

“Reconnect”: Re-engaging Disengaged Northern Youth in Learning Final Evaluation Report



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1. Introduction



Participants in the Creative Storytelling Program in Baker Lake.

A. Purpose of the report

The purpose of this final evaluation report is to document the results for the project *Reconnect: Re-engaging Disengaged Northern Youth in Learning*. This summative or final evaluation also examines how well the project met its goals, objectives, and outcomes as set out in the proposal for the project. This report articulates the major lessons learned through the project as well.

An *Evaluation Plan* was developed for this project in conjunction with the NWT Literacy Council staff with input from team members from the other three participating coalitions. The *Evaluation Plan* provides the framework for this final report and the two interim evaluation reports that preceded it.

B. Project overview¹

The NWT Literacy Council is the lead for this pilot project in four regions of northern Canada (the NWT, the Yukon, Nunavut and Newfoundland and Labrador). The project aims to improve youth literacy and essential skills (LES) by increasing community capacity to re-engage disengaged northern youth in learning. The project builds on ongoing community-capacity building work that the NWT Literacy Council, the Nunavut Literacy Council and Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador started in 2001 to enable community groups to take ownership of literacy issues in their communities and plan solutions. From that project, with funding from the NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment, the NWT Literacy Council developed a model to support community-based family literacy programs. The model includes promotion of family literacy, development of resources for family literacy programs, training for community members to plan and deliver programs, outreach and support to help people get started and maintain programs, and a small amount of funding to support programs. From the start, the approach has been to integrate family literacy into existing community-based programs.

In this project, the model will be reviewed in the context of youth LES and adopted or adapted to support community-based youth LES programs. The Council is using the same approach – embedding youth LES into existing programs – to create community-based youth LES programs. The model, approach and materials will be pilot-tested in two sites in each of the NWT, Nunavut, the Yukon and Newfoundland and Labrador. Revisions will be made to the materials following pilot testing, and the model, approach and resources will then be made more widely available across Canada.

¹ From the NWT Literacy Council's project proposal to the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills

C. Project phases

The project has been divided into four phases. These phases are described in Table 1.

Table 1

Phase	Activities
Phase 1: 6 months May 2012 – November 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write terms of reference• Develop evaluation plan• Develop overall framework• Develop communications plan• Write literature review• Review NWT Literacy Council Community Capacity Building Model• Write role descriptions
Phase 2: 10 months Dec 2012 – December 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop promotional toolkit• Develop facilitator manual• Develop draft learning modules• Develop asset-based assessment tools• Meet with staff to finalize projects• Create workshop materials• Train community groups
Phase 3: 12 months January 2014- December 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pilots to run• Staff visits to sites• Monthly phone calls• 4 check-in e-mails per month
Phase 4: 3 months December 2014- March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate project• Hold evaluation meeting• Revise model and materials• Prepare materials for wider distribution• Complete reports

D. Project outcomes, goals and objectives

Project outcomes

- Research findings on strategies and best practices inform LES development for disengaged youth.
- Communities understand the importance of youth LES and want to be involved in re-engaging youth in learning.
- Community-based groups have the knowledge, skills and resources to embed LES in their programs.
- Community-based groups have the knowledge, skills and resources to re-engage youth in learning and enable them to improve their LES.
- Youth who participate in the programs improve their LES.

Project goals

1. Increase community capacity to support learning among disengaged northern youth using an established community-based model and approach as a foundation.
2. Re-engage disengaged northern youth in learning and prepare them to enter and succeed in the workplace, return to school, take further training, and/or participate more fully in family and community life.

Project objectives

1. Research potential re-engagement strategies for disengaged youth.
2. Develop promotional materials to mobilize communities around youth LES.
3. Develop teaching and learning modules to support youth LES programming.
4. Build community capacity to embed LES into community-based programs that offer youth programs and services.
5. Pilot-test, review and revise the approach and materials as necessary, and make more widely available.

E. Findings from Interim Evaluation Report 1

The first interim evaluation report covered the period May 2012 to April 2013. The findings showed that the project had proved to be much more complex than originally anticipated. This slowed the project somewhat in its early stages. However, overall the project was on track within its four phases with pilots intending to run up until December 2014 in Phase 3. Moreover, the project had a stable, cohesive team working on the project with excellent leadership from the NWT Literacy Council.

The project team took time to figure out the project concept in a thoughtful way so that the pilots would run well and be successful. Having a pre-pilot was an innovative move to prepare for training community organizations and to learn more about how to execute the pilots overall. It was clear that this project was breaking new ground in terms of how to explicitly embed LES within youth programs. Research found almost no explicit literature or experiences that addressed the concept of embedding literacy intentionally in youth programs.

Because the project was breaking new ground and making connections with new youth partners, this outreach work also took longer than expected.

Given the challenges and changes that the project faced, it moved along the path it set out in a way that was expected during the period of this first interim evaluation. The deliverables for Phase 1 were completed and the deliverables for Phase 2 ending in 2013 were underway. The training of community groups was moved to November 2013 to accommodate the lessons learned from the pre-pilot, which was scheduled for discussion at a face-to-face team meeting in the fall of 2013.

The next steps and challenges for the project were to:

- 1) integrate new team members,
- 2) secure pilot sites, and
- 3) bring the project to a practical, tangible level through the addition of the pre-pilot.

F. Findings from Interim Evaluation Report 2

The second interim evaluation report covered the period April 2013 to August 2014. The results of the second interim evaluation showed that the project objectives, activities and deliverables were on track. Local youth facilitators received training and rated that training very highly. Pilot projects were underway, complete or expected to finish before December 2014. Phase 3 activities were scheduled to finish according to the timeline.

Overall, both regional coordinators and youth facilitators agreed that they mostly had good support for their work from the project team and from their own communities. The project team had stabilized in terms of its members and was working well together. Two pilots in each region, for a total of eight projects, were to be completed. Youth were taking advantage of learning opportunities through these pilots in small, northern communities.

The main finding from this interim evaluation was about the complexity of embedding LES into youth programs. New ways of embedding LES to engage both youth and local facilitators needed to be thought out for future work. There were many good ideas in this regard from evaluation participants. Youth were mainly interested in the hands-on, technical focus of the pilots that were part of this overall project. Generally, they were not so interested in the explicit LES activities or what they might have seen as the “classroom” aspects of the project.

2. Summative evaluation for this project

A. Overarching questions for the summative or final evaluation

The following questions represent the overarching questions for the summative component of the evaluation as outlined in the evaluation plan for the project.

1. How well did the project identify strategies and best practices to inform LES development for disengaged youth?
2. In what ways do communities across the four territories/province understand youth LES and want to be involved in re-engaging youth in learning?
3. What are the conditions for success in terms of communities and youth organizations being involved in LES programming for youth?
4. In what ways has capacity been built in youth organizations in terms of knowledge and skills to re-engage youth in learning and enable them to improve their LES?
5. In what ways has capacity been built in the four coalitions in terms of knowledge and skills to re-engage youth in learning and enable them to improve their LES?
6. How well did the literature review inform the project and youth re-engagement?
7. What results were there for the youth involved in the project? In what ways were they re-engaged in learning? What are some of the barriers for re-engaging youth and how well were they addressed?
8. How well did the project partners work together?
9. What unexpected results have there been from this project?
10. In what ways have project materials been shared with others? What were the outcomes of sharing the research findings?
11. How effective has the overall approach that was developed to re-engage youth been?
12. How is this approach available to others?

13. In what ways have the lives of involved youth participants changed 6 months after their program has finished.

B. Methods for collecting Information for this report

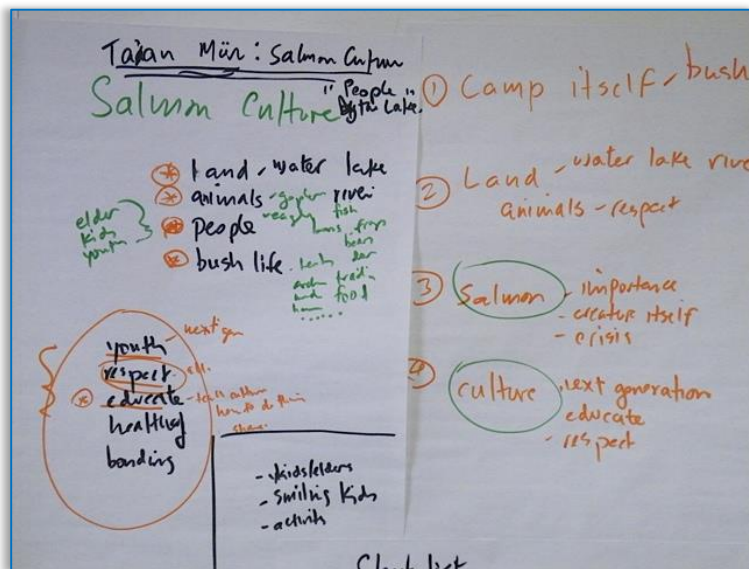
Data was collected for the final evaluation mainly through a follow-up evaluation meeting in November 2014. The project manager, four regional coordinators, two contractors and six youth facilitators attended the three-day meeting. The follow-up meeting included:

- presentations on seven of the eleven youth projects
- demonstrations of embedded literacy activities from each project
- focus groups with 1) regional coordinators and 2) youth coordinators
- additional training on embedded literacy activities

In addition, the evaluator:

- used notes and observations from throughout the project
- reviewed written evaluations from the youth projects and final meeting
- conducted two interviews with the project manager
- conducted an interview with one regional coordinator for 2015 projects
- reviewed the previous two interim evaluation reports
- conducted three interviews with the youth facilitators on the 2015 pilots
- reviewed the outcomes for pilots not represented at the final meeting

3. Findings



Embedding literacy and essential skills was not an established idea. In this project there were two ways of looking at literacy and essential skills—opportunities are everywhere inside a project or literacy and essential skills can be added into a project. Both were legitimate. How the embedding occurred depended on many factors—the experiences of the youth, their interests and type of project. Some projects did one or the other or both.

-- Project team member

A. Introduction to pilot programs

The project team designed the project concept. The project team consisted of:

- A project manager from the NWT Literacy Council provided support to the regional coordinators in implementing their projects.
- Each territory or province had a regional coordinator who worked with and supported local facilitators on the ground.
- Two experts in LES provided support to the project as well. They provided support to the overall project team in terms of embedding LES into the youth programs and developing LES materials suited to each project.
- Other representatives from the four literacy coalitions.

Eleven pilot programs for youth took place through this project. The pilot programs were diverse and included the topics that follow for each participating region.

Yukon

Whitehorse (shores of Lake Laberge)

- *Tan'an Kwach'an Council Fishing/Summer Camp* (plan and make a video about salmon fishing)

Dawson City

- *Gearing Up* (bicycle repair)

Northwest Territories

Hay River

- *NT Boats Project* (pre-trades skills to youth through refurbishing and building boats)

Fort Simpson

- *Picnic Table Project* (building picnic tables)

Nunavut

Baker Lake

- *Creative Storytelling Youth Summer Program* (storytelling to unify traditional and contemporary arts)

Rankin Inlet

- *Kivalliq Hockey Camp* (develop and support local youth coaches and develop players)

Newfoundland and Labrador

L'anse-au-Loup and Port Hope Simpson

- *Sealskin Mitts Project* (develop traditional skill of sealskin mitten making in two communities)

Postville

- *Learning through the Land and Working with Our Hands* (wilderness survival skills)

Nain

- *Carpentry and Design* (building benches for the community)

L'anse-au-Loup

- *Healthy Eating* (Understanding what constitutes healthy eating and preparing healthy food)

More detailed information on outcomes for pilot programs can be found in pilot case studies (see Appendix 4).

B. Project outcomes

This section describes the outcomes of this project for the youth who participated in the pilots across three territories and one province, for the local youth facilitators who organized the projects, for communities in which the pilots took places and for the project partners.

I. Outcomes for youth involved in the pilot programs

I am learning how to deal with kids and how to communicate with them better.

--Program participant, hockey camp

Through this project, approximately 120 youth received embedded LES development through 11 pilot programs in 10 northern communities in Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Newfoundland and Labrador. The majority of the participants in these programs were disengaged indigenous youth who had not had positive experiences in school. The program participants represented a good mix of male and female participants. The flexibility of the programs offered the “hands on” focus, and the fact that most programs had a finished product at the end contributed to their success in the eyes of the youth.

There were common outcomes across programs and specific outcomes related to the particular topic of the program and the LES that were part of the program.

Overall outcomes



Learning at the NT Boat Project in Hay River.

It was self-confidence that our young people learned. They didn't think they could do it. We told them to keep trying and they had an end result. We had to coach them along. At the end, they all thanked us.

-- Youth facilitator

The common outcomes for youth across projects were as follows:

- ability to follow through with a project and finish something
- commitment attend the program and be on time
- ability to set goals and be more reflective
- improved social skills
- pride and confidence in their achievements
- engagement in the pilot program
- more interest in other learning and courses²
- better relations with Elders and other community members
- more involvement in their communities
- more exposure to traditional ways

Technical skills gained

- carpentry skills (3)
- skills for making a video to tell a story (3)
- sealskin mitt-making skills (2)
- leadership and teaching skills (2)
- bicycle repair skills (1)
- outdoor survival skills (1)
- healthy cooking skills (1)
- knowledge about how to be an artist (1)

² One youth received a high school credit for his essential skills work in the Gearing Up program.

Overall improvement in literacy and essential skills

- Working With Others (e.g. teamwork with other participants, coaching younger children, mentoring peers, working with community members and Elders)
- Oral Communication (e.g. giving and receiving instructions, asking questions, providing customer service to community members, providing feedback in sharing circles facilitated by Elders, understanding stories about culture, telling stories in a variety of ways)
- Writing (e.g. creating a story board, providing feedback through journaling, writing an instruction booklet for sewing, completing forms)
- Document Use (e.g. understanding safety information, reading forms and specifications, reading charts and infographics online)
- Numeracy (e.g. understanding and using measurements for carpentry, pattern making, bicycle repair and cooking)
- Computer Use (e.g. looking up information relating to the topic of the pilot program on the Internet, making ads to sell bikes)
- Thinking Skills (e.g. problem solving for bike repair issues, how to manage conflict with children)
- Reading (e.g. patterns, instructions, recipes)
- Continuous Learning (e.g. learning through this program and looking to future programs)

II. Outcomes for local youth facilitators and local organizations



Participants in the cooking program in Labrador.

I didn't realize how much literacy could be embedded into youth programming as well as how easy it is to do so. I've learned that embedding literacy and essential skills into our programming doesn't have to mean sitting the youth down in a classroom to read and write.

-- Youth facilitator (final wrap-up session)

Outcomes for youth facilitators depended on their experience

Overall, the outcomes for youth facilitators depended on their previous experience with running youth programs and embedding LES. It also depended on whether or not they had attended the training on embedded LES offered in November 2013 for youth facilitators. The regional coordinators' support and understanding of embedded LES was also an important factor. In addition, not all youth facilitators were part of a youth organization or had offered programs for youth before. All these factors influenced how much capacity was built.

Capacity was built in all cases

In all cases, capacity was built through offering successful, new programs that had never been offered in participating communities before. To varying degrees, youth facilitators gained greater facilitation and coordination skills needed to develop and implement these programs. Just developing and running a new program, that was of interest to disengaged youth, was considered a success in most communities. In addition, youth facilitators learned new program ideas and how to implement these programs from others across the north.

Embedding was a new idea

The concept of intentionally embedding LES into youth programming was a new idea for almost all the youth facilitators as well as most regional coordinators. Learning what embedded LES was, and how to intentionally incorporate it into a youth program was an ongoing process. This continued until the end of the final project wrap-up session where youth facilitators and regional coordinators shared how their programs went. One project partner stated, “The youth coordinators did not see themselves as adding to the educational experience. It was a new role and they took it on very well.” At the same time, the youth facilitators and regional coordinators indicated that while LES were part of all programs, more could have been done to intentionally embed these skills into the programs.

Wrap-up session was a critical piece

Youth facilitators attending the final wrap-up session indicated that they had a much better understanding of how to intentionally embed LES.³ The sharing of successes and challenges created a better understanding of embedded LES that youth facilitators could take away with them and use in new situations.

³ Please see summary of evaluation data from the final wrap-up session in Appendix 3.

III. Outcomes for communities



Youth with the snowshoes they made in Postville.

This Youth Literacy Project has proven to be a fundamental tool for the development of essential skills for the youth of [our community]. The most important skill that the youth have gained, and I cannot stress this enough, is the ability to speak and interact with leaders of the community. Before the project, many of the youth were hesitant in approaching the older members of the community, particularly when it came to asking for help or looking for instruction. This hesitation in approaching teachers of traditional knowledge is particularly troubling since it antagonizes experiential learning and is not conducive to Inuit and Aboriginal culture.

--Community leader

New programs available for youth

The most important outcome for participating communities was that new programs were offered to disengaged youth. Some communities are pursuing additional programs as a result of this positive experience. For example, one community offered a second embedded LES program on healthy eating and cooking after their successful sealskin mitt-making project. One youth facilitator had this to say:

This program was very successful and all the participants learned concrete information that they will use in their daily lives. We will soon be starting a program with intergenerational learning between youth and seniors where the seniors will be teaching youth how to make traditional dishes and in return the youth will be teaching seniors how to use technology.

New leaders in communities

Most communities now have new leaders who have the capacity to develop and implement future programming with embedded LES.

New partnerships in communities

New partnerships among organizations were formed in participating communities. These partnerships sometimes led to better relationships between community organizations and

participating youth, and between youth and other community members, especially Elders. An important outcome for communities was that there was a more positive perception of the youth who had participated in the programs and recognition of their skills and abilities. This recognition led to enhanced self-esteem on the part of the participating youth.

Elders as instructors

Some Elders had not instructed youth before and were a bit nervous to do so. Through the program, they developed the confidence to instruct youth. Some are going on to instruct other programs with youth. One youth facilitator said, “I enjoyed the intergenerational learning. The respect is not there with older people. The interaction with instructors was heartwarming.” Another youth facilitator noted, “We are getting the opportunity to help our young people with traditional skills. We are so caught up in technology.”

New initiatives and products in communities

One community will support the continued development of a bike repair business as a result of the program offered through this project. The bike repair business will provide a needed service to community members. Through some programs there were important end products for communities such as picnic tables, benches, refurbished boats, and important videos. These programs’ products will continue to be used and recognized in the communities.

IV. Outcomes for project partners



Youth facilitators, regional coordinators and project staff at the final wrap-up session for the project.

Partnership was strengthened

One of the main outcomes was that the four literacy coalitions strengthened their own pan-northern partnership. This was the first large project of its kind where the four literacy coalitions worked together to do a project across the north. Those participating in the project indicated the team from across the north was strong and worked well together. Meetings where partners got together for planning, training and to share learnings from their programs were greeted positively and enthusiastically. The group indicated that they learned a great deal from sharing ideas with others working in different contexts and regions. They noted that they had a lot in common and shared similar challenges.

New relationships and partnerships

Another outcome for the project partners was that they developed new partnerships and relationships with communities, organizations and people who work with youth. This paves the way for future work with these new partners should the opportunity arise.

Enhanced capacity of regional coordinators for embedding literacy and essential skills

The regional coordinators built or enhanced their capacity to support and mentor youth facilitators and participating organizations to intentionally embed LES into their youth programs. Regional coordinators spoke about the confidence they had gained throughout the project to work with others to help them intentionally embed LES into their programs.

However, they indicated that this was not a smooth road and revealed that there were a number of challenges. At the beginning of the project, both they and the youth facilitators saw embedding as narrowly focusing on reading and writing. As the project continued and they got more experience, they were better able to explain and support the different ways that youth facilitators could embed literacy into their programs. Having the support of essential skills specialists was crucial. Coordinators got embedded literacy materials for youth programs as needed and their questions were answered.

One regional coordinator said, “I can get people behind the idea and I feel like a champion.” Another said, “I have more confidence reaching out and talking about it. I can tell them they are doing literacy already in an unintentional way and show them how to do it more intentionally.”

One regional coordinator who had been involved in embedding literacy into non-formal programming for some time noted that it was important to broaden people’s perspectives on what literacy is. She further noted that non-formal, embedded literacy programs are showing results that exceed those of job training programs. The regional coordinators agreed that it became easier to talk about embedded LES after they had practical experience with embedding through a pilot program.

New opportunities for project partners

The capacity developed through this pan-northern youth project has led to other opportunities for project partners. Three of the four partners have had the opportunity to develop and implement other embedded LES programs for youth. One coalition received funding for a large project to develop embedded literacy programs for young parents in their region.

C. Success factors for the project

I have learned so much by coming together and sharing project ideas, lessons, pros and cons. Meeting people who also work with youth in the north or remote areas was very positive and useful. Meeting each other and speaking one-on-one was great.

-- Youth facilitator

This section outlines the major success factors for the project as a whole and across the pilots.

I. Project partnership

The project partnership was identified as a success factor. First, the working relationship among the four partners was strong and positive. Second, the project had strong, committed staff. As well, it was an opportunity for the four coalitions and their staff to work together across the north and learn from each other. This was very motivating and energizing for staff. In addition, it was an opportunity for youth facilitators to see what kind of programming was taking place in other northern, remote areas. They were able to take home ideas they could apply to their current and future programs.

II. Strong supports on the project

Strong supports were identified as a success factor for the project. These supports included a regional coordinator for each territory and province, the project manager, the essential skills consultants and the evaluator. Regional coordinators could call on the project manager and the three consultants for support. The essential skills consultants were available to develop specific embedded LES materials for pilot programs as needed. The youth facilitators could contact and work with both the regional coordinators and the essential skills consultants through the regional coordinators.

The three-day training for youth facilitators and the resources on facilitating programs and embedding LES also supported the project for those who were able to attend the training. The training and final wrap-up session were seen as critical in being able to share program ideas and results across the north.

III. Project flexibility

A key success factor was the lack of rigidity and the flexibility of the project. This for choosing the sites for the pilots as well as managing and adjusting them as needed. There was a lot of leeway in the project for creativity in the pilot-projects. In the words of one regional coordinator, “There was support but no micro-managing.” Another indicated that there was the flexibility to change or adapt the pilot when something did not work or no longer fit.

IV. Community support for programs

The communities that had identified a priority that fit with this project had strong success. These communities tended to make in-kind and cash contributions to the pilot. Often, community Elders and other members were engaged in the project as instructors or advisors. Those communities that had a strong champion from within the community were able to address their challenges and ensure the smooth running of their program.

V. Learning about best practices for youth from field trips and literature review

Youth programming as outlined in the current project was new to most partners. In the first two years of the project, an extensive literature review was conducted. Although very little was found on embedded literacy programs for youth, a great deal of literature was discovered on what it takes to engage disengaged youth, especially indigenous youth. The literature review provided guidance on:

- 1) overall principles and values for youth learning,
- 2) considerations for program planning and implementation, and
- 3) considerations for needs assessment and evaluation.

The literature review identified the importance of principles that would work for engaging disengaged indigenous youth. These principles reflected an approach that was strength-based, emotionally safe, respectful, relevant, flexible, participatory and ethical. These principles applied to assessment and evaluation as well. The literature review findings showed that assessment needed to be useful, respectful, and strength-based and avoid standardized testing.

The project team also visited a number of programs serving indigenous youth. These field trips confirmed many of the findings from the literature review and provided valuable insights into what kind of programming works with disengaged youth. In these programs, LES were dealt with naturally as they came up and related to what was of interest to the youth rather than intentionally added and taught. These programs reflected the principles for program planning and assessment highlighted in the literature review.

D. Major challenges on the project

There were several challenges on the project. These challenges are outlined below.

I. The concept of embedding literacy and essential skills



Embedding literacy and essential skills into the program was a challenge for me. I still have a long way to go to understand this. Before, I had the idea that it was the three R's. I am still trying to remind myself that literacy is more.

-- Youth facilitator

Determining how to intentionally address LES by embedding them in youth programs proved to be one of the most challenging aspects of the project for many reasons.

Two different views on embedding literacy and essential skills

The first reason was that there were differing views on what “intentionally embedding” meant. On one hand, embedding was seen as working intentionally with the LES that were a natural part of the topic being covered in the programs. Examples included facilitating reading strategies for understanding safety information for carpentry work and using tools. Another example was teaching someone to access the Internet so they could find information they need to repair a bike.

On the other hand, adding something in means something different. Adding a literacy component included having participants journal about their experiences in the program. Examples of embedding LES into a program included:

- having a business entrepreneurship component in a program focusing on bike repair
- making an instruction booklet for sealskin mitt-making

- adding teambuilding exercises for working together
- incorporating games and evaluations activities

Both views are valid

The project showed that both ways of thinking about intentionally embedding LES are valid. However, overall both youth and youth facilitators preferred building on the LES in ways that came up naturally as part of the project. This included focusing on skills such as teamwork, communicating with Elders, listening to stories, storytelling and measurement. The youth tended to prefer the hands-on, technical skills parts of the program to anything that involved classroom-based learning or worksheets.

Embedding was a new concept

The embedding concept was challenging also because it was new to most regional coordinators. Furthermore, both LES and embedding these skills were new to youth facilitators. There was a tendency to initially think about LES as only reading and writing with literacy activities that were school-based. As the project went on, everyone, to different degrees, got clearer on what these skills meant and the different ways they could be successfully embedded into youth projects.

Some regional coordinators relied on support from the essential skills specialists. Youth facilitators worked with their regional coordinators. Some youth facilitators mentioned that the embedding component was difficult because there was a long passage of time between the training and their pilot. Other youth facilitators did not have the benefit of the training because the projects were staggered and some projects had not been identified at the time of the training. All in all, the learning curve for most people involved in the project was steep and evolved over the years of the project.

The comments from one youth facilitator show the challenges:

It was a long time since Winnipeg even with the booklets. I didn't really understand what literacy and essential skills meant. We understood it, but not how to teach it. We didn't want to embarrass them [youth] or lose them. They have been out of school and are not good at writing. We had them fill in forms. Didn't think we would add anything else.

Those youth facilitators who attended the final wrap-up meeting got a clear understanding of embedded LES from hearing about what worked and what didn't through the actual projects.

II. Communicating and providing long-distance support

Communication with [the community] was an issue for two reasons. First, as a remote area, site visits were not possible during the sessions. Second, the local coordinator was occasionally difficult to reach via phone or e-mail.

-- Regional coordinator

All regional coordinators and some youth facilitators spoke about the challenge of providing and getting support at a distance.

Many communities were remote, so site visits during the pilots from regional coordinators were not always possible. When regional coordinators worked with their pilots by e-mail and phone, it was often hard to understand the challenges, where pilots were at and what support would be helpful. Sometimes it was difficult to get a hold of youth facilitators to find out what was going on.

Some youth facilitators indicated that they wished they had kept in better touch with their regional coordinators to get more support. One youth facilitator would have preferred more in-person support by having the regional coordinator come to the program at the beginning for a few days. She would like to have had a demonstration in her program of how to embed LES.

Regional coordinators agreed that they needed more support in the middle of the project. They suggested that it would have been good if the regional coordinators had met at mid-point to discuss their questions and obstacles. If a meeting had not been possible, an e-mail group or conference calls would have worked. Regional coordinators suggested that having their own Facebook page would have helped them collectively deal with and discuss issues such as youth facilitators not responding to their e-mails. They agreed that having their own Facebook page would have been better than Basecamp.

III. Training youth facilitators

The identification of youth pilot-project took longer than expected because, to differing degrees, the partners were establishing new relationships. As a result, not all the pilots were identified by the time the training for youth facilitators was offered. Therefore, some youth facilitators did not get the training, although they were supported by their regional coordinators. In addition, there were some attendees at the training who did not actually

facilitate the pilots. This situation had an impact on how well the facilitators were able to understand and integrate LES into their programs.

E. Strategies for working with disengaged youth

The project revealed some strategies for working with disengaged youth in northern communities. These effective practices are detailed below.

I. Overall strategies

- Offer programs based on explicit youth interests and community priorities. Identify these interests and priorities at the front end of the program by meeting with youth and community leaders, and interested organizations.
- Get the support of the community or band leadership for the program. Identify a community leader who can act as a champion for the program.
- Hold the program at flexible times. Be willing to adjust the timing or focus of the program to suit the needs of the youth participants to maintain good attendance and interest in the program. Avoid making the program too structured or rigid.
- Involve Elders as instructors and facilitators in programming wherever possible to build positive relationships and respect among youth and Elders. Each has a lot to teach the other.
- Incorporate a focus that includes traditional skills, cultural activities or another focus that will benefit the community and be meaningful for them.
- Ensure that individual assessment is flexible, informal and seamless within the program. It should be based on the needs of the youth and what they want to learn.
- Use a “hands-on” approach to learning focusing on content skills and knowledge; avoid making the learning look school-based. A program that looks too academic or school-based may scare youth from participating.
- If possible, have two facilitators for the program- one to work with technical skills and the other to plan the program and facilitate the embedded literacy component.
- Ensure that the group is not too big. If it is, break it into smaller groups of not more than ten or twelve.

- Provide an orientation to the program, including expectations and everyone's role.
- Hold a recognition ceremony or event at the end of the program to recognize and honour the participating youth and their achievements. Invite community members and parents. Provide a certificate of completion to participants.

II. Strategies for embedding literacy and essential skills

- Make embedding LES aligned with the focus of the youth project. Build on the natural essential skills that come out of the content of the program and/or the interests of the youth.
- Plan the embedded literacy component early in the program development process.
- Ensure that any intentional LES development is of interest to youth and does not embarrass them; it should build positively on what they already know and can do.
- Broaden the understanding of embedding LES to go beyond reading, writing and math to include oral communication, computer skills, working with others, thinking skills, document use, and continuous learning. Focus on essential skills like working together and oral communication that will be an important part of any program.
- Avoid using handouts and other materials and activities that appear to be school- and classroom-based unless it is a natural part of the program to do so.
- Link essential skills development with traditional skills wherever possible, for example: communicating with and asking Elders questions about traditions around sewing, survival skills, or traditional food preparation.

F. Overall lessons learned

I. Embedding literacy and essential skills into youth programs

Learning how to intentionally embed literacy and essentials skills (LES) into youth programs is a process rather than a one-time event. This project illustrated that there is a large learning curve around embedding LES for those running the project, those supporting youth facilitators and the youth facilitators themselves.

A great deal of training and support is needed, especially at the program level. Youth facilitators need practical examples of how to embed LES, and examples of activities that they can use in their programs. They need more training, with projects already identified when they come to training. A longer training period would allow for a deeper exploration of embedding LES, planning, and covering topics such as individual needs assessment and evaluation. One suggestion was to go through a proposed youth program, break down all the essential skills, and show how one could intentionally build on what occurs naturally.

Both youth facilitators and regional coordinators need to meet midway through the project to share what they are hearing and discuss solutions to challenges they are facing. As well, more support on site for some youth facilitators would be beneficial, especially at the beginning of their programs.

The programs that were most successful with embedding were those where the embedded literacy component was planned at the early planning stage of the program itself. This was easier than trying to add the embedded component on to an existing program.

II. Having a pre-pilot

The pre-pilot on this project was a successful learning experience for the project team. The pre-pilot provided important information on what embedding LES could look like. It also provided information on the challenges of embedding LES, youth reactions to it, and the support needed for youth facilitators. It set the tone and provided a foundation for the rest of the pilots.

III. Ongoing communication and support

The findings show the importance of more collective ways to communicate as a means of providing support, especially across distance. For example, regional coordinators needed more ways to connect with each other. This could be accomplished through a private Facebook page, an e-mail group or conference calls. These same strategies could also be used for communication among youth facilitators. Finally, more on site support was needed in some cases, along with one additional meeting in the middle of the project for both regional coordinators and youth facilitators.

IV. Recognizing the youth

The project identified the importance of recognizing participating youth in each pilot through an end-of-program celebration. The celebration could include a display of the products of the program with parents and community members attending. While most of the pilots did have a celebration, some did not. In retrospect, this was seen as a great oversight and a lost opportunity. Often the youth attending were those who, previous to the programs, were viewed negatively in their communities.

V. Resources for embedded literacy and essential skills

The essential skills consultants put together customized packages and provided support to those pilots that wanted assistance. In addition, facilitators received *Embedding Literacy and Essential Skills into Youth Programs Guide* and *Facilitation Skills Guide* when they came to the training. Not everyone asked for help. Some programs created their own resources or used materials they thought would be appropriate for embedding.

In an ideal world, it would have been effective to have had a web site with modules of embedded LES activities related to each program topic to choose from. This would have made the resources easy to access for everyone. That did not happen because the projects were all identified at different times. However, all the embedded literacy resources have been compiled and will be available online. In addition, more activities were added to the *Embedding Literacy and Essential Skills into Youth Programs Guide* and *Facilitation Skills Guide* was updated.

VI. Individual assessment

The literature review and field trips showed the importance of not imposing a standardized assessment tool for these kinds of non-formal learning programs for disengaged youth. Instead, the literature review findings showed the need to be flexible, and informal to weave assessment into the program, and to address the needs identified by the youth. The project employed this strategy successfully, as demonstrated by the outcomes and the retention of the youth in the program. The effectiveness of this strategy was confirmed by the aversion of most of the youth to “pencil and paper” tasks that were seen to be like formal schooling (where many youth had not be successful) and not relevant to their program.

4. Evaluator's conclusions

A. Summary

This project broke new ground in testing out a community-based model applied to embedding literacy and skills into youth programs. Embedding LES was new to most of the project partners. Common effective practices, challenges and lessons learned were identified across the four regions, through a strong partnership among the team members.

Overall, the project met its goals and objectives as outlined in the project proposal. However, the findings of this project show that the concept of embedding LES is complex, and especially so with disengaged youth. The embedded LES focus must be of interest to these youth, and avoid using paper-based activities that seem like school and that do not seem relevant. There were many layers to the project in terms of capacity and development. First, the project team needed to develop the concept of embedding LES so that regional coordinators could clearly explain it to communities, community-based organizations and youth facilitators. Then, youth facilitators needed to be trained and supported in how to do it. This was no easy task and requires more focus through future projects.

In terms of project outcomes, the project provided the opportunity for youth to re-engage in learning and learn new technical skills while improving their essential skills. What they learned will be useful for further learning and employment. Moreover, the youth enjoyed their learning and some asked for additional programs.

B. How well the project met its goals and objectives

Goal 1: Increase community capacity to support learning among disengaged northern youth using an established community-based model and approach as a foundation

The project did build community capacity for the partners that participated in the project. They established new relationships with youth organizations and got a better understanding of how embedded LES would work with disengaged northern youth. Because of the experience and lessons learned on this project, they are at a place now where they can continue to support embedded LES youth programs in their regions. One partner has been asked to do this work in its region and another is applying for funding to do so.

This work explicitly built on the previous work of the partners using the community-based model the NWT Literacy Council uses for Family Literacy, along with the model of intentional embedded literacy in the Nunavut Literacy Council's Miqqut Program. Further projects should build on this one so more communities can get involved in this promising model of non-formal learning.

Goal 2: Re-engage disengaged northern youth in learning and prepare them to enter and succeed in the workplace, return to school, take further training, and /or participate more fully in family and community life

The project re-engaged northern youth in learning by getting them out to the programs it offered. Youth enjoyed the programs and many are interested in future programs. This was seen as success in itself especially for those youth who had dropped out of school, got into trouble and were unemployed. Participants developed more confidence, self-esteem and pride through the pilots. The project showed that many youth in the pilots participated more in their community and were more connected to Elders and others through the pilots. In addition, the overall outcomes achieved, along with the essential skills practised⁴, are those that are critical for success in further learning and for work. Moreover, the youth learned a technical, practical or traditional skill through the pilots.

One must be creative to keep youth engaged and interested in LES activities. The project showed the importance of staying away from school-based learning, worksheet, and formal testing.

⁴ See pages 12-13.

One youth got a high school credit through the program and some expressed a desire to go to college to learn filmmaking. Others from the hockey camp are interested in continuing to coach children and continuing to develop their leadership skills.

Objective 1: Research potential re-engagement strategies for disengaged youth

A comprehensive literature review was conducted through the project. The literature review along with actual field trips to youth programs was critical in shaping the project. The pilots confirmed both the literature review and field trip findings on what works with disengaged northern youth.

Objective 2: Develop promotional materials to mobilize communities around youth LES

A comprehensive communications strategy with promotional materials was developed near the beginning of the project. Project partners could draw from the strategy and material as they saw fit. They could adapt the materials to their own regional context.

Objective 3: Develop teaching and learning modules to support youth LES programming

A number of teaching and learning materials were developed or revised through this project. These included the *Embedding Literacy and Essential Skills into Youth Programs* guide. The NWTLC had previously developed the *Facilitation Skills Guide*, which was revised and reprinted for the facilitators in this project. NWTLC's *Literacy, Cooking and Nutrition* modules were also adapted for this project. In addition, specific LES materials were developed for teaching youth how to make a video, how to make mittens, personal growth at a hockey camp, and for starting their own business. The materials from all the pilots were compiled and will be available online.

Objective 4: Build community capacity to embed literacy and essential skills into community-based programs that offer youth programs and services

Through the pilots, youth facilitators and their communities have increased their capacity to plan and deliver programs that embed LES. All the pilots were programs that had never been offered in participating communities. There are now youth facilitators who can build on what they have learned to offer similar or new programs. However, most youth facilitators need more training, resources and support around embedded LES to continue and further this work. They would benefit from understanding the breadth of possibilities for intentionally embedding LES, more concrete activities for doing so, and support for doing this in practice.

Objective 5: Pilot test, review and revise the approach and materials as necessary, and make more widely available

The learnings from the project are contained here in the evaluation report with an inclusion of effective practices for future work. The learning materials were all revised and enhanced and will be on the NWT Literacy Council web site.

C. How well the project met its expected outcomes

Project Outcomes

Research findings on strategies and best practices will inform LES development for disengaged youth

The comprehensive literature review found very little on embedding LES into programs for disengaged youth. However, there was a great deal of literature on how to engage youth. These findings were used to make decisions about how to shape and design the project and address the pilots. A pre-pilot added to the findings and also shaped the project going forward.

Communities understand the importance of youth LES and want to be involved in re-engaging youth in learning

Communities involved in this project were very supportive of youth learning and were behind the pilots. They very much wanted to see their youth re-engaged in learning. They understood the importance of LES in theory but there is more work to be done to illustrate how LES can be intentionally embedded into youth programs.

Community-based groups have the knowledge, skills and resources to embed LES in their programs

Community-based groups have more knowledge and resources to embed LES into their programs than they did at the beginning of the project. However, because the concept of embedding is complex, most need more opportunities to broaden their understanding of embedding LES and more support to develop their skills to do so.

Youth who participate in the programs will improve their LES

Youth facilitators, community leaders and the youth involved in the projects reported that they had learned a lot through the pilots. The outcomes for youth are detailed on pages 12-14. It was impossible to determine what had changed for the youth after six months because some staff members were no longer at programs and the programs themselves were seen as complete. It was difficult to contact people in some communities during the pilots and impossible afterwards. In addition, some projects did not finish until close to the end of the project.

Appendix 1: Evaluation Framework

Evaluation Framework for Pilot-Projects that Embed Literacy and Essential Skills into Youth Programming

Evaluation Features:

- The evaluation will tell the story of each pilot program and the overall story of all the programs.
- The evaluation is strength-based and will involve the input of youth.
- The evaluator will support the regional coordinators to develop an overall evaluation plan for each pilot program.
- The evaluation plan and its activities will be customized to each program.
- The regional coordinators will support the youth facilitators to develop specific evaluation activities.
- Responses in individual interviews will be confidential.
- We will use youth-friendly language to talk about the evaluation and its importance.

Evaluation Framework for Pilot-Projects that Embed Literacy and Essential Skills into Youth Programming

Evaluation Activity	Objective	Timeline	Method and Responsibility
1. Assess the needs and interests of youth who are attending embedded program (what their interests are, what strengths they bring, what they want to learn, what their expectations are)	To determine what interests and expectations youth had at the beginning of the program in order to compare at the end	Near the beginning of the program	To be determined by the youth facilitator and regional coordinator; what the youth facilitator sees working best with the group
2. Reflect on ongoing learnings throughout the project	To determine what is working, how things are going and what to do differently	Throughout the program	Each youth facilitator and regional coordinator will get a small notebook with evaluation questions to reflect on pasted on the back of the notebook. They can reflect on these questions by writing in the notebook
3. Planning for how to get feedback on the program from participating youth (what they learned, what worked and what didn't, how well their expectations were met.)	To determine the most effective ways to get feedback on the program from youth	During the first half of the program	To be determined by the youth facilitator with support of regional coordinator and with input from youth (youth input into questions and how they want to do it)
4. Planning a small activity that demonstrates skills learned	To determine the best way to demonstrate what youth have learned in their program that the youth buy into	During the first half of the program	To be determined by the youth facilitator with support of regional coordinator and with input from youth
5. Carry out evaluation activity to get feedback from youth	To identify what worked, what the youth liked and what could be done differently for another time	Near the end of the program	Youth facilitator with participants

Evaluation Activity	Objective	Timeline	Method and Responsibility
6. Carry out evaluation activity that demonstrates skills learned	To showcase what skills the youth have learned in the embedded program	Near the end of the program	Youth facilitator with participants
7. Interview with youth facilitators	To identify what worked, what the results were, how the support worked, lessons learned	Near the end of their program	Interview with evaluator either by phone or a site visit
8. Conversations with regional coordinators	To identify what worked, what the results were, how the regional support worked and lessons learned	Ongoing	Interview with evaluator
9. Interview with consultants	To identify what worked, how the embedding support worked and lessons learned	Near the end of the overall project	Interview with evaluator

Appendix 2: Data Collection Tools

Pan–Northern Youth Project

Questions for Evaluation Focus Group for November 2014 Meeting

Regional coordinators

1. What aspects of this project worked really well for you as a regional coordinator?
2. How did your pilot projects intentionally integrate literacy and essential skills activities into the program? How easy or difficult was it to do this? What would you do differently for another time?
3. What does embedded literacy and essential skills mean to you now?
4. What were the biggest challenges doing this project?
5. What resources did you use for the project? Did you use the Facilitation Skills Guide? Did you use the Embedded LES Guide?
6. What other resources would you like to have had to make things easier?
7. How well did the training in Winnipeg and additional support on the project help you?
 - What were the most useful parts of the training?
 - How did you use what you learned in the training?
 - What support did you get on the project?
 - What materials were useful for the pilots?
 - What other support or training would have been helpful to you?
 - What additional knowledge or tools did you need?
 - What suggestions would you make for doing a pan-Northern project differently for another time?
8. What are your suggestions for other programs that would be helpful for youth that intentionally include literacy and essential skills?
9. What other kind of support and training would you like now to help you?

Pan–Northern Youth Project

Questions for Evaluation Focus Group for November 2014 Meeting

Youth Facilitators

1. What aspects of your program worked really well?
2. How did you intentionally integrate literacy and essential skills activities into the program? How easy or difficult was it to do this?
3. What does embedded literacy and essential skills mean to you now?
4. What, if anything, would you do differently for the embedding component for another time for another time?
5. What were the biggest challenges in offering your program overall?
6. What other aspects of your program would you do differently for another time?
7. What did participants learn that they did not know about when they started the program?
8. What did participants like best about the program?
9. What resources did you use for the project? Did you use the Facilitation Skills Guide? Did you use the Embedded LES Guide?
10. What other resources would you like to have had to make things easier?
 - How well did the training in Winnipeg and the support for the project help you?
 - What were the most useful parts of the training?
 - How did you use what you learned in the training?
 - What other support or training would have been helpful to you?
 - What additional knowledge or tools did you need?
11. What are your suggestions for other programs that would be helpful for youth that intentionally include literacy and essential skills?
12. What other kind of support and training would you like now to help you?

Pan-Northern Youth Learning Project: Wrap-up Meeting
November 20, 2014
Evaluation Form

Please circle the number that describes your experience and write your comments. Thank you!

1. This meeting was valuable to me.

Very much



5

4

3

2

1

Not at all



My comments:

2. I learned new information about embedding literacy and essential skills into youth programming.

Very much



5

4

3

2

1

Not at all



My comments:

3. I learned new information about youth programming from other people attending.

Very much



5

4

3

2

1

Not at all



My comments:

4. What I liked best about this meeting was:

5. The most important things I learned were:

6. The meeting could be improved by:

7. One thing I will do differently in the future is:

8. I feel that I still need to learn more about:


**Appendix 3: Evaluation Feedback
from the Final Wrap-Up Meeting**

Pan-Northern Youth Learning Project: Wrap-up Meeting
November 20, 2014
Evaluation Form

N= 9 (100% of participants)

Please circle the number that describes your experience and write your comments. Thank you!



1. This meeting was valuable to me.

Very much					Not at all
	5	4	3	2	1 
	5	4	-	-	-

My comments:

- The meeting was valuable
- There were new ideas around youth learning and embedded literacy that participants could take home
- The connections with other people were valuable
- Informative, organized and positive



2. I learned new information about embedding literacy and essential skills into youth programming.

Very much					Not at all
	5	4	3	2	1 
	6	2	1	-	-

My comments:

- I learned about embedding and how important this is
- I am confident I can use the information and implement it
- I learned that embedding literacy for youth does not mean sitting them down in a classroom setting to read and write
- I am confident embedding can be done
- Sharing stories and tools was powerful
- I was already confident about embedding but I could see there was a lot of learning

3. I learned new information about youth programming from other people attending.

Very much					Not at all
	5	4	3	2	1 
	7	2	-	-	-

My comments:

- I learned new information that I can take home and implment

- I will use the resources

4. What I liked best about this meeting was:

- Learning about all the projects (3)
- Meeting everyone (2)
- The regional coordinators' focus group; we were overdue for that
- The sharing and sense of connection
- Getting closure
- Showcasing the success of the northern programs
- Sharing positive impacts
- Great location, positive and welcoming
- Meeting with youth facilitators
- What worked best and the challenges on projects

5. The most important things I learned were:

- We share similar struggles across the north along with how to overcome them
- With success come challenges
- Youth want to come to programs that meet their interests but programs need to be modified to meet their interests
- Using different settings to create different environments more suitable to what is being taught
- Youth appreciate opportunities—provide them!
- Mistakes are a good thing as long as you learn from them
- Don't let mistakes stop you and literacy is everywhere
- LES activities (2)

6. The meeting could be improved by:

- More time for regional coordinators to speak about the project
- More energy between sessions
- More program facilitators present
- More movement ice breakers
- It was great
- Contact information for everyone
- Having a full day for regional coordinators and consultants to debrief

7. One thing I will do differently in the future is:

- Games to implement literacy into our projects
- Have a back-up plan for communicating with youth facilitators
- Look for more support when having challenges in a project
- Do more background research on youth programs across the North
- Document process of creating a youth program from conception to completion
- Incorporate more LES activities
- Seek resources before creating my own
- Reach out to allies in literacy
- Remember the importance of celebrating successes

8. I feel that I still need to learn more about:

- LES games and activities; this project should gather a collection of possible programs
- New project ideas
- Managing problems and training
- Encouraging youth facilitators and supporting them to carry out their projects
- Understanding the youth I am involved with in future projects so I can better understand their needs
- Youth and how to engage them and get them involved in their community
- The funding process

Appendix 4: Pilot Case Studies

Case Study: *Sealskin Mitt-Making*



Project partners

The partners in the project were the NWT Literacy Council, Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador, the Community Youth Network and the Junior Rangers.

Location

L'anse-au-Loup and Port Hope Simpson, NL

Number of youth participants

There were 15 youth enrolled in the L'anse-au-Loup area and thirty in Port Hope Simpson. The group in Port Hope Simpson split into two groups because of its large size. The youth were both male and female and covered ages from 12–early 20s. The youth were described as from low-income families and not the ones who usually come out to the youth centre. They were described as “not the keeners or high achievers.”

Pilot overview

The Sealskin Mitt-Making project took place in two communities in Labrador—L'anse-au-Loup and Port Hope Simpson. The focus of the project was to teach traditional skills. In both communities the goal of the youth project was to make sealskin mitts. The focus of the youth program on sealskin mitt-making was new to each community.

Craftspeople worked with a youth coordinator in each community. The project took place over 7-8 weeks in each community from February- April 2014 with participants meeting for 2-3 hours a week.

There was a big celebration at the end of the program where parents and others acknowledged the participants and got to see the mitts that were made.

Need in the community

Sealskin mitt-making reflected the involvement of the parents' and grandparents' work in the seal fishery. This was something the youth knew little about. The art of making seal products had skipped generations, so many adults in the community did not know how to do this. Teaching these skills to youth was seen as a way of preserving culture.

Literacy and essential skills

Embedded literacy played a large role in the project through measuring, tracing, writing in log books and journals, reading patterns and putting together a handbook on how to make sealskin mitts. Working with others, computer use and critical skills were also embedded into the project.

Project outcomes

The youth gained pride and confidence. They got to complete a very difficult project with sealskin mitts as the final product. They learned numeracy and document use in how to measure and make a pattern. They wrote in logs with their feeling and reflections. They learned better oral communication skills through asking questions, following instructions and “puzzling things out.” They completed a guidebook together for sealskin mitt-making. They now want to learn more traditional skills. The project also provided an opportunity for the youth to learn through intergenerational learning.

The communities gained pride in their youth through their accomplishments. These accomplishments were acknowledged at the programs' celebrations at the end of each program. Parents and grandparents were excited to try on the mitts and read the log books.

The communities gained craftspeople who are now confident to work with youth on other projects. Youth coordinators have more awareness of how to embed LES into youth programs.

Project challenges

The biggest challenge was that in one community there were so many youth. This challenge was resolved by splitting the youth into two separate groups and having more experienced youth working with those who needed help.

Another challenge was that it was difficult for the regional coordinator from Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador to provide support in person to these remote communities. It was difficult to communicate by e-mail to follow the projects' progress.

The youth facilitators also needed more guidance in how to frame the reflection questions.

Success factors

- Youth interest in the project
- Supportive youth facilitators and craftspeople
- Support from Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador
- The flexibility allowed on the project

Case Study: *Healthy Eating*



Project partners

The partners in the project were the NWT Literacy Council, Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador, the Community Youth Network and Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health. Seniors also contributed traditional food and taught some traditional skills.

Location

L'Anse-au-Loup and West St. Modeste, NL

Number of youth participants

There were two programs run at the same time in two youth centres. There were 13 youth enrolled in the L'Anse-au-Loup area and 8 in West St. Modeste. The youth were ages 12 to 18.

Seventy percent of participants were female, thirty percent were male. Thirty percent were Aboriginal. All were in school.

Pilot overview

The Healthy Eating Program took place in two communities with exactly the same program. The program ran from October 2014 to February 2015. Participants in each youth centre attended twice a week, for 2 hours. The program took place after school.

The youth centres partnered with a local public health nurse. The session consisted of an information session and then a cooking class. The information sessions focused on why one should eat healthy, reading food labels, budgeting, shopping, understanding the Canada Food Guide and using menus in restaurants.

The youth cooked pastas, spaghetti, chili, stir fries and moose meat stew. They also did partridge soup, fish bubbly bake and baked beans.

Moose meat stew was served at a celebration held at the end of the program.

Need in the community

There was a need to educate youth about healthy food and how to prepare it. People tend to go with what is cheap rather than what is healthy in rural communities. Young people want quick and easy food and tend to eat junk food.

Literacy and essential skills

Embedded literacy came through reading food labels, understanding the Canada Food Guide, and reading and understanding menus. There was also a focus on numeracy in measurements for recipes and budgeting for food shopping.

Project outcomes

The youth learned to cook healthy food and still eat healthy on a budget. Some of the youth did not know how to cook at all. They gained a great deal of self-confidence and an interest in cooking. Through learning to read food labels, they got an understanding of how much sugar and how many food additives there are in processed food. They learned how to cost out meals and why it is better to live off the land. The youth learned how to preserve left-over food as well.

The communities gained because this project has led to a new one where seniors will teach youth traditional cooking skills and the youth will teach them computer skills.

Project challenges

The project used the NWT Literacy Council's *Literacy, Cooking and Nutrition* modules as a guide for embedding LES. However, they used their own recipes. The youth were not interested in any of the games in the materials; they just wanted to do the program.

Success factors

- Youth interest in the project and their level of involvement
- Intergenerational learning with seniors (youth not always viewed positively)
- The focus on embedding LES directly related to the project
- The focus on cooking
- The involvement of the public health nurses

Case Study: *Learning through the Land and Working with Our Hands*



Project partners

The project partners were the NWT Literacy Council, Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador, the Nunatsiavut Government, and the Postville Inuit Community Government.

Location

Postville, NL

Number of youth participants

There were nine participants, two males and seven females between the ages of 13 and 17. The hope was to attract older youth but they were working full-time at the time of the project and/or had families.

Pilot overview

The purpose of the project was to get youth to reconnect with Inuit skills and knowledge through outdoor survival skills. For youth, these skills were seen as secondary and not as highly valued as technology and school skills. The aim of the project was to create the opportunity to connect youth with traditional skills and the land. Five instructors were chosen who grew up on the land and had these skills, as well as experience working on the land.

The project went from November 2014 to February 2015. The youth and instructors usually met every week and the land outings took place on the weekends. There were several components to the project. The youth did snowshoe construction and grassworks construction. They will make a komatik when the instructor is available. On the land, they learned navigation skills, how to set traps, where to find partridges, and how to set up and construct a shelter and light a fire.

Need for the project in the community

There was a need to reconnect youth with Inuit skills and knowledge. Many youth do not have the opportunity or knowledge to go out on the land. Some do not have snowmobiles.

Literacy and essential skills

LES were embedded through the project itself. The learning emphasized oral communication: being vocal, creating connections and expressing feelings among themselves and with the instructors. Other essential skills focused on were pattern making and numeracy.

Project outcomes

The youth were excited about and interested in the project. They gained confidence in themselves and their skills. There were tangible outcomes such as snowshoes and grassworks products (and the komatik to come). A big outcome was how the youth connected with their instructors and Elders. There is a better relationship between the Elders and youth, and the youth are more likely to approach these Elders and others in the future.

The community benefited because Elders saw the commitment of the youth, and changed their perception that the youth are not as active as they were at that age. The Elders are proud of the youth and more likely to approach the youth as well.

Project challenges

One challenge was the timing of the project. Funding for the project was not received until November. The intention had been to take the youth out on the water in boats and teach them navigational skills. The project's late start meant that the youth could not go on the land until December. In addition, timing affected when the instructors were available. Lastly, weather was also a factor.

The project was complex with many different parts and instructors. It would have been better for two people to coordinate the project so they could spell each other off. Often community leaders are already busy in their roles and with travel. Having two coordinators would have made the project run more smoothly, and would have made sure there was always someone available to cover things off.

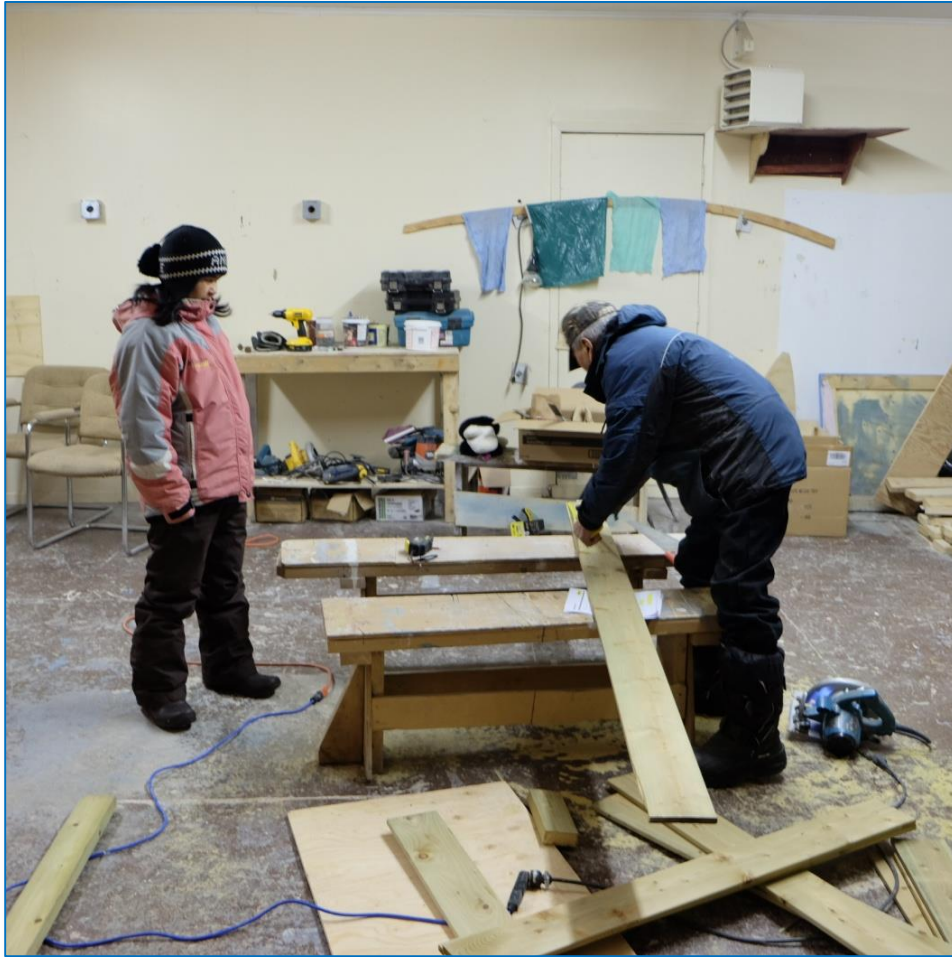
The project was demanding in terms of its coordination on the ground. In the future, it would be good to have someone from the literacy coalition come out when the project is starting. It would be important for both instructors and participants to see there is a higher level of support for the project with interest in the project succeeding. Instructors could also use further development and support.

Success factors

The success factors for this project included:

- youth interest and participation
- experienced instructors who connected with the youth
- support for the project from parents and families of the youth
- the project met a community need
- the project embedded LES naturally

Case Study: *Nain Bench-Making Project*



Partners

Partners on the project were the NWT Literacy Council, Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador, Nunatsiavut Government Division of Youth, Elders and Recreation and Nain Inuit Community Government's Town Council.

Location

Nain, NL

Number of youth participants

Seven young men and women between the ages of 15 and 21 attended the program. Three youth were out of school. Four attended regularly. Two of the seven left during the project to work with youth in Africa.

Pilot overview

The purpose of the project was to make benches that could be used by Elders in Nain as they were walking through the long stretch of the main street. The benches would provide a resting place for Elders and would beautify the town.

The program ran from December 2014 to March 2015. It started out with youth meeting three times a week, then moved to two nights a week and some weekends because of conflicts with other youth activities like sports, drama and travel. During the last part of the project, the youth met four nights a week to complete the project.

A community Elder worked with the youth facilitator. He worked with the youth and taught them to make the benches.

The youth completed eleven benches. These benches will be stained and painted in April 2015 in the warmer weather. There will be a celebration to recognize the youth for their hard work and do the “ribbon cutting” for the benches with all community members in June.

Need for the project in the community

The need for benches for Elders had come up from time to time from Elders themselves and others. The benches would also beautify the community. The youth were interested in the project because it was something different from what they usually did and it was making something for the community.

Literacy and essential skills

The embedded LES component came naturally from building the benches. Youth walked through the plans for the benches which were very complicated. They also moved off the plans to talk about what they would do to create the benches. Through this, they were focusing on thinking skills and deciding what made sense. They were also learning about math and measurements for making the benches. Participants also engaged in teamwork which built naturally on what they already knew. They would give instructions to each other and divide up the work. They discussed how they could do things better.

The youth also went through and learned safety regulations and rules for the work they were doing.

Learning how to work within a structure and a schedule, moving from point A to B, was also part of the essential skills learning.

Changes to the project

The one change was moving from three nights to two and then more sessions near the end of the project to complete the benches.

Project outcomes

The youth gained pride and confidence in what they accomplished. They learned through working with the Elder that it's okay to make mistakes. You can fix mistakes or use the materials for something else later on. There was a great rapport between the youth and the Elder instructor. Youth are "hungry" to learn from Elders. At first the youth were intimidated by the safety rules and thought that making the benches would be difficult. They learned from working with the Elder instructor that it was quite simple.

The youth learned carpentry skills and the essential skills that are part of carpentry such as understanding safety instructions, working in a structure, measuring, thinking skills and teamwork.

Two of the youth now want to go to carpentry school. They are being encouraged to do so.

Project challenges

Challenges centered around having the project in the winter when youth are busy with other activities. It would be better to have the project in late spring, summer or fall. It would also be better to have two people to support the project because the youth facilitator was busy with numerous other youth projects.

Success factors

The success factors for the project included:

- the Elder instructor who was very patient
- the support of the Town Council who donated space in the Fire Hall for the project
- the support of the mayor who visited the project and encouraged the youth
- the support of community members for the project
- the project met a real need in the community
- the project focused on embedding LES naturally through the teachings of the Elder and the components of the project like measurement and safety
- the project avoided a school-based approach to literacy with a classroom and paperwork

Case Study: *Making Picnic Tables*



Project partners

The partners on the project were the NWT Literacy Council, Liidii Kue First Nation (LKFN) Education and Training Department, Noah Enterprises for their in-kind contribution of shop space, and Rowes Construction for their in-kind delivery of supplies.

Location

Fort Simpson, NT

Number of youth participants

The project started out with ten youth and six completed the project. All were male under 35, unemployed and out of school.

Pilot overview

The youth project in Fort Simpson focused on building picnic tables with LKFN youth. The three-week project was completed on May 20, 2014. The project ran every day for three weeks. Participants were paid to attend through the LKFN Training and Education

Department. The youth completed eight out of ten picnic tables working with a local carpenter/trainer.

Need for the project in the community

There was a need to provide this kind of programming for unemployed, out-of-school youth in the community. The picnic tables are being used by an on-the-land project for disengaged youth.

Literacy and essential skills

The trainer and youth facilitator focused on developing skills to build the picnic tables. Together, the trainer and youth facilitator incorporated essential skills development-- filling in necessary forms, measurement, Internet search, group rules, and cultural principles and values.

Project outcomes

The youth gained confidence and pride, realized the importance of being on time, and learned how to work as a team. They were viewed more positively by the community as a result of completing the project. There were judgments about these young men “not doing anything.” The project showed their commitment. They learned essential skills such as:

- filling in forms
- using computers for stencils
- traditional storytelling
- measurement
- teamwork

All the youth want to work on another project. The youth facilitator is looking for another project for them to work on, possibly building a gazebo.

The community benefited because participating youth felt worthy and hopeful. The youth want to contribute by working on another project that will benefit the community. Better relationships were developed between youth and community members.

Project challenges

One challenge was getting support for the project at the beginning. Another challenge was that the youth facilitator did not understand enough about embedding LES into the program. She also needed more support with facilitation skills.

Success factors

The success factors for the project included:

- a strong trainer
- the support of the community
- the project met a community need
- the project embedded LES naturally
- the project avoided using a classroom-style approach and embarrassing the youth
- a number of different funders and contributors

Case Study: Northern Transportation (NT) Boats Project



Project partners

The partners in the project were Northern Transportation Company Limited, Soaring Eagle Friendship Centre, Youth Centres Canada, Hay River Youth Centre, and the NWT Literacy Council.

Location

Hay River, NT

Number of youth participants

The youth were from the Ka'tlodee'che First Nation and some older youth from Hay River looking to gain skills and work experience on the shipyard. Those attending were from 14 to 30 years of age with twice as many males as females.

Ten regulars came to work on the boats two nights a week. There was also a film group with six youth once a week. These two groups overlapped.

Pilot overview

The Boats project started in February 2014. It was aimed at out-of-school youth from Hay River and the Ka'tlodee'che First Nation.

The overall purpose of this project was to provide pre-trades skills to youth through refurbishing and building boats. The hope was that the project would be accessible to “out-of-school” youth in the community and provide them with marketable skills.

Another goal was to include a community-based literacy project as part of the bigger project where the youth would investigate the relationship between water and their history by working on a film. This project would teach digital literacy and allow participants to research and tell their own story. The idea was to have the youths' work and stories shared with the community as part of the collective picture of the past.

Need in the community

My home is here in the North, in Hay River where I will stay. I am an aboriginal person, born and raised here and have a strong interest in seeing our maritime history preserved and recognition given to the contributions that the Dene and Métis people have made to further economic development of the North. Recognizing this history and providing useful skills and knowledge to our youth is a significant feature of the project and that is worthy of support.

--Bea Lepine⁵

The project came about as a result of several community members' interest in “providing the materials and expertise needed to pass on their own knowledge and skills after so many years spent on the water and in the marine industry.”⁶

Literacy and essential skills

The embedded literacy and essential skill component was added into the project and consisted of the filmmaking component of the project. The idea was that some of the youth working to refurbish the boats would learn filmmaking and storytelling skills and tell the story of the history of the boats and the water in Hay River. LES were also developed in the planning and refurbishing of the boats.

⁵ <http://ntboatsproject.com/about-us/>

⁶ Project proposal

Project outcomes

The youth learned pre-trades skills by working in the shipyard refurbishing boats. They also learned safety skills, teamwork skills and thinking skills along with a professional attitude. Two youth went on to get apprenticeships and others went back to school on the Ka'tlodee'che First Nation.

The youth in the film club learned technical skills related to filmmaking. The youth saw filmmaking as a viable career path through working with an experienced filmmaker.

The project was not able to meet its goal of marrying the filmmaking with the boat refurbishing.

The communities gained through new partnerships and relationships that had not been present before.

Project challenges

There were a number of challenges on the project. These challenges included not always having enough volunteers to run the filmmaking component of the project. Therefore, inconsistent staffing had an impact on youth attendance.

Another challenge was the location for the film club. The original location was the youth centre which did not have good lighting. The film club moved to a room in the library. While this location had better lighting, it was a public place and the youth did not like to film there. The shipyard would have been a good place but the film club volunteers could not attend the nights the youth were working on the boats. In addition the instructors at the shipyard were not keen on having filming there unless there was something special.

There was also confusion on the part of the youth facilitator around the role of the NWT Literacy Council in developing resources for the project. The youth facilitator would have preferred to have only one contact from the council (opposed to two) and more ongoing communication.

Success factors

- youth interest in carpentry and getting a trade
- youth interest in filmmaking
- community support
- committed volunteers
- practical hands-on experience

Case Study: Creative Storytelling Youth Program



Project partners

Partners on the project were the NWT Literacy Council, Ilitaqsinik, Department of Recreation and Culture, TD Bank Group, Michealle Jean Foundation, and the Hamlet of Baker Lake. Other contributors were Calm Air, The Northern Store, the Jesse Oonark Centre, Sanavip Co-op, and the Jerry Cans.

Location

Baker Lake, NU

Number of youth participants

Forty youth participants attended the program over the summer of 2014. There was a mix of male and female participants.

Pilot overview

The program ran from July 2 to August 7 as a drop-in centre. An average of 12-13 youth attended each day. The goal of the program was to develop creative ways for youth to tell stories. The youth were mentored in storytelling by three Elders. Two youth facilitators and two summer students also worked on the program. Other teachers were brought in as well. Youth were then able to discover and develop their own creative stories through the program. Storytelling was a unifying theme across art forms.

The workshops in the program focused on many traditional and contemporary art forms. The focus of the workshops included: storytelling with Elders, poetry, traditional songs, making a video, sketching, painting, sculpture, digital photography and much more.

Towards the end of the program, the youth shared their own art and stories with the community. The last day of the program was an Open House where the community could come and see the work of the youth from the entire summer. There were snacks and cake to celebrate the work of the youth.

Need for the project in the community

This pilot was important for the community by providing a way for youth to contribute to the arts. Baker Lake has had a history of prominent artists. However, there was no way for youth to contribute or for programming that connects youth and Elders through creative arts.

Literacy and essential skills

LES were built into the program through the creative storytelling process itself, singing and poetry and the many steps and instructions for creating other art forms. The youth listened to the Elders' stories, asked them questions about the stories, retold the stories and then as group created their own stories. They also wrote poetry and listened to and discussed oral poetry of others. Throat singing and traditional singing were another focus. The traditional songs were broken down and then sung by participants. Essential skills and literacy were embedded into the planning process for filmmaking and learning digital photography. Digital skills and learning occurred through the editing process with Photoshop.

Project outcomes

Art is not what you see. It is what you make others see!

--Youth participant

The youth learned a variety of art forms including how to make a video. Through the learning of the art forms, they practiced and learned essential skills such as:

- planning a video (thinking, reading and writing skills)
- writing stories and poetry (writing skills)
- communicating with Elders, asking them questions and synthesizing stories told (oral communication and thinking skills)
- digital skills in filmmaking and photography (computer and thinking skills)
- listening and understanding traditional stories and songs
- listening and understanding instructions for filmmaking and digital photography including numeracy skills, document use skills, thinking skills and digital photography skills

Community members and parents were supportive and excited about the program. They attended the program celebration. Many community members came by to see the program and made comments on Facebook. The program connected youth to Elders through art and has started a new generation of youth artists in a community well-known for its art.

Project challenges

The biggest challenge was getting youth to remember to come at the same time each day because of 24 hours of daylight and the fact the program was drop-in. In addition, it was difficult to get the target age group of 15 years and older. This age group was not as available during the summer (due to jobs and other programs) so the program focused on younger youth. The workshops had to be adjusted for this change. Another challenge was having a number of guest instructors back out.

Success factors

The success factors for Creative Storytelling Program included:

- talented youth facilitators and Elders
- the support of the community
- the project met a community need
- great media coverage
- a number of different funders and contributors

Case Study: *Kivalliq Hockey Camp*



Project partners

Partners on the project were the NWT Literacy Council, Ilitaqsiniq, Hockey Nunavut, Hockey North, ROCH, Manni Uluiuk School, Canadian Tire Jump Start and the Hamlet of Rankin Inlet.

Location

Rankin Inlet, NU

Number of youth participants

There were twelve youth leaders (two females and ten males from ages 15-21) who worked with and coached 130 children in four different groups: Initiation Novice (ages 4 – 8), Atom/Peewee (ages 9 -12), Girls (ages 11- 17), and Bantam/Midgets (ages 13- 17).

Pilot overview

The camp ran from October 20 -25 during the teachers' Professional Development week. The players had two ice times a day: one that focused on skating and the other on puck skills. The players also had literacy sessions every day that focused on team work, setting goals and being a good team mate and more. They also had an hour off ice session on conditioning, healthy living and eating right. At the end of the camp, there were games and a pizza party to celebrate the success of the camp.

The twelve youth leaders worked with the players on and off the ice and in the classroom. They were assigned a group and assisted with the running of the camp in all aspects. They

got support in coaching from the three facilitators and attended a special coaching workshop.

Need for the project in the community

This pilot was important for the community in terms of further building the skills of youth leaders as coaches, and to provide an opportunity for hockey camp and literacy development that the players might not have had.

Literacy and essential skills

The youth leaders reviewed on ice lesson plans daily and completed other embedded literacy activities including daily written learning logs and evaluation. They also learned teamwork and leadership skills, as well as oral communication, by managing the players and dealing with issues and conflicts.

The players participated in daily literacy activities where they discussed and wrote about:

- their goals
- healthy eating
- building a team
- being a good player
- appreciation and gratitude
- why I love hockey
- heroes
- empowerment
- compliments
- group Values

Some of the activities were displayed in the recreation hall where players, parents and other communities could view them.

Project outcomes

The players learned new life skills through the embedded literacy component of the hockey camp. They were more engaged in learning about themselves, hockey and their teammates. The personal development approach which used literacy as a vehicle was viewed positively by the players.

The youth leaders learned confidence, patience, how to more effectively coach children and communicate with them, how to explain drills, and how to be a good leader. They also learned sportsmanship, how to skate better, and how to deal with different types of players. They liked helping kids succeed, being a leader, helping hockey in the community and

providing an experience they did not have. They also liked getting paid for their work. Some felt they became more independent in coaching and dealing with player issues.

They indicated that players learned respect, got more determination, became more outgoing and they got faster.

They mostly rated the hockey camp as excellent or very good. They thought the hockey camp was excellent or very good at incorporating LES learning.

The community gained camp leaders, most of whom are coaching and volunteering with Minor Hockey coaches. In the words of the hockey camp youth coordinator, “They have become role models for the youth in our community.”

Community members and parents were involved and excited about the camp.

Project challenges

Most of the project challenges happened before the camp started. One challenge was finding the right partners and enough partners. Another was working out the scheduling so it worked for everyone.

During the camp one challenge was managing 130 kids in the first few days. Another was making sure that those players who stayed at the arena for their lunch were supervised.

The days were very long for the youth leaders. One idea was to have more youth leaders next time so they could have more breaks.

Success factors

The success factors for the Hockey Camp included:

- the right partners
- the combination of instructors and youth facilitators for on the ice, off the ice and literacy
- the support of the community
- the project met a community need
- great media coverage
- motivated youth leaders

Case Study: *Tan'an Kwach'an Youth Learning Project*



Project partners

The partners on the project were the NWT Literacy Council, Yukon Literacy Coalition, Salmon Sub-Committee, and the Tan'an Kwach'an Council.

Location

Lake Laberge, YT

Number of youth participants

Six youth leaders were part of the project, three males and three females from 15-25 years old.

Pilot overview

In the summer of 2013, a pre-pilot took place within the Tan'an Kwach'an Council's fishing/summer camp. This camp takes place on the shores of Lake Laberge, near Whitehorse. The summer camp takes 20-25 children under the age of 13. Families, Elders, youth and youth leaders get together to share language, culture, skills, food and music. The Tan'an Kwach'an Council hired six youth leaders to help with the camp. In this case, their role was also to do the embedded literacy project. The focus of the project was to plan and make a video of the story of salmon fishing in the area.

The youth spent one day before the camp in the classroom focusing on leadership, the salmon story, technical aspects of filming and camera work, and video development. They spent half a day on site practising their filming. They then met the next week at the camp, where they spent five days filming. The youth worked on the story development, critical thinking and leadership skills, interviewing skills and questions along with the technical aspects of filming including editing. At the end of the pilot, the youth had made a video on salmon fishing, and a professional editor edited the final version.

There was a celebration in December 2013 where the video was shown to the community and the youth were acknowledged. The video can be viewed at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuMdJhV7s8w>

Need for the project in the community

The community wanted to educate people on the importance of salmon in their culture along with how they incorporate culture into their summer camp. The video covered both at the same time.

Literacy and essential skills

The youth worked on the story development, critical thinking and leadership skills, interviewing skills and questions along with the technical aspects of filming including editing.

Project outcomes

The fish project was very successful. The youth learned a variety of skills, both technical and essential skills. The youth learned how to film and be responsible for equipment. With essential skills, they developed relationship skills, respect, interviewing skills, how to develop a story and how to stay on task. They also stuck with the program. The greatest skill they learned through the project was filming to tell a story.

The youth indicated they were very comfortable with the facilitator. They liked his pace and that he was “mellow.” Their favourite and most important learnings were on the technical side. One of the participants is thinking of going to college for filmmaking.

Project challenges

One challenge was that the planning process was not, nor was the role of the regional coordinator was in supporting a pre-pilot project. Also a number of tools were not in place

and needed to be developed (e.g. a proposal and contract template). In addition, the timeline to plan the project and develop relevant essential skills materials was short.

One challenge was having one youth who was not engaged in the project. Also, some aspects of the project were difficult for the youth, such as developing interview questions, interviewing and thinking critically about the project. There was also a fine balance between giving the youth the reins and managing or controlling things as a facilitator.

Success factors

- There was good support, trust and communication among the partners.
- The facilitator's guide on LES developed specifically for this project was useful; the facilitator used the majority of the materials in the guide.
- The project took place within the structure of the camp.
- The youth were leaders and one took the role of leader for the group.
- There was a bigger purpose in the project in that it was telling the story of salmon; salmon being of great cultural importance to the Tan'an Kwach'an Council.
- The hook for the youth was the technology.
- The project had a passionate and skilled facilitator with good connections.
- The planning day before the camp started allowed for more filming at the camp.

Case Study: *Gearing Up*



Project partners

Partners on the project were the NWT Literacy Council, Yukon Literacy Coalition, Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation government (recreation and education divisions), Robert Service School and Dawson City Recreation Board.

Location

Dawson City, YT

Number of youth participants

Seven young men and one woman between the ages of 18 and 22 attended the program.

Pilot overview

Gearing Up was planned as an 8-week bicycle repair program for youth of the Tr'ondek Hwech'in community of Dawson City. The program was designed to operate three hours a day, four days a week. LES were planned for weeks 2 to 7 through activities such as creating a youth blog and a Facebook page, a community needs assessment, customer service,

finances and entrepreneurship. The program was held in the local school. The staff on the project were a youth worker and Lead Hand bike repair person.

The program ran Tuesday to Friday from noon to 3 pm. Once a week, one of two bike mechanics flew in from Whitehorse to work with the youth. They came in from bike shops in Whitehorse. They taught the youth how to repair bikes and how to strip down old bikes for parts. The youth facilitator worked with the mechanics to deliver the program.

Elder circles were conducted to discuss the progress participants made and their plans for the future. They also discussed the school expectations and gauged the interest of the youth in the program.

Need for the project in the community

This pilot was important for the community because there were disengaged youth in the community who were unemployed and had dropped out of school. These youth had gotten into trouble. There was also no one who could do bicycle repair in the community and partnerships between different organizations needed to be strengthened.

Literacy and essential skills

The program included essential skills development in the areas of numeracy (pressure numbers, size fits to frames, etc.), teamwork, critical thinking skills and oral communication. There was also a lot of continuous learning as participants took new information they learned from the mechanics and applied it working on their bikes. Helping each other and working together was important, as was learning to communicate their needs and successes to facilitators and mechanics and during sharing time. For one participant, embedded LES focused on writing, reading, and document use as he learned how to set up a business, develop marketing and focus on customer service.

Changes to the project

Originally, the program was to work through particular workshops and content each day but that changed dramatically. It became a drop-in program that focused on actually repairing community members' bikes. Only one participant was interested in the more formal LES activities that had been planned as part of the program.

Project outcomes

None of the youth had completed high school and all were unemployed. Most had had issues with the school system and it was considered quite the success that they were willing to come into the school for this program. The youth learned how to repair bikes and gained essential skills associated with both learning together and bike repair. One youth was

enrolled in Tr'ondek Hwech'in alternative education program and earned a high school credit through the pilot.

Community partnerships created through the bicycle repair project were very significant. The Tr'ondek Hwech'in Education Department, Tr'ondek Hwech'in Youth Centre and Robert Service School joined forces to make this project possible. The partnership with Robert Service School was momentous as relationships between the youth participants and school faculty had not been consistently positive during the time that youth stopped attending high school in previous years. Participants were also asked by Robert Service School to create a display for the arrival of Clara Hughes, Olympic medalist, for Clara's Big Ride, a national bike tour to help raise awareness and acceptance of mental illness. Due to the positive results and successes of the program, partnerships in the future are likely to happen again in the future.

The community wants to continue the bike repair program. As well, a paid work position was created for a local youth who was targeted as a potential candidate to continue bike repair in the community after this project.

Project challenges

One of the project challenges was that the youth were not interested in the more formal LES activities prepared as part of the bicycle repair project. The business component for the program was intimidating to some. The youth were only interested in repairing bikes. Thus the embedded literacy activities had to focus on areas related to bike repair only. Another challenge was the original program design. The format was changed to a drop-in one as the youth were not interested in coming to a formal program. Another challenge for the youth coordinator was working with multiple funders, which involved overwhelming paperwork. In addition, she indicated that she would like to have been more knowledgeable on what embedded LES meant.

Success factors

The success factors for Gearing Up included:

- adjusting the program to meet the needs of the youth
- having male instructors
- the support of the community and Elders
- the partnership with the school
- the project met a community need