



October 10, 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Forum will Explore “Made in the North” Adult Literacy  
and Skills Development  
October 23 – 25, 2012 – Explorer Hotel - Yellowknife**

Some 160 educators, policy makers, literacy experts, elders, businesspeople and other northerners are coming together for a unique pan-territorial forum to explore effective northern approaches to adult literacy and skills development.

"Made in the North: Policy and Practices Exchange on Skills Development" is organized by the Yukon Literacy Coalition, NWT Literacy Council, and Ilitaqsiniq—Nunavut Literacy Council. It is sponsored by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and the three territorial governments. The forum will be held Oct. 23 to 25, 2012, in Yellowknife.

"Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut share similar challenges and opportunities, particularly relating to building the capacity of their workforces. The 'Made in the North' gathering is well-timed, given the pace of change and rapid development of the resource-based economies in the North," says Helen Balanoff, executive director of the NWT Literacy Council.

"The forum will give people working in the area of adult education a rare opportunity to connect and share information. We want to create a space in which partnerships are built, emerging practices supported, and successful initiatives celebrated," she says.

The forum is designed to support open conversations, networking and knowledge-sharing among delegates, their networks and their home regions and organizations.

Delegates are arriving from more than 30 communities. They will participate in presentations, workshops and moderated plenary conversations around the following themes:

- Workforce Development and Workplace Education
- Inspiring Practices in Non-formal, Community-based Programs
- Reconsidering “Literacy and Essential Skills” in Multi-lingual, Multi-cultural Contexts
- Innovations, Challenges, and Developments in College Classrooms Across the North

The forum website is at [www.madeinthenorth.ca](http://www.madeinthenorth.ca).

To arrange interviews with delegates or speakers or for more information contact:

Pre-event: Helen Balanoff, 873-9262 or [Helen@nwtliteracy.ca](mailto:Helen@nwtliteracy.ca)

During the event: Alan Morantz , [alan@alanmorantz.com](mailto:alan@alanmorantz.com)

## **FORUM BACKGROUNDER: Why “Made in the North”? Why now?**

There are many innovative, local approaches to adult learning and skills development in use across northern Canada today—in community and wellness centres, remote college classrooms and cutting-edge workplaces. The forum is designed to showcase these approaches and to strengthen the connections among educators, policy makers and community leaders.

Sessions will focus on four areas:

### **Workforce and Workplace Skills Development**

Workplace education combines literacy with relevant workplace training and integrates worksite issues and materials. Typically, such programs are developed by staff and management together. Workplace education shows promising results in places such as Nova Scotia, Ontario and Manitoba. The sessions in this track highlight innovative practices and offer an overview of the current state of workplace education across northern Canada.

### **Non-formal, Community-based Skills Development Programs**

This track is about adult learning programs that take place outside of formal learning institutions. “Embedded” literacy programs weave literacy and basic skill development into other subject-specific learning, such as computer skills courses, trades programs or traditional knowledge programs. These customized programs have high participation rates and low drop-out rates compared with conventional training. The forum will hear about successful examples, such as the Miqut project in Nunavut. Miqut involved the teaching of traditional and modern sewing skills with embedded literacy skills.

### **Literacy and Essential Skills in Our Multicultural, Multilingual Regions**

Literacy has been described as the ability to “see our world and know what we are seeing” (from elders in Gjoa Haven, Nunavut). Literacy, in fact, is about more than the three Rs—it is central to our cultures and includes the basic skills upon which all adults build their lives. Effective northern adult learning policies and practices must work from this expanded perspective. What are “multiple literacies”? What do they mean for adult learning, literacy and essential skills? In this track, forum delegates will learn more about the NWT-based Ulukhaktok Literacies Research Project.

### **Challenges and Innovations at the Territorial Colleges**

Formal adult education service providers, especially the three territorial colleges, play a central role in adult learning, literacy and skills development. This track will explore current programs, policies, challenges and developments in formal adult education in northern Canada.

## Sponsoring Organizations

### **Yukon Literacy Coalition**

The Yukon Literacy Coalition (YLC) is a Yukon-wide organization that is community-governed and committed to supporting and encouraging literacy in all the languages of the Yukon.

Although the purpose and responsibilities of the YLC have evolved over the last six years, the YLC adheres to the founding belief that individuals and communities know their own challenges, know their own resources, and should be supported in meeting their literacy goals.

The YLC achieves these objectives through family/community literacy initiatives (including the Yukon Family Literacy Centre), literacy promotion, practitioner training, information sharing, resource development, research and essential skills training.

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### **NWT Literacy Council**

The NWT Literacy Council, founded in 1989, works with individuals and groups to promote and support literacy and essential skills in all the official languages of the NWT. We:

- Develop resources and learning materials.
- Mentor, train and support local literacy workers and projects.
- Design, write and edit plain language documents.
- Promote, research and share information about literacy and essential skills.
- Monitor and respond to territorial and national literacy and essential skills policies.

The NWT Literacy Council believes everyone has a right to literacy and that literacy is something that involves everyone – individuals, families, communities, business, labour, and governments. Literacy is the foundation of lifelong learning and of active participation in the social, economic, and political life of our communities, territory, and country.

The Council has six staff members and is governed by a board with regional representation from across the NWT.

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## **Ilitaqsiniq – Nunavut Literacy Council**

Ilitaqsiniq—Nunavut Literacy Council was founded in 1999, branching off from the NWT Literacy Council when Nunavut was established as a separate territory. Ilitaqsiniq promotes and supports the literacy needs of Nunavummiut in the official languages of Nunavut with respect for the principles and values of community capacity building and development. It conducts research and develops resources for language and literacy skills in Inuit language dialects, French, and English.

The organization is membership-based and includes adult educators, literacy practitioners, Government of Nunavut departments, non-profit organizations, schools, libraries, and individuals. It relies almost exclusively on project-based funding and donations to carry out its work. Ilitaqsiniq currently has eight staff members, living and working in Cambridge Bay, Rankin Inlet, Iqaluit, and Ottawa.

The Inuktitut name – Ilitaqsiniq – means “continuous learning” or, literally, “continuous recognition of the world around us.” Ilitaqsiniq defines literacy as “seeing and knowing what you see,” a definition developed by Inuit elders in Gjoa Haven, Nunavut.

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