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It's Never Too Late

It's been a long and winding road but two Ndlı̄ sisters are on the verge of new beginnings, thanks to the Community Learning Centre and its adult educators – as well as their own persistence and hard work.

Diane Drygeese quit school in grade six because her mother wanted her to babysit her younger siblings. Now she is trying to get into a culinary arts program in Prince Albert, a location selected because another sister lives there and it's not too big a city. Mary Ann Francois quit school in grade eight due to peer pressure. Her goal is to enter the Aurora College Social Work access program next fall.

Both sisters are working on Math 150 and English 140 this winter at the Ndlı̄ Community Learning Centre. They took upgrading in their late teens but getting pregnant prompted them to drop out.

Mary Ann says she continued to go to upgrading on and off over the years but always quit because of peer pressure. She got her GED (General Education Diploma) in 1996, but it wasn't enough to go on in school.

[...continued on pg 3](#)

President's Message: Cate Sills

Working With Our Northern Partners

This newsletter comes near the end of our fiscal year and our planning is well underway for the next year and beyond. It's a good opportunity to share what we've accomplished and where we're going next.

We entered into an exciting partnership with the Yukon Literacy Coalition and the Nunavut Literacy Council to establish the Northern Alliance for Literacy and Essential Skills (NALES). This followed the 2012 Made in the North pan-northern adult literacy and skills gathering.

Since then we've shared information, support, expertise and knowledge. We recently learned we have funding to deliver a joint project – Supporting Excellence and Innovation in Literacy and Essential Skills (LES). The money comes from the federal Office of Literacy and Essential Skills.

The three organizations will embed LES into current and new training for workers in the natural resources, tourism and service industries. We'll connect working age Aboriginal youth and adults, who are out of school, unemployed or underemployed, with new opportunities to improve their skills.

The project's main objectives are to:

- increase levels of LES among Aboriginal youth and adults that are out of school, unemployed or underemployed in the northern tourism, natural resources and service industries.
- increase employability of out of school and unemployed adults in the north through improved LES that will enable them to take advantage of employment opportunities, as well as allow them to be more successful within the workplace.
- increase the capacity of NALES to meet the needs of the target population.

Our projects and partners are not limited to NALES. In this issue of *Literacy Matters* you'll read about family, adult and youth literacy projects supported by the NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment and other sources.

We also have a story about the Northern Adult Basic Education (NABE) courses we developed for Aurora College. They received rave reviews during pilot tests.

We're also active participants in a number of Government of the NWT initiatives including the Education Renewal Initiative and the Skills 4 Success Initiative. Our involvement provides an opportunity to bring our perspectives to the work being undertaken by the government.



Our training events, such as the Family Literacy Training Institute, community workshops, and youth engagement continue to support local literacy practitioners and learners and bring people together to share their knowledge and skills. This in turn builds the capacity to deliver literacy programs that meet community needs and interests.

Last, but certainly not least, literacy promotional activities such as NWT Literacy Week, National Family Literacy Day, and the PGI concerts and school visits have kept literacy in the spotlight and engaged families, adults and children in communities across the NWT. Many thanks to all of our community partners for your great work!

The NWT Literacy Council Board of Directors wishes to thank the Literacy Council staff, our sponsors and our community partners for their dedication to literacy and essential skills in the north.

Mark Your Calendar Now!

Aboriginal Languages Month

March

NWT Literacy Council Annual General Meeting

March 7, 12 noon-1 pm

Explorer Hotel, Yellowknife

Aboriginal Languages Workshop

March 10-11

Contact pat@nwtliteracy.ca
for information

Gathering for Helen Balanoff

Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre
March 13, 4-7 pm

We're gathering for Helen Balanoff's
retirement party.

If you are able to join us please RSVP
to katie@nwtliteracy.ca by March 6.

Adult Learners' Week in Canada

April 11-19

Save Money and Paper!

We are committed to the wise use
of our money and our natural
resources, including paper.

Please send an email to
nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca if you
would like to receive *Literacy Matters*
by email instead of a paper copy.



Welcome Laura!

Laura Eby joined the Council in the fall as a Youth and Adult Services Coordinator. She's working closely with Katie Randall. Laura taught in Nahanni Butte and Fort Providence before moving to Yellowknife in 2012. Her most recent teaching position was with Weledeh Catholic School.

It's Never Too Late

 continued from page 1

Diane worked in the mines until physical problems made that life impossible. She also got involved in tourism work and earned a Tourism Management Certificate.

"I decided I didn't care for office work. Cooking is my passion. My goal is to work at exploration camps," says Diane, who was inspired to go back to school by Laurie Ann Lines, a former Ndiłò adult educator.

There were many reasons Diane and Mary Ann couldn't pursue their education earlier. "Our kids are grown. It's easier not to have to worry about babysitters," says Mary Ann. "Having a goal is important too."

"In the past I had previous partners who discouraged me from going back to school," says Diane. "It's very important to have family support and encouragement. We have that now, especially from our siblings." Diane and Mary Ann help each other with schoolwork these days. They agree that Mary Ann is faster at assignments and more focused, while Diane's more patient at Math.

"There should be more programs in Ndiłò," says Mary Ann. "I am lucky the social work program is nearby in Yellowknife. I couldn't go to school elsewhere because I would lose my house." Tenants in NWT public housing sometimes have to wait years to get a home and lose their home if they leave the community.

Do they have regrets? Mary Ann says she wished she had focused more on her education rather than drugs and alcohol earlier in her life. Diane says she would have liked to have had parents who encouraged them to go to school. Today, she's clear about why she agreed to tell her story.

"I was so ashamed to tell people I dropped out in grade six. Now, I want people to know that it's never too late."



Language Revitalization Needs Wide Range of Skills and Approaches

Betty Grandjambe describes herself as a Jack-of-all-Trades. She says she needs to be one to succeed as the Fort Good Hope Language Coordinator for the K'asho Got'ine Community Council.

Betty has been in the job for just over two years. Since then she has organized and run three on-the-land camps for youth, elders and families.

“At the start I was not sure I should do cultural activities, but the elders say I can’t work with the language without the culture. It’s best when people learn the language in a cultural context,” says Betty. Putting the camps together, getting people there and making sure there is language and cultural learning demands great organizational, bush, fundraising and people skills.

Betty involved lots of community people in evening sessions to prepare for the camps where people

learned about first aid, safety, traps and other topics relevant to the upcoming bush experience. So far she has organized a camp in summer, fall and winter.

Betty organized North Slavey classes in the community as well last spring, but there hasn’t been funding to do that this year. She enlisted a language teacher at the school, Regina Lennie, to teach and they used videos and photos from the on-the-land camps in those evening classes.

Betty taught herself how to use a small video camera on the job. As well as on-the-land videos, she is developing basic vocabulary videos. She posts them on her FGH Dene Language YouTube channel,

where young people can download them onto their tablets and MP3 players.

She also posts them on the Facebook page that she set up last year and administers.

The Radı́ııh Kóé xədə Facebook page is very active with Betty posting her program videos and photos along with ones of community events, such as drum dances. The Facebook page now has almost 200 members who can read posts in North Slavey as well as English.

“The young people really enjoy it. I get lots of good feedback,” remarks Betty. “It’s also a way for us to connect with community members who live out of town now.” The Facebook page documents Betty’s efforts, including a storytelling night that encourages elders to get together and speak their language.

Betty has been involved in language work for many years. She learned how to write in her language when she was in Fort Smith 20 years ago. Her teacher was a former NWT linguist, Phil Howard. Since then she has taken several courses in the University of Victoria Aboriginal Language Revitalization Program. That’s where she learned how to produce videos.

“My goal is for the younger people to at least pick up some of the language. Some of them don’t hear it at home,” says Betty. “They need to understand the importance of their language and culture and feel good about themselves. I love to see them enjoy themselves and learn something out on the land.”

Betty’s latest approach is to play stories recorded years ago with elders on the community radio station. The elders on the tapes have since passed on, but their words live on and help to make North Slavey more visible in Fort Good Hope.

Fred Rabesca, the long-time Senior Administrative Officer in the community, praises the work Betty has done to raise the profile of North Slavey in Fort Good Hope. That’s no small feat since community Aboriginal language workers often work in isolation to stem the strong tide of language loss.



We Have a New Website Address

Our new website address is

www.nwtliteracy.ca

There's no longer a period between nwt and literacy. Please change your bookmarks.

Connect With Us!

We’re constantly sharing funding sources, events, research, news, resources and the odd fun cartoon or quote. We think you’ll find us pretty interesting. Check us out.

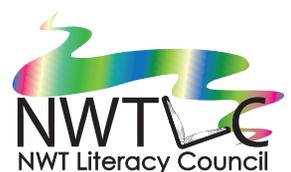
Sign up for our weekly email newsletter, *Literacy This Week*. Enter your email address on our website www.nwtliteracy.ca



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Family Literacy Day 2015

Across the NWT

National Family Literacy Day activities happened on January 27 in NWT libraries, early childhood programs, schools and community gyms.

Deline's pre-school teacher, Mary Ann Vital, holds a variety of family literacy events from *1-2-3 Rhyme with Me*, *Storytime Adventures*, *Books in the Home* to *Little Chefs*, as well as family literacy nights.

Her program celebrated National Family Literacy Day at the Helen Tutcho Community Library with the theme *Snuggle Up Together*. The Mother and Daughter Night Out included stations for doing hair and make-up, having a spa and massage, pedicure and for children's reading and crafts. Door prizes and snacks were available.

Mary Ann has been holding Family Literacy events since 2004. She is very committed to the revitalization of North Slavey, the Aboriginal language of her community. She includes Aboriginal language and literacy programming as part of the pre-school program.

The Chief Julius School library in Fort McPherson had a hot dog lunch for the community, elders' storytelling, a Family Night of literacy activities, a safety talk with the RCMP, bingo, and a story chain.

The Helen Kalvak School in Ulukhaktok held an Elder and Youth Day with storytelling and

traditional games.

In Fort Resolution, the Deninu School designed an afternoon of literacy activities for both students and their families. The activities included a puppet show, a scavenger hunt, a book walk, literacy quilt, and a reading corner.

At the pre-school in Wekweètì, families sang songs, and parents helped children cut out ducks to sing with at home along with the book, *4 Little Ducks*.

Chief Jimmy Bruneau School in Behchokò held a pancake breakfast and classroom activities such as bannock making, family trees, and word games.

In Trout Lake, 60% of the community came out to a family literacy night at the Community Gym! The event featured a reading teepee, a giant Scrabble game, circuit board games for matching vocabulary, a fishing game, a Slavey game centre, a puppet centre and theatre, and a wall map scavenger hunt.

Thanks to everyone who let us know how they celebrated National Family Literacy Day!



Our Youth Project Ends

This winter marked the end of our four-year youth literacy partnership with the Yukon Literacy Coalition, Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador and Ilitaqiniq-Nunavut Literacy Council.

The Government of Canada's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills funded our youth literacy project. Our goal was to help

embed literacy and essential skills in youth programs across the four jurisdictions. In total, 10 projects ran between 2013 and 2015 covering topics from hockey and boat repair to sewing and filmmaking.

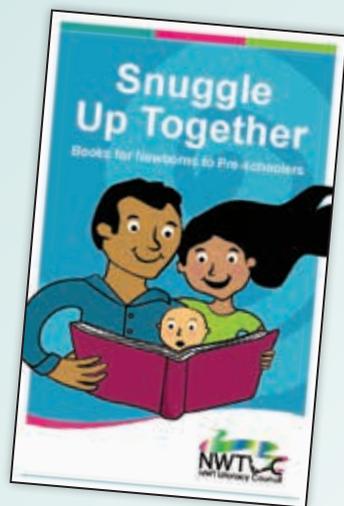
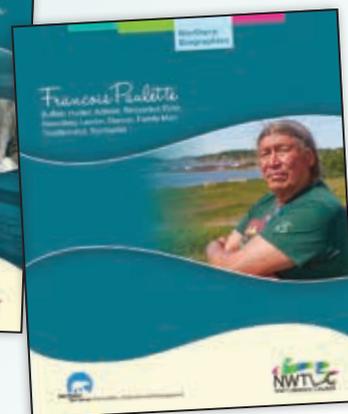
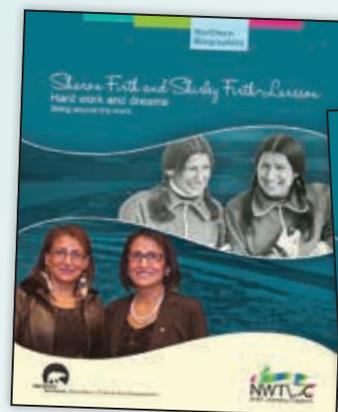
In November, staff from each of the four Literacy Councils and facilitators from the programs met for a week to review the

projects. There were several innovative and unique ways that people embedded LES into their programs.

Thank you to all the people who worked so hard on this project over the last four years! We'll let you know when the resources created through this project are available for use in your community!

Check Out Our Resources!

Northern Biographies is another exciting Literacy Council project—a series of easy-to-read books suitable for youth and adult literacy learners. Each book is about 50 pages and tells the compelling story of an inspiring northern person, with lots of photos and discussion questions. We have published two books so far with one more on the way. And hopefully we can do more in the future.



Snuggle Up Together

Snuggle Up Together with a baby, toddler or newborn and the 100 books suggested inside this booklet. Lots of great reading tips too!

Search for these new resources at
www.nwtliteracy.ca



We're Training Family Literacy Practitioners

Ulukhaktok, Aklavik, Fort Good Hope, Deline, Norman Wells, Yellowknife, Hay River and Fort McPherson all had participants at our annual Family Literacy Training Institute (FLTI) in Yellowknife December 1-5, 2014.

FLTI brings together librarians, prenatal workers, child development centre staff and other people interested in family literacy for a week of workshops on topics such as Story Time Adventures, Brain and Language Development, an Introduction to Family Literacy and felt story creation. We're looking forward to working with our new family literacy facilitators.

The FLTI participant binder continues to be a work in progress. We launched it in draft form in time for FLTI 2013. Then we set up a working group to provide feedback and best practices.

Thanks to our working group members: Amy Ryan, Healthy Families Program Supervisor from Fort Smith; Audrey Walker, Librarian at the Tuktoyaktuk Community Library; Marianne Bromley and Kathryn Barry Paddock, Family and Community Literacy Coordinators with the NWT Literacy Council. The revised binder will be ready for FLTI 2015.

Literacy Matters | Spring 2015

Literacy This Week Gets Good Reviews

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete our survey and give us feedback on *Literacy This Week*, our weekly email news update.

It was heartening to read the many positive comments about *Literacy This Week*. Here's a sample.

"It is a fabulous e-newsletter that is very relevant to my job. It unifies literacy based projects across the North, and is a portal for information sharing. Love it!"

Wow!

If you have issues with the way it displays on your computer or mobile device, please contact us directly at communications@nwtliteracy.ca.

Readers want to hear about more community events and Aboriginal language projects so please share your stories and photos so we can pass that along.

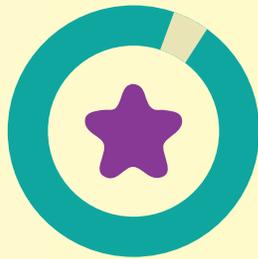
We'll also make every effort to get *Literacy This Week* to you in the morning instead of Thursday afternoon.



Literacy This Week 2014 Survey Results

Recently 8% (63) of the 713 subscribers to *Literacy This Week* responded to our survey to find out how we could improve our weekly e-news. Here are the survey highlights.

95%
overall
satisfaction rate



&



98%
of readers find
the information
relevant

Engaged Readers Responded



94%

of readers **ALWAYS**
or **FREQUENTLY** read
Literacy This Week



62%

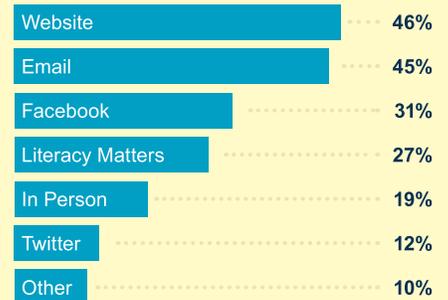
of readers want
Literacy This Week
to remain **WEEKLY**



77%

of readers read at least
half of each edition

Other Ways People Connect with Us



48%

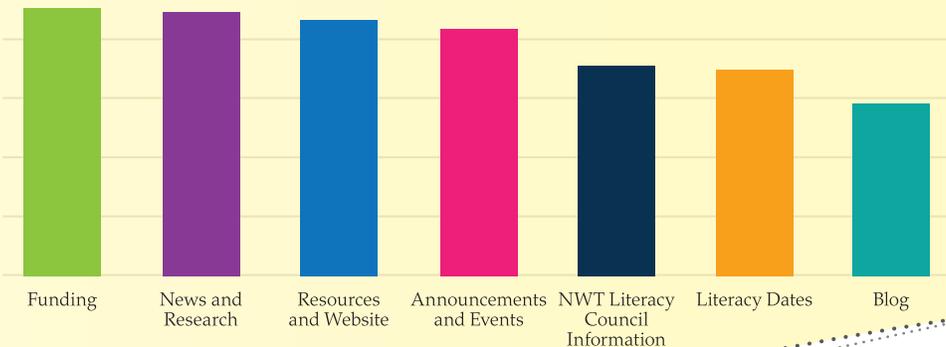
THURSDAY is the most
popular day to receive
Literacy This Week



52%

prefer to
receive it in
the **MORNING**

Most Popular Content



86%

of respondents
from NWT



Community-based Short Courses

= Success



Since 2011, the NWT Literacy Council has been developing and supporting the pilot testing of short embedded literacy courses for adult learners at Aurora College. Not in our wildest dreams did we ever imagine how successful and popular these new six-week courses would be.

For many years, adult educators in small communities saw a need to re-imagine the programs they offer to adult learners. In particular, they believed short courses would let adult learners experience success quickly. Many learners have had negative experiences in the formal education system. Funding for the Northern Adult Basic Education Program finally enabled us to create the new courses.

Four courses are now in place: *Introduction to Office Skills; Start Your Own Small Business; Small Business Funding and Marketing; Early Learning and Child Care.* The courses are designed to be relevant and meaningful enough to re-engage adults with lower levels of literacy in learning.

They are 'leg up' courses; they don't make people experts in the subject area of the course. Instead, they build learner confidence and

open up new opportunities for adults for further training or for entry-level employment.

The courses target smaller NWT communities. They let people experience an occupation that exists in these communities. Participants learn job readiness skills and preliminary 'technical' skills related to an occupation and then apply these in a short work placement. At the same time, participants upgrade their academic skills through the

integration of relevant literacy, numeracy and other essential skills into the course.

Although they are aligned with an occupation, the skills are totally transferrable. So, for example, in the business courses, learners analyze application forms for start-up funding. This prepares them to apply for business funding, but, as they understand the application process and learn vocabulary associated with forms, they can transfer the skills to forms in other situations. They now know how forms work.

By the end of this academic year, the Literacy Council will have supported adult educators to deliver 51 courses – way up from our original estimate of around 20! Outcomes for participants have been extremely positive. Participants have gone on to:

- part-time employment
- full-time employment
- full-time Adult Literacy and Basic Education programs to upgrade their academic skills

- other college programs
- a business project with start-up funding

One unexpected outcome was that employers in several communities enrolled existing employees into the programs so that they could upgrade their skills.

Here's what we're hearing from adult educators and learners about the courses...

"I feel very good about completing this course."

"I never knew that soft skills were so important in a job."

"It was the best course I have ever taken."

"I am excited to take more courses."

"I can't believe I can go to these types of courses right in my own community."

"I love having all these materials to teach with."

"This is just what we needed for our community learning centre."

We are now completing the development of three more courses: *Ready to Work NWT*; *Introduction to Labouring Jobs*; and *Retail and Customer Service*. Aurora College will pilot-test and implement these courses next year. With the new short courses, NWT adult learners in smaller communities now have a broader range of programs to choose from.



Building Skills in Young Parents

We're just completing the two-year pilot project, *Skill Builders for Young Parents*, funded by the NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Our goal is to increase young parents' (15-29 years old) literacy and essential skills (LES) by embedding this learning into a larger program.

Embedding LES means adding intentional learning opportunities into a program. For example, a cooking program lends itself to teaching the essential skill of numeracy. In an embedded program, participants would have to challenge their skills by doubling or tripling a recipe. In this pilot we've seen NWT communities embed LES learning opportunities into different kinds of programs in fun and meaningful ways.

Essential skills help community members gain greater independence and increased confidence. As skills increase, participants may experience improved problem solving and communication skills as well as better overall health and wellbeing. Other outcomes include higher learning and earning potential, improved ability to use technology, more flexibility and greater capacity to adapt to change.

In September, the Literacy Council provided training for leaders from several communities. They went back to their

communities and facilitated nine projects across the NWT.

The first project completed was in Fort Good Hope. Betty Grandjambe incorporated LES into an on-the-land experience for young people. The embedded LES part of this project saw the group start a popular Facebook page documenting their adventures on the land. Participants said that they learned various skills related to using knives, ice chisels and wood. They learned about trapping and how to respect the land. The skills were valuable for people in the community. Participants wished they could participate in these kinds of on-the-land projects more often. (You can read more about Betty's work as a community Language Coordinator on [page 4](#))

Yellowknife facilitators at the North Slave Young Offenders Facility helped project participants make mittens from beaver fur and moose hide. We could see the pride of the learners when we visited this project. They made mittens for a family member as well as a pair for themselves.

This group created a mitten-making instructional guide as their embedded LES piece.

The project in Tulita was geared toward young fathers who learned the art of traditional drum making. Participants used old drum frames, in need of repair, from the school and cultural centre. The completed drums were given back to the community when they were finished.

Bradley Menacho, the community's Recreation Coordinator, facilitated this program. Bradley started the program so that the men in his community could learn traditions from their elders before they are lost. LES were embedded into this project through oral storytelling, problem solving, and a filmmaking digital literacy component. (Read details about this project in a February blog on our website at www.nwtliteracy.ca)

A six-day drum and rattle-making project took place in Fort McPherson. Participants made traditional instruments guided by an elder instructor from Whitehorse. While creating their instruments, participants also

increased their Gwich'in language skills.

Young people in Fort Resolution got to try their hand at floor hockey during a week-long camp. Before hitting the floor with their sticks they had to read and understand the rules of the game, as well as have safety lessons. Facilitators embedded LES into the sport as participants took turns taking notes and keeping score.

Five projects revolved around cooking. We updated our resources for these projects, based on feedback from facilitators and participants during the first year of our Literacy, Cooking and Nutrition program. In Colville Lake, participants learned and shared traditional recipes from their region and compiled them into a cookbook or calendar. Georgina Oudzi, ran the program weekly from the school's kitchen.

In Aklavik, facilitators Myrna Sittichinli and Doris Rogers ran their weekly cooking program at the Moose Kerr School. They helped young parents learn about the importance of healthy eating while building LES.

Facilitators from Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour and Ulukhaktok embedded LES into their prenatal cooking programs this year.

We've learned a lot during this two-year pilot project from the feedback of community members. Thanks to our facilitators for their time and hard work. They jumped right into their projects to see what would fit for their community. Thank you also to the program participants - your feedback is invaluable in helping us to shape future projects.



Literacy: Our Health Depends on it!

The last week of September is NWT Literacy Week. This last fall the NWT Literacy Council chose the theme, *Literacy: Our Health Depends on it!* because health and literacy are tied together in so many ways.

Communities across the NWT joined in on the celebration. We were happy to hear how different community groups used the materials they received from us to put on unique events and activities for their community.

Students at Chief Jimmy Bruneau School in Behchokò spent the week creating a display of artfully decorated inspirational quotes. These quotes were in both English and Tłı̨chǫ. Families participated in a Family Literacy night, and students played literacy games during the school day. Everyone in the school was invited to Drop Everything and Read.

A healthy recipe was the cost of admission to a healthy foods lunch at Aurora College in Hay River during Literacy Week. This gave everyone a chance to enjoy delicious hot soup together and share recipes.

In Fort Smith four students from different regions in the NWT each read in their Aboriginal language before a large audience at the Thebacha Campus of Aurora College. We're told that this was a very moving event. Events at the Mary Kaiser Library included a book sale and a Question and Answer period with a dietician. Participants of the Healthy Families Program were invited to come get free books for their family.

Thank you to everyone who let us know how their community celebrated NWT Literacy Week. We love seeing photos of your events, and hearing how participants enjoyed the programs.



Celebrating with Celebrities

What do concerts, school visits, community feasts and learner awards have in common? They're all part of the biannual PGI (Peter Gzowski Invitational) for Literacy.

Last fall's PGI events took place in Yellowknife, Behchokò, Ndilò and Dettah. Northern and southern celebrities performed at the North Slave Young Offenders facility, Yellowknife Association for Community Living, Avens Manor and visited schools in Behchokò, Ndilò and Yellowknife.

The community concerts featured Connie Kaldor, Russell deCarle, Mike Stevens, Jonathan Torrens, Barney Bentall, Dustin Bentall, Kendel Carson, and local performers Wesley Hardisty, Pat Braden, Indio, Willy Mammoth, Diga, TJ Buggins and Miranda Currie.

One of the most important aspects of the PGI is the celebration of adult learners. Two adult learners received awards: Stacey Keyes from the Yellowknife Campus of Aurora College, and Rose Mackenzie from the Ndilò learning centre. Both women have

inspirational stories to share and are role models for learning.

Mary Rose Sundberg, of Dettah, won the Gzowski award for her work promoting Aboriginal languages through the Goyatikò Language Society.

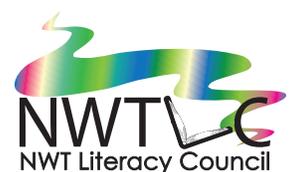
Peter Gzowski, the iconic CBC journalist, started the PGIs in 1986. They've raised over \$13.5 million for literacy across Canada.

Our northern PGIs rotate between the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. In southern Canada, PGIs usually take the form of golf tournaments while in the north we favour community concerts. Thanks to the performers who volunteer their time for literacy, our sponsors and other partners.

Stay tuned for the 2016 NWT PGI and visit the new PGI Canada website at pgicanada.ca



Thank you to our Sponsors



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Keep in Touch!

Become a Literacy Council Member

Literacy and essential skills touch all aspects of our lives.

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

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

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

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

Why become a member of the NWT Literacy Council?

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

Your support is important to us. It's easy and it's fast!

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

Literacy is everyone's business!

Yearly Dues

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

Membership dues can be waived on request, if necessary.

Donate Online

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

You can donate online at www.nwtliteracy.ca or directly through Canada Helps.



We're on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube!

Please search for NWT Literacy Council.



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