

# Literacy Matters

Spring 2019

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Photo: Tony Devlin



## Reclaim your language without shame or fear

*Thank you to Beverly Siliyuaq Amos, long-time Indigenous language advocate, for this submission. Beverly lives in Inuvik and grew up on Banks Island.*

I acquired my Inuvialuktun language at home with my parents and family. At that time in the 1960s, it was the dominant language.

Spending time on the land and living in a tiny isolated village, I was taught by example to be aware and to be watchful, mostly having to do with the environment and wildlife. On many occasions we encountered polar bear, or *nanuq*, within the village and during our travels.

One time there was a *nanuq* right close to our tent. It was at the dog tie-out line and the dogs were lying flat on the snow – they were quiet and afraid of the *nanuq*, it was so close. They were trying to hide as best they could, just lying flat. I started to cry, so my mom covered my mouth, talked to me quietly, and told me that we mustn't bring attention to ourselves.

[...continued on pg 15](#)

## President's Message: Bev Garven

# Introducing our new President



Happy spring!

I am happy to send you this message as we welcome spring to the north. Let me introduce myself since this is my first President's message.

After getting a Bachelors degree in Medieval History and Religious Studies and a Masters of Divinity, I made my way to Inuvik in 1994. I started working at the Inuvik Centennial Library in 1995, becoming Head Librarian in 2002 until my retirement in 2018. I currently work part-time for First Air.

I joined the NWT Literacy Council in the spring of 2010 representing the Beaufort Delta. I held the position of Secretary on the Board for many years, and then became Vice-President.

My favourite literacy story is from Christmas when I was 10 years old. In those days in Saskatchewan, if the municipality where you lived did not contribute tax dollars to the nearest library (if the library was located in a different municipality), then you had to pay for your library card. We were in this situation, and when I got a library card for Christmas, it was the best gift I ever received. My whole family used it. I had always been an avid reader, and this gift opened up a whole new world for both myself, and my family.

As a librarian, I enjoyed sharing the gift of reading with children and with everyone who participated in our family literacy programs such as Reading Rascals or *Books in the Home*. The NWT Literacy Council funded these programs and I saw firsthand the benefits of this type of support for our communities.

At the NWT

Literacy

Council,

we use a broad

definition of literacy that incorporates concepts such

as numeracy, on the land skills, storytelling and more.

As spring turns to summer, I hope you make some literacy-related memories with your family that you can look back on with fondness as well.

In the meantime, please enjoy this latest issue of *Literacy Matters*, a celebration of Indigenous languages and the work we have done since last fall.

## Mark your calendar

### **International Literacy Day**

*September 8*

### **NWT Literacy Week**

*September 22-28*

### **Plain Language Day**

*October 13*

## Write for us!

We are always looking for contributions to our weekly blog and email newsletter, *Literacy This Week*, as well as to *Literacy Matters*.

We offer a small honorarium for blogs.

If you are interested, contact

[nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca](mailto:nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca).

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# Building skills in youth

Youth in 11 NWT communities are benefiting from Skill Builders for Youth programs this year. They are building their literacy and essential skills through informal learning experiences.

Some youth literacy workers are building off successes in previous years. For example, the Yellowknives Dene First Nation is offering a digital literacy program for youth for the second year. Youth Literacy Nights continue to be well attended in Fort McPherson. Fort Resolution offered a traditional sewing and footwear-making program again. The youth facilitator in Tulita is continuing the momentum from last year by offering another *Learning in the Kitchen* program.

Other communities developed new Skill Builders for Youth programs. In Fort Liard, youth were invited to participate in a youth-led series of guitar lessons. Youth also participated in a *Learning in the Kitchen* program held at the community seniors' complex, with seniors invited to share each meal. In Hay River, youth had the opportunity to participate in a six-week program that focused on a new life skill each week. The Centennial Library hosted this program. Youth could also drop into Hay River's Lights On program and build their literacy and essential skills through cooking.

The Skill Builders for Youth program is designed to provide informal learning experiences for youth 16-29 years old who are out of school, unemployed,

underemployed, or at-risk. The goal is to provide informal learning experiences that help youth build their literacy and essential skills and that offer them a path back into learning.

The NWT Literacy Council is running this program for the fourth year with money from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Each youth facilitator takes training from us to be eligible for funding under the program.

We are evaluating the effectiveness of the Skill Builders for Youth program. In January, our youth and adult services coordinator, Emily Smith, and our external evaluator, Sue Folinsbee, visited two Skill Builders for Youth programs and interviewed their program facilitators.

We observed the *Learning in the Kitchen* program at the North Slave Correctional Centre's youth unit and visited Fort McPherson to take part in Youth Literacy Nights, coordinated by Delores Vittrekwa. The variety of activities gives each youth the chance to build skills and take on a leadership role. Thank you to Spencer and Delores for hosting us at their programs!

To learn more about the Skill Builders for Youth program contact [nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca](mailto:nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca). Keep up to date on upcoming training and funding opportunities by signing up for our weekly e-news.





# Learners write

*Thank you to Ramona Rymer, of Fort Resolution, for this story for Literacy Matters.  
We welcome stories and poems from readers.*

## How we survived a skidoo accident

One day it was very beautiful outside. My boyfriend and I decided to go for a skidoo ride. We took my youngest daughter with us, so we all got ready. I made sure my daughter was dressed up very warm.

Finally, it was time for the three of us to go for a wonderful ride on Great Slave Lake. Everything was going great, with the terrific weather all day long; we drove all around the Mission Island. My boyfriend worried about us getting cold and often checked if we were warm.

I was really enjoying the scenery but my daughter was getting bored of sitting in the middle of us. So now my boyfriend and I decided to let my daughter drive the skidoo. We stopped for a little bit in the middle of the lake to explain how she could drive the skidoo.

My boyfriend thought it would be fun to let her drive. We both agreed that she wouldn't drive too fast. He said he would help her and show her how to drive. We drove closer to the shore thinking it would be safer.

My youngest daughter was now driving the skidoo. She was having a lot of fun. She was yelling at me, "Mommy, Mommy, I'm driving". We hit a couple of big bumps and my youngest daughter ended up slowing down. Then we came to a complete stop.

Just when we stopped, the skidoo started to sink into the ice. The ice was breaking fast around us. I was so scared we would go down with the skidoo. My boyfriend wasn't! He quickly jumped off the skidoo into the water, trying to hold up the skidoo.

We were very close to the shore so the water wasn't too deep. My boyfriend was telling my daughter, "I'm going to carry you over here. Wait for me and your mom".

My daughter didn't have a clue about what just happened. She was still excited about driving the skidoo for the very first time. She was only three years old!

Now that my daughter was on land, it was my turn to go next. Oh was I scared of what happened to us! I didn't really say anything because I didn't want my daughter to see me scared.

She was having so much fun making snow angels while waiting for me. My boyfriend got the skidoo up so that it didn't sink under the ice that was still breaking. He was all wet from his waist down. His feet were getting cold.

Finally, someone showed up and helped him pull out the skidoo. They brought us back to town. It's a good thing that a lot of people were driving around on that beautiful day. Everyone from the town of Fort Resolution can see and help each other on the land or the big Great Slave Lake.



Communities around the NWT found creative ways to embrace the popular theme of *Everyone in the Kitchen* during NWT Literacy Week last fall. Over 350 community groups received our NWT Literacy Week mailout with a cookbook, cooking fractions magnets, event posters, a letter with ideas, and our useful wall calendar.

We invited every community to apply for a Literacy Week event grant. This grant gave groups \$300 to host an event. We funded 18 events in 15 communities. We were blown away with the creative ideas that people had.

Some of our favourites were: a vegetable “gingerbread” house in Lutsel K’e, a Books and Bannock event on Kat’lodeeche, and an Elders’ Tea in Fort McPherson. There was lots of pizza eaten in the Dehcho region during NWT Literacy Week. The Deh Gah School students in Fort Providence made pizzas for community events, and the Fort Liard Community Learning Centre hosted a Kids Can Cook night with real pizza and pizza crafts.

We celebrated NWT Literacy Week, too. We took our new Bison Bus to the Pop-Up Park in Yellowknife twice. We gave away books and hot drinks over lunch hour at the Post Office one day, and served food and gave away more books at Lunch with a Bunch put on weekly by the Yellowknife Seniors’ Society. We had over 450 people join us for a Family Fun Night at the Fieldhouse, complete with supper, bouncy castles, games, books, and more.

Once again this year the Ministerial Literacy Award winners inspired us. They were honoured at the Adult Learners’ Luncheon during NWT Literacy Week. Christopher Aitken received the Ministerial Educator Literacy Award and Dr. Suzanne Robinson, the Ministerial Literacy Champion Award. Carly Sayers, from Aklavik, was awarded the Ministerial Youth Learner Literacy Award. Diane Brule, of Yellowknife, was awarded the Council of the Federation Literacy Award. This last award is given annually to an adult learner in each province and territory.

## National Family Literacy Day 2019

National Family Literacy Day is celebrated each year on January 27. This year was the 20th anniversary of the event, which is promoted each year by ABC Life Literacy Canada. We wanted to promote and support the Year of Indigenous Languages on Family Literacy Day.

We created a new set of memory cards for families, childcare programs, and schools to enjoy. The cards feature northern animals and objects, and have either their English name, or a blank space. Adults can fill in the blank lines in their Indigenous language themselves, or work with children to do it together.

The Literacy Council staff also joined the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre’s Festival of Silliness again this year. Families came to NACC for an afternoon of shows, face painting, bouncy castles, food, and games. We appreciated the chance to help kids make silly monsters and give out our new memory cards.



# These students are part of an NWT Indigenous language revival



*Students learning about language revitalization in Yellowknife this winter have various goals for seeking a Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization.*

Becoming a mother prompted Jordee Reid to take the part-time course at Aurora College. “Having a baby made me examine what’s really important, and this course was in the right place at the right time.”

Rita Drygeese grew up speaking her language. She sees this course as a gateway to being able to teach her Tłı̨chǫ language. Several other students are using the program as a stepping-stone to learn or improve their language skills.

Shauna McLeod, originally from Fort Providence, says she sees it as her duty to learn her language. “It’s always been a missing piece of my identity.” Shauna’s mother completed the certificate program a few years ago when it was offered in the Dehcho region.

Liz Liske wants to be able to incorporate the language into her work and normalize its use within the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. “As an adult there is no excuse not to learn it.”

Debbie Klengenberg applied to the program because she hopes that she can be part of setting the “spark that we need to revitalize before our current speakers are all gone.”

The students say the help given by their employers and the territorial government makes them feel supported and valued. The Government of the Northwest Territories offered scholarships to cover the tuition for students. Debbie is the only student without an employer. The employers of the other students allow them to take work time to participate in the week-long in-class sessions interspersed throughout the program.

The Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization is available through a partnership among Aurora College, the University of Victoria, and the Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat, Government of the Northwest Territories.

There are diploma, degree, and Masters programs where northerners are learning about Indigenous language revitalization. “The next step is an adult immersion program for people wanting to learn their language”, noted Angela James at the Indigenous Languages and Learning Symposium this winter. She is the director of the Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat for the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The current program’s instructor, Bonnie Maracle, says the support of the territorial government for students who study Indigenous language revitalization is “unique in Canada”.

# Review of NWT Official Languages Act coming up

*The NWT Commissioner of Official Languages, Shannon Gullberg, says the Official Languages Act should change so that it protects Indigenous languages.*

Shannon describes the current Act as a service-based model. Its focus is on when and where you can ask for services, and on translation of government meetings and publications.

Shannon would like to see the Act move towards protecting language promotion and preservation activities at the community level. She says language legislation and policies that do this will support using Indigenous languages in daily life and working with Elders and language speakers, and ensure that there are competent teachers.

The NWT government is due to review the Act this fall, though it is not clear that will happen before the October 1 territorial election. The Languages Commissioner sees this as an opportunity to give the Act a revitalizing role for Indigenous languages.

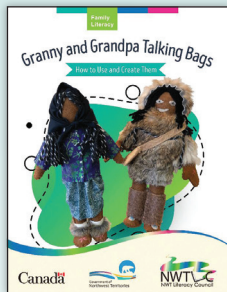
# Check out our resources!

## Family Literacy Memory Game

Each card in our new Memory Game has a picture of a northern animal or object. Children can use both the English version, and a version that has a blank line on it. You can label the image in an Indigenous language on that blank line. Contact us for your Memory Game.

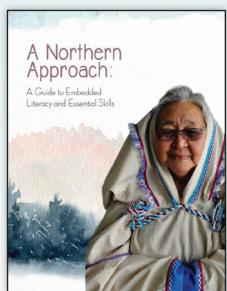


The following resources can be found at [www.nwtliteracy.ca](http://www.nwtliteracy.ca)



## Granny and Grampa Talking Bags Manual

This cultural resource for family literacy and early childhood programs can help include elders in programs as mentors and teachers. Elders can use the items in Talking Bags to animate stories, teach vocabulary, sing songs, and demonstrate skills – in any language. Call us to find out who in your region has been trained and made a Talking Bag.



## A Northern Approach: A Guide to Embedded Literacy and Essential Skills

This guide was developed as part of a collaboration of three northern literacy organizations: the Yukon Literacy Coalition, the NWT Literacy Council, and Iltaqsinik – Nunavut Literacy Council. It explains how organizations can embed literacy and essential skills into existing learning and training programs.



# Physical literacy with newcomers



*The Canadian Association of Advancement of Women in Sport held a workshop last year for newcomers in Yellowknife to discuss ways to get more immigrant women and girls active.*

Newcomers identified several barriers to active living for women and girls. The obstacles included the cost of activities, scheduling, and a need for female-only programs. One woman said she went to a female-only exercise class only to find that a man led it. She didn't stay for the class.

Knowing these barriers to participation, we were excited when there was a good turnout for our Community Connections program World Snow Day event in January. Eight immigrant families came out. Several women gave cross-country skiing a try for the first time. The kids were on and off skis for several hours, warming up in the ski club building as needed. Some people also tried snowshoes. We are exploring ways to offer more skiing opportunities.

The Community Connections program tried to meet the need for female-only activities by booking monthly swims and yoga classes for women and girls this winter.

Last year, women did a lot of socializing in the hot tub and the steam room with only a few women in the pool

to exercise. This fall, however, several women returned to the pool intending to learn to swim. They have been floating and learning how to kick, and trying to get used to putting their heads under water. It's exciting and fun to help. Pool staff members offer encouragement and suggest ways the women can try to improve. The women are working hard and challenging themselves, though visiting is still an important part of the evening. There is a festive atmosphere because it is 'ladies night out'.

Our yoga class is not a typical yoga class. The women move and are active in ways that are unfamiliar to them. Sometimes there is laughter when someone tips over, or someone will interpret the instructions into Arabic to help someone else get into a pose. The number of participants increased throughout the two sets of yoga classes as more women learned about the program. We are trying to offer an affordable female-only yoga class on an ongoing basis, because the women realize the benefits of exercise and they are eager to continue.



# Everyone can help revitalize Indigenous languages

*The International Year of Indigenous Languages is a perfect time to contribute to the health of Indigenous languages in the NWT. Everyone can play a part. You don't have to speak an Indigenous language, or even be Indigenous to make a difference.*

Indigenous languages tie people to their identity, culture, land, history, and ancestors. They can be an important factor in the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people.

This article is based on advice given by Dr. Lorna Wanasts'a7 Williams, the keynote speaker at the Indigenous Language Learning and Education Symposium this winter in Yellowknife.

She encouraged non-Indigenous people to “have the courage to learn, to enter into another world” by learning a language.

## Support language learning

Do what you can to support Indigenous language learning in early childhood programs, schools, adult learning centres, and at the post-secondary level. Encourage students and teachers.

## Create places where Indigenous languages can be used

Work with people in your community to promote Indigenous language learning and use in sports and recreation programs, on community radio, in church, at feasts, and elsewhere.

## Be watchful

Languages can disappear at an alarming rate. NWT Indigenous languages are on shaky ground.

## Thank a language worker

Find ways to thank and support the work of the language teachers, interpreters, and others working in the language. Participate in activities where Indigenous languages are used.

## Be an advocate

Work for immersion learning opportunities, training for interpreters, more films in Indigenous languages, more funding to create teaching and learning resources.

## *If you're a non-speaker...*

### Tell people you value Indigenous languages

Encourage speakers to use their language in your school and workplace, and in social situations. Find out about the local language and dialects in your region. Understand that language and culture are a source of pride, control, and power.

### Download an Indigenous language app and use it

Set aside time each day to use a language app to increase your vocabulary. You can learn common expressions on language apps, play games, and use quizzes to get positive feedback on your language learning.

### Make friends with a language speaker

Technology can help, but learning a language requires interaction with speakers. Go for coffee. Find a common interest that paves the way for you to spend time together. Trade your skills and time for their time and expertise. Do their dishes or laundry while you learn.

## *If you're a speaker...*

### Use your language

Even if it's a few words here and there, use your language, or the Indigenous language in your community. Everywhere. Use it at the grocery store, at work, on the ball field, at the community garden, on the land, and especially at home with your family.

### Teach the young

Make the most of the early years when babies and young children can easily learn languages.

### Buy books in Indigenous languages

Buy books written in Indigenous languages, or that are bilingual. Let authors and publishers know there is a demand for these. Expose your child to the local Indigenous language as much as possible.

### Respect different dialects

Dr. Williams says that Indigenous languages don't have to be standardized and that dialects should be allowed to thrive.

### Make links between school and community

Find out what the young people in your life are learning at school. Reinforce their language learning at home and in the community.

## *If you're a business, group, or agency...*

### Make Indigenous languages visible

Translate signs. Greet people in their language. Put the local language on your souvenirs and gifts. Reward bilingual workers. If possible, encourage language learning during work hours.

### Find partners

Share expertise, money and efforts to make a bigger impact. Sponsor contests, encourage singing and other ways to make Indigenous languages visible and normal.

*Thank you to Sabet Biscaye and Jacey Firth Hagen for reviewing this article.*



# What's happening in **Family Literacy**



*Our Family and Community Literacy Coordinators, Katie Johnson and Charlotte Upton, shared their expertise with family literacy facilitators from around the territory this fall and winter. Highlights were our annual Family Literacy Training Institute and Advanced Family Literacy Training Institute.*

## Community Wellness Fairs

The NWT Department of Health and Social Services invited the NWT Literacy Council to participate in Health and Wellness Fairs again this past fall. We shared our resources and information about our services at fairs in Tsiigehtchic, Fort Liard, Jean Marie River, Deline, Nahanni Butte, Sambaa K'e, Colville Lake, Wrigley, Enterprise, and Fort Good Hope. The Health and Wellness Fairs continue to allow us to travel to many NWT communities and create connections with more people than we would otherwise be able to.

## Family Literacy Training Institute

Last October, 21 participants from Aklavik, Behchokò, Dettah, Fort McPherson, Fort Resolution, Fort Smith, Hay River, Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Ndilo and Yellowknife took part in our annual Family Literacy Training Institute. The dedication of this year's group was obvious from the start with travel itineraries that included ice roads, taxis, planes, and even a helicopter ride just to get to Yellowknife.

Participants had the chance to learn how to facilitate some of the family literacy programs that we have

developed over the years. We did workshops on Introduction to Family Literacy, Choosing Books, Baby Brain and Language Development, *1-2-3 Rhyme with Me*, *Story Time Adventures*, and *Science Fun*. This year's participants particularly enjoyed our session on Baby Brain and Language Development.

If you want to receive family literacy training, sign up for our weekly *Literacy This Week* email newsletter to learn about dates and locations. We will accept applications for our next Family Literacy Training Institute near the end of the summer. More than 45 people applied to attend the 2018 training, so apply early.

## Advanced Family Literacy Training

Our Advanced Family Literacy Training Institute is intended for family literacy facilitators from around the NWT who have previously taken our regular Family Literacy Training Institute. In January, 15 participants who wanted to increase their skills attended three days of advanced training. We did sessions on *Little Chefs*, *Take a Break* (our new parent-focused program), *Story Sacks*, *Books in the Home* and *Talking Books*. We enjoyed getting to spend more time with our participants, discussing family literacy programming that is happening around the NWT, and seeing the new resources people created during the training.

## Training early childhood workers

We were invited to Aurora College's Early Childhood Education course for two days in March to present our Introduction to Family Literacy, *Science Fun*, Baby Brain and Language Development and Book Making sessions to the students. We appreciated the chance to get to meet future family literacy facilitators from around the territory and to see the hard work they have done so far this school year.

## Continuing our partnership in Fort Providence

With funding from Healthy Children's Initiative, we facilitated sessions of *Science Fun* and *Little Chefs* in Fort Providence in March. This time we worked with the families of children in the Aboriginal Head Start program as well as with instructors. Entire families did age-appropriate experiments, cooking, and crafts and went home with the books we read during our sessions.







# Bison Bus

## on the road this summer

*We look forward to taking our new Bison Bus on the road this summer.  
We'll visit communities and take part in several celebrations in the NWT.*

The NWT Literacy Council's new mobile family literacy centre was wrapped to look like a bison in late summer in time to attend several events. These included the Fall Harvest Fair in Ndilo, a YWCA Open House, the Ecology North Pop-Up Park, the Centre for Northern Families, the Range Lake North School Open House and the Federation of Labour's Labour Day BBQ.

We played games, made crafts and did other activities, both on and off the bus, with children and their families. We also had books for families to take home.

At the International Literacy Day breakfast in September, we received lots of new northern books, toys and games to put onto the bus for future use.

Also in September, the members of our Board of Directors got their first chance to tour the Bison Bus during our in-person board meeting.

Keep track of our travels this coming summer through our Facebook page. We may be coming to pay you a visit!



## ...continued from page 1

I experienced these things because I didn't attend residential school. Being sent away from home was avoided because my dad said no.

We were on an isolated island, but the plane would come every year to get the kids. But he said no. He didn't believe that kids should be away from their parents at such a young age.

It was very quiet to be in a community with no other children my age. I became accustomed and to this day, I still enjoy time alone. I can better collect my thoughts of the day, reminisce about the past, and think about what I envision for tomorrow.

I am so thankful that my father kept me home. I'm adopted, so I'm even more thankful to be raised by strong traditional Inuvialuk parents. My dad's name was David Isaac Amagana Aiviq Nasogaluak, son of Joe Emsley Nasogaluak and Susie Qablusiaq Anngik (Ruben). He passed away in 2016 at age 81. My mother's name was Agnes Kanraran Aullaran Carpenter, daughter of Fred Ajgaliak Carpenter and Lucy Siliuyaq Wolki.

I have the unique perspective of seeing the before and after effects of residential school on survivors. The impacts will be with us for many years to come. Now we're starting to wash off the layers of our people's experience, trying to heal wounds that are still sore and raw.

Decolonization has to happen to regain pride in our ancestral identity. Inuvialuit can do this by reclaiming their language. They can make it their business to relearn without shame or fear of reproach, and the healing can happen.

Elders fear that the majority of the Inuvialuit language will go with them. When it's my turn to pass away, I hope there is a group of people to fall back on for our Tuktuuyaqtuuq language.



Thank you to former NWT Commissioner, Tony Whitford, for a generous donation to the NWT Literacy Council last fall. He is pictured here with our new President, Bev Garven, and Past President Ken Latour.

## 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.



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