

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

Annotations for the Literature Review

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I. Introduction

This document provides an annotated bibliography for the project *Reconnect: Re-engaging Disengaged Northern Youth in Learning*. The companion piece to this report is a literature review report which summarizes the findings of the literature review and the relevance of the findings to this project.

The development of the annotated bibliography was an ongoing process throughout the first two years of the project. The lessons from the literature review were applied to the youth pilot programs undertaken as part of this project.

II. Objectives of the Literature Review

The objectives of the literature review were:

- To uncover what literacy practices are important to youth.
- To identify what motivates youth to learn.
- To identify Aboriginal learning styles.
- To identify best practices for northern youth learning.
- To determine alternative methods of assessment that are appropriate for Aboriginal youth.
- To identify alternative, community-based programming for implicitly and explicitly embedding literacy for northern youth.
- To find practical resources that include considerations for program development.
- And to determine the importance of evaluation in youth programs.

III. Youth Engagement

1. Crooks, C., Chiodo, D. & Thomas, D. (2009). *Engaging and empowering Aboriginal youth: A tool kit for service providers.*

<http://www.youthrelationships.org/documents/Engaging%20and%20Empowering%20Aboriginal%20Youth%20-%20Toolkit%20for%20Service%20Providers.pdf>

Purpose of the tool kit:

The purpose of this tool kit is to provide guidance on making programs more appropriate and relevant for Aboriginal youth. It is for educators, service providers, facilitators, community partners and researchers. The authors advocate for a strength-based approach to programming that takes into consideration the historical Canadian context of colonization and assimilation.

Contents of the tool kit:

This document includes:

- A description of four guiding principles for enhanced programming
- Introductory materials to provide context for working with Aboriginal youth, including culturally specific factors
- Specific strategies
- Working with schools
- Research ideas

Guiding principles:²

1. **Understanding and integrating cultural identity.** The loss of cultural identity and values is a major risk factor faced by Aboriginal youth. It is critical to address this loss in programming for youth.
2. **Increasing youth engagement.** Youth engagement is both a process and a desired outcome. Youth engagement means providing a range of roles for youth who become engaged, and providing them with opportunities to become leaders in addition to being participants.

¹ The term Aboriginal has been used by the authors with the knowledge that it is problematic. Some partners see

² These principles are taken from p. 15 of the tool kit.

3. **Fostering youth empowerment.** Empowerment is an extension of youth engagement. Empowerment includes supporting youth in the development of skills, competencies and identity, but also supporting them in using these skills for social change.
4. **Establishing and maintaining effective partnerships.** Effective and appropriate partnerships are an important foundation to any prevention programming, but the importance of these relationships is amplified when working with Aboriginal youth and their communities.

The tool kit describes these principles in more detail and provides more guidance in how to implement the principles in programming. Case studies are provided with links back to how they integrate with the four foundational principles. For example, 10 considerations for integrating cultural identity into programming are offered as an introductory strategy.

Youth engagement:

For the principle of increasing youth engagement the authors emphasize the need to meet youth where they are at and address the following youth needs:

- Basic physical needs
- Emotional wellness and needs for healing
- Spiritual trauma
- Their interests
- Their commitment to an initiative

Barriers to youth engagement include:

- Competing demands
- Lack of trust
- Poverty
- Adult attitudes
- Childcare
- Transportation
- The degree of cultural connectedness among youth
- Individual histories

The tool kit includes a number of useful tools for thinking about youth engagement:

- Strategies for youth engagement at the program level
- Ethical guidelines
- Considerations for doing an organizational audit for youth engagement

- Ways to involve youth in organizations
- The role of adults

Fostering youth empowerment:

The tool kit includes the following ideas for fostering empowerment:

- Creative ideas for community action
- Mentoring youth as a way to empowerment
- Leadership opportunities for youth

Establishing and maintaining effective partnerships:

Partnerships are described as the most important factor in enhancing programming for Aboriginal youth. Partners will vary from program to program but overall include:

- Service providers
- Educators
- Funders
- Community (including Elders)
- Family
- Researchers

The section on partnerships includes guidelines for selecting partners and accessing Elders.

Working with schools:

This section focuses on the advantages of working with schools and what educators can do to better engage youth. It discusses ways to honour the learning styles of Aboriginal youth and increase the capacity of educators to work with Aboriginal youth. The section includes ways to engage parents and integrate culture into programming.

Research and evaluation:

This section outlines guidelines and considerations for research and evaluation. The authors emphasize that an indigenous worldview is holistic and includes “spirit, emotions, heart and body.” This worldview needs to be an integral part of the research methodology. Community participation and ownership of the research is identified as critical. Researchers working in indigenous communities must know something of the worldviews, history and values of the people they are working with. Moreover, research needs to empower and be

an instrument of healing rather than oppression. It needs to be useful to and respectful of indigenous people.

While non-indigenous researchers can use their skills in conducting research with Aboriginal youth and other partners, there are some important considerations.

- Rethinking research priorities so that they are aligned with the interests and priorities of the Aboriginal partners one is working with.
- Being aware and using ethical frameworks developed for research with Aboriginal partners.
- Working with community partners to conduct the research.
- The importance of documenting process where some of the most important lessons occur.

This section outlines the importance of program evaluation and importance of making it ethical and useful to those involved—focusing on the effectiveness of the programs involved. The steps in evaluation are outlined along with types (needs assessment, formative and summative) and different methods of data collection. Some basic guidelines for conducting interviews are offered. The authors indicate that in the case of youth programming, youth should be involved in designing the questions and carrying out the evaluation. They can contribute to data analysis, making recommendations and disseminating the results.

Finally, outcomes measured and timelines need to be realistic, and methodologies need to be appropriate to the context with youth. Examples of sample questions are given.

2. Forum for Youth Investment. (2001). *Lessons learned, lessons shared: Reflections from the International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development*. <http://www.forumfyi.org/files/LessonsLearned.pdf>

Purpose of the research:

This document provides lessons learned from a cross-national learning experience involving 10 countries. Twenty leaders in youth and community development participated. Half were from the United States. They formed the International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development (ILG). The Group was facilitated by the Forum for Youth Investment. The purpose was to bring international perspectives into US discussions on youth development. The purpose of the learning experience was to “better understand how

young people and adults working together can make significant changes in their own lives and in the lives of their communities and societies.”³

These leaders made site visits in five countries in small groups. After that, they participated in a regional conference that looked at learnings across the sites and nations. They continued their work through local projects in their own countries, on-line conversations, and writings about their work and what they had learned. All of this built on what they learned in the “travelling seminar.” The Forum for Youth Investment’s role is to do research, synthesize learnings and share information.

This publication focuses on the Latin American experience of the ILG. The writings included took place during and after this trip. The focus of the document is a reflection on issues and ideas about youth development and participation, in a context of youth marginalization and community development.

The publication is divided into three sections as follows:

1. International Insights on Youth and Communities
2. Common Themes and Contrasting Contexts: Reflections of the Latin American Experience
3. Lessons learned from the ILG Experiment

Research findings:

The key findings from the ILG learning experiences in Latin America include the following lessons.

The first issue that had to be discussed and shared among ILC members was the meaning of key concepts like youth participation and community development. After multiple discussions to surface tensions and differences, some new ideas and premises were documented that mostly but not entirely reflected the position of the members.

These premises were:⁴

- Community supports are integral to young people’s development.
- Youth participation is integral to young people’s development.
- Youth participation is integral to community well-being and social change.
- Community well-being is not synonymous with community development.
- Youth participation is more than community service.

³ See page 1.

⁴ See page 8.

- Youth participation requires space.
- Youth participation requires protection.
- Youth participation requires connections.
- Youth participation is a basic right and obligation.

Each premise is described in detail in the report. There is also a discussion on the premises and some of the positions of ILG members as well as differences of opinion. Participation of youth is described as both a responsibility and a right.

The report includes the following insights around youth development and engagement:

- The process of youth development needs to start with self-identify and be followed by a nurturing and enhancing of their potential; then ensuring they are contributing to youth and community development.
- The ILG and others identify strategies for change for youth engagement that include:
 - Building capacity of youth to mobilize
 - Changing social, cultural and political environments to support young people
 - Transforming mainstream institutions to include youth as stakeholders, and
 - Creating connections among organizations that are already engaging young people.
- The ILG has developed a process for youth engagement and community change which includes consideration of context and youth and community outcomes.
- The ILG found through their Latin American visit that there is no shortage of programs and activities. What is lacking is information on how they work, what expectations support them and what impact they have. The LG concludes that it is difficult to advance youth development without this information.
- The ILG created a Pathways for Youth Framework that asks about:
 - The extent to which youth are playing meaningful roles in community life.
 - What intentional strategies have been created to enhance the capacity of youth as change agents.
 - What the outcomes and evidence of these strategies are.

As a result of these important issues, the Forum and ILG developed a learning agenda to explore answers to these questions over a number of years.

- The outcomes questions are important to who benefits from these strategies and what results there are for youth and community development and improvement.
- A key conundrum was how young people could be asked to contribute to their communities when their basic rights around education and employment, etc. were not being met.

3. Kielburger, M. & C. (2012). Flexible approach to education helps engage Aboriginal youth. *Edmonton Journal*. February 20, 2012.

This article describes the school experiences of one youth who was bussed to a public high school from a reserve in British Columbia. The school was not welcoming and did not include much Aboriginal culture. However, the youth completed high school in spite of these barriers.

At the urging of his chief, he became a teacher. He focused on short stories by Aboriginal authors in his English class. He found that students became engaged and more successful in school when they were able to connect with their culture.

4. Lafferty, D. (2012). DO EDÀEZHE⁵: Building resiliency among Aboriginal youth. *Community Health* 10 (2).

Do Edàezhe is a crime prevention program developed by Yellowknife Catholic Schools which focuses on “enhancing capacities of identified youth to decrease risk factors and enhance protective factors related to crime and victimization” (p.217). It is a strength-based approach.

⁵ Do Edàezhe is a Dogrib term meaning a person who is “capable, skilful and knowledgeable; a person who has the skills to survive in the world in a Dene sense.

Purpose of the article:

- To outline the challenges faced by the youth and the need for a strength-based approach
- To describe the Do Edàzhe approach
- To illustrate the preliminary impact of the program

Findings:**Youth in NWT:**

- The number of Aboriginal youth who stay in school is “unacceptably low.” (41% of students are likely to graduate as compared to 75% elsewhere in Canada.)
- Youth violent crime is an issue.
- High risk behaviours and environments affect the health and well-being of Aboriginal youth.
- Youth unemployment rate is high.
- The suicide rate is five times the national average.

Do Edàzhe concept:

- There are three tiers of increasing intensity of services based on need.
- All youth get community liaison support (support to address barriers to attending school).
- Some get mentoring (an adult who is a positive and supportive role model meets with the youth once a week).
- A small subset of those mentored get to take part in the Leadership and Resiliency Program (main component of Do Edàzhe; affirms that language and culture are key to success in education).
- The Leadership and Resiliency Program includes cultural activities, service activities, and resiliency groups which address important areas related to students’ lives.

Impacts of the Do Edàzhe approach:

Positive impacts for Aboriginal youth were identified through parents, staff and academic indicators. Parents saw an increase in self-confidence and self-esteem. Staff saw that students gained self-esteem, a positive attitude about school, and leadership skills.

Academic impacts include:

- Overall improvement in attendance at school
- Decrease in office referrals
- Increase in academic performance

5. McCreary Centre Society (2007). *Against the odds: A profile of marginalized and street-involved youth in BC*

http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/Against_the_odds_2007_web.pdf.

Purpose of the research:

Surveys were conducted with 762 marginalized, street-involved youth in nine communities across BC. The goals of the research were to:

- Provide an accurate picture of the experiences of marginalized, street-involved youth.
- Address misconceptions that others have about these youth.
- Compare results of the survey used in this research with findings from a previous survey six years earlier.

Research findings:

- The percentage of Aboriginal youth who are street-involved is disproportionate compared to other youth, and there has been an increase of almost 20% of street-involved Aboriginal youth.
- Youth in the survey still had strong connections to their families despite some challenges.
- One in three was working at a legal job or attending school.
- These youth were three times more likely to have been sexually abused than their counterparts in school.
- Half of the youth identified mental or emotional concerns.
- The best support for counselling was their peers.
- They identified job training and shelter as their biggest needs.

Recommendations from the report⁶:

- Provide adequate services to address the needs of youth and their families.
- Prioritize assistance and education for families of young adolescents.
- Provide access to substance use treatment, safe and supportive housing options, job training, education, and youth mental health services.
- Provide additional supports to help youth reach their educational goals.
- Address the unacceptably high levels of sexual exploitation, violence, abuse and discrimination experienced by youth.
- Provide Aboriginal organizations with the capacity to offer culturally appropriate safe housing and other supportive services, in order to address the rising numbers of Aboriginal youth who are marginalized and street-involved.

6. Yalem, N. and Martin, S. (2007). Building the evidence base for youth engagement: Reflections on youth and democracy. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 35(6): 807-810.

Purpose of the commentary:

This commentary serves as an introduction to seven articles that make the case for engaging young people, especially those that are marginalized. This special issue brings the voices of researchers into the conversation. The authors of the seven articles are consistent in that both psychological and sociological theories have failed to capture the role of activism and civic engagement in both youth and community development. Youth engagement alongside adults is an area where practice has long been ahead of research. These seven articles lay the groundwork for future research.

Findings:

Broadening the youth paradigm:

Overall, some of the articles make the case for broadening the youth paradigm suggesting that a social justice perspective needs to be incorporated into theories of adolescent development. A second idea is that a focus needs to move from the individual to the collective and look at structural barriers to youth participation. In addition, the youth paradigm should focus on political sensitivities during youth, the role of power in relation to well-being, and a broadened understanding of the political dimensions of social action. The authors note that the linking of justice and wellness (programs that help youth focus on the injustice in their lives) are the exception rather than the rule.

⁶ See P. 49

Predictors for youth engagement:

The articles in this special feature shed light on predictors of youth engagement and how this engagement can be fostered. The articles focus on two categories of predictors: 1) individual and family, and 2) structural/community.

Motivation for engagement is identified as key with internal and external predictors. These predictors include family, peers, individual characteristics and the nature of the issue undertaken. The importance of structural predictors is raised as well. These predictors include space, social recognition, pathways for involvement and a supportive environment.

Measuring impact of youth engagement:

The question of “measuring impact” is described as complex. Measuring impact could focus on the individual or on community impact. Although both forms of impact are cited as important, little research has managed to examine and measure both kinds. Most individual impacts that have been identified include better adjustment, more socio-political awareness, a better sense of control, and hopefulness. In addition, youth may gain skills related to planning and communication, and more awareness around health issues. As well, some scholars indicate that the development of a positive identity increases over time.

The authors of this article call for a balance of research focusing on both types of impact.

A future research agenda:

The seven articles in the special issue advance the research agenda for youth engagement. They introduce new frameworks and measures, along with gaps that need to be addressed through research to inform practice. One gap is differentiating among the different types of youth engagement along with their philosophies and approaches. Other gaps include the various roles of youth and adults in these engagements, and frequency and length of the engagement. Some frameworks are being used to address these issues. Specific attention needs to be focused on marginalized youth. Finally, important research gaps include what factors sustain involvement and, conversely, what factors inhibit it.

IV. Youth and Learning

7. Bonnell, J. and Ziziys, T. (2005) *Best practices for youth programming*.
<http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com/downloads/whatWeDo/reports/YouthBestPractices-FinalPublicReport.pdf>

Purpose of the research:

The purpose of the research was to determine practices that develop the full potential of youth and improve their chances of making a successful transition to adulthood.

This report summarizes the findings from this research, based on an extensive literature review of over 80 academic and community sector studies and reports, interviews with over 40 key informants, a focus group with youth leaders and outreach workers, and profiles of 12 programs demonstrating best practices in action. For the purposes of the research, a youth was 12-13 years old to early twenties.

Research findings:

The authors emphasize the need to exercise caution around best practices. Agencies need to look at the strength of the evidence and how the practices may or may not fit their context. The importance of measuring outcomes rigorously is stressed. The use of control groups to measure outcomes is noted as an effective but expensive strategy.

The three themes that came out of the literature around best practises were:

- **The use of an asset-based approach**, where the skills of youth are built on and promoted. The importance of not focusing on what needs fixing is emphasized. There is a need to build on what youth bring in holistic ways, with youth as part of the solution. Building capacity is important.
- **The need to have a supportive adult**, which means having an adult who takes a personal interest in the youth in an informal or formal way.
- **The importance of effective program implementation, along with the importance of evaluation to measure learning increments and identify areas for improvement.** Aspects of effective program implementation include:
 - Having a clear, sharply-focused purpose
 - The importance of measurement to find out what works and what doesn't for ongoing improvement and continuous learning
 - The need to build organizational capacity
 - The importance of collaboration and partnerships
 - The importance of partnering with schools

- Making sure programs are accessible to youth
- Recognizing the diversity of youth

The literature review focused on seven different areas:

- The importance of both workforce and youth development in employment and training
- Services, and strategies for newcomer youth to engage them
- Youth violence prevention
- Youth social recreation and how to increase participation
- Youth engagement

The research found that engaging at-risk youth through successful programs requires:

- A clear focus
- “Critical mass” impact within a confined geographical area
- Provision of a range of services
- Involvement of numerous community partners

The research shows the importance of:

- Having a conceptual framework for youth programming because it is complex, often involving whole communities and many partners.
- Articulating lessons learned and best practices across the community sector as a way of continuous learning.

8. UK Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (2013). *Motivation and barriers to learning for young people who are not in education, employment or training*. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/70141/bis-13-548-motivation-and-barriers-to-learning-for-young-people-not-in-education-employment-or-training.pdf

Purpose of the research:

Overall, there has been an increase in the number of young people aged 18-24 who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in the United Kingdom. The NEET research project was launched to develop a better understanding of this phenomenon so that policies can be better targeted to this group.

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) was commissioned to do the research. The objectives of the research were to:

- Better understand the aspirations and motivations of young people not in training, education and employment
- Support service providers in learning and skills to secure institution-specific evidence to develop their understanding in relation to these issues
- Inform individual provider strategies to meet the needs of these youth and adults in their location
- Inform the national strategy for raising the participation age

NIACE conducted 806 interviews with young people who fit the criteria.

Research findings:

Motivation to learn:

The research identifies 14 motivators to learn. The top four centre around:

- Career development
- Employment
- Increased employability
- Getting qualifications.

Other motivators focus on developing skills, personal development or enjoyment. Young people also indicate they are motivated by professional and family/peer support.

Participants said that a relaxed atmosphere, being treated as adults by instructors, and shorter courses were important for the learning environment.

Providing structure to the day and financial support were also motivators for learning.

Barriers to learning:

The top barriers to learning for young people were:

1. Family and peers
2. Course content and format
3. Financial barriers
4. Behaviour, attendance and attitude

Women, more than men, experience parenthood as a barrier to learning. The learning environment can be a barrier when academic styles of learning are found to be “repetitive

and uninteresting.” Key financial issues include course costs, living while learning, and losing entitlements. Youth also face barriers from behaviour and attendance problems and a previous negative experience with learning.

Other issues for youth include accessibility and availability of courses, along with lack of support and advice. Literacy and numeracy challenges were also barriers to engaging in training and education. Lack of confidence, health issues, personal circumstances were also identified as barriers to learning.

The research also categorizes the types of young people in different groups:

- Those who have applied for a course
- Those looking for learning opportunities
- Those who want to learn in the future
- Those who have no plans with respect to learning

The group with no plans to return to learning includes youth who are most likely to have left school without completion. Their most frequent barriers to learning were behaviour, attendance, attitude and poor previous experiences with learning. They don’t know what would motivate them to engage in learning. Interestingly, they recognize the role that leaning might have in improving their confidence. A lot of these young people believe they have nothing to gain by taking part in education and would need convincing to do so.

Conclusions:

The research highlights the need for support and advice for young people in accessing education and training, and the importance of positive learning experiences as a young adult to replace negative school experiences. Practical challenges around childcare and financial support also need to be addressed.

9. Pink, D. *Revenge of the right brain.*

http://chapmanrandy.pbworks.com/f/Pink_RevengeOfTheRightBrain.pdf

Purpose of article:

This article shows how the abilities associated with the “left brain” such as “sequence, literalness and analysis,” connected with success in school and business, are no longer enough in today’s Information Age. Abilities that matter the most in today’s world are more

closely associated with the right brain. These abilities include artistry, the ability to empathize, getting the big picture and pursuing the spiritual.

Findings:

Pink outlines three reasons that he believes account for right brain abilities having more currency than left brain abilities in today's world.

The author argues that outsourcing to Asia significantly reduces the number of jobs that involve number crunching, chart reading, and rules and routines. As foreign knowledge workers are able to do these jobs more cheaply, the West needs to focus on work that involves the right brain, and do it better. In addition, many routine functions are being turned over to machines. Pink further argues that our prosperity and abundance have created more search for meaning because left brain needs have been met.

Pink says that the situation is not "either/or." He suggests we have moved to a Conceptual Age from an Information Age. This means that, to do well, it is important to build on high-tech abilities with aptitudes that are "high-concept" and "high-touch." He defines high-concept as the ability to invent, to detect patterns and opportunities, and to create emotional and artistic beauty along with satisfying stories. High-touch has to do with a higher level of understanding within the field of human interactions and relations both with self and with others. This includes having joy, bringing it to others and the ability to empathize.

Pink concludes that high-touch and high-concept have always been part of being human. However, he believes these muscles have not been exercised for a few generations and need to be worked back into shape. He suggests that young people need to focus on right brain abilities.

V. Youth and Literacy

10. NWT Literacy Council (2010). *Youth literacy gap analysis: Research highlights*.

Purpose of the research:

The objectives of the research were to:

- Provide an overview of current research on youth literacy, citing best practices for improving literacy rates for populations comparable to youth in NWT.
- Review data and issues related to literacy levels of youth in NWT, including a review of existing educational data such as school records and testing data, and departmental exam results.
- Identify data on pertinent literacy issues for NWT youth such as reasons youth choose to enter ALBE rather than return to high school.
- Investigate strengths and weaknesses of responses to youth literacy in the NWT—what is working and what is not.
- Discuss and analyze possible causes and impacts of existing literacy rates for youth in the NWT.
- Recommend actions to address low youth literacy levels in the NWT, including suggested methods of implementation and measurement criteria with respect to outputs identified in the *Strategy Framework*.

353 NWT residents including 195 youth, in 17 communities, participated in interviews and focus groups. 311 youth completed a questionnaire.

Research findings:

In this report the main findings are articulated under seven research issues. Findings combine information from primary research in NWT communities with information collected through a literature review. There are 24 recommendations related to the seven research areas.

Understanding literacy:

In the NWT, there are many different understandings of literacy and who should be responsible for imparting literacy to youth. These different understandings can keep educators, schools, youth, families, communities and government apart. Youth understand the importance of literacy to learn, succeed at school and do well in life.

Assessing youth literacy:

In the NWT, a number of standardized assessment tools are used to assess school-based literacy. These measures indicate a high percentage of poor literacy skills. The standardized tools don't measure a broad range of literacy skills, including new technologies and culture-based literacy. They are better at measuring a person's ability to do a test than the real abilities of the student. Report cards are the main way that literacy is discussed among youth, their parents and teachers. There is a disconnect between the school curriculum and northern life and cultures. There is also a disconnect between home and school environments. Many northern youth have had poor relationships with the school system.

Relationship of literacy and academic achievement:

A number of factors affect whether or not NWT youth succeed at and stay in school. The main factor is a supportive social environment that includes good relationships with parents and other adults. Other factors include good literacy skills, effective information about opportunities and pathways after school, friends, and peers. Extracurricular activities, food and computers are also important. So are evening classes and financial support for childcare and living expenses. Educators need more training and orientation to be able to serve youth and address their literacy needs.

Literacy and in-school and out-of-school youth:

Low literacy is a factor contributing to early school leaving, which creates many missed opportunities for learning. New technologies using computers and cell phones have the potential to increase the literacy skills of youth. However, these new technologies are seen as having advantages and disadvantages. For youth, they are motivating with immediate results. However, other things get left out such as reading, listening to Elders' stories, expressing feelings and critical thinking. Issues related to using new technologies in learning

include lack of knowledge about them on the part of educators; lack of infrastructure and supports; disparity among communities, and issues like privacy and cyber bullying.

Although there are different kinds of literacy programs for youth across communities, there are barriers. These barriers include lack of support to access programs, programs that fail to meet their needs, poor facilities, and programs that are short-term. Alternative programs that are community-based and address barriers for out-of-school youth are recommended.

Life circumstances:

Stressful social environments tend to be the norm for youth with low literacy skills due to poverty, cultural disconnections and feeling a lack of support. These youth can be vulnerable to the law. They need support from schools such as caring educators, food and exercise programs, and ways to have connections among school, family and community. Community supports needed include leaders, cultural activities and spaces to do things and learn. Supports are also needed to help youth integrate back into the community after being in a correctional facility.

Older youth in the labour market:

Youth with low literacy skills face barriers to getting and keeping jobs. The jobs they do get tend to be short-term, low-paying jobs. Challenges for youth include financial issues, alcohol and drugs, and family issues. The barriers are exacerbated for older youth with few supports to help them. Factors that can help are inclusive, flexible programs with life and work skills that use a community development approach and address financial barriers. Employers can also help address literacy skills.

Best practices in youth literacy programs include:

- Positive relationships and support for youth from their teachers, families, peers and communities
- Counselling to deal with addictions, and full-time guidance counselling
- Meaningful, flexible, stable programs with a wide range of subjects including new technologies and Aboriginal culture and languages
- Links between academic work and life experiences
- Leaders and champions that support and engage youth
- Financial and childcare supports
- Smaller classes with individual help for students

- Appropriate tools to measure success, along with resources and technical support
- Long-term program funding

11. Hinchman, K., Alvermann, D., Boyd, F., Brozo, W., & Vacca, R. (2004). Supporting older students' in- and out-of-school literacies. *Journal of adolescent and adult literacy*, 47 (4): p. 304 -310.

Purpose of the article:

This article uses research to show how parents, teachers and others can help young people develop literacy practices in and out of school. The authors reviewed a number of previous literature reviews on the topic as their basis for evidence needed in terms of literacy instruction.

Research findings:

Researchers found that youth benefit when they see themselves as competent, and are part of the decision making around what is to be learned. Another finding is that these young people are more likely to see themselves as competent outside of school rather than within. The authors think that this competence needs to be fostered by teachers so that students can recognize and transfer this competence to academic settings.

The research also suggests that an important goal for teachers is to understand students' lives out of school, respect and capitalize on these interests, and ground teaching and learning in the experience of the students. Research shows that the more teachers can align subjects with students' personal literacies, the more opportunity there is for engagement in reading and writing. Older students may have difficulty understanding the importance of school-based literacy; and students overall will be more engaged when the learning is meaningful and relevant to them and their identities. Another important factor is that subject areas taught in school may be contrary to the culture of the students, causing "cultural dissonance." The authors give examples of how teachers might connect subject area learning to issues of interest to students using inclusive, participatory methods that resonate with students' lives.

One important strategy is to show students different ways of sourcing information, including how to find reliable and valid information on the web. Embedding literacy into meaningful content is also identified as an effective comprehension strategy. Importantly, these strategies for comprehension need to be taught explicitly within the learning; comprehension cannot be expected to happen on its own. Embedded literacy needs to be

interesting, familiar and meaningful to students. In the 21st century, strategy students need multiple literacies to be successful. To be effective with older students will mean grounding learning to show them as competent and connect to their personal interests with “search and comprehension strategies embedded in context.” A strength-based approach, that uses alternative approaches to learning, is especially important for marginalized students. Building on the literacies that students already use in their everyday lives, especially out of school, can serve as a bridge to school-based literacies.

12. Smith, M. & Moore, D. (2012). What we know about adolescents’ out-of-school Literacies, what we need to learn, and why studying them is important: An interview with Michael W. Smith. *Journal of adolescent & adult literacy*, 55(8): 745-747

Purpose of article:

This article provides insights into the out-of-school literacies of adolescents and why it is important to do further research on these literacies.

Research findings:

Smith indicates that although research shows out-of-school literacies are counter to those focused on in school, they require many of the same skills that schools want. Examples of these counter-literacies include playing a complex video game or making a zine.⁷ Smith argues that these literacies used outside school take just as much skill as the in-school literacies, but are simply different. He cites the example of written composition that deals with poetry or rap. He notes that adolescents using these forms of composition are “literate in different ways.”

He notes that the research also shows that, when teachers include these “different” literacies and value them, the results can be transformative. Incorporating these youth literacies in the classroom is referred to as “cultural modelling.” Smith emphasizes that the research shows that positive results happen when a place is made for these counter-literacies in school. At the same time he notes that integrating these literacies into the classroom is not without problems.

Smith suggests that further research on these counter-literacies can pave the way for changes in both curriculum and instruction. The research will need to focus on outcomes

⁷ Zines are self-published, small-circulation, often non-profit books, papers, or websites. They usually deal with topics too controversial or niche for mainstream media, presented in an unpolished layout and unusual design. See <http://rookiemag.com/2012/05/how-to-make-a-zine/>

because that is what matters to policy makers. Then this research needs to be made available beyond just literacy researchers to policy makers. More research is needed on what these out-of-school literacies that youth engage in look like. He cites research that showed that instant messaging used by young people was more elaborative than abbreviated. He cautions not to jump to conclusions about what these literacies look like and how they work.

He also indicates that the gaps between out-of and in-school literacies might not be as large as one might think. He indicates that research on the literate lives of young men shows the same five conditions for engagement for both:

- Competence and control
- Appropriate level of challenge
- Clear and immediate feedback
- A focus on the immediate
- A focus on the social⁸

Smith concludes the interview by suggesting that the new literacies that youth bring should be considered in “their own right,” not just as a bridge to school literacies. He also notes that new literacies are emerging quickly, and that it is difficult to keep up with them. He indicates that these emerging new literacies should not be a problem in the classroom if teachers are open to creating opportunities for them.

⁸ See page 746.

VI. Aboriginal ways of learning including literacy learning

13. Cooper, N. (2006). *The transformative nature of culture-based literacy provision in Native literacy programs*.

<http://en.copian.ca/library/research/cooper/cooper.pdf>

Purpose of the research:

The purpose of the research was to examine the transformative nature of culturally-based literacy provision in Native literacy programs in Ontario. The research shows how culturally-based learning in literacy programs is transformative for both instructors and students, and offers examples of successful approaches. The researcher conducted three in-depth interviews with Native literacy practitioners from different parts of Ontario.

Research findings:

The research identifies four important factors that were common across Native literacy programs.

- Everyone is both a teacher and a learner; learners mentor others around cultural knowledge and this has nothing to do with being a trained instructor.
- Self-awareness leads to self-determination; learners thrive and succeed through cultural teachings. They come to know themselves as native people, and people become more at ease with themselves. For some it is a healing journey.
- Learners may learn their histories for the first time or reclaim knowledge that they knew before as valid.
- The importance of community in and out of the classroom is critical to literacy learning and needs to be maintained and promoted.

Teaching and learning strategies are presented for each factor.

The author concludes that culture-based approaches to Native literacy are transformative for learners, tutors and practitioners.

The importance of creating a safe space for learners was highlighted. In this space, they can access cultural knowledge, engage in cultural practices and learn literacy skills. These skills contribute to participant goals. Healing is part of the learning journey for many.

14. Antoine, E., Gamlin, P. & Provost-Turchetti, L. (2003). *Literacy and learning: Acknowledging Aboriginal holistic approaches to learning in relation to 'best practices' literacy training programs.*

<http://en.copian.ca/library/research/aborigt/finlrprt/finlrprt.pdf>

Purpose of the research:

The main objective of this research was to document and understand the experiences of holistic approaches to learning and “best practices” in literacy programs, according to program staff and learners. Another objective was to document the barriers experienced by Aboriginal learners in literacy programs. Literacy is seen as learning in the broadest sense that spans a life time. Aboriginal literacy is more than gaining “mainstream employment.”

Aboriginal literacy begins with oral communications and the traditional values that are found in storytelling. Aboriginal literacy is a means to empowerment and is connected to healing, community development and self-determination. “Aboriginal literacy has to find expression in everything that is done.” (p. 8)

Research findings:

The overlay to four distinct findings was that practitioners saw Aboriginal literacy as a way of looking at literacy that is distinct, holistic and culturally appropriate. Practitioners believe that they must respond proactively to this concept of Aboriginal literacy. The four findings were:

- Aboriginal literacy begins with self-awareness.
- Best practices are what is relevant to a group of learners and inclusive of their cultural traditions. Government criteria for funding that supports outcomes-based learning doesn't take into consideration these cultural understandings.
- There is little support or understanding about Aboriginal literacy that takes into consideration these cultural dimensions.
- Aboriginal literacy is distinct from other kinds of mainstream literacies:
 - It is intergenerational/multigenerational and includes all aspects of life.
 - Both instructors and learners are in fact all learners.

The research findings outline personal, social, cultural and material barriers for Aboriginal people in literacy programs, and make recommendations for change.

VII. Non-formal learning with literacy outcomes

15. Ilitaqsiniq –Nunavut Literacy Council (2011). *Promising models of non-formal adult learning with literacy outcomes.*

Purpose of the research:

The purpose of this review is to identify international best practices in models of non-formal learning program that have literacy outcomes, and how Nunavut and others can learn from these models to support adults and youth who are disengaged from formal learning.

Research findings:

The review identifies three successful approaches to non-formal learning with literacy outcomes that incorporate most of the literature review criteria, and have been offered in contexts that are “highly comparable to Nunavut.” These approaches are:

- Language, Culture and Land Camps
- Literacy through the Arts
- REFLECT: Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques

The review begins by defining terms such as *formal*, *adult* and *indigenous learning*, and moves into describing the three promising models.

Promising Model: Language, Culture and Land Camps

Language, culture and land camps are used by many indigenous communities across North America to reconnect indigenous people with their heritage. They promote well-being and skill development. Camps that focus on language development as an explicit goal have similar well-proven results to language immersion programs in other contexts. The author looks at some of the results of these camps based on the systematic evaluation of one of the programs and other published experiences.

The description of the approach includes who the participants are (they include youth), the teachers, activities, context and outcomes.

Success factors for the approach include:

- Many opportunities to use the indigenous language in everyday communication with a low ratio of fluent speakers to learners
- Understanding of language learning principles
- Reachable goals for the camp, with everyone involved committed to these goals; focused themes and quality activities related to camp goals
- Strong community support
- Incorporation and respect for indigenous values and practices
- Environment that is physically and emotionally safe, supportive, trusting, comfortable, flexible and fun
- Camps held in remote locations, outdoor
- Opportunities for youth and Elders to interact along with mentoring relationships
- Everyone encouraged to use what they know and pass on what they know

A number of northern examples that use this model are given along with further readings.

Promising model: Literacy through the Arts

The second promising model identified is literacy through the arts. Even if literacy is not a stated goal, these programs increase literacy skills and practices in many different ways. The review found that even though non-formal arts programming has been implemented in many different contexts, they have similar outcomes, underlying philosophies and goals. The synthesis of this model relies mostly on arts programs in inner city USA and remote indigenous communities in Australia, as they are the most documented and evaluated.

The target for these programs was youth at risk, disengaged from formal schooling, with different literacy levels. The description of the approach includes the teachers, activities, challenges, context and outcomes.

Success factors for the approach include:

- Respect for youth and youth seen as artists in their own right
- Themes and art projects are motivating and exciting for youth with hands on learning; youth may have control over space, time and resources
- Features include mentoring/apprenticeship relationships, a sense of belonging and ownership, safe space, ability to take risks and practice, and ability to explore and express identities
- Careful planning with resources to succeed
- Can be a vehicle to other ends

- Careful selection of teachers and artists along with training for them
- Low student-instructor ratio
- Transportation and food support
- Recognition for work
- Community involvement
- Acceptance of multiple literacies that youth bring or develop

A number of examples that use this model are given along with further readings.

Promising Model: REFLECT: Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques

“REFLECT is a learning process that starts from people’s reflection on their socioeconomic, cultural and political environment and aims to promote change in individuals, communities, organizations and societies. It is an intensive and extensive, horizontal, educational process.” (Archer 1998: 34-35)

This model combines literacy and empowerment using a participatory education approach. The program has been offered by over 250 organizations in over 50 countries since 1993. In this model, facilitators are co-learners. There is a centralized curriculum but each program is developed locally. Therefore, outcomes have been different and depend on context. There has been much published about this model through course evaluations and documentation. Key factors and observed outcomes are reported on and described for this model.

Success factors for the approach include:

- Education as a foundation to transformation in oppressed societies
- Approach is grounded in local concepts of literacy, and literacy practices are a tool to address the felt needs of participants
- Equality and respect between facilitators and participants, and facilitators and local groups adapt the approach to their local context
- Learning draws on knowledge of participants who makes decisions and create ideas and materials

A number of examples that use this model are given along with further readings.

Commonalities across models:

- **Whole Person Approach** is used, where personal development, identity and community empowerment are components along with developing particular skills and practices. All models have literacy outcomes whether or not literacy was explicitly taught or was a goal.
- **The importance of relationship** between facilitators and learners, and amongst learners themselves.
- **Community and collaboration** are central; programs are a collaboration with local communities.
- **The importance of place** or physical space where the program is held is emphasized.
- **Safety is stressed** in that all models emphasize a safe environment for learning.
- **Relevance** to the needs of participants is key.

Divergences

- **Balancing preparation with responsiveness to learners** is evident in all three approaches, but to the degree to which this happens varies.
- **Literacy is an outcome** in all models, but explicitly taught in some and not in others.

I6. Ilitaqsiniq - Nunavut Literacy Council (2013). *Summary of the research report “Kasuutittiaqatigiingniq: Joining literacy, culture and well-being through non-formal programming in Nunavut.”*

Purpose of the research:

This research focused on participants in five non-formal learning programs in Nunavut (two were conducted by Ilitaqsiniq). The research looked at the outcomes of these programs in terms of the impact of the programs on participants and their lives, skills learned, and effective teaching methods

Four of the five programs embedded literacy and essential skills (English and Inuktitut) into the cultural content of the non-formal learning. Participants (most were Inuit), instructors and coordinators of these programs participated in the research. Non-formal learning programs are seen as an effective way to reach a wide range of learners in Nunavut who may not be ready for formal learning.

Research findings:

There were findings in three major areas as follows:

Cultural skills:

- Increased self-confidence and pride in what they had made
- New or enhanced skills in traditional cultural activities such as creating art or making traditional Inuit clothing
- A greater willingness to learn from others with skills to offer, especially Elders
- Confidence to pass on their skills to others

Literacy and essential skills:

Learning traditional cultural skills requires the use of many literacy skills other than reading and writing. Participants in all five programs improved their literacy skills, but improvement was greater in programs that had literacy as an explicit goal and where literacy activities were intentionally built into the program. Improved skills included:

- Improved language skills (English and Inuktitut)
- Better comfort with reading
- More self-confidence in public speaking
- Successful work habits
- Some participants went on to jobs or back to school

Well-being:

Participants found the programs transformational. Their lives were changed a result of the program. Results included:

- Improved self-confidence, and pride in themselves
- Empowerment to live cultural values such as generosity, patience, respect and forgiveness

- Healthier lifestyles
- More happiness and healing
- More positive experiences with their families and community

Lessons learned about instructors and programming:

- Build on skills participants bring to develop new ones important to them.
- Make literacy an explicit goal, with explicit literacy activities, and embed literacy in learning cultural skills.
- Use both English and Inuktitut for activities.
- Make learning experiential.
- Involve participants in the running of the program.
- Elders are important mentors and instructors in the program.
- Use a diversity of different ways for participants to learn.
- Use a team approach with skilled literacy instructors working alongside cultural instructors, or instructors skilled in both areas.
- Recognize the skills learned by participants.
- Participants should assess their own learning in accordance with their own goals.

17. Kusugak, A. (2013). *Pijunnautitaaqpaalliqsimaliqtut: Building confidence through cultural and literacy skill development.*

www.islandscholar.ca/download_ds/ir%3A10613/OBJ/ir_10613.pdf

Purpose of the paper:

- To analyze the Miqqut Project as a Case Study (participants and Elder instructors were Inuit women living in Rankin Inlet).
- To focus on the confidence developed through the program and how this confidence enables participants to make changes in their lives (going on to formal education, entering the workforce, and establishing positive relationships with their families and communities).
- To document the importance of non-formal cultural programs like the Miqqut Project that embed literacy.

Findings:

Success factors for the Miqqut Program:⁹

- Starting the program with an orientation
- Building a safe environment
- Having Elders as instructors
- Non-formal programming
- Co-operative learning
- Creating garments
- Developing communication in the language of choice
- Embedding literacy

Development of confidence:

- Miqqut program participants gained more confidence in themselves as manifested in feeling happier and having more pride; there was a change in the whole group.
- As a result of the confidence and happiness gained, relationships with family members became closer and relationships with children improved.
- Confidence also impacted stronger relationships in the community. People felt more connected to their community, with new networks and new friends. The community was also proud of program participants.
- The development of confidence, influenced participants to take more risks with further learning resulting from their success in learning. More than half of the participants engaged in further learning after the Miqqut Program.
- The Miqqut Program gave participants structure and discipline, along with the confidence and skills to believe they could be successful in the wage economy. Several participants gained employment after the program.

⁹ See page 10.

Conclusion:

The Miqqut Program was an example of how a non-formal program with embedded literacy was able to successfully achieve wellness, at the level of family and community, and have wide impacts through the development of confidence for participants.

VIII. Assessment and Evaluation

18. *Aboriginal Adult Literacy Assessment Tool (AALAT): Decolonized community English literacy partnership (website)*

<http://saln.ca/programsandservices/assessment-services/aalat/>

This website outlines the history and a description of the AALAT. The assessment tool was developed in response to IALSS testing. It was intended to provide a way of assessment that was positive, strategic, and respectful of valued understandings of Aboriginal English literacy in Saskatchewan.

The assessment focuses on “Aboriginal ways of collecting data in five domains (numeracy, problem solving, reading, writing, and listening).” It is intended to respond to cultural and linguistic uniqueness in each community. The pilot project was described as “very successful,” showing the importance of having an assessment that is specific to Aboriginal peoples for literacy and essential skills.

The assessment takes two hours to complete with trained community facilitators. It is strength-based, and is computer, and paper-based for Aboriginal people 16 years of age and older. It follows a holistic model and collects a random sample from a community. It provides a contextualized picture of literacy needs in a community with an identification of gaps and barriers that community members might face.

In Ross Grandel’s speech about AALAT at the Centre for Literacy’s 2011 Fall Institute, he notes both the limitations and considerations of the tool.

Limitations:

- The assessment had to have comparisons to IALS through adapting their question objectives.
- Aboriginal literacy is much broader than English literacy.
- The assessment only deals with English.
- The assessment had to reflect multiple Aboriginal cultures.

Considerations:

The primary consideration with the assessment was participant comfort. The assessment was designed so that:

- People could take the assessment at home over a couple of days.
- Local community facilitators administered the assessment.
- A one-on-one interview was used.
- People could skip questions they felt uncomfortable with.
- Translation was an option.
- Each community gets a confidential report including answers to questions they wanted.

Barriers:

Barriers to communities or individuals participating included:

- The idea that literacy is a European concept
- Facilitators who got participants to complete paperwork as a test rather than an interview
- Community divisions
- Negative experiences with European, institutional experiences of education

19. Canadian Council on Learning (2009). *The state of Aboriginal learning in Canada: A holistic approach to measuring success.*

http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/StateAboriginalLearning/SAL-FINALReport_EN.PDF

This report acknowledges the learning of Inuit, First Nations, and Métis peoples as holistic and lifelong. Although policies and practices now reflect a better understanding of Aboriginal learning, measurement approaches do not. The report argues that, not only does learning for Aboriginal people need to be culturally appropriate, measurement of what the learning accomplishes must also be culturally appropriate. The CCL presents a culturally appropriate framework for measuring results in learning that reflects Aboriginal perspectives. The measures for each indicator developed are reported on in detail, reflecting the state of Aboriginal learning across Canada.

The three main components of the Holistic Lifelong Learning Measurement Framework are: “*Sources and Domains of Knowledge, The Lifelong Learning Journey, and Community Well-being.*” (p.4) There are indicators for each component that reflect the full range of Aboriginal learning.

Purpose of the research:

- To introduce the Holistic Lifelong Learning Measurement Framework and articulate its three components, along with indicators and measures of the indicators for Aboriginal people in Canada.
- To set an on-going framework for gathering data and measuring progress in Aboriginal learning across the lifespan.
- To provide evidence for more effective policy for measurement of Aboriginal learning.

Findings:

The report begins by articulating the key attributes of Aboriginal learning as:

- Holistic
- Lifelong
- Experiential
- Rooted in Aboriginal languages and culture
- Spiritually oriented
- Communal
- Integrative (both Aboriginal and western knowledge)

The factors related to Aboriginal learning, and three models of learning for Inuit, First Nations, and Métis learning, are linked then to the Holistic Lifelong Learning Measurement Framework. The framework acknowledges both the attributes above and these three models. The three components of the Framework are described below:

1. *Sources and Domains of Knowledge*—This component reflects the sources and domains “from which an individual learns from and about: people (family, Elders, community), languages, traditions and ceremonies, spirituality, and the natural world. Western and Aboriginal knowledge and learning approaches also exist within this component.” (p. 14)

2. **The Lifelong Learning Journey**—This component includes “a wide range of formal and informal learning opportunities that occur in a number of settings (in and out of the classroom) and throughout four life stages.” (p. 14)

3. **Community Well-being**—This includes “the social, physical, economic, spiritual, political and health conditions that influence the learning process. This component depicts the individual and collective conditions that reflect and individual and community perspective on community well-being.” (p.14)

The report includes a chart with the indicators and measures for each component of the Framework.

The measures for each indicator for each of the three components are reported on in great detail from existing data and literature.

The report concludes that its findings using the Framework provide the most comprehensive understanding of Aboriginal learning to date. The findings provide a balanced picture of this learning with the integration of family and community as central to the Framework. The report findings also show how the Aboriginal perspective is central to Inuit, First Nations and Métis communities’ well-being. The CCL concludes that the findings should be used to determine social policy and programming.

20. Overview of alternative assessment approaches (website)

<http://www.essentialschools.org/resources/115>

This website makes the distinctions among four different types of assessments of learning. These four types are:

- tests
- product/project assessments
- performance assessments
- process skills assessments

While these four types are all described as having a purpose in the right context, tests are described as traditional ways of assessing knowledge. The other three are described as a basis for authentic measure using authentic tasks. It is suggested that there should be no difference between a learning activity and an assessment activity. The focus is on product/project assessments where a project can be given to a student or groups of students. Both the product and the processes used can be assessed. Checklists and rubrics

can be used through an observation process to analyze what one is looking for. This can be done by peers, so both people are learning and assessing. The website provides a whole host of different sample ideas for assessment as follow:

Products/Projects (Examples)

- Brochures
- Cartoons
- Collages
- Drawings
- Bulletin boards
- Displays
- Games

Performance (Examples)

- Fashion show
- Ballads
- Demonstrations
- Interviews
- News reports
- Journals
- Role plays/simulations
- Protest letters

Process skills (Examples)

- Interviews
- Learning logs
- Process-folios
- Oral histories of events
- Skits
- Résumés
- Scrapbooks
- Short stories
- Videos