

NWT Election, October 2011: Responses from candidates to literacy issues

| Candidate | How will improving literacy and essential skill levels be a part of your platform? | If elected, what will you do within the government to position and promote literacy and essential skills as a priority in the NWT? | If elected, what will you do to recognize the inter-related nature of literacy and essential skills with social and economic issues? | What will you do to ensure that addressing literacy and essential skills needs is integrated into the development of all social programs? |
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| Mark Bogan, Weledeh | Having worked within the Literacy Network of Durham Region and as an adult educator, literacy is an important issue for people like me. However, there are many facets that contribute to a person's inability to properly read or write. My platform includes a wholistic look at society. While employed in the Literacy field, many of us found how children and adults backgrounds contributed to their literacy failures. People from drug and alcohol families, alienated from one or more of their parents, experienced poverty or education grants un- available because of their sex. Within my platform includes implementing social programs with a proven track record, and revising our civil justice system. At the end of the day, people like me believe how a healthy family leads to a healthy society and know people like you do too. | Once the revised cost effective social and justice programs are in place (year 1) and once we see the benefits within society (year 2) more money will be available to promote literacy and essential skills within the NWT. | Social problems including Teen and Adult suicide, drug and alcohol consumption, crime, homicide, inter-partner violence, homelessness and more have and continue to rise over the past twenty years within the NWT. Again, by introducing and implementing cost effective social-justice programs with a proven track record will decrease social problems while increasing levels of literacy. | Judging by the emails from my current MLA, if our incumbents are re-elected it is unlikely our social-justice programs will change. It is also unlikely that our next Government would rise to answer this call. My position would be to rise and answer this call. |

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| <p>Glen Abernethy, Great Slave</p> | <p>As indicated in my platform, I believe that people should have the opportunity and resources to live healthy and productive lives. Literacy and essential skills development are key components to this success and must be included within the GNWT's Anti-Poverty Strategy and plan. The GNWT must place a greater priority on literacy at all levels including adult basic literacy, family literacy and the basics of literacy being provided within schools throughout the NWT as well as the assessment and development of essential skills need for the workplace. This includes additional attention being placed on Aboriginal and French languages. I believe people and education are the keys to our future. To maximize benefits of economic development and activity we have to ensure that there are enough educated Northerners to do the work. Not enough of our children are graduating from high school. Within the NWT only 57% of youth are graduating. We need to address the root causes of this failure. The GNWT needs to support post-</p> | <p>Within government I will fight to include literacy and essential skill development as an important part of our Anti-Poverty Strategy. In my opinion, increased levels of literacy and focused essential skills development can help lift many of our residents out of the poverty cycle. NWT Literacy Council – Candidate Questions Page 3 of 3 I want to include educators and organizations such as the NWT Literacy Council in the development of these recommendations and solutions. Experts like yourselves bring valuable information and insight to the table and must be present. True success in this area, like all areas to be addressed through a comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy, can only be successful with passionate and committed partners. As the MLA for Great Slave I will continue to take opportunities to promote literacy, essential skills development, and the important work of the NWT Literacy Council throughout the NWT.</p> | <p>As indicated in my previous answer, I see addressing literacy issues and the development of essential skills as a critical component of a comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy. A true Anti-Poverty Strategy must be broad and strive to support a Territory without poverty where all of our residents can develop to their full potential. Literacy and essential skills are like a thread weaving through all areas of an Anti-Poverty Strategy. It helps address demands of employers, ability to access programs, ability to make informed choices, ability to understand systems, etc. To this end, as indicated previously, I will work, with you, to ensure that literacy and essential skills are a critical component of an NWT Anti-Poverty Strategy.</p> | <p>We need to recognize that not all of our residents are at the same level of literacy or essential skills. As a result, we need to ensure that when we are developing social programs (often for those at lower levels of education) we need to ensure that they are easy to understand. NWT Literacy Council – Candidate Questions Page 4 of 3 The GNWT must ensure that it uses clear, concise and well-organized plain language to introduce and explain its programs. I believe that the GNWT should be working with partners like the NWT Literacy Council to ensure that our public programs and documents meet the test of plain language. Further, there is significant benefit to making “Plain Language” training mandatory for all GNWT employees tasked with program design or promotion.</p> |
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| | secondary education and training to prepare our people to take advantage of opportunities. | | | |
| Michael Miltenberger, Thebacha | As it has been for the last 16 years I support literacy in essential skill levels in thought, word and deed. Education budgets that continue to grow, partnerships with business, better linkages across departments and constant reinforcement of the primary role of the family and parents. | See previous question | I will be advocating for a formal Social Programs Ministers committee of Cabinet that will create a permanent table to have these inter-related issues discussed and integrated into the development of all social programs. I will also advocate for a closer working relationship with the Social Programs Committee of regular members. | See previous question |
| Roy Courtoreille, Hay River North | Part of my platform is Youth Education, if we can keep our youth in school and give them better education opportunities this would improve literacy and essential skills. | As noted above, if we can promote education at all levels we would improve literacy skills, if elected I will work with other MLAs to make literacy a priority. | Low literacy and lack of essential skills are more noticeable in the adult population. I believe we need more adult education programs in the NWT. I would work with literacy councils and other MLAs to assist them in promoting education so that more people are aware that literacy and essential skills are inter-related. | I would work with all departments to ensure that literacy and essential skills are integrated in all development of social programs. |
| Kevin Menicoche, Nehende | I am a strong believer that we should provide resources to communities to improve literacy to all ages. | If elected, I will ensure that the GNWT document Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework 2008-2018 remains a priority and gets implemented. | I will support literacy to improve skills in individuals which will make them more employable. | I believe that the GNWT often creates wonderful strategies and frameworks. Once again, I would ensure that the Literacy Strategy 2008-2018 becomes a priority and not sit on a shelf collecting dust. |

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| David Wasylciw, Range Lake | Improving literacy and essential skills is an important area of focus. In my platform one of the items I discuss is the development of NWT- wide telecommunications infrastructure so that there is better access to remote resources and universal access to courses, etc in each of our communities. Excellence in education makes us a stronger people and guarantees that Northerners will be able to fill the jobs offered in the North. | Literacy and essential skills are a priority for me within my family and for people across the NWT. The low literacy rates are extremely concerning and, if elected, I would work to ensure that the 17 th Assembly makes these essential skills a priority by working with schools, communities and parents to focus on those most in need. In some cases, adult learning or alternative methods of learning to develop these skills may be necessary. To ensure our population is ready for the workforce and that we have healthy vibrant communities literacy levels need to be increased. The GNWT should continue delivering programs and should work with a variety of non-government organizations that are active in communities so that our citizens are able to participate in the knowledge-based economy. As the Vice-Chair of the Smart Communities Society I am actively involved in programs to train youth in technology but also with programs that open up access to technology and the internet in a number of communities across the NWT. | I personally recognize that on many levels literacy and essential skills are connected to a number of social and economic issues. As an MLA I would continue to recognize this as a driving reason for us to focus on the development of literacy and essential skills in all of our people. The importance of these issues led me to joining the NWT Montessori Society Board of Directors last year so I could actively encourage the development of learning programs that would provide the most benefit to our youth. | Social programs at their very nature should always address literacy and essential skill needs as they are a necessary component of the programs. I would work to ensure that the relevant social programs address the skills gaps and necessary training. For example, at the moment significant funding is available for post-secondary education but we must also make available programs to properly support those that need to attain their high school diploma later in life. No matter a person's age we should be able to ensure that they have the means to complete high school and college/university. |
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| <p>Wendy Bisaro, Frame Lake</p> | <p>In February 2011, I presented a motion asking the Government of the NWT to develop and implement an anti-poverty strategy. Literacy and essential skills development would be an integral component of this strategy. The development of an Anti-poverty Strategy must be a priority for the 17th Assembly. We need to recognize that though programs for Literacy have associated costs, they also demonstrate benefits such as increased employment and decreased social skills. I would promote a broader understanding of the importance of literacy and numeracy.</p> | <p>As part of an Anti-poverty Strategy literacy and essential skills must be one of the highest priorities of the 17th Assembly. When MLAs meet for strategic planning and to discuss the priorities of the 17th Assembly shortly after the election, I will work with my colleagues to make it one of the next Assembly's priorities. In my first term, I showed a broad understanding of social issues and systemic factors that come to play in keeping people living in poverty. Literacy and essential skills are among these. I will continue to point out the relevance and necessity of enabling our residents to function to their best capacity and to provide accessible opportunities for people who are disadvantaged to participate in these programs. In fact, the "pay off" for investment is often greatest when it is done among the most marginalized population.</p> | <p>I spoke several times in the House on just this topic during my first term. It is one of the reasons why I believe so strongly in the value of an Anti-poverty strategy. An holistic strategy like an Anti-poverty Strategy recognizes the many factors that keep people living in poverty, that contribute to unemployment, and to poor health and mental wellness. If we work together to develop a comprehensive and coordinated strategy, we can achieve benefits for our residents without the need for much new funding. We have to move away from "department-specific" initiatives and towards policies and programs that are linked together by the goal of reducing poverty, a goal that cannot be reached without addressing literacy and essential skills.</p> | <p>i) Ensure that information about social programs is communicated using plain language that makes the nature and benefits of the program accessible to all populations.</p> <p>ii) Ensure that accessing programs is an empowering experience for clients, resulting in a sense of being supported and having developed a new skill and understanding of possibilities.</p> <p>iii) Offer continued access to more specific literacy-development programs for adults. Though we need to focus on our youth, their development also depends on the literacy level of their parents.</p> |
| <p>Bob McLeod, Yellowknife South</p> | <p>The future of the NWT is very bright with significant opportunities and jobs. Yet a significant portion of NWT jobs are filled by southerners due to the lack of skilled workers here in the NWT, this despite the majority of small communities in the NWT (at</p> | <p>Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society."I would approach this from a number of different angles.</p> | <p>I recognize that where there are limited economic opportunities, adult literacy is difficult to secure so I would support the NWT Literacy Council and Industry in promoting literacy. I would also work with the Government of Canada to commit to</p> | <p>-It is no longer sufficient to just consider whether a student can read and write. Literacy can increase job opportunities and access to higher education. Many claim that literate people can be trained easier and less expensively then illiterate people. As</p> |

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| | <p>least 23 of 33) have unemployment rates of 45% or higher. My focus will be a commitment to education at the community level. The first priority will be children and the second priority to develop programming for adults. The biggest hurdle for employment at our 3 diamond mines is illiteracy. To increase employment of Northerners I will also work with ECE and Industry to identify the skill sets required for employment and work with Industry to stream students interested into the trades to take advantage of these opportunities.</p> | <p>First of all I would promote increased literacy levels from our education system amongst school aged children and youth. Motivate parents to take a more active role in their children's education. Secondly to convert the illiterate adults too literate ones, it is fundamental to motivate them to learn in the first place. Ii would utilize Adult Educators and Aurora College to build capacity in the communities by improving literacy and basic skills of all residents. I would also coordinate work place literacy, adult literacy and basic education courses and skill development projects with community organizations.</p> | <p>participating and increase funding support for literacy. Also, Adult learners can be motivated by the prospects of improved social and economic opportunities. I would work with Aurora College to provide for competent adult educator and community worker s which is critical to motivating people to do so.</p> | <p>well, literate people generally have a higher socio-economic status and enjoy better health and employment prospects. So quid pro quo this clearly shows that addressing literacy skills is essential to development of any and all social programs.</p> |
| <p>Duff Spence, Frame Lake</p> | <p>Currently with our economy in a recession it is even harder for people with literacy issue to compete and be success in job competitions. I will support programs at a community level that offer job training as well as literacy training to improve the skills of our residents. The mining industry can be an entry point for many of our residents and could be supported through the GNWT to provide support literacy programs to improve the literacy skills of our residents. Increased access to literacy programs</p> | <p>Education and learning for all of us is an important issue for me. I will be a spokesman for this issue and making sure everyone understands the benefits for all. We all need to be productive and successful in our communities and having literacy skills is a basic requirement for this.</p> | <p>The issue of low literacy and the linkage with poverty and other challenges is apparent to me and I will work other Members of the Legislative Assembly to increase literacy levels and increase the success and productivity of our residents and therefore reduce the negative challenges in their lives.</p> | <p>I agree that there is a link between low literacy and poverty and will work with other Members of the Assembly to provide support to programs that have an integrated approach to this issue.</p> |

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| | at our school after the school day should also be supported. | | | |
| Norman Yakelya, Sahtu | <p>Make literacy a part of your employment contract as a means to increase your skills both at work and home. Create an incentives with your families to improve literacy in the NWT. Let the people decide what works best for them, initiate community based programs.</p> <p>Create more positions in the Education system to improve the Aboriginal languages and make it a requirement for the Senior GNWT officials to learn the languages and culture of the Aboriginal communities they are working for.</p> | | <p>Develop a model or framework to begin the task of improving skills that will greatly increase the social and economic wealth of people. Review strategy yearly, and improved on model.</p> <p>Develop an essential component that will ensure some form of literacy that is crucial to receive funding and support.</p> | |
| Jane Groenewegen, Hay River South | <p>As a Government we talk about healthy, self reliant citizens in the north. We consider ourselves a modern and forward thinking jurisdiction. We need to do more than pay lip service to the most basic tools for self determination and realizing our potential, that of literacy. Literacy affects every aspect of a person's life.</p> | <p>Our greatest opportunity to achieve literacy skills is in our education curriculum. That is where I believe that a strong foundation should be built. But, we also need to provide opportunities for adults to obtain the literacy skills they need through our facilities and programs in communities, in our Adult Learning facilities and Adult Basic Education programs. Functional literacy skills are the premise of lifelong learning.</p> | <p>We as the GNWT, have many different avenues of introducing or enhancing literacy training to compliment existing activities within our social envelope activities. One obvious place is in our Corrections facilities, Young Offenders Facilities, our Senior's programming, care facilities, our assisted living facilities, in our programs for persons with disabilities and in our women's shelters, etc. Any time, any place, that we offer programming, as required by the various clients, we need to consider the benefits of literacy components.</p> | |
| Beaton Mackenzie, Range Lake | <p>As an educator, the emphasis of promoting literacy and essential skills is a high priority in encouraging people to improve their skills to have a better quality of life.</p> | <p>Recognizing organizations that promote literacy to improve skills such as the mines that have adult education for their work force. Also, promote our aboriginal literacy writers through the</p> | <p>Emphasize how the federal government continues to support the importance of literacy by committing nine million dollars over the next two years to expand adult basic education programming to foster the basic skills needed to join the work force.</p> | |

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| Daryl Dolynny, Range Lake | I have made education one of the key planks of my platform. This means a greater emphasis on the education of all northerners whether it is our school system, post-secondary studies or adult up-grading (including literacy) for all northerners. | If elected, I would be committed to work towards consistent, long-term funding for adult education programming and for life skills programs that provide northerners with the skills needed to deal with the demands of everyday life and participate more fully in the workforce. | <p>It is important that we recognize the linkages between literacy rates and unemployment, poverty and health status. Nowhere is this more profound than in the NWT.</p> <p>In addition to greater funding for and access to adult education programming, we need to help working families with heavy child care costs and develop programs that provide young families with access to literacy programs, education and training closer to home.</p> | Addressing literacy rates in the NWT requires us to look at all government programming to ensure that we provide as much opportunity as possible for northerners to access literacy and essential skills programming. |