

Literacy Matters



Spring 2022

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Upcoming events:

- **May 1-7:** NWT Literacy Week. This year the theme is Literacy Around the NWT.
- **May 16-18:** Skill Builders for Youth Training



Find "NWT Literacy Council" on social media

Meet Dr Angela James, helping "sleeping languages" awoken through MAP

The Northwest Territories (NWT) Literacy Council and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) wish everyone a Happy Indigenous Languages Month!

Indigenous Languages Month is celebrated in the NWT every February and this year's theme is "Let's Go Fishing." Stay tuned to radio, newspapers, and social media posts for activities to celebrate and promote Indigenous languages in schools and communities, including learning more about the Mentor Apprentice Program, or MAP as it is known.

"For many years in Indigenous language learning situations, we have used the drill and kill approach, which involved learning the alphabet, numbers, colours, days of the week, etc. And that is a small part of language revitalization, but more so it is about immersion – that is, staying in the language with a fluent language speaker, most often an Elder."



Angela James

Dr. Angela James is an example of that immersion happening. James directs Indigenous language revitalization at ECE, and sees herself as a champion for a form of learning that can transform the future of the territory's nine official Indigenous languages.

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President's Message

Literacy in the New Normal...

It is always a privilege for me when I receive the draft newsletter from the hardworking staff at the NWT Literacy Council. I get to see it early so that I can add a few words at the beginning of each newsletter to introduce or highlight some of our significant achievements, just as I am doing now.

Each newsletter contains some familiar themes, such as Youth and Family Literacy programming. This comforts me, knowing that the Council has found many important 'service' niches over the years that create a bedrock of programming for us. I also usually encounter some new items that signal to me (and to you, I hope) that the Council continues to grow. I see that it is on a continuous path of improvement and development, adapting to larger changes happening in our northern and global society.

One of the main themes that stood out to me, not surprisingly, is the many program adaptations that both we and our clients had to make in order to continue offering programming under COVID public health measures. In the story about the Hay River library adapting its program delivery model, we see how so many organizations that offer vital services have had to adapt and take risks in order to keep offering programming. We can see as well, by the uptake we still see in our programs, how people are hungry for these services to continue.

Another great example of program expansion is the addition of Integration Advisor to our Community Connections program. Next to other programs covered in this newsletter—the multicultural gathering of June 27th, HIPPI outreach to homes, or Reading Together where incarcerated fathers read stories to their children—we can see how important it is for people now to make connections. It is perhaps part of a 'social' literacy often left undiscussed: that, essentially, we are social beings; that we are somehow reduced when we are cut off from each other. It is a duty for organizations like ours to step into the breach that the pandemic has opened, and



Ken Latour

to help weave connections across it, so that we stay a society and don't become only a collection of individuals.

As the president of this proud and capable organization, I want to extend a heartfelt thanks to our staff. The importance of the work you do cannot be overstated in these times. And to the people who participate in our programs, thank you. Showing up to be part of what we do is of equal importance.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to congratulate the Literacy Council on its new office and status as 'owner.' It's a big step forward for the Council and marks a new phase in its growth.

Thank you all, and as we head into spring 2022, I wish you all a happy NWT Literacy Week, May 1-7.

- Ken Latour, President, NWTLC Board of Directors

It's been a busy year at the NWT Literacy Council

We're happy to announce that we have some big news!

We've purchased a building. In August 2021, staff moved one block over and one block up, from 48th to 47th Street in Yellowknife. It was a big step for us. We've changed from being tenants to being property owners. We are hopeful that this new move will give us the space that we need, and allow us room to grow, as we adapt to the ever-changing literacy landscape.

Our new building gives us three floors of office and program space. We are sharing our space with four tenants and are hopeful to welcome visitors soon. Two of our staff -- Karen, our Community Connections Coordinator, and Steph, our Integration Advisor -- continue to work from the Welcome Centre for Newcomers in Diamond Plaza. The rest of our staff -- Kathryn, Katie, Charlotte, Grayce, Jeremy, Balqisa, Kristie and Nicole are on 47th Street.

We have news in our staffing as well.

Our long time Office Manager, Uma Sivakumar, has taken a leave of absence. In her place as Office Coordinator, is Balqisa Kulan. Balqisa worked for us this summer and we are very happy to have her back with us.

Over the last year we have expanded our projects serving newcomers in Yellowknife. In addition to our Community Connections non-formal English language and literacy project, we also now offer integration support and a HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) program. Stephanie Van Pelt shifted to the Integration Advisor role from leading our Oral Health Literacy project which ended on March 31, 2021. Grayce Patino joined our team in fall 2020 to coordinate the HIPPY program.

We also welcomed back Jeremy Mousseau. Jeremy has worked for us as a Family and Community Literacy Coordinator and a summer student. This year, he will work as a program coordinator for the Empowering Northern Youth through Career Development. This is a new project funded by Employment and Skills Development Canada and in partnership with the Yukon Literacy Coalition and Ilitaqsiniq- Nunavut Literacy Council. This project will include pre-employment and supported workplace experiences for youth. Watch our social media for updates as this program unfolds.

Nicole Sharp and Kristie Leach have each joined our team in 2022. Nicole has joined as a Family and Community Literacy Coordinator. Kristie will be working as a program coordinator for the Empowering Northern Youth through Career Development program along with Jeremy.



The Bison Bus visits a community.

Some familiar faces at the NWTLC have also recently moved into new roles over the last year. Charlotte Upton has shifted from her role as a Family and Community Literacy Coordinator to lead our Skill Builders for Youth project. Charlotte has lots of exciting ideas coming to this project and will also still be leading our Canada Learning Bond outreach. Katie Johnson now has a dual role with NWTLC. Katie is still leading our Family Literacy projects, as well as supporting all of our projects as our Program Manager.

Community Literacy program changes through the pandemic

The word 'pivot' and the phrase 'new normal' have become exceedingly commonplace as we navigate our way through the (hopefully) final stages of this pandemic. Many hurdles, challenges, and curveballs have been directed our way over the past 18 months. The literacy programs that operate throughout the NWT were in no way immune to these impacts. With in-person gathering heavily restricted, the way many, if not all, literacy programs were offered had to, "ahem", pivot. However, the resiliency and creativity demonstrated by many programs across the NWT has been incredible. The Hay River Library, for example, demonstrated how successful some of these changes and adaptations could be.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the Hay River Library had to cancel all their in-person programs, which made up a large portion of the programs that the library was offering. This included school visits, story time, and their after-school programs, as well as their community programs for adults. The Hay River library received family literacy program funding for some of these programs.

With many of their programs cancelled, the library was forced to rapidly adapt to the unprecedented situation we found ourselves in. When restrictions were at their heaviest, the library began offering virtual alternatives to their in-person programs. This included a community baking challenge, in which people made videos of themselves baking a particular item, such as cakes, pies, or cookies. The library then did a draw for prizes for all of those who participated that week. The library also did book drop offs, as well as virtual sessions of some of their in-person programs using online video calls.

One method that the library found worked very well was the 'take and make' format. The library prepared various kits for the community, which could then be picked up by community members. The kits featured a specific craft, baking item, colouring book or items for various activities. This allowed a variety of activities to be offered even during lockdowns and gathering restrictions.

One idea that the library found very successful was their virtual 'paint nite'. In keeping with the take and make format, members picked up a paint pack, then joined an online session to do the painting. Events like this allowed people to socialize and enjoy a craft while remaining safe at home. Capitalizing on our current access to technology, the Hay River Library has also moved their story time program to an online platform, allowing parents and children to engage with a story being read to them.

While not a full substitution of in-person programs, the Hay River Library through creativity, ingenuity, and hard work, managed to pivot with the best of them. Creating numerous alternatives to former programs, as well as creating brand new programs, allowed them to offer a great variety of literacy activities. The NWT Literacy Council recognizes just how difficult this is, and commends the Hay River Library and all their staff and volunteers on their hard work throughout the past 18 months. It is great to see the effort and success of programs across the NWT, even during such a trying time. The Hay River Library is just one example of how well the literacy community throughout the NWT has been able to adjust to continue promoting literacy during the pandemic.





Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters

In the last quarter of 2020, the NWT Literacy Council introduced HIPPPY to Yellowknife. The timing was perfect. The pandemic brought more hardships and affected the quality of life for families already isolated demographically. HIPPPY offered solace, hope, and stability to families who needed it.

Our HIPPPY program is available for Permanent Resident newcomers. Last year's participants were families that experienced isolation in one way or another, and more so during the pandemic. Although the service was delivered virtually, it made a huge impact on families. Families found a program they can truly lean on, with staff who were willing to go beyond just service. Additional personalized support outside of the program helped build strong ties between the home visitor and the families. The families became united as a group through regular face-to-face group meetings where they had the opportunity to:

- get to know each other
- exchange parenting strategies
- share HIPPPY breakthroughs
- casually enjoy each other's company

This bond translated into dedicated families who enthusiastically stayed in the program till graduation day. That day became the highlight of our HIPPPY 2020-2021 school year. It was definitely a day to remember! Parents and children came fully dressed up in beautiful summer colours to match the outdoor venue at the park. We enjoyed a lovely sunny afternoon on June 25, 2021.

With HIPPPY now in its second school year, more families have joined the program. Word of mouth from our first group of parents and the NWTLC media campaign spread through the community. The number of HIPPPY families has doubled. HIPPPY YK is looking forward to an even more exciting year with new things to learn and experience both for parents and their children.

This year the program is still being delivered virtually. Connections will continue to be built through regular communication and support. HIPPPY's monthly group meetings will continue to grow and expand, exploring other areas of learning and experience for the families as they integrate fully into Canadian culture and society.

A summer with the NWT Literacy Council

By James Franklin, 2021 Summer Student

What an interesting summer I have had working with the NWT Literacy Council! If you are someone who appreciates variety and flexibility in your workplace, look no further than the NWTLC. They provided a workplace that kept me on my toes, in a great way.

Each full-time employee at the NWTLC spearheads a variety of different programs that collectively make up the Literacy Council. As a summer student I worked alongside these program coordinators, supporting them as needed. This meant that I was given the opportunity to delve into many different areas that the Literacy Council takes on within its range of work, and this is where things got interesting. Instead of parking myself at a desk each day and counting the hours until the day was done, I was filling my weeks with unique opportunities that kept me engaged as the days flew past.

The variety and scope of work I took on this past summer was awesome! In no specific order:

- I was able to plan and implement a week-long day camp session in partnership with the City of Yellowknife, where I met new and familiar faces for a week of fun at the YK Arena.
- I took part in facilitating swim time at the community pool for new and immigrant families in Yellowknife, a luxury that had diminished during the COVID-19 era.
- I assisted in organizing and facilitating two separate event days at Long Lake Boat Launch for new and immigrant families, which proved to be fantastic days of campfires, canoe and paddleboard rides, games, food, and activities.
- I hosted a station for Ecology North's Rivers to Oceans Day, an interactive presentation day for elementary students which, despite Covid-19 restrictions, was still able to reach students by being hosted across multiple fun-filled days this year.
- I assisted with Yellowknife's first annual Canadian Multiculturalism Day, a day set aside to celebrate Canadian diversity with food, presentations, activities and fellowship. The

event took place at Somba K'e Civic Plaza and was a large success enjoyed by many community members.

- I helped to facilitate small-group discussion at Speak English Café, a growing group of folks who gather to practice engaging with the English language in different community spaces.
- I orchestrated a series of Park Times for immigrant families, a weekly event for those interested to gather and have fun with outdoor games and activities.
- I was a part of the group responsible for the NWTLC's weekly book give-aways. Not only did we give away hundreds of books this summer, but we also managed to give away many other great items from the Literacy Council.

All these terrific events were on top of the Literacy Council's biggest summer task: moving! As a group we managed to achieve success with all our events on top of packing, sorting, cleaning and moving the entire NWTLC space and relocating to a new building.

I know what you are thinking: where was the time to sit in front of the computer with all these things going on? There was plenty of time for that. Events are great, but I was also able to learn a few things about developing literacy resources this summer. I learned how to produce my own illustrations, which allowed me to start creating crafts and activities for children. I tried to include many of my own designs in the resources I was tasked with putting together, which allowed my imagination to soar. The subject matter of these resources was interesting as well.

I worked on a large project to create resources for 2SLBGTQQIPA+ children's books. I assisted on aspects of a smaller resource for new northern content. The Northern Fur Kit resource is a hands-on tool aimed at helping identify northern animals by their fur and tracks.

Having a glimpse into the work involved in creating these resources, and getting to help expand them further, was intriguing and humbling. There is a lot of work done at the NWTLC that takes a lot of planning, consideration, and time to complete. From an outside

perspective, it would be easy to take for granted the efforts required to take on projects.

Due to the restrictions of COVID-19 during this past summer, a few summer plans had to be postponed. The NWTLC had planned to tour communities across the north with a mobile activity bus, known as the Bison Bus, to promote family literacy. Likewise, the Bookmobile, a bicycle modified to be a portable library of give-away books, did not get to make its rounds in Yellowknife this summer. These projects are both fun and engaging ways of promoting literacy for all ages in the NWT, so be sure to keep an eye out for when they make their next future appearance.

Thanks to my time with the NWTLC I was able to have a creative, diverse, and engaging summer. I also know that there is even more to look forward to from the Literacy Council. The scope of work that they take on in service of the NWT is amazing, and their tasks are completed with a full heart.

As the Literacy Council settles into a new building and a new phase within the organization, I wish them luck, success, and a bit of excitement. May the Literacy Council continue providing the north with quality and care in their work, and may the NWT continue to support them in kind. All the best going forward!



Essential Skills now Skills for Success

Over the past few years you have probably heard staff at the NWT Literacy Council talk about Essential Skills. Essential Skills were a set of nine skills that the federal government considered important for individuals to have in order to be successful in work and other aspects of their lives, such as education. We used Essential Skills as a foundation for many of our programs, such as our Adult Literacy and Skill Builders for Youth programs. Often, we used and incorporated other skills that were relevant to our work in a northern and Indigenous context.

The federal government has recently done an upgrade of the nine Essential Skills, and has rebranded them under the term Skills for Success. The nine Skills for Success as outlined by Employment and Social Development Canada are:

- **Collaboration**
- **Adaptability**
- **Numeracy**
- **Writing**
- **Communication**
- **Creativity and Innovation**
- **Problem Solving**
- **Reading**
- **Digital**

You can find further information and descriptions of how Skills for Success can be used daily on the Government of Canada's website here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/jobs/training/initiatives/skills-success/understanding-individuals.html>

Gathering Across Cultures and Generations For a Stronger Community





On June 27, 2021, hundreds of residents of all ages gathered in Somba K'e Civic Plaza, on Chief Drygeese Territory, the traditional land and home of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and homeland of the North Slave Métis Alliance. Community members came together to celebrate the rich diversity of peoples and cultures that presently live within the territory. The event was held in partnership with YK Dance and organizations affiliated with the Welcome Centre for Newcomers.

The Welcome Centre aims to integrate newcomers into the territory through information sessions, events, and connecting them with important services and programs. As part of the Centre, the NWT Literacy Council knew it was important to recognize Canadian Multiculturalism Day as a day for community to come together, (un)learn, share, and celebrate diversity in all of its forms.

The day started with a prayer song from the Yellowknives Dene Drummers and speeches from Chief Edward Sangris and Mayor Rebecca Alty.

Activities ran all afternoon, with 18 booths hosted by:

- people representing various countries, including Mexico, Pakistan, and Taiwan
- organizations that shared aspects of their cultures, such as Aboriginal Sports Circle, Islamic Centre of Yellowknife, Black Advocacy Collective Up North
- food stalls sharing cuisine from around the world, including Jamaica, Iran, and West Africa

The amphitheater was filled all day, as performances and showcases captivated the audience. Drummers and dancers performed; Aboriginal Sports Circle demonstrated Northern and Dene games; and a fashion show showcased traditional dress from around the world. Some members of the audience

even chose to take part in dance lessons—not once, but twice!

Those who attended the day's activities were given a free food ticket so they could sample a new and unfamiliar food. Bingo cards were also handed out for visitors to complete by visiting every booth. The NWT Literacy Council booth gave out prizes for everyone who completed a bingo card. Prizes featured a selection of local and international books, highlighting authors who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour. Over 70 prizes were given away during the event.

It was a meaningful day, especially after a long period of COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings and social distancing protocols that kept people from taking part in events that bring the community together. NWT Literacy Council hopes that everyone walked away from the event having learned something new and with a new appreciation of the diverse community.

We hope to improve the event for next year by making it even more vibrant and inclusive. Several people and organizations shared that they would like to be involved next year. We look forward to hearing from new organizations and groups that would like to participate in 2022 in a meaningful way that brings our community together in respect, curiosity, and learning. The event happens on Canadian Multiculturalism Day, June 27, every year.

If you or someone you know is new to the NWT and Canada, or if you are a long-time resident and you would like to volunteer with one of our welcome programs, please reach out to us by email at nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca.

Congratulations to the NWT recipient of the 2021 Peter Gzowski Award, Mary Ann Vital!



The Peter Gzowski Award recognizes an individual who embodies the spirit of Peter Gzowski; someone who understands the importance of literacy and works passionately to promote and support it.

Mary Ann Vital attended the first Family Literacy Training Institute held by the NWT Literacy Council in 2001. She was working in her community of Délı̄ne, NT at the Délı̄ne Preschool. She has always been a literacy leader in her community, in both English as well as her language Dene Kede.

Mary Ann developed Dene Kede language and literacy programming as part of the preschool program. She worked closely with Elders and volunteered her time in the evenings to deliver family literacy programming.

Mary Ann has been a volunteer regional representative for the NWT Literacy Council's Board of Directors a few times over the past twenty years. She has been active in the DEA in her community. As an experienced family literacy facilitator, Mary Ann often attends Family Literacy Training Institutes to help co-facilitate different sessions and share her wealth of knowledge.

Mary Ann now works as a Regional Indigenous Languages Coordinator for the Sahtu Region. She started this position in 2015 and works for the Sahtu Dene Council.

In 2019-2020, the Sahtu Dene Council joined the Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP) to help apprentices learn through language immersion. The goal of this program is to have the apprentices increase their fluency in speaking and understanding their language. Mary Ann has become an Oral Proficiency Assessment Evaluator.

Mary Ann credits her family with being very supportive of her work, as she travels a lot in her role. Her daughter, Joy, has joined her as an apprentice in the MAP program. Mary Ann is able to talk to her every day and everywhere they go in Dene Kede. Mary Ann's hope is that one day Joy is able to start talking in Dene Kede.

Mabel's Story

Mabel's Story is about identity. Elder, Mabel Cardinal, slips and falls in front of the Northern Store. Tommy, a young man who doesn't like old people, reluctantly takes Mabel home in a taxi and has to help her with her groceries and make sure she is safe. During the cab ride, Mabel tells Tommy that she knew his grandfather and begins to tell him stories about his grandfather. At first Tommy only half listens, but gradually becomes interested in Mabel's stories. Through hearing her stories of his grandfather, he begins to learn who he is. Mabel gives him a gift in return for helping her home. When Tommy opens the gift, he decides he wants to learn more from Mabel.

Read the whole of Mabel's Story here: www.nwtliteracy.ca/sites/default/files/newsletter/Winter%202022-%20Mabel%27s%20Story.pdf

You can also read more of Frederick's stories here: <https://fearlessfrederick.wordpress.com/2009/07/>

The Backstory

Frederick Lepine is Cree/Métis from Hay River where he attended Diamond Jenness Secondary School. He's had a varied career: he's been a political cartoonist, commercial fisher, forest firefighter, painter, sculptor, writer, digital artist/programmer, photographer, and videographer. In 2006 and again in 2007, he completed Artist Residences in Writing at the Banff Centre for the Arts.

In 1996, he wrote a short story which he called Mabel's Story, and submitted it to the NWT Writing Contest. It won the Grand Prize. Frederick tells us the origin of his story.

This week's short story is loosely based on the character and experience of my mother, Alvina Lepine (1918-2009), who at 64, decided it was time to learn to read and write. She won a Peter Gzowski Literacy Award for her efforts. She appeared on CBC North television and as a result, she inspired a 43-year-old Inuit woman in the eastern Arctic to do the same.



Fred Lepine

To celebrate her story, I wrote this. It ended up the Grand Prize Winner in the 1996 Northwest Territories Writing Contest sponsored by NWT Literacy. As a result of that, both my mother and I were interviewed by the Bravo Channel for a documentary on literacy – a documentary that I have never seen. BTW, the references in this story to the National Enquirer are there because as soon as she was able to read at that level, my mother began to believe all the stories she read in the NI. Anyway, I hope you enjoy it.¹

The Literacy Council has included the story in several publications. The story also features in a number of Literacy and English courses in the Developmental Studies Program at Aurora College. Instructors, adult educators, and adult learners all enjoy reading it.

Recently, we asked Frederick for permission to reprint the story. We offered him an honorarium, but he suggested we use the money to encourage adult learners to write their own short story, so we're working on creating a writing contest. Watch for the details on our website.

¹Lepine, F. (2009, August 26). Mabel's Story. Widespread Bannock. <https://fearlessfrederick.wordpress.com/2009/08/>

Youth Literacy Update

We've had an interesting and unprecedented year in Skill Builders for Youth that has introduced both new challenges and opportunities for our programs. A lot of credit should be given to facilitators who were up to the task of pivoting and changing their programs. Their ability to make them as safe as possible meant they could still provide programming to the youth in their communities during these challenging times.

Our Skill Builders for Youth program is all about re-engaging youth with learning and their community. We provide training and mentorship to develop community capacity, and then offer funding and ongoing support to help community members run youth literacy programs.

Skill Builders has had to turn to virtual training sessions over the past 18 months. The training helps prepare community facilitators to run youth programs using embedded literacy and essential skills (now Skills for Success). We have hosted two virtual training sessions, one in the 2020-2021 fiscal year and a second online training for 2021-2022. If COVID-19 restrictions allow, and it is safe to do so, the second half of our 2021-2022 training will be in-person and focus on program evaluation and development.

In the 2020-2021 fiscal year eight Skill Builders for Youth projects were successfully completed in seven different communities:

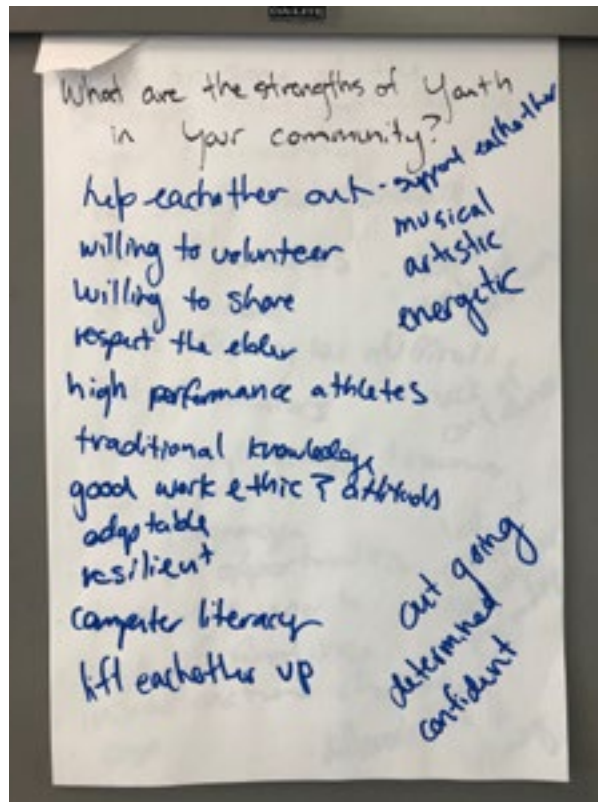
- Aklavik
- Fort Resolution
- Fort Smith
- Lutsel K'e
- Sachs Harbour
- Yellowknives Dene First Nation (Dettah and Ndilo)
- Yellowknife (Foster Family Coalition of the NWT and North Slave Correctional Centre- Youth Unit)

They hosted Learning in the Kitchen, Youth Literacy Night and Telling our Stories (digital literacy) programs. This was a significant decrease from our usual number of programs due to the pandemic. We are on track to increase these numbers this year and fund new communities and projects.

In January 2021, Youth Literacy Coordinator, Coleen Hardisty, left to pursue new opportunities and Charlotte Upton moved into this position. Charlotte is looking forward to a new challenge with the Skill Builders for Youth project and is planning to bring in some new and exciting programs to engage youth.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment funds the Skill Builders for Youth program. 2020-2021 was the final year in its second three-year contribution agreement. The program continues to receive overwhelmingly positive feedback from youth and facilitators after six years in existence.

If you work with youth and would like to learn more about the Skill Builders for Youth program you can reach out to program coordinator, Charlotte Upton, at charlotte@nwtliteracy.ca. Skill Builders for Youth training for facilitators will take place in Yellowknife in May, 2022. Contact Charlotte if you would like to attend.



Make the Difference The Canada Learning Bond

In March 2019, we received funding from the Government of Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, to increase the awareness and take-up of the Canada Learning Bond. The Canada Learning Bond can provide up to \$2,000 towards a child's post-secondary education. A child can only receive this funding if an adult opens a Registered Education Saving Plan (RESP) for the child.

This project aimed to have regional trainings across the NWT to provide education around the Canada Learning Bond and teach participants how to help sign up families in their home communities. Another part of this project was to do Canada Learning Bond information evenings, where NWT Literacy Council staff and trained community members would come together and hold an information session and help families sign up.

This project was originally supposed to end in March 2021, but the funding has been extended an additional 12 months due to delays caused by COVID-19 restrictions. The majority of training and take-up events over the past 18 months have had to be cancelled or postponed. We are hoping to be able to travel again in Spring 2022 to host a training in Norman Wells for the Sahtu region. If restrictions open up, and it is safe for us to travel, we will be visiting 23 communities to do information sessions! Make sure to keep an eye out for us, and we hope to see you in person soon.

PGI for Literacy Virtual Trivia Night: Thank you!

We are very grateful for all of the community support and participation in our annual PGI for Literacy fundraiser. This year we went virtual, with a trivia night hosted by Ollie Williams. With the support of our sponsors and participants, we raised \$10,000 for the Bison Bus Mobile Family Literacy Centre! Thank you to the Peter Gzowski Foundation for Literacy and the following sponsors:

Presenting Sponsors

- Lupo Fire and Security Limited
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- RE General Services

Prize Sponsors

- Canadian Tire (Yellowknife)
- Board Silly
- Signed.
- Old Town Glassworks
- YKPT
- Erasmus Apparel
- Barren Ground Coffee

Tanya Roach joined us as this year's Poet Laureate with a moving poem highlighting the literacy of Inuit tattoos. Quana for your beautiful words Tanya!



Reading Together: Bedtime stories from incarcerated fathers

Over the last year, NWTLC has formed a new partnership with the North Slave Correctional Centre (NSCC). This family literacy project is to encourage fathers' engagement in their children's literacy while they are incarcerated at NSCC. Another goal of the project is to support family relationships and parental pride through creating bedtime comfort kits and recording bedtime stories. The initial program offering was funded by the Healthy Choices program (Department of Health and Social Services).

NWTLC staff and a videographer have worked with NSCC staff to offer the program twice, once in March 2021 and once in November 2021. Fathers who chose to join the program were able to choose books to send to their children, and to have a video recording of them reading one or more of the chosen books, along with a bedtime message to their children. They then chose a stuffed animal as well as fleece to create a no-sew blanket. Their children's kit also included pajamas and an oral hygiene kit.

In March, 11 fathers joined us to create packages for their combined 22 children. The participants all enjoyed the program and rated it highly in their feedback. Highlights included stress reduction, pride in creating and giving something to their children, feeling connection, enjoying getting to choose things for their children, and improved sleep. Many of the participants asked that we continue the program regularly, especially in the lead up to Christmas. We were very excited to bring the program back to NSCC in fall 2021, to have the fathers create kits that they could mail to their children as a Christmas gift. The COVID-19 outbreak in Yellowknife subsided just in time for us to be able to hold a program in November. Six fathers were happy and grateful to create Christmas gifts for their combined 12 children. The children's gifts were wrapped in Christmas bags along with special notes from their fathers.

One highlight of the second round of the project was seeing how many fathers wanted to do the program

again, and hearing feedback they have received from their children. We heard that children are watching the videos daily, reading their books and love cuddling with their blankets. We look forward to hearing how the recipients enjoyed their Christmas packages!

“Sleeping languages” awoken through MAP continued...

In the program, MAP pairs fluent speakers of those languages with people who are eager to learn.

“They spend time together to learn the language,” says James. “The most important aspect is developing the immersion sets, where they speak only in the language. And it's mandatory. The apprentices might only have the vocabulary, or the ability, to speak in the language for one minute or so – or they may not understand a thing that is being said -- but little by little, over time, and with energy and practice, they increase the immersion sets to two minutes, to five minutes, to the whole session, and then language begins to pour out.”

James, Manitoba Métis by birth, is married into a Chipewyan Dene family who are learning their Indigenous language. Every Thursday, she and her family gather in their living room to practise their language with a Dëne Sų́hné Elder who runs an online class from the Fort Smith area.

James says those classes are a chance to “make sure that I not only talk my talk, but I walk my talk.”

She has talked and walked this path for a while, as a teacher in two YK1 schools in the late 1980s, as a Dene cultural camp coordinator for all Yellowknife schools in the 1990s, as the principal of Ndilq's Kalemi Dene School for 12 years, and now as the driver of programs like the NWT's Our Languages curriculum and the Indigenous Languages and Education Handbook – Our People, Our Ways, Our Land, Our Languages, informed by the foundational Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit curricula, and now MAP.

The MAP program is unique in engaging pairs of people to work intensively on their language in such a way that the broader community feels and sees the benefits. James calls it, “a part-time job” because both mentors and apprentices are paid for their MAP time.

“The MAP pairs are often family members, like a mom and daughter, father and son, aunty and niece,” she says. “We have one MAP pair in the Tłıchǫ region who are husband and wife, and it spills out into the home, into the family with the children, and then into the community. The latent, or sleeping, language is being awakened. Community members see that there are learners out there. So, they’re more intentional in speaking the language with the learners.”

These are the MAP benefits that weren’t immediately evident on starting the program, but James believes they are key. “They are known as the ripple effects of language learning, which include reconciling identity issues, healing from intergenerational trauma, connecting families to their culture. Some of the most powerful stories involve dealing with the shame and inferiority that comes with not knowing or speaking one’s Indigenous language.

“This is happening around the NWT and it is what makes MAP so exciting,” she says. “Lots of times, speakers such as Elders would not speak their language to young people or community members, knowing that they did not understand.

“We’re trying to create a whole new atmosphere, a whole new movement, towards letting them know that they need to speak, and it needs to be intentional. Language speakers and Elders need to do it more for the learners, the family members, the community members to really learn the language.

“That is Indigenous language revitalization in its purest, most effective, most productive way!”

MAP does not stand alone. The range of programs aimed at revitalizing Indigenous languages includes the overarching Learn, Speak, Live Our Languages campaign that spans a number of initiatives, such as the promotional plans for February’s Indigenous Languages Month, the \$5,000 Indigenous language

revitalization scholarship program, which also invites interpreters-translators to apply to advance their training, and the new pilot Indigenous languages diploma program, which is in the research and development stages.

These all augment MAP as it continues to offer community-based language learning opportunities in partnership with Indigenous Governments.

“The GNWT has ongoing funding for MAP,” James says. “Imagine how every year MAP is going to grow and develop. You’re going to start to see the language statistics slowly come up in terms of language use, which is so exciting.”

To James, the outcome of MAP’s work is a reversal of the language colonialism governments once practised.

“Almost a century ago, Indigenous peoples were made to feel ashamed and punished for using their languages. Now, we’re flipping it,” she says. “We’re saying, ‘Now, it’s time to feel proud to speak your languages, use your languages, have your languages alive and vibrant!’”

Languages that were once sleeping, she says, are being awakened.

“People haven’t been using their languages and so there’s an inferiority complex, or a missing link, a gap, a hole in their heart,” says James.

“And when learners are a part of MAP, they’re fulfilling that goal of learning the language. That’s the most powerful story: getting rid of that feeling of not learning your language, and dealing with that part of you that’s missing, taking the steps towards language wholeness, which impacts one’s health, well-being, and connection to family and community.”

That is what MAP is all about!

ECE invites anyone interested in MAP to stay tuned, as the new recruitment period for MAP 2022-2023 begins in April 2022.

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