Indigenous or non-Indigenous organization? Why?
11. What is the longest time you've been in an executive role?
    a. What did you like about that place?
    b. What did you not like about that place?
12. What is the shortest time you've been in an executive role?
    a. What did you like about that place?
    b. What did you not like about that place?
13. Why do you think Indigenous executives leave their roles in Indigenous organizations?
14. What can Indigenous organizations do to retain their Indigenous executives?

Do you have anything else you'd like to share with me regarding Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations?

Interview Question for a Former Executive

1. What were you doing in your previous job?

2. What inspired you to take an executive role?

3. How many years experience do you have as an Indigenous executive?

4. What are you doing for a career right now?

5. Do you prefer to work an Indigenous or non-Indigenous organization? Why?

6. What is the longest time you've been in an executive role?

    a. What did you like about that place?

    b. What did you not like about that place?

7. What is the shortest time you've been in an executive role?

    a. What did you like about that place?

    b. What did you not like about that place?

8. Why do you think Indigenous executives leave their roles in Indigenous organizations?

9. What can Indigenous organizations do to retain their Indigenous executives?

Do you have anything else you'd like to share with me regarding Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations?

Interview Questions for the Board Chair

1. What inspired you to take a leadership role?

2. Approximately, how many employees does your organization have?

3. What are some challenges and opportunities that you see for your organization?

4. How long have you been the Board chair for your organization?

5. How many executives have you seen in the past 10 years?

    a. How many were Indigenous?

    b. How many were non-Indigenous?

6. Does your organization have a preference in hiring Indigenous executives over non-Indigenous executives? Why?

7. When an executive leaves your organization, what are the impacts that you notice?

8. Is executive retention important to you? Why or why not?

9. What do you think causes executives to leave their role?

10. What does your organization do to retain its executives?

11. Do we have permission to interview your current executive?

12. Do you know of any Indigenous executive outside of your organization that may be interested in being interviewed about Indigenous Executive Turnover in Canadian Indigenous Organizations?

Interview Questions for the National Indigenous Executive

1. What were you doing in your previous job?
2. What inspired you to take an executive role?
3. What are some challenges and opportunities that you see for the National Indigenous Organization you serve?
4. How many years experience do you have as an Indigenous executive?
5. Do you self-identify as Indigenous?
6. What is your age?
7. What is your gender?
8. What is the highest level of education that you possess?
9. How long have you been in your current role?
10. Do you prefer to work an Indigenous or non-Indigenous organization? Why?
11. What is the longest time you've been in an executive role?
    a. What did you like about that place?
    b. What did you not like about that place?
12. What is the shortest time you've been in an executive role?
    a. What did you like about that place?
    b. What did you not like about that place?
13. Why do you think Indigenous executives leave their roles in Indigenous organizations?
14. What can Indigenous organizations do to retain their Indigenous executives?
15. Do you have anything else you'd like to share with me regarding Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations?

Appendix C: Recruitment Emails

<DATE>

To: Chiefs

Re: Participation in Mason Ducharme's PhD Dissertation

My name is Mason Ducharme of the Líl̓wat Nation, and I am a PhD student with the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. I am contacting you with regards to research I am undertaking for my PhD dissertation, which seeks to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives. My interest in this topic arises from own experience as a band manager and program director for two Indigenous communities.

This will be the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities. This is a big topic and my research on the experience of Indigenous executives will rely on several case studies of selected Indigenous communities in BC as well as some national Indigenous organizations.

I am writing to ask permission to arrange a time with you to discuss with your Nation's experience with Indigenous executives. I would like to understand your Nation's unique governance tradition and where you have had Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) executives work. More specifically, our discussion would enable me to learn about: your Nation's history and approach to governance; the range of executive roles in your community; your Nation's experience with executive turnover; and what strategies you have for attracting and retaining Indigenous executives. To inform follow-up research, I would seek your permission to interview some of your current Indigenous executives and ask for the names and contacts of former Indigenous executives, since I am interested in where else they have gone to work during their careers.

If you agree to participate, I will arrange an interview time of convenience to you. Please provide me with two days and times that you are available for an interview this month.

Please note that all data will be treated in a confidential manner. Individual responses will not be identified within the final report. Rather, the data gathered will be summarized. The data will be securely kept for a maximum period of one year after the PhD Dissertation is accepted by the University of Victoria.

As your participation is completely voluntary, you can decide to withdraw from participating at any time during the process. Should you decide to do this; any data collected will be used in summarized form with no identifying information

Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any questions about the project, please feel free to email me at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

I have attached a Participant Consent Form. Prior to participating in this interview, I will require your signature on this document.

Sincerely,

Mason Ducharme

<DATE>

To: Indigenous Executives in BC First Nations

Re: Participation in Mason Ducharme's PhD Dissertation

My name is Mason Ducharme of the Líl̓wat Nation, and I am a PhD student with the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. I am contacting you with regards to research I am undertaking for my PhD dissertation, which seeks to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives. My interest in this topic arises from own experience as a band manager and program director for two Indigenous communities.

This will be the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities. This is a big topic and my research on the experience of Indigenous executives will rely on several case studies of selected Indigenous communities in BC as well as some national Indigenous organizations.

I am writing to ask permission to arrange a time with you to discuss with your experience as an Indigenous executive. I have met with {Insert Name}, leader of your Nation and received permission to interview you. I would like to understand your Nation's history and approach to governance; your career path; your experience with executive turnover; and what strategies you propose for attracting and retaining Indigenous executives.

If you agree to participate, I will arrange an interview time of convenience to you. Please provide me with two days and times that you are available for an interview this month.

Please note that all data will be treated in a confidential manner. Individual responses will not be identified within the final report. Rather, the data gathered will be summarized. The data will be securely kept for a maximum period of one year after the PhD Dissertation is accepted by the University of Victoria.

As your participation is completely voluntary, you can decide to withdraw from participating at any time during the process. Should you decide to do this; any data collected will be used in summarized form with no identifying information

Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any questions about the project, please feel free to email me at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

I have attached a Participant Consent Form. Prior to participating in this interview, I will require your signature on this document.

Sincerely,

Mason Ducharme

<DATE>

To: Former Indigenous Executives in BC First Nations

Re: Participation in Mason Ducharme's PhD Dissertation

My name is Mason Ducharme of the Líl̓wat Nation, and I am a PhD student with the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. I am contacting you with regards to research I am undertaking for my PhD dissertation, which seeks to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives. My interest in this topic arises from own experience as a band manager and program director for two Indigenous communities.

This will be the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities. This is a big topic and my research on the experience of Indigenous executives will rely on several case studies of selected Indigenous communities in BC as well as some national Indigenous organizations.

I am writing to ask permission to arrange a time with you to discuss with your experience as an Indigenous executive. I have met with {Insert Name}, leader of your Nation and they suggested you as a potential interviewee given your Indigenous executive experience. I would like to understand your career path; your experience with executive turnover; and what strategies you propose for attracting and retaining Indigenous executives.

If you agree to participate, I will arrange an interview time of convenience to you. Please provide me with two days and times that you are available for an interview this month.

Please note that all data will be treated in a confidential manner. Individual responses will not be identified within the final report. Rather, the data gathered will be summarized. The data will be securely kept for a maximum period of one year after the PhD Dissertation is accepted by the University of Victoria.

As your participation is completely voluntary, you can decide to withdraw from participating at any time during the process. Should you decide to do this; any data collected will be used in summarized form with no identifying information

Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any questions about the project, please feel free to email me at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

I have attached a Participant Consent Form. Prior to participating in this interview, I will require your signature on this document.

Sincerely,

Mason Ducharme

<DATE>

To: National Board Chair

Re: Participation in Mason Ducharme's PhD Dissertation

My name is Mason Ducharme of the Líl̓wat Nation, and I am a PhD student with the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. I am contacting you with regards to research I am undertaking for my PhD dissertation, which seeks to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives. My interest in this topic arises from own experience as a band manager and program director for two Indigenous communities.

This will be the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities. This is a big topic and my research on the experience of Indigenous executives will rely on several case studies of selected Indigenous communities in BC as well as some national Indigenous organizations.

I am writing to ask permission to arrange a time with you to discuss with your organization's experience with Indigenous executives. I would like to understand your organization's unique governance tradition and where you have had Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) executives work. More specifically, our discussion would enable me to learn about: your organization's history and approach to governance; the range of executive roles in your organization; your organization's experience with executive turnover; and what strategies you have for attracting and retaining Indigenous executives. To inform follow-up research, I would seek your permission to interview some of your current Indigenous executives and ask for the names and contacts of former Indigenous executives, since I am interested in where else they have gone to work during their careers.

If you agree to participate, I will arrange an interview time of convenience to you. Please provide me with two days and times that you are available for an interview this month.

Please note that all data will be treated in a confidential manner. Individual responses will not be identified within the final report. Rather, the data gathered will be summarized. The data will be securely kept for a maximum period of one year after the PhD Dissertation is accepted by the University of Victoria.

As your participation is completely voluntary, you can decide to withdraw from participating at any time during the process. Should you decide to do this; any data collected will be used in summarized form with no identifying information

Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any questions about the project, please feel free to email me at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

I have attached a Participant Consent Form. Prior to participating in this interview, I will require your signature on this document.

Sincerely,

Mason Ducharme

<DATE>

To: Indigenous Executives in National Indigenous Organizations

Re: Participation in Mason Ducharme's PhD Dissertation

My name is Mason Ducharme of the Líl̓wat Nation, and I am a PhD student with the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. I am contacting you with regards to research I am undertaking for my PhD dissertation, which seeks to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives. My interest in this topic arises from own experience as a band manager and program director for two Indigenous communities.

This will be the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities. This is a big topic and my research on the experience of Indigenous executives will rely on several case studies of selected Indigenous communities in BC as well as some national Indigenous organizations.

I am writing to ask permission to arrange a time with you to discuss your experience an Indigenous executive. I have met with {Insert Name}, leader of your organization and received permission to interview you. I would like to understand your organization's history and approach to governance; your career path; your experience with executive turnover; and what strategies you propose for attracting and retaining Indigenous executives.

If you agree to participate, I will arrange an interview time of convenience to you. Please provide me with two days and times that you are available for an interview this month.

Please note that all data will be treated in a confidential manner. Individual responses will not be identified within the final report. Rather, the data gathered will be summarized. The data will be securely kept for a maximum period of one year after the PhD Dissertation is accepted by the University of Victoria.

As your participation is completely voluntary, you can decide to withdraw from participating at any time during the process. Should you decide to do this; any data collected will be used in summarized form with no identifying information

Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any questions about the project, please feel free to email me at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

I have attached a Participant Consent Form. Prior to participating in this interview, I will require your signature on this document.

Sincerely,

Mason Ducharme

<DATE>

To: Indigenous Executives in BC Urban Indigenous Organizations (Chairperson)

Re: Participation in Mason Ducharme's PhD Dissertation

My name is Mason Ducharme of the Líl̓wat Nation, and I am a PhD student with the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. I am contacting you with regards to research I am undertaking for my PhD dissertation, which seeks to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives. My interest in this topic arises from own experience as a band manager and program director for two Indigenous communities.

This will be the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities. This is a big topic and my research on the experience of Indigenous executives will rely on several case studies of selected Indigenous communities in BC as well as some national Indigenous organizations and BC Urban Indigenous organizations.

I am writing to ask permission to arrange a time with your group of executives to discuss their experience as an Indigenous executive. I would like to understand their career path; their experience with executive turnover; and what strategies they propose for attracting and retaining Indigenous executives.

If you agree to participate, I will arrange focus group at a time of convenience to you and your group. Please provide me with two days and times that your group is available for a focus group this month.

Please note that all data will be treated in a confidential manner. Individual responses will not be identified within the final report. Rather, the data gathered will be summarized. The data will be securely kept for a maximum period of one year after the PhD Dissertation is accepted by the University of Victoria.

As your participation is completely voluntary, you can decide to withdraw from participating at any time during the process. Should you decide to do this; any data collected will be used in summarized form with no identifying information

Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any questions about the project, please feel free to email me at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

I have attached a Participant Consent Form. Prior to participating in this focus group, I will require your signature on this document.

Sincerely,

Mason Ducharme

<DATE>

To: Indigenous Executives in BC Urban Indigenous Organizations

Re: Participation in Mason Ducharme's PhD Dissertation

My name is Mason Ducharme of the Líl̓wat Nation, and I am a PhD student with the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. I am contacting you with regards to research I am undertaking for my PhD dissertation, which seeks to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives. My interest in this topic arises from own experience as a band manager and program director for two Indigenous communities.

This will be the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities. This is a big topic and my research on the experience of Indigenous executives will rely on several case studies of selected Indigenous communities in BC as well as some national Indigenous organizations and BC Indigenous organizations.

I am writing to ask permission to arrange a time with you to discuss with your experience as an Indigenous executive. I have met with {Insert Name}, leader of your group of organizations and received permission to conduct a focus group with your group. I would like to understand your career path; your experience with executive turnover; and what strategies you propose for attracting and retaining Indigenous executives.

If you agree to participate, please attend the focus group session which will occur on ***Insert Date* from *Insert Start and End Times***.

Please note that all data will be treated in a confidential manner. Individual responses will not be identified within the final report. Rather, the data gathered will be summarized. The data will be securely kept for a maximum period of one year after the PhD Dissertation is accepted by the University of Victoria.

As your participation is completely voluntary, you can decide to withdraw from participating at any time during the process. Should you decide to do this; any data collected will be used in summarized form with no identifying information

Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any questions about the project, please feel free to email me at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

I have attached a Participant Consent Form. Prior to participating in this focus group, I will require your signature on this document.

Sincerely,

Mason Ducharme

Appendix D: Survey Questions

1. What is the population range of your Nation (on and off-reserve)?
    a. Under 500 members
    b. 501-1,500 members
    c. Over 1,501 members
2. What is the name of your community?
3. What best describes you?
    a. Chief
    b. Council member
    c. Executive (Band Manager, CAO, COO, General manager, etc.)
    d. HR person (HR manager, HR coordinator, etc.)
4. How many executives (Band Manager, CAO, COO, General manager, etc.) has your Nation had in the past 10 years?
    a. How many of them were Indigenous?
    b. How many of them were not Indigenous?
5. What's the longest time you've had an executive?
6. What's the shortest time you've had an executive?
7. How many executive team members (positions that report to the executive) does your organization typically have on a given year?
8. How many executive team members left your organization in the year 2020?
9. Does your Nation prefer hiring Indigenous executives over non-Indigenous executives?
    a. Yes
    b. No
10. Are you interested in participating in a one-on-one interview with Mason Ducharme to support his Indigenous Executive Turnover in Canadian Indigenous Organizations dissertation research?
    a. If yes, please provide contact information
        i. Name:
        ii. Phone number:
        iii. Email:

Appendix E: Survey Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Mason Ducharme of the Líl̓wat Nation, and I am a PhD student with the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria. I am contacting you with regards to research I am undertaking for my PhD dissertation, which seeks to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives. My interest in this topic arises from own experience as a band manager and program director for two Indigenous communities.

This will be the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities. This is a big topic and my research on the experience of Indigenous executives will rely on the completion of an online survey by BC First Nations Chiefs.

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include involvement in an online survey process. The survey will take approximately **30 minutes** to complete. During this survey, you will be asked about:

- the range of executive roles in your community;
- your community's experience with Indigenous executive turnover; and
- your interest in participating in a one-on-one interview to support Mason in his Indigenous Executive Turnover in Canadian Indigenous Organizations dissertation research.

Survey Link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SJW896F

Your participation will be fully anonymous if you choose NOT to identify yourself as an interested interviewee, which requires you to share your name, email, and phone number. Although, you will remain anonymous in the dissemination of results.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any questions about the project, please feel free to email me at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

I have attached a Letter of Information for Implied Consent that outlines all of the technical and ethical information related to this research.

Kúkwstum̓ckacw (thank you),

Mason Ducharme

PhD Candidate, University of Victoria

Appendix F: Letter of Information for Implied Consent

Letter of Information for Implied Consent

The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations

You are invited to participate in a study entitled The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations that is being conducted by Mason Ducharme.

Mason Ducharme is a PhD Candidate in the department of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by email at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

As a PhD Candidate, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a PhD in Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Evert Lindquist. You may contact my supervisor at 250-721-8416.

This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because it is the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a leader, executive, or a Human Resources employee for a BC First Nations.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include involvement in an online survey process. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. During this survey, you will be asked about the range of executive roles in your community; your community's experience with Indigenous executive turnover; and your interest in participating in a one-on-one interview to support Mason in his Indigenous Executive Turnover in Canadian Indigenous Organizations dissertation research.

Please be advised that information about you that is gathered for this research study uses an online program located in the U.S. or a program that can be accessed from the US (SurveyMonkey). As such, there is a possibility that information about you may be accessed without your knowledge or consent by the US government in compliance with the US Freedom Act.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including total time dedicated to this project.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include a benefit to the participant which could include having their voice heard about their experiences with Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations which could make the participant feel hopeful, relieved, and important. Society would benefit as this would provide Indigenous organizations with an understanding of Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations and strategies to retain Indigenous executives which helps organizations function efficiently. This would benefit the state of knowledge because there is no research in this area, therefore it would generate another dimension of literature.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be used in summarized form with no identifying information.

Anonymity

Your participation will be fully anonymous if you choose NOT to identify yourself as an interested interviewee, which requires you to share your name, email, and phone number. Although, you will remain anonymous in the dissemination of results.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by having the information that is provided in the online survey will have each participant be assigned a random letter as a code. The survey data will be saved on the Survey Monkey which is password protected. The login information is only known by the primary researcher. The results of this online survey will not be traced back to an individual – the results will be collected in an aggregate form.

Dissemination of Results

I plan to personally share the findings with the First Nations and IOs that contributed to my research in person. I would like to write three journal articles that focus on retaining indigenous executives in 1) First Nations; 2) BC Indigenous Urban Organizations; and 3) National Indigenous Organizations. I will also present my findings to the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association, and First Nations Public Service Secretariat to develop their strategies to attract and retain talent and train talent. Additionally, this dissertation will be made available online available on the internet via UVicSpace.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of by deleting the survey results from SurveyMonkey within ~~one~~ three years maximum after the PhD Dissertation is accepted by the University of Victoria.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Mason Ducharme (Primary Researcher), and Dr. Evert Lindquist (Supervisor) at their respective contact information listed at the beginning of this consent form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

By completing and submitting the questionnaire, **YOUR FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT IS IMPLIED** and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Please retain a copy of this letter for your reference.

Appendix G: Participant Consent Forms

Chief Consent Form

Participant Consent Form – Group 1

The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations

You are invited to participate in a study entitled The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations that is being conducted by Mason Ducharme.

Mason Ducharme is a PhD Candidate in the department of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by email at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

As a PhD Candidate, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a PhD in Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Evert Lindquist. You may contact my supervisor at 250-721-8416.

This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because it is the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a First Nations leader of a BC First Nation in one of the six unique regions across BC, and your First Nation is unique in terms of governance systems. The only selection criterion is that the participant is a First Nations leader and is competent.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a two hour interview, which will occur at your earliest convenience in your office or online with Zoom. During this interview, Mason will ask you about your Nation's history and approach to governance; the range of executive roles in your community; your Nation's experience with executive turnover; what strategies you have for attracting and retaining Indigenous executives, and permission to interview some of your current Indigenous executives and ask for the names and contacts of former Indigenous executives.

Audio-tapes/and-written notes, observations/ will be taken. A transcription will be made.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including total time dedicated to this project.

Risks

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include Emotional and Psychological. To prevent or to deal with these risks the interview questions are written to avoid stressing participants out.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include a benefit to the participant which could include having their voice heard about their experiences with Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations which could make the participant feel hopeful, relieved, and important. Society would benefit as this would provide Indigenous organizations with an understanding of Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations and strategies to retain Indigenous executives which helps organizations function efficiently. This would benefit the state of knowledge because there is no research in this area, therefore it would generate another dimension of literature.

Compensation

In compliance with Indigenous customs and protocols, I will provide small gifts as a token of appreciation to participants.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be used in summarized form with no identifying information. You will still will still receive their thank you gifts for your time.

Anonymity

Your participation will not be fully anonymous as the primary researcher will be participating in the interviews. Although, you will remain anonymous in the dissemination of results, unless you choose to be identified in the results of the study and have your responses attributed to you; in which case, you will review, provide feedback and final approval of your contribution before it is made public in my dissertation.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by the following practices:

1. Shredding my written notes after they are transcribed onto my computer;
2. Deleting my audio files once they are transcribed; and
3. Ensuring that the names of the participants are removed from the documents.

Dissemination of Results

I plan to personally share the findings with the First Nations and IOs that contributed to my research in person. I would like to write three journal articles that focus on retaining indigenous executives in 1) First Nations; 2) BC Indigenous Urban Organizations; and 3) National Indigenous Organizations. I will also present my findings to the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association, and First Nations Public Service Secretariat to develop their strategies to attract and retain talent and train talent. Additionally, this dissertation will be made available online available on the internet via UVicSpace.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of by shredding my written notes after they are transcribed onto my computer; and deleting my audio files once they are transcribed. The transcriptions will be deleted from my laptop within ~~one~~ three years after the Dissertation is accepted by the University of Victoria.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Mason Ducharme (Primary Researcher), and Dr. Evert Lindquist (Supervisor) at their respective contact information listed at the beginning of this consent form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

[WAIVING CONFIDENTIALITY*] PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT only if you consent:*

I consent to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

Future Use of Data *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT:*

I consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Current Executive Consent Form

Participant Consent Form – Group 2

The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations

You are invited to participate in a study entitled The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations that is being conducted by Mason Ducharme.

Mason Ducharme is a PhD Candidate in the department of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by email at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

As a PhD Candidate, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a PhD in Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Evert Lindquist. You may contact my supervisor at 250-721-8416.

This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because it is the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a First Nations executive of a BC First Nation in one of the six unique regions across BC, and your First Nation is unique in terms of governance systems. The only selection criterion is that the participant is a First Nations executive and is competent.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a two hour interview, which will occur at your earliest convenience in your office or online with Zoom. During this interview, Mason will ask you about your Nation's history and approach to governance; your career path; your experience with executive turnover; and what strategies you propose for attracting and retaining Indigenous executives.

Audio-tapes/and-written notes, observations/ will be taken. A transcription will be made.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including total time dedicated to this project.

Risks

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include Economic, Emotional and Psychological. To prevent or deal with these risks, the interview questions are written to avoid stressing participants out and mitigate job security concerns. For example, the questions do not ask the participant to share their experiences in their current job.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include a benefit to the participant which could include having their voice heard about their experiences with Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations which could make the participant feel hopeful, relieved, and important. Society would benefit as this would provide Indigenous organizations with an understanding of Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations and strategies to retain Indigenous executives which helps organizations function efficiently. This would benefit the state of knowledge because there is no research in this area, therefore it would generate another dimension of literature.

Compensation

In compliance with Indigenous customs and protocols, I will provide small gifts as a token of appreciation to participants.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be used in summarized form with no identifying information. You will still receive thank you gifts for your time.

Anonymity

Your participation will not be fully anonymous as the primary researcher will be participating in the interviews. Although, you will remain anonymous in the dissemination of results unless you choose to be identified in the results of the study and have your responses attributed to you; in which case, you will review, provide feedback and final approval of your contribution before it is made public in my dissertation.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by the following practices:

1. Shredding my written notes after they are transcribed onto my computer;
2. Deleting my audio files once they are transcribed; and
3. Ensuring that the names of the participants are removed from the documents.

Dissemination of Results

I plan to personally share the findings with the First Nations and IOs that contributed to my research in person. I would like to write three journal articles that focus on retaining indigenous executives in 1) First

Nations; 2) BC Indigenous Urban Organizations; and 3) National Indigenous Organizations. I will also present my findings to the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association, and First Nations Public Service Secretariat to develop their strategies to attract and retain talent and train talent. Additionally, this dissertation will be made available online available on the internet via UVicSpace.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of by shredding my written notes after they are transcribed onto my computer; and deleting my audio files once they are transcribed. The transcriptions will be deleted from my laptop within ~~one~~ three years after the Dissertation is accepted by the University of Victoria.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Mason Ducharme (Primary Researcher), and Dr. Evert Lindquist (Supervisor) at their respective contact information listed at the beginning of this consent form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

[WAIVING CONFIDENTIALITY*] PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT only if you consent:*

I consent to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

Future Use of Data *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT:*

I consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Former Executive Consent Form

Participant Consent Form – Group 3

The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations

You are invited to participate in a study entitled The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations that is being conducted by Mason Ducharme.

Mason Ducharme is a PhD Candidate in the department of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by email at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

As a PhD Candidate, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a PhD in Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Evert Lindquist. You may contact my supervisor at 250-721-8416.

This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because it is the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a former First Nations executive of a BC First Nation. The only selection criterion is that the participant is a former First Nations executive and is competent.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a two hour interview, which will occur at your earliest convenience in your office or online with Zoom. During this interview, Mason will ask you about your career path; your experience with executive turnover; and what strategies you propose for attracting and retaining Indigenous executives.

Audio-tapes/and-written notes, observations/ will be taken. A transcription will be made.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including total time dedicated to this project.

Risks

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include Economic, Emotional and Psychological. To prevent or deal with these risks, the interview questions are written to avoid stressing participants out and mitigate job security concerns. For example, the questions do not ask the participant to share their experiences in their current job.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include a benefit to the participant which could include having their voice heard about their experiences with Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations which could make the participant feel hopeful, relieved, and important. Society would benefit as this would provide Indigenous organizations with an understanding of Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations and strategies to retain Indigenous executives which helps organizations function efficiently. This would benefit the state of knowledge because there is no research in this area, therefore it would generate another dimension of literature.

Compensation

In compliance with Indigenous customs and protocols, I will provide small gifts as a token of appreciation to participants.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be used in summarized form with no identifying information. You will still receive thank you gifts for your time.

Anonymity

Your participation will not be fully anonymous as the primary researcher will be participating in the interviews. Although, you will remain anonymous in the dissemination of results unless you choose to be identified in the results of the study and have your responses attributed to you; in which case, you will review, provide feedback and final approval of your contribution before it is made public in my dissertation.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by the following practices:

1. Shredding my written notes after they are transcribed onto my computer;
2. Deleting my audio files once they are transcribed; and
3. Ensuring that the names of the participants are removed from the documents.

Dissemination of Results

I plan to personally share the findings with the First Nations and IOs that contributed to my research in person. I would like to write three journal articles that focus on retaining indigenous executives in 1) First Nations; 2) BC Indigenous Urban Organizations; and 3) National Indigenous Organizations. I will also present my findings to the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association, and First Nations Public Service Secretariat to develop their strategies to attract and retain talent and train talent. Additionally, this dissertation will be made available online available on the internet via UVicSpace.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of by shredding my written notes after they are transcribed onto my computer; and deleting my audio files once they are transcribed. The transcriptions will be deleted from my laptop within ~~one~~ three years after the Dissertation is accepted by the University of Victoria.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Mason Ducharme (Primary Researcher), and Dr. Evert Lindquist (Supervisor) at their respective contact information listed at the beginning of this consent form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

[WAIVING CONFIDENTIALITY*] PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT only if you consent:*

I consent to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

Future Use of Data *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT:*

I consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

National Indigenous Leader Consent Form

Participant Consent Form – Group 4

The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations

You are invited to participate in a study entitled The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations that is being conducted by Mason Ducharme.

Mason Ducharme is a PhD Candidate in the department of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by email at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

As a PhD Candidate, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a PhD in Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Evert Lindquist. You may contact my supervisor at 250-721-8416.

This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because it is the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an Indigenous leader of a National Indigenous Organization, and your Organization is unique in terms of governance systems. The only selection criterion is that the participant is an Indigenous leader and is competent.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a two hour interview, which will occur at your earliest convenience in your office or online with Zoom. During this interview, Mason will ask you about your organization's history and approach to governance; the range of executive roles in your organization; your organization's experience with executive turnover; what strategies you have for attracting and retaining Indigenous executives, and permission to interview some of your current Indigenous executives and ask for the names and contacts of former Indigenous executives.

Audio-tapes/and-written notes, observations/ will be taken. A transcription will be made.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including total time dedicated to this project.

Risks

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include Emotional and Psychological. To prevent or to deal with these risks the interview questions are written to avoid stressing participants out.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include a benefit to the participant which could include having their voice heard about their experiences with Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations which could make the participant feel hopeful, relieved, and important. Society would benefit as this would provide Indigenous organizations with an understanding of Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations and strategies to retain Indigenous executives which helps organizations function efficiently. This would benefit the state of knowledge because there is no research in this area, therefore it would generate another dimension of literature.

Compensation

In compliance with Indigenous customs and protocols, I will provide small gifts as a token of appreciation to participants.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be used in summarized form with no identifying information. You will still receive thank you gifts for your time.

Anonymity

Your participation will not be fully anonymous as the primary researcher will be participating in the interviews. Although, you will remain anonymous in the dissemination of results unless you choose to be identified in the results of the study and have your responses attributed to you; in which case, you will review, provide feedback and final approval of your contribution before it is made public in my dissertation.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by the following practices:

1. Shredding my written notes after they are transcribed onto my computer;
2. Deleting my audio files once they are transcribed; and
3. Ensuring that the names of the participants are removed from the documents.

Dissemination of Results

I plan to personally share the findings with the First Nations and IOs that contributed to my research in person. I would like to write three journal articles that focus on retaining indigenous executives in 1) First Nations; 2) BC Indigenous Urban Organizations; and 3) National Indigenous Organizations. I will also present my findings to the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association, and First Nations Public Service Secretariat to develop their strategies to attract and retain talent and train talent. Additionally, this dissertation will be made available online available on the internet via UVicSpace.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of by shredding my written notes after they are transcribed onto my computer; and deleting my audio files once they are transcribed. The transcriptions will be deleted from my laptop within ~~one~~ three years after the Dissertation is accepted by the University of Victoria.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Mason Ducharme (Primary Researcher), and Dr. Evert Lindquist (Supervisor) at their respective contact information listed at the beginning of this consent form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

[WAIVING CONFIDENTIALITY*] PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT only if you consent:*

I consent to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

Future Use of Data *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT:*

I consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

National Indigenous Executive Consent Form

Participant Consent Form – Group 5

The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations

You are invited to participate in a study entitled The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations that is being conducted by Mason Ducharme.

Mason Ducharme is a PhD Candidate in the department of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by email at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

As a PhD Candidate, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a PhD in Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Evert Lindquist. You may contact my supervisor at 250-721-8416.

This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because it is the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an Indigenous executive of a National Indigenous Organization, and your Organization is unique in terms of governance systems. The only selection criterion is that the participant is an Indigenous executive and is competent.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a two hour interview, which will occur at your earliest convenience in your office or online with Zoom. During this interview, Mason will ask you about your organization's history and approach to governance; your career path; your experience with executive turnover; and what strategies you propose for attracting and retaining Indigenous executives.

Audio-tapes/and-written notes, observations/ will be taken. A transcription will be made.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including total time dedicated to this project.

Risks

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include Economic, Emotional and Psychological. To prevent or deal with these risks, the interview questions are written to avoid stressing participants out and mitigate job security concerns. For example, the questions do not ask the participant to share their experiences in their current job.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include a benefit to the participant which could include having their voice heard about their experiences with Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations which could make the participant feel hopeful, relieved, and important. Society would benefit as this would provide Indigenous organizations with an understanding of Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations and strategies to retain Indigenous executives which helps organizations function efficiently. This would benefit the state of knowledge because there is no research in this area, therefore it would generate another dimension of literature.

Compensation

In compliance with Indigenous customs and protocols, I will provide small gifts as a token of appreciation to participants.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be used in summarized form with no identifying information. You will still receive thank you gifts for your time.

Anonymity

Your participation will not be fully anonymous as the primary researcher will be participating in the interviews. Although, you will remain anonymous in the dissemination of results unless you choose to be identified in the results of the study and have your responses attributed to you; in which case, you will review, provide feedback and final approval of your contribution before it is made public in my dissertation.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by the following practices:

1. Shredding my written notes after they are transcribed onto my computer;
2. Deleting my audio files once they are transcribed; and
3. Ensuring that the names of the participants are removed from the documents.

Dissemination of Results

I plan to personally share the findings with the First Nations and IOs that contributed to my research in person. I would like to write three journal articles that focus on retaining indigenous executives in 1) First Nations; 2) BC Indigenous Urban Organizations; and 3) National Indigenous Organizations. I will also present my findings to the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association, and First Nations Public Service

Secretariat to develop their strategies to attract and retain talent and train talent. Additionally, this dissertation will be made available online available on the internet via UVicSpace.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of by shredding my written notes after they are transcribed onto my computer; and deleting my audio files once they are transcribed. The transcriptions will be deleted from my laptop within ~~one~~ three years after the Dissertation is accepted by the University of Victoria.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Mason Ducharme (Primary Researcher), and Dr. Evert Lindquist (Supervisor) at their respective contact information listed at the beginning of this consent form.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

[WAIVING CONFIDENTIALITY*] PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT only if you consent:*

I consent to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

Future Use of Data *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT:*

I consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Executive Focus Group Consent Form

Participant Consent Form – Group 6

The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations

You are invited to participate in a study entitled The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations that is being conducted by Mason Ducharme.

Mason Ducharme is a PhD Candidate in the department of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by email at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

As a PhD Candidate, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a PhD in Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Evert Lindquist. You may contact my supervisor at 250-721-8416.

This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because it is the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an Indigenous executive of a BC Indigenous Urban Organization. The only selection criterion is that the participant is an Indigenous executive and is competent.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a two-hour focus group, which will occur via online with Zoom. During this focus group, Mason will ask you about your career path; your experience with executive turnover; and what strategies you propose for attracting and retaining Indigenous executives.

Audio-tapes/and-written notes, observations/ will be taken. A transcription will be made.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including total time dedicated to this project.

Risks

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include Economic, Emotional and Psychological. To prevent or deal with these risks, the focus group questions are written to avoid stressing participants out and mitigate job security concerns. For example, the questions do not ask the participant to share their experiences in their current job.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include a benefit to the participant which could include having their voice heard about their experiences with Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations which could make the participant feel hopeful, relieved, and important. Society would benefit as this would provide Indigenous organizations with an understanding of Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations and strategies to retain Indigenous executives which helps organizations function efficiently. This would benefit the state of knowledge because there is no research in this area, therefore it would generate another dimension of literature.

Compensation

In compliance with Indigenous customs and protocols, I will provide small gifts as a token of appreciation to participants.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be used in summarized form with no identifying information. You will still receive thank you gifts for your time.

Anonymity

Your participation will not be fully anonymous as the focus group will include other participants in the group. Although, you will remain anonymous in the dissemination of results unless you choose to be identified in the results of the study and have your responses attributed to you; in which case, you will review, provide feedback and final approval of your contribution before it is made public in my dissertation.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by the following practices:

1. Shredding my written notes after they are transcribed onto my computer;
2. Deleting my audio files once they are transcribed; and
3. Ensuring that the names of the participants are removed from the documents.

Dissemination of Results

I plan to personally share the findings with the First Nations and IOs that contributed to my research in person. I would like to write three journal articles that focus on retaining indigenous executives in 1) First Nations; 2) BC Indigenous Urban Organizations; and 3) National Indigenous Organizations. I will also present my findings to the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association, and First Nations Public Service Secretariat to develop their strategies to attract and retain talent and train talent. Additionally, this dissertation will be made available online available on the internet via UVicSpace.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of by shredding my written notes after they are transcribed onto my computer; and deleting my audio files once they are transcribed. The transcriptions will be deleted from my laptop within ~~one~~ three years after the Dissertation is accepted by the University of Victoria.

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Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

[WAIVING CONFIDENTIALITY*] PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT only if you consent:*

I consent to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

Future Use of Data *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT:*

I consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I **do not** consent to the use of my data in future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for future research: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Leader Focus Group Consent Form

Participant Consent Form – Group 7

The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations

You are invited to participate in a study entitled The Retention of Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations that is being conducted by Mason Ducharme.

Mason Ducharme is a PhD Candidate in the department of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by email at masonducharme1@gmail.com.

As a PhD Candidate, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a PhD in Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Evert Lindquist. You may contact my supervisor at 250-721-8416.

This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to understand the nature of Indigenous executive turnover and what strategies Canadian Indigenous organizations can develop and use for hiring and retaining Indigenous executives.

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because it is the first research on this topic and my goal is to share my findings with Indigenous leaders and organizations in BC and across Canada to further self-governance in Indigenous communities.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a chief or leader of a BC First Nation. The only selection criterion is that the participant is a Chief or leader and is competent.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a two-hour focus group, which will occur via online with Zoom. During this focus group, Mason will ask you about the range of executive roles in your community; your Nation's experience with executive turnover; and what strategies you have for attracting and retaining Indigenous executives.

Audio-tapes/and-written notes, observations/ will be taken. A transcription will be made.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including total time dedicated to this project.

Risks

There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research and they include Economic, Emotional and Psychological. To prevent or deal with these risks, the focus group questions are written to avoid stressing participants out and mitigate job security concerns. For example, the questions do not ask the participant to share their experiences in their current job.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include a benefit to the participant which could include having their voice heard about their experiences with Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations which could make the participant feel hopeful, relieved, and important. Society would benefit as this would provide Indigenous organizations with an understanding of Indigenous executive turnover in Indigenous organizations and strategies to retain Indigenous executives which helps organizations function efficiently. This would benefit the state of knowledge because there is no research in this area, therefore it would generate another dimension of literature.

Compensation

In compliance with Indigenous customs and protocols, I will provide small gifts as a token of appreciation to participants.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be used in summarized form with no identifying information. You will still receive thank you gifts for your time.

Anonymity

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3. Ensuring that the names of the participants are removed from the documents.

Dissemination of Results

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_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

[WAIVING CONFIDENTIALITY*] PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT only if you consent:*

I consent to be identified by name / credited in the results of the study: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results: _____ (Participant to provide initials)

Future Use of Data *PLEASE SELECT STATEMENT:*

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A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.