

# Literacy Matters

FALL 2018

## Free Books in the Mail

Imagine getting a free book in the mail each month! Babies and young children in 11 NWT communities are getting just that. Each month approximately 240 children feel special about getting mail addressed specifically to them.

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library sends the books to registered children from birth until age five in Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, Ulukhaktok, Fort McPherson, Aklavik, Tsiigehtchic, Fort Resolution, Fort Providence, Fort Simpson, Inuvik, and Norman Wells.

“I signed up because reading is very important to me. My mother was a librarian and started me reading early and I wanted to pass that on,” says Sara Gordon, one of the first parents to sign on in Fort Simpson. Her son is less than one year old.

“He wasn’t interested in the beginning. Now he likes turning the pages, looking at the pictures and eating the books. He is literally devouring the books,” she laughs.

Another parent, Angel Joe, of Inuvik, signed up her two children with the encouragement of the local librarian.

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# President's Message: Ken Latour

## Change Is Inevitable and Is Happening to Us

Greetings Everyone!

Welcome to the fall edition of our newsletter. This will be the last President's Message I write for the NWT Literacy Council as my term comes to an end at this fall's annual general meeting. I will continue to serve as a board member, but the mantle of President will be passed on to someone else.

It has been a very gratifying experience to serve as President of the NWT Literacy Council. Our northern Literacy Council is unique. It is one of the only literacy councils left in the country. Many of these provincial bodies have closed due to a lack of funding. I believe this shows that we do important work, we do it well, and we are, like true northerners, resilient.

In late 2015, I took over as President from Jeri Miltenberger, who had served the Council well for a long time. Since that time, the board has continued the important work of ensuring the Council is on solid footing for the future. In the last three years this has included developing a new strategic plan to take us to 2019; revising our board handbook, policies and by-laws; and streamlining the Council's mission, vision and goals—all very important for a board to remain healthy.

Throughout the three years I served as President, I had the pleasure of working with a great group of board members who are passionate about literacy in the north. One of the standouts from this board is Dr. Suzanne Robinson. She served as President of the Council two times during her 15 years service on the board and made innumerable contributions. Suzanne will be leaving the board by our fall annual meeting. Her deep experience with literacy, and her quick wit and insights, will be missed.

Another notable board member, Rachel Gauthier, left the board this year. Rachel also made significant contributions during her several years of service with

the Council. The Council thanks Rachel and Suzanne for their commitment.

I would also like to thank our hardworking and talented staff members and our Executive Director, Kathryn Barry Paddock. The Council's services and success rely on them. Finally, a big thank you to Helen Balanoff, who has continued working for the Council after she finished her term as Executive Director. Her intelligence and knowledge of literacy issues and best practices have been invaluable to this organization.

Have a great fall everyone. Happy reading!



## Mark Your Calendar

### **International Literacy Day**

*September 8*

### **NWT Literacy Week**

*September 23-29*

### **NWT Literacy Council Annual General Meeting**

*October 13*

### **Plain Language Day**

*October 13*

### **Family Literacy Training Institute**

*October 15-18*

### **National Family Literacy Day**

*January 27, 2019*

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## The Bison Bus Is Coming to a Community Near You

The wheels on the Bison Bus go round and round, rolling into a community near you.

An enormous amount of work has gone into getting the Bison Bus on the road. Our summer student, Catriona Profit, spent the better part of the summer preparing fun activities for children and their families to do inside the Bison Bus when it comes to your community.

The Bison Bus also took a lot of planning and fund raising. This summer our plain, white bus was transformed into the Bison Bus, thanks to the talented people at Poison Graphics, in Hay River. Contact us to find out if the Bison Bus can visit your community!

### *Thank you to the donors who helped make the Bison Bus a reality.*

100 Men Who Give a Damn	Canada Post Foundation	James Koponen	Rachel Gauthier
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We'll need to keep updating and renewing supplies, craft materials and books. We also need to fill the hungry Bison Bus with gas. If you can contribute to the Bison Bus, we'd love to hear from you. Contact [nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca](mailto:nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca) or call us at 1-866-599-6758 or 873-9262.

# INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES MONTH

## Photo/Video Contest Winners

### *Congratulations to the winners of our Indigenous Languages Month photo/video contest.*

Jenny Vandermeer, of Norman Wells, spoke glowingly of her role model, her mother, Jane Modeste, of Délı̨ne, in a video she posted on Facebook. Jane has worked as a Dene language specialist for many, many years.

Liza Mandeville sent a photo of her Indigenous language role model, Catherine Boucher, of Fort Resolution. Liza had this to say about her role model.

“Ms. Boucher is an excellent teacher...So now when I hear somebody speaking Chipewyan, I smile because I know what they are talking about. Having to start speaking and understanding my Chipewyan language again is helping a great deal to be around my elders.

“Ms. Boucher is a very caring and happy instructor, when we have a hard time trying to learn. She makes it easier by understanding how we feel and she says, ‘never get embarrassed because you are here to get your language back’.”

Thank you to everyone who promoted and entered the contest. We hope the winners and their role models enjoy their prizes.



We Continue to Learn about

# Embedded Literacy



The NWT Literacy Council staff participated in two training sessions with Pat Salt, an essential skills consultant, this spring. We focused on embedding essential skills – with an emphasis on numeracy – into community-based programs.

Think how much we use numbers in our everyday lives: counting money; measuring – fabric, ingredients in a recipe, gas needed for a skidoo or boat trip, the area of a room; reading and understanding temperatures; working out the cost of heating our homes; and on and on.

Numeracy is one of the Government of Canada's essential skills. It's as much a foundational skill as reading. Alberta Achievement Test results show that NWT students in both grades 6 and 9 struggle with math. As an organization, it's time that the NWT Literacy Council pays more attention to numeracy.

To help us develop more embedded literacy and essential skills activities, Pat taught us to use an artifact-based approach. This means we start with a document – a book, a recipe, an order form, a video outline – and break it down into the essential skills that you might need to use this document. Then, we rebuild the document as a series of activities with embedded literacy and essential skills.

For example, what if our artifact is an order form, and we want to develop numeracy activities? We look at an order form and note that to complete the form, a person

would need to know how to calculate percentages to figure out the deposit on their order. They might need to understand unit prices, know how to budget for an event, understand terms and conditions, know how to format dates, and be aware of how interest rates work if they are paying with a credit card. That's a lot to tackle all at once!

However, if we identify each element and build embedded literacy activities around each one, we can make the task less overwhelming. This approach works well because it is so flexible and because we can choose artifacts or documents that are meaningful to people's lives.

When it comes to embedding numeracy, or any other essential skill, Pat's main message is simple. Any activity must be meaningful for the people involved, so that they can apply what they learn to their everyday lives – at home, in their community, or at work.

We look forward to using the techniques that Pat taught us as we incorporate more numeracy activities into our future materials. In the meantime, check out our Everyday Math Skills Series, as an example of learning skills in context. You'll find the books on our website at <https://www.nwtliteracy.ca/resources/youth-and-adult-literacy#39>.

# Activities Help Newcomers Connect to the Community



*Our Community Connections program tried some new activities this spring and summer, based on the interests of newcomers. We rented a garden plot at the Weledeh community garden in Yellowknife, and we started female-only swim nights.*

Female-only swims give women a chance to exercise, while building community across cultures within Yellowknife. Swimming pools in Britain regularly offer female-only swims in their pool schedules. While our initial intention was to offer an opportunity for Muslim women to go to the pool with no men present, many other women and girls are taking advantage of the all-female hour at the pool. This lends the evening swims quite a social feel.

Women and girls visit in the hot tub and steam room. One young mother dozed while she got a shoulder massage from an older woman in the steam room. Volunteer coaches from Special Olympics and Swim NWT have helped participants who want to improve their swimming skills. The last swim night found six women and girls in the shallow end of the pool trying to float or swim. With all the water around Yellowknife, swimming is an important skill to learn.



Thank you to swimming enthusiast, Lilia Abdessemed, who wrote a wonderful blog for our website after the first female-only swim night. You can read it at <https://www.nwtliteracy.ca/blog/when-swim-dream-come-true>

Gardening started in May at our plot in the Weledeh community garden managed by the Yellowknife Community Garden Collective. Newcomers joined a work bee on the May long weekend to turn over the soil and set up an irrigation system.

Some participants were super keen to get started so we planted some seeds and our potatoes before the end of May.

Community Connections Coordinator, Karen Johnson, often reminds people that she is not an expert gardener. The garden is a venture where we all learn together. The tomatoes planted in the plot suffered with the cold and rain in June but they managed to hang on. We will be able to compare the success of cucumbers seeded directly into the ground and those that were transplanted after an earlier start indoors.

We picked the first spinach and radishes at the beginning of July. Our fall harvest will be exciting. Once we see what grows well this year, we can make plans for next year. Starting plants like tomatoes, cucumbers, cabbage and cauliflower indoors would give us a head start on the growing season.

Karen responds as best she can to suggestions for other activities. Please contact Karen if you have skills or knowledge to share with newcomers. We aim to set up a volunteer matching program for newcomers and longer-term Yellowknifers this fall or winter. Let us know if you are interested in helping out. Karen can be reached at 873-9262 or at [karen@nwtliteracy.ca](mailto:karen@nwtliteracy.ca).





# Youth Programs Update

*People who work with youth in different contexts gathered in June for our annual training for the Skill Builders for Youth program. The 13 participants from 10 NWT communities brought a wide range of experiences to the training. With backgrounds in health and wellness, recreation, or education we explored the ways that youth literacy can intersect with different sectors.*

A highlight of the training for many participants was the chance to meet other people who work with youth. They don't often get the chance to learn from other people doing youth literacy work and wished that they could do this more often.

The Department of Education, Culture, and Employment funds the Skill Builders for Youth program, which is targeted at youth, 16-29 years old, who are out of school, unemployed, underemployed, or at-risk. This year, the NWT Literacy Council signed a new contribution agreement with the department for another three years of program funding.

The goal of the Skill Builders for Youth program is to provide informal learning experiences for youth that build their literacy and essential skills while offering a path back into learning. The most recent evaluation of the program found that, along with building literacy and essential skills, youth who participate in the Skill Builders

for Youth programs have more confidence, better communication skills, and work together better than at the start of the program. The programs also benefit the entire community by improving connections between youth and elders and contributing to crime prevention.

The participants in our training were a lively group, and we had a lot of fun learning together. We look forward to staying connected with this new group of youth literacy facilitators, and continuing to work with those trained in previous years.

People who train with us are eligible for Skill Builders for Youth funding for their community youth programs. We can't wait to visit some of the programs we fund later this year! The deadline to apply for funding is January 15, 2019. If you have questions about this program, you can call the NWT Literacy Council office at 1-866-599-6758 or email [emily@nwtliteracy.ca](mailto:emily@nwtliteracy.ca).

## Meet Our Summer Student

Catriona Profit joined us in the late spring. She is an English major at the University of Calgary. Catriona was a huge help during the summer, especially with our family literacy activities.

Sadly, we said goodbye to Christine Barker, who worked on family literacy activities with us during Katie Johnson's maternity leave. We are happy to welcome Katie back to the family literacy program.

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# Check Out Our Resources!



***Our NWT Literacy Week theme this year is “Everyone in the Kitchen!”  
We will have some new resources for NWT Literacy Week with this theme.***

We created a Cooking and Counting fridge magnet for family literacy and early childhood programs to share with families in their communities. We also are working on a mini-cookbook to encourage families to cook together.

Our ever-popular wall calendar is a great way to track special days and months and plan programs. We get very positive feedback on the calendar from community, adult education, early childhood, and school programs.

If you haven't received your copy of our NWT Literacy Week materials, please contact our office and we will be happy to send you some.



# The NALES Project Comes to an End

The three-year NALES (Northern Alliance of Literacy and Essential Skills) project ended this spring. It was a pan-territorial effort by the Yukon Literacy Coalition, the NWT Literacy Council, and Ilitaqsiniq – Nunavut Literacy Council to embed literacy and essential skills into training projects.

Each project was unique, just like each of the three territories. We worked with the NWT Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment and Aurora College to train people and develop curriculum to improve skills in the service and tourism industry. The Yukon focused on tourism, and Nunavut on building traditional skills.

During the last phase of the NALES project, from January to June, 2018, we reflected on what we learned. The three literacy groups identified and described a northern approach to embedding literacy and essential skills. This will guide our future projects. We also documented tools and ways to collect information, as well as evaluation methods, for future community-based projects.

We gathered this spring in Rankin Inlet to wind down the NALES project and view Ilitaqsiniq's Niqitsialiurniq project in action. Niqitsialiurniq is a food preparation program with embedded literacy and essential skills, originally designed as a part of the NALES project.

Niqitsialiurniq is an intensive four-month program. The participants have classroom-style literacy programming each morning, followed by cooking in the afternoon with a Red Seal chef.

Each day is different, but Wednesdays and Fridays are special. On Wednesdays, the group cooks for, and hosts, a soup kitchen open to the community. Fridays are a "special choice" day, when participants can cook a menu of their choice and can take home their cooking to their families. The menu demands that students practice a new cooking technique or recipe.

The Niqitsialiurniq program works with elders to harvest and prepare food in traditional ways. We were delighted to participate in one of the program's field trips. We travelled to a cabin along the Qajakuvik River and spent the day fishing for arctic char. As soon as we arrived, one participant made a fire and cooked bannock, which was quickly followed by char, fresh from the river.

The Niqitsialiurniq program has seen many successes. The last time it ran, almost all participants found jobs after completing the program. Some students got jobs at a local mine, while others started their own businesses.

The visit to Rankin Inlet was a wonderful end to the NALES project. We look forward to future work with our neighbours and partners, the Yukon Literacy Coalition and Ilitaqsiniq – the Nunavut Literacy Council.



# Learners Write

**Thanks to Liza Mandeville, of Fort Resolution, for this story. It tackles difficult issues about family dysfunction and the perils that can face young women travelling alone. We welcome submissions to *Literacy Matters* from NWT adult learners.**

## **A Troubled Runaway Left a Dysfunctional Home**

It was in the mid-summer month of July 1980 in a small community where there was nothing to do. When you walked around town all you saw were intoxicated people everywhere you looked. This young girl's parents were alcoholics as well. The young girl was being abused and whipped when she had to do her other sibling's chores. She was being treated like Cinderella.

When her parents got intoxicated, they would become very vicious and mean. Her parents would strap her at times when she didn't want to listen to them. This abuse went on for several years because she was scared to say anything for fear of making it worse. When the parents were drunk, they always picked on her only. Then the young girl would run away as soon as her parents were "out to lunch" passed out.

On her 18th birthday she ran away, she hitchhiked south; it was about six in the evening. When she reached her southern destination, it was so nice and beautiful out, the sun was shining with beautiful colours of orange; light colours of pink and yellow glowing around the rim of the sun, it was a beautiful evening that night.

This young girl hitchhiked as far as she could, she was not scared of anything because of the abuse she had been through. She had seen so much hurt all her life and she knew when someone was going to harm her. The next day a pick-up truck came her way; when it got closer it was a dark blue color. The guy that stopped her was alone, and she didn't think anything bad was going to happen to her. As she got into the truck she introduced herself. He asked, "where are you going?" and she said, south to visit relatives and he said, "I am going south as well, hop in".

They got into a conversation as they were travelling and all of a sudden he was taking a different route and he said it would take less time. The young girl started thinking very scary thoughts, wondering why

he was going this way. She turned her head to ask him and he had a gun pointed right at her head and told her to do as he says or else I would kill you.

Being raised in a dysfunctional abusive home, she knew how to react quickly as possible. She was thinking of a way to get out, no matter what. He was driving through an industrial area, not far from the highway. The young girl observed the area closely, so when it was time to run she would escape. As they parked he had the gun still to her head and told her to undress. She slowly started to unbuckle her seat belt as she was looking in the mirror at the same time. She saw lights coming on the highway. The young girl pretended to act scared so the guy would not look in the mirror. As she got her belt off, immediately she hit the gun out of his hand. The gun flew on the floor and as he was trying to reach for the gun, she made a fast escape.

The young girl was running so fast that she was getting out of breath, but she never stopped running until she met up with the vehicle coming her way. The vehicle stopped for her and it was a married couple who picked her up. This couple was so scared for this young girl's life after she told them what had happened to her, that as soon as they got to the nearest town, they brought her right to the RCMP station to make her report.

The RCMP took her statement and put her on the bus to where she was going and said "Don't hitchhike again, it's too dangerous".

Till today this young lady never hitchhiked again and when she had kids she told them the story of her past. This young girl never drank in her life and never wanted alcohol around her home for the fact of growing up in a dysfunctional abusive home. She never went back home; she got a degree in law and became a lawyer.

# What's Happening in Family Literacy

*We were happy to partner with DeBeers this spring to promote literacy in Gamètì, Whatì, Wekweeti, Behchokò, Łutselk'e, Ndilo, Dettah, Fort Resolution, and Hay River through the DeBeers Books in Homes program.*

The program gave out 6,900 books to 1,800 students in 14 different schools this year. We also got to visit the Gahcho Kué mine site to help workers at the mine site create their own book recordings. Participants picked out a free children's book to take home, and recorded themselves reading the book. In this way,

children with parents and family members who work away from home for extended periods never have to miss out on a bedtime story!

During Earth Week, we partnered with Ecology North for a second year to host a StoryWalk® based

on the book *Up in the Garden, Down in the Dirt*, by Kate Messner. Our StoryWalks® are a popular resource. We've lent out our kits all around the territory. You can contact us to borrow our other StoryWalks®, based on the books, *Kumak's River*, *The Littlest Sled Dog*, *The Moose Who Almost Got Me*, and *How Raven Returned the Sun*.

Family Literacy program staff attended High-Five training in April. High-Five training combines physical literacy with the principles of healthy child development to ensure children's emotional, developmental, and social needs are met. We hope to learn more about this subject and include information in our future resources.

We partnered with two third-year nursing students at Aurora College on a Little Free Libraries project. Their task was to develop a health promotion initiative



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while building a relationship with a community organization. The students hosted a chili cook-off at the college to raise funds to purchase a Little Free Library for us to install outside the Literacy Council office. There are more than 10 Little Free Library locations in Yellowknife and we hope to see more soon throughout the NWT.

We provided family literacy activities for community members who attended Yes We Care Day in Yellowknife in May with their children. We also gave out free books and new socks.

Family Literacy staff hosted Talking Book training on the Kát'odeeche Reserve May 29 and 30. We trained eight workers from Aboriginal Head Start programs and the Chief Sunrise Education Centre. Participants created Talking Books that incorporated Indigenous languages and cultural practices specific to their community.

We also attended the NWT Evaluation Symposium in Yellowknife May 31 and June 1. We learned about decolonizing evaluation and Indigenous approaches to evaluation. Facilitators suggested using outcomes for evaluations that are selected by communities instead of relying on ones chosen only by funders. This symposium gave us much to think about as we improve our own evaluation practices.

We continued to visit the Centre for Northern Families' Pre-Natal and Healthy Mom and Baby programs as well as Aurora College's Family Nights on Campus in Yellowknife. We gave free books to the families that attend these programs and led literacy-related crafts or activities. We visited camps, community programs, and the YWCA Family Centre throughout the summer.

As in past years we helped families do activities, games, and crafts at the Yellowknife Farmers Market. Many families visited our Book Mobile each week to check out our selection of free books. On Canada Day, 92 children participated in our scavenger hunt and we made 133 batches of playdough with children of all ages. We gave away mini-books, bubbles, and more. Our Book Mobile was also at Ramble and Ride in early August with books for community members of all ages.

We're already planning for the annual Family Literacy Training Institute, October 15-18, 2018 in Yellowknife. Watch our website or social media for the registration form and more information.





“I signed them up because books are expensive and hard to find here, plus I have outstanding fees so I can’t borrow any books at the library right now. Once they come, my daughter is so excited.”

Most of the NWT Imagination Library initiatives began through the efforts of the E-Rotary Club of Canada, a virtual version of the service club, Rotary International. It recently decided to renew its sponsorship of Imagination Library in the NWT. Lynne Ternosky is a former president of E-Rotary in Canada and leads the Imagination Library initiative, which raises the money to pay a fee to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library for each registered child. She looks for a committed champion in each community who will encourage families to register their children.

Troy Bellefontaine is a big Dolly Parton fan. He was at a concert where he learned about the singer’s charity, the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Getting involved fit in with the work he had been doing with Fort Simpson children.

Troy has registered about 50 children. He put some of his own money toward the project. Others in Fort Simpson have helped with donations. Troy says the Imagination Library buys in bulk and is able to send each book for about \$3.55, including shipping. It takes a society or business to sponsor the project, so Troy used his business. He says he is scrupulous at accounting for all donations. Right now he has the money to expand beyond Fort Simpson into the nearby communities of Jean Marie River, Sambaa K’e, and Wrigley. He plans to send registration forms to the health cabins in those communities.

Troy is enthusiastic about the American research into Imagination Library, which shows that program participants outperform non-participants in the following areas:

- reading skills
- school readiness
- language development
- life skills development
- concept of print and book appreciation





- home literacy practice
- excitement about books and reading
- parent engagement

So far, Troy has used Facebook, the library and a sign-up table at community events to interest parents.

“I have a life-size cut-out of Dolly Parton that I use at events,” says Troy. “But it is easier for many parents to sign up themselves online.” Parents can find out if Imagination Library is in their community and then sign up at <https://imaginationlibrary.com/ca/find-my-program/>

Both Troy and the John Tetso Memorial Library manager, Roxanna Thompson, have taken Family Literacy training with the NWT Literacy Council. They look forward to organizing some community events for parents and children that will complement the free books.

Lynne says Tuktoyaktuk was the first community that E-Rotary worked with five years ago. She says there are more children who could be registered in some of the NWT communities where the program is available. “One thing that came out of Tuktoyaktuk was that

children who received the books were already oriented to books, and had an orientation to learning, curiosity and creativity when they entered school,” she noted.

If a community is interested in the E-Rotary sponsorship, they need a dedicated person to champion the program and a small amount of money they have raised themselves to show their commitment.

Both Troy and Lynne would like the NWT government to take over sponsorship of the Imagination Library in NWT communities. Troy estimates that could happen for about \$100,000 a year. The Yukon government matches donations up to \$50,000 a year for Yukon Imagination Library. The Ontario government department of education funds Imagination Library to put books into the hands of each young First Nations child living on reserve in that province.

You can contact Troy to find out how to register children in Fort Simpson at [troykennethbellefontaine@gmail.com](mailto:troykennethbellefontaine@gmail.com). Lynne Ternosky is at [lynneternosky@gmail.com](mailto:lynneternosky@gmail.com) if you want to bring Imagination Library to your community with the support of E-Rotary.



## ***Board Member Update***

We have a new board member for Yellowknife, Ndilq and Dettah. Rachel VanderVeen was acclaimed during the summer to this position. Rachel was a volunteer, teacher and librarian at the school in Fort Providence for eight years. She moved to Yellowknife two years ago. We sadly say goodbye to Rachel Gauthier, our former board member for this region.

Mary Ann Vital, of Délne, is back as our regional board member for the Sahtu region. Mary Ann was a long time early childhood educator and is now the regional Indigenous language coordinator.

There will be an election this fall to fill our board vacancy for the DehCho region.

## Board of Directors

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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.

Join the Literacy Council and strengthen the voice of our network of literacy workers and supporters across the NWT. Your support is important to us.

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 [www.nwtliteracy.ca](http://www.nwtliteracy.ca) or directly through Canada Helps.



It's easy and it's fast!



We're on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram!

Please search for NWT Literacy Council.

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