



## Family Literacy Thrives North of 60°

Across the north, family literacy activities strengthen families and communities. They help parents learn skills alongside their children, skills that they can practice together at home.

Most family literacy activities in all three territories happen as part of existing programs where an interested community person takes the lead. Family literacy activities might run out of libraries, early childhood programs, or less frequently out of health and recreation programs. They might be part of an adult learning centre that opens up to children after school to do activities with their adult student parents.

In the NWT, we focus on developing resources, training local people, and building capacity among communities to deliver family literacy programs. For example, each year more than 20 community people come to our Family Literacy Training Institute to learn how to deliver specific programs, such as 1-2-3 Rhyme with Me or Storytime Adventures.

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# Strategic Planning Will Be Board's Major 2014 Task

## President's Message: Cate Sills

Our current strategic plan ends this year, so one of our major board activities in 2014 is to revisit that plan. We don't do that work alone.

We ask our major stakeholders for input, so we will be asking some of you about our work, and where you see us going in the future. We encourage you to contact us directly if you have suggestions for us and want to contribute to our plan.

The board of directors sets the Council's vision, values and mission through five-year strategic plans. This planning is partly how our board meets its legal responsibility for the Council's work and its finances.

The NWT Literacy Council was established in 1989, with Edna Elias, now Commissioner of Nunavut, as the first President. As the current President of the Council, it's my honour to act as the chair for the Board of Directors.

The board is the cornerstone of a not-for-profit organization like ours. We have four executive members – president, vice-president, treasurer and secretary. We also have six regional representatives: Beaufort Delta, Sahtu, Tłı̄chǫ, Yellowknife, Dettah and Ndilo, South Slave and Deh Cho. The board members direct the business of the organization and ensure that we fulfil our mission to provide programs and services that help communities develop literacy and essential skills in the NWT.

Our board is a policy board; that is, it develops policies for the organization and monitors their implementation. It does not get involved in the day-to-day running of the Council. Our Executive Director and our staff are responsible for carrying out the daily work. The Executive Director is accountable to us and reports to us at our monthly meetings.

As an organization, we are accountable to the people of the



NWT. We report on our activities and our finances each year at our Annual General Meeting. You can see our 2012-2013 Annual Report and Audited Financial Statement on our website at <http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/Annual%20Reports>

Our board members are committed and hardworking. We look forward to carrying out our mandate through this year's strategic planning. And, we look forward to hearing from many of you!

## Encouraging Aboriginal Languages Use in NWT Homes

We are pulling together people for an Aboriginal Languages project to encourage families to use Aboriginal languages in their homes.

We plan to meet in the early spring. In the past we have translated some family literacy resources into Aboriginal languages. We hope that with this group we can produce some resources in the Aboriginal languages.



# Helping Young Canoeists Tell Their Stories, **Digitally**

Katie Randall and David Buchanan, our youth and adult literacy coordinators, led digital literacy workshops this fall with NWT youth who had canoeing stories to tell. Digital literacy is the ability to find, evaluate, use, share, and create stories using technology and the internet.

Wendy Lahey, from the NWT Recreation and Parks Association, organized two canoe trips last summer for NWT high school students. Students from Fort Liard participated in a two-day trip on the Petitot River, while students from Fort Providence and Fort McPherson

went on a four-day trip on Tibbitt Lake.

The goal of the canoe trips was to give youth opportunities to identify and assume positive leadership roles, improve their self-esteem, and to develop an understanding of cultural identity and on-the-land skills. The students were responsible for taking pictures and video of their experiences during the canoe trips. The plan was for them to use the material they gathered in a digital literacy project that would tell a story about their canoe trips.

Our digital literacy workshops revolved around the process of developing a story board and editing film and photos with Windows Movie Maker. Students learned how to obtain music legally for their videos and about the process for creating a story.

The students were very excited to tell their stories using technology that they understood. At the same time they developed digital skills and learned how to better use technology.

# Lots of Participants and Enthusiasm at the Family Literacy Training Institute



“One little duck went out to play...” “One green and speckled frog sat on a speckled log...” “Hurry, hurry, drive the fire truck...” If you find yourself humming these tunes and many others, chances are you were a participant in the Family Literacy Training Institute in Yellowknife on December 3-6.

We had 27 participants from communities such as Fort Good Hope, Colville Lake, Fort McPherson, Aklavik, Whati and Gameti spend the week learning songs and rhymes to support early literacy development in their communities. In addition, they had an introduction to family literacy, learned how to choose appropriate books for different ages, received training in the Storytime Adventures program, and planned a family fun night for their community. But probably most importantly, they met people from across the territory who shared ideas and tips for successful family literacy programs.

This was the largest attendance at the Family Literacy Training Institute in quite a while, and it was an amazing group of creative people who are excited to spread the word about Family Literacy across the NWT. Check out our *1-2-3 Rhyme with Me* songbook on our website for the words to these rhymes and many more!



# NWT Adult Competencies Ranking in Context

On October 8, 2013 the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) released the preliminary findings from the most recent survey of adult competencies. Commonly referred to as PIAAC – the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies – the survey was administered in 24 countries, including in all the provinces and territories in Canada.

In general, Canada achieved an average score in literacy, but below average in numeracy. The NWT did not fare as well. Overall, we ranked 13th among the 13 provinces and territories. Although not directly comparable because changes were made to the design of the survey, our scores were lower than in previous surveys. Approximately, 64% of our population was at the three lowest levels in literacy, and these figures are lower when you separate out the Aboriginal from the non-Aboriginal population.

Are we surprised? No, not really. We're disappointed,

but not surprised. There are many reasons why the NWT does not rank as high as other Canadian regions. People in the north are still healing from the intergenerational legacy of residential schooling. As well, lower rates of high school completion lead to lower levels of education and are related to lower levels of English literacy.

At the same time, we have to remember that PIAAC is only one way to assess people's skills. These skills enhance people's opportunity for employment, but many people live rich and full family lives without high levels



of literacy, and are extremely proficient in skills that enable them to live more traditional life styles.

The findings from the assessment emphasize the importance of staying in school to achieve higher education levels, as well as the importance of access to computers and the internet.

At the Literacy Council, we look forward to getting more in-depth analysis of the findings. This will allow us to shape our programs and services to build stronger literacy, numeracy and computer-based skills among NWT youth and adults.

## Book Your Financial Literacy Workshop

We offer financial literacy workshops. You can book one for your community or organization by contacting **Katie Randall** at [Katie@nwtliteracy.ca](mailto:Katie@nwtliteracy.ca) or call toll free 1-866-599-6758.

Book now while we have the funding to cover the costs of travel and facilitators. Our funding runs out in June.

Our workshops help people understand financial basics. They have inspired participants around the NWT to take control of their money, instead of having it control and worry them.

We love sharing tools, such as ones that help people find the credit card and bank account that meet their needs. We especially like telling people how they can get free money for their child's education!



# We Have Two New Youth Literacy Projects

We are very excited about two youth literacy projects we are working on right now. The federal Office of Literacy and Essential Skills funds one project, aimed at re-engaging youth in learning.

This project includes our partners in Yukon, Nunavut and Newfoundland and Labrador. Each partner is working with two communities that will incorporate learning into a youth program.

In the NWT, we are working with the Northern Transportation Boats Project in Hay River where facilitators will embed literacy and

essential skills into video making about the project. Youth in Fort Simpson are still deciding on the pilot project for that community.

Pilot projects in the other regions include video making at a fishing camp, a bike repair shop, a traditional sewing project, a hockey camp and a crafts project. We look forward to working with all of the communities on their projects over the next year.

Cooking and Nutrition for Young Parents is a pilot project which the NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment funds.

We partnered with people involved with the Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program, First Nations and community organizations to pilot an approach to embedding literacy and essential skills into a program that helps parents gain skills to feed their families. Families involved in the program will also take part in family literacy activities, so everyone is learning together!

The pilot programs have started in Fort Good Hope, Fort Resolution, Jean Marie River and at the Centre for Northern Families in Yellowknife.



## Fort Providence Focus Group with Young Fathers

Sandy Auchterlonie, of Lutra Associates, and David Buchanan held a focus group with young fathers in Fort Providence in January to find out what they like to do and what is important to them. We wanted the information as part of our work to embed literacy and essential skills in community programs for youth. During the focus group participants created collages about their interests. This was a fun, safe way to share ideas with the group.

Gathering this information will help us create meaningful, successful programs and ensure that there is both interest and support for the programs from the community.

We will do three more focus groups with young fathers in different regions this year.



# People were Finding Their Way Financially during NWT Literacy Week

Thank you to everyone who helped celebrate NWT Literacy Week 2013! People throughout the NWT had a great week learning about finances and sharing tips. Here are some NWT Literacy Week highlights.

- In Aklavik, Aurora College students learned about household budgeting and used our new resource, *Talking with Children about Money*. Also in Aklavik, the community library held a sewing night and book giveaway.
- The community of Deline came together again this year for a Community Read In.
- The Fort Good Hope community library was very busy with a One Minute to Spend \$100 Game, rhymes and songs and a Family Literacy night.
- In Yellowknife, celebrity readers visited several schools around the city, and we held our third annual Read on the Street. Families also joined the Literacy Council for an afternoon of Financial Fun.
- The Fort Smith Healthy Families program hosted a book giveaway.



# Family Literacy Day

## Highlights From Around the NWT

Family Literacy Day 2014 was another great success! Many communities around the NWT planned fun events to celebrate the theme, “15 Minutes of Fun!”

“15 Minutes of Fun!” reminds parents that every 15 minutes that you spend with your child makes a difference.

Board games, card games, cooking, folding laundry, washing dishes together, going out on the land and playing in the snow are all fun things that you can do together as a family.

In Yellowknife, the NWT Literacy Council partnered with the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre for the Children’s Festival of SiLLiness. Many activities took place during the festival; the Literacy Council offered a book making station, fish pond and book giveaway during the afternoon activity session on Saturday, January 25.

Angik School, in Paulatuk, invited RCMP to read a story to students and then students created a wall mural story. The school also had a popular bookmark station.

In Aklavik, the Community Library had a great turnout for their family event on the same day. They had a scrapbooking corner, colouring contest and a Wii corner. Everyone received a free book to take home.

In Hay River, the NWT Centennial Library had an early start to Family Literacy Day with a cooking event from the Little Chefs program. Families had a lot of fun making and eating pancakes, singing songs and sharing stories. Everyone took home a copy of Eric Carle’s book *Pancakes, Pancakes!*

All the schools in the South Slave District hosted Family Literacy Day activities. Lutsel K’e Dene School offered a stew and bannock luncheon and storytelling with Madeline Drybones and Emily Saunders translating. Students also read their favorite book to their family.

Chief Sunrise Education Centre on the Katlodeeche Reserve had 15 Minutes of Fun! activities for students and their families to enjoy. P. W. Kaeser High School in Fort Smith encouraged students to take a break from exams by participating in a Family Literacy Quiz with their family.

Those are just some of the Family Literacy Day highlights across the NWT. We hope families continue having “15 Minutes of Fun” every day all year long!







## Plain 2013 Brought Plain Language Advocates Together

Two NWT Literacy Council consultants, Mary McCreddie and Aggie Brockman, participated in an international plain language conference last fall.

Plain 2013 brought plain language advocates and experts together from around the world in Vancouver. It coincided with the 20th anniversary of the Plain Language Association International and with Plain Language Day on October 13.

The NWT Literacy Council is a long-time advocate of plain language. The Council does plain language consulting, editing and writing on a fee-for-service basis. You can find our resources at <http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/plain-language>

The conference was two and a half full days of plain language inspiration and ideas. Mary and Aggie learned about the latest research, best practices and wisdom in the field. It helped rekindle their passion for clear communication.

You can learn more about plain language by checking out the conference presentations online at <http://www.slideshare.net/2013PLAINConference/tag/plain2013>

## Changes on our Board of Directors

Thank you to Bette Lyons for her many years on our board of directors. Bette decided at our fall Annual General Meeting to step down and not seek re-election. She served in different board positions, most recently as vice-president.

As of our annual meeting, Suzanne Robinson is our new vice-president and Beverly Garven joined the executive as secretary. This created a vacancy for the Beaufort-Delta regional representative position. Melani Adams was recently elected the new Beaufort-Delta regional representative and Lisa Nitsiza was re-elected as the Tłı̨chǫ region representative. There will be an election for the Tłı̨chǫ regional representative position in the near future.

Mary Ann Vital, Rachel Gauthier and Emma Amundson were acclaimed to serve another term as regional representatives for the Sahtu, Yellowknife and the Dehcho regions.

Thank you to everyone who came out to our annual meeting, including past board members Charlotte Babicki and Dawn McInnes!





Photo credit: S. Glowach/GNWT

# NWT Inmates Use Our Literacy Backpacks to Reconnect with Their Families

The North Slave Correctional Centre, in Yellowknife, has a different take on incarceration. Programs at the Centre emphasize healing and rehabilitation.

Recently, the basic literacy instructor, Vincent Casey, decided to take healing a step further by giving inmates a literacy care package as they leave the facility. The NWT Literacy Council created this package – literacy backpacks – to support family literacy throughout the territory.

The backpacks are designed for families with children between the ages of 0 to 5. They contain children’s books, CDs with audio tracks of stories and songs, craft supplies, and resources about child development for parents.

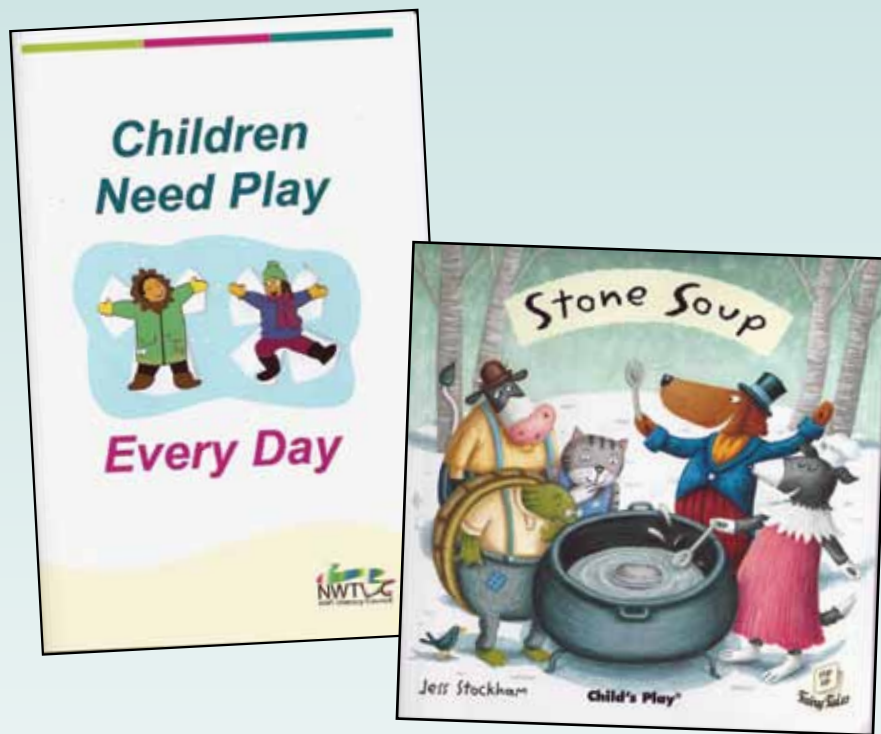
The goal is to give a backpack to each inmate for their children and grandchildren. Vincent gave out approximately 95 backpacks in 2013 and says the program is popular with both inmates and staff. “The inmates seem quite excited about them,” he said. He heard from one inmate that his children “were very

excited to receive the bags” and have read the books and love them.

The time that a parent is incarcerated can be difficult for an inmate’s children and the other parent. The kits are a way for inmates to reconnect with their children after being away from them, and provide an opportunity for families to bond and learn together once they are reunited.

Research shows that adults with lower levels of literacy skills are more likely to be incarcerated. Through the learning centre at the Correctional Centre, inmates have the opportunity to learn literacy and essential skills. Parents’ literacy levels have a big impact on their children’s learning. The Literacy Council hopes to play a part in breaking this cycle for NWT children by providing adults an opportunity to increase their own skills, and to learn with their children.

# Check Out Our Resources!



Children have a natural need to play; it is one way they learn about their world. Through play children explore, create, and figure things out. To help support both parents and family literacy providers, the NWT Literacy Council has produced a new booklet called *Children Need Play Every Day*. It talks about why play is important and ways that adults can engage children in play.

Soon we will have two new storybooks to lend out.

- *Stone Soup* by Jon J. Muth
- *The Three Snow Bears* by Jan Brett

Check out our website for a list of all our storybooks: <http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/Storiesacks%20You%20Can%20Borrow>

# How Does Your Engine Run?

The CBC Radio program “The Sunday Edition” recently ran a documentary called “How Does Your Engine Run?” The topic was self-regulation. It’s a hot topic these days, especially with educators.

Self-regulation is how you deal with and recover from stress. Understanding what this has to do with learning is important for a couple of reasons.

First, stress levels in children and adolescents are the highest they’ve ever been. Studies show unprecedented numbers of children and teens experience anxiety, depression, behaviour issues and other signs of excessive stress. Many children don’t know what “calm” feels like, much less how to calm themselves.

Second, stress affects learning. The brain responds to stress by preparing the body for “fight or flight”. It shuts down systems not needed for immediate survival. This includes the part of the brain we use to learn new things. Stress makes it impossible for a child to pay attention, to take in or make sense of information, or even to hear a person speaking.

Learning becomes impossible. Yelling or punishing only creates more stress. Something needs to happen to help a child’s brain shift from survival back to learning.

This is where self-regulation makes a difference. Self-regulation includes a number of aspects.

- awareness of your own and others’ emotions
- knowledge about when you are stressed and how to effectively deal with stress
- ability to focus or shift attention
- tolerance for frustration

The ability to self-regulate is increasingly essential to help children respond successfully to everyday challenges they face in and out of school.

Self-regulation gives children a set of “tools” to help them cope with stress and return to a state of calm, focus, and readiness to learn. Tools can include taking some time in a quiet place, physical activity such as running or going up and down stairs,

or wearing ear protectors to shut out noise. What causes stress, how much stress is too much, and the tools to recover from stress are different for each person.

When we show students different ways to deal with and recover from stress that affects their learning, they can test what works for them. They discover that they can calm themselves, and learn better in all subject areas. School districts throughout Canada—and the world—are embracing the idea of self-regulation because teachers, students and parents have seen that it works.

Classrooms become calmer, teachers are less stressed, students enjoy learning and they get better grades. By dealing with the source of learning problems—such as the inability to pay attention, hyperactivity, or aggressive behaviour—self-regulation helps to increase the effectiveness of all learning.

The CBC radio documentary “How does your engine run?” can be heard at <http://www.cbc.ca/player/Radio/The+Sunday+Edition/ID/2421268726/?page=2>



# Save Money and Paper!

The cost of postage is rising and we are committed to the wise use of our natural resources, including paper.

Please let us know if you would like to receive Literacy Matters by email, rather than a paper copy in the mail.

Call us or email [nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca](mailto:nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca)

## Congratulations to Literacy Award Winners

Congratulations to the Ministerial Literacy Award winners who were honoured during NWT Literacy Week. The Tuktoyaktuk Public Library received the award for literacy organizations and Kathleen Taylor, of Deline, received the youth award. Simone Gessler and Rachel Gauthier, shared the educator's award for their literacy work at Weledeh Catholic School. Rachel is one of the Literacy Council's board members.

Bertha Goulet, of Ndilo, was awarded the Council of the Federation Literacy Award which goes to an adult learner. The 44-year-old mother returned to school last year.



## Mark Your Calendar Now!

Aboriginal Languages Month  
March

Adult Learners Week 2014  
March 29 – April 6

Canada Learning Bond  
Sign-Up Event, Yellowknife  
May 12, 2014 at Northern United Place

If you are interested in having our family, youth or adult literacy training in your community, give us a call.

## Sign Up for Our E-news

Keep up to date on trends, events, funding sources, research, news and resources. It's not just for literacy workers!

Sign up for *This Week in Literacy*.

Go to [www.nwt.literacy.ca](http://www.nwt.literacy.ca) and enter your email address on our home page.



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## ...Family Literacy Thrives North of 60°

“We give participants our program manuals to take home. If there is enough funding and demand, we deliver an advanced institute for more experienced people,” says family literacy coordinator, Kathryn Barry Paddock.

“We know that one-time training doesn’t work, so people come back for more training or ask for follow-up,” says Kathryn. “We travel to communities to

do outreach and workshops as much as funding allows, and we mentor by phone.”

We also administer a small pot of money that communities can use to pay for a facilitator and supplies for short-term family literacy activities. In addition Kathryn and Pat Ilgok, our other family literacy coordinator, take two community family literacy workers to the national family literacy conference each year.

Family literacy programs work with the family and community, making them well suited to the northern Aboriginal emphasis on community, rather than the individual. The three northern literacy coalitions prefer inter-generational programs because that fits with how people in communities interact.

Just as in the NWT, Nunavut sees “family literacy as more than singing and playing. It can

be anything that engages and inspires people and we build literacy around that,” says Kim Crockatt, the executive director of Ilitaqsiniq, the Nunavut Literacy Council. “We’re building resilience and community connections within the community. If we want to make change in a community, we have to involve everyone. It has to be inclusive.”

Meanwhile further west, the Yukon Literacy Coalition is the only one of the three organizations doing direct family literacy program delivery. It operates the Whitehorse Family Literacy Centre, while also doing outreach to smaller communities. Standalone family literacy programs like the one in Whitehorse are rare in Canada’s north.

Mary Ann Vital opened the preschool in Deline, NWT on the shore of Great Bear Lake with one box of materials in the late 1990s. She says her program and the larger community benefit from NWT Literacy Council training and resources.

“As an early childhood worker, I try to encourage more parents to read to their children. But since our literacy nights are at the library anyone shows up, including adults and elders without children,” says Mary Ann.

The three literacy coalitions work to keep the benefits of family literacy front and centre with the territorial governments. They know that research and their own evaluations show the positive results and cost-effectiveness

of investments in family and community literacy. Family literacy activities improve brain and language development in young children.

For northern literacy advocates, the family literacy message is clear. Elders and parents are a child’s first teacher. They can incorporate family literacy learning into what they do every day. Family literacy is how we learn in the environment where we live,

on the land and within our culture. It does not have to be an additional thing to add on to our list of things to do.

Across the north, literacy coalitions learn from each other, share resources, and partner on projects. Children and adults across Canada’s north benefit from our pan-northern collaboration and complementary approaches.



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# Become a Literacy Council Member

Literacy and essential skills touch all aspects of our lives.

Literacy and essential skills impact our social and economic well-being, our health, our families and our communities.

The NWT Literacy Council is committed to ensuring that all NWT residents have access to the literacy supports they need to:

- get jobs
- continue their education
- take care of their families
- participate fully in their communities

The NWT Literacy Council is a strong non-government literacy voice and service provider.

## Why become a member of the NWT Literacy Council?

A strong network is key to creating solutions that address the complex issues of literacy and essential skills.

Your support is important to us.

Join the Literacy Council and strengthen the voice of our network of literacy workers and supporters across the NWT.

Literacy is everyone's business!

## Yearly Dues

- Individual, \$10.00
- Family, \$20.00
- Organization, \$25.00

Membership dues can be waived on request, if necessary.

## Donate online

Donations are essential for the NWT Literacy Council's work.

You can donate online at the NWT Literacy Council website.

Go to [www.nwt.literacy.ca](http://www.nwt.literacy.ca). Just click on the CanadaHelps button on our home page.



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