# MAKING A CASE FOR LITERACY

The State of Adult Literacy and Adult Basic Education in the NWT.

October 2000

Prepared for: the NWT Literacy Council by: Lois Little, Bob Stephen and Sandy Auchterlonie Lutra Associates Ltd., Yellowknife, NWT

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## 1. Research into Literacy in the NWT

#### 1.1 The Need for Literacy Research

The NWT Literacy Council is a not-for-profit territorial organization, which promotes and supports literacy in the NWT's eight official languages. It is a goal of the Council to ensure that accessible, meaningful and well-supported literacy services are available throughout the NWT. The Council has identified three major barriers affecting its ability to promote and support literacy, namely:

- 1. inadequate information on literacy levels and the impact of low literacy on the lives of NWT adults and families.
- 2. lack of appropriate policy and programs for literacy.
- 3. insufficient priority to and resources for literacy.

The NWT Literacy Council has worked hard to bring attention to literacy issues in the Northwest Territories (NWT). In the last year alone, the Council has petitioned the Government of the NWT's (GNWT) Minister of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE), the NWT Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Social Programs and a host of other organizations to address literacy needs in the north. The Council has submitted that the following four priorities of the GNWT are unlikely to be achieved without a literate and educated population:

- 1. self-reliant individuals, families and communities, working with governments toward improved social well-being.
- 2. better governance through partnerships.
- 3. a northern-controlled economy that is balanced, diversified, stable and vibrant.
- 4. adequate resources helping all levels of government to become more self-reliant in meeting the needs of the people they serve. 1

The NWT Literacy Council has called for a comprehensive literacy strategy to:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Legislative Assembly of the NWT. 2000. "Towards a better Tomorrow." Government of the NWT

- "Broaden our understanding of literacy as an important element of economic productivity and labour market participation, of health and well-being and of social cohesion.
- Promote interdepartmental policy and programming solutions.
- Promote an understanding that literacy is everyone's concern and requires support from public and Aboriginal governments, employers, social agencies, communities and families.
- Make a commitment to reducing inequalities and ensure that there is access to high quality literacy programs and these programs are adequately resourced."<sup>2</sup>

On July 7, 2000 the GNWT made a commitment to develop a comprehensive literacy strategy for the NWT.

### 1.2 Purpose of this Report

Lutra Associates Ltd. has prepared this research report to provide the NWT Literacy Council with qualitative and quantitative information for advocating for, and shaping literacy and adult basic education initiatives in the NWT.

Literacy is defined as the "ability to read, write, calculate, speak and understand as well as communicate with others. It is also the ability to understand and use information and communication technology. Literacy is the ability to participate and contribute in one's family, community, culture, workplace or any other group that one interacts with on a regular basis." Adult basic education (ABE) "refers to all of the educational activities provided as a prerequisite to post-secondary training or employment. ABE can include literacy activities, general upgrading in all subject areas, life skills, career planning and work experience."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>from "Making the Case for Literacy" presentation of the NWT Literacy Council to the Standing Committee on Social Programs, NWT Legislative Assembly, June 2000

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Iatridis, G. June 1999. **Directive-Adult Literacy & Basic Education.** draft. College & Careers Branch, Education, Culture and Employment, Government of the NWT

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Crosscurrent Associates. May 1997. Aurora College Literacy Strategy Research Project. Aurora College

#### 1.3 About Literacy in the NWT

Literacy is a dominant force in shaping the quality and extent of individual choices, opportunities and experiences. Literacy is a cornerstone of individual participation and involvement in family, school, work and community life. In the NWT, there is no accurate measure of literacy levels among the adult population. Self-reporting of formal education achieved is used as a proxy measure of literacy level. Educational attainment as a measure of literacy has been replaced in Canadian provinces by the results of prose, document and quantitative literacy tests. The most recent of these tests was the 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS).<sup>5</sup>

In the NWT persons who have achieved grade 9 are considered to have **functional** literacy skills. This means that they can carry out such daily reading and writing tasks as understanding and responding to government correspondence, completing forms, applying for jobs, reading medical prescriptions, reading newspapers and following written instructions. In 1999, 87% of all NWT adults and 75% of Aboriginal adults reported having achieved grade 9. The remaining 13% of all NWT adults and 25% of Aboriginal adults are considered to be **illiterate** and to have inadequate reading, writing and numeracy skills to carry out daily reading and writing tasks.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century where a minimum of 12 years of education is required for most entry-level jobs, grade 9 as a measure of literacy has no relevance. National data from the 1989 Literacy Skills Used in Daily Living Survey (LSUDA) and the 1994 IALS confirm the inappropriateness of grade level or educational achievement as a measure of literacy. These surveys also indicate that the problem of literacy is much more serious than is suggested by educational achievement. While most Canadian adults have completed secondary school, the LSUDA found that:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) defined literacy as the ability to understand and use printed and written information to function in society, achieve goals and develop knowledge and potential. IALS was conducted to determine the level and distribution of literacy among adult populations in seven countries. IALS data for Canada provides adequate data to make statements about the non-institutional population aged 16 or more years except in the Yukon and the NWT, which were excluded from the survey. Also, the 1994 IALS did not include high-risk populations throughout Canada for example, persons in prisons and living on Indian Reserves.

Lutra Associates Ltd. contracted with Tristat Resources in Ontario to prepare a synthetic model to estimate literacy levels in the NWT. This modeling exercise was based on IALS data and the outputs are provided in Appendix D. Literacy estimates provided through this modeling exercise are limited by the sample size of the IALS (about 5,600 observations) and the number of persons (57) reporting Aboriginal status.

## 2. Literacy Among Adult Northerners

The ability to read, write, understand and use information and numbers is empowering. Literacy and numeracy skills lead to self sufficiency, satisfaction, achievement and confidence. Personal and family security, health and well-being are strengthened by literacy skills. Literacy enriches the quality of life in virtually every way - in the home, in relationships, at work and in lifestyle choices.

This chapter provides data on NWT literacy levels by educational achievement; provides estimates of literacy levels; and describes the characteristics and circumstances of NWT adults with low literacy.

### 2.1 The Face of Literacy in the NWT

- Using educational attainment as the measure of literacy, about one-third (9,429) of NWT adults have literacy needs.
- Estimates of literacy levels in the NWT derived from the 1994 International Literacy Survey (IALS) suggest that 50% of NWT adults do not have the required literacy levels to successfully participate in society.
- NWT adults of Aboriginal ancestry have the greatest literacy needs.
- Low literacy contributes to socio-economic disparities, particularly between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal northerners.

In the NWT, illiteracy is defined as less than grade 9 education. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, persons with low literacy are generally described as persons with less than secondary school education (grade 12). In the NWT,

- 13% of adults (15 or more years of age) are illiterate (less than grade 9 education).(Table 2-1)
- another 19% have low literacy (grade 9 but less than grade 12 education).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> 1996 Census of Canada and 1999 NWT Labour Force Survey

In total, almost one-third of NWT adults (9,429) have some level of difficulty reading, writing, understanding and using information. They have literacy needs.

The number of illiterate NWT adults is declining.

 Between 1991 and 1999, the percent of NWT adults with less than grade 9 education fell from 19% to 13%. (Table 2-1)

The number of NWT adults with low literacy is also declining, albeit at a much slower rate.

Between 1991 and 1999, the percent of NWT adults with less than grade 12 education fell from 22% to 19%. (Table 2-1).

As shown in Table 2-1, the percent of adults with a high school diploma increased dramatically between 1996 and 1999. The type of data collected and the manner in which it is reported are likely the reasons for this.

A variety of factors are contributing to changing education levels in the NWT, for example:

- implementation of age-grade appropriate schooling between kindergarten and grade 9,
- participation in adult basic education (ABE) programs,
- greater access to and participation in senior high school programs, and
- more awareness of the value and need for formal education.

The problem of literacy in the NWT is mainly found among Aboriginal adults.

- 26% of Aboriginal adults in the NWT are illiterate (less than grade 9 education) compared to
   2% of non-Aboriginal adults.
- 55% of Aboriginal adults in the NWT have low literacy (less than grade 12 education) compared to 13% of non-Aboriginal adults.

Table 2-1: NWT Adult Population by Highest Level of Schooling, 1986-1999

	<u>1986</u>		<u>1991</u>		<u>1996</u>		<u>1999</u>	
	No.	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	No.	<u>%</u>	No.	<u>%</u>
Population 15 Years & Over	23710	100	25690	100	27965	100	29506	100
Less than Grade 9	5590	24	4960	19	4110	15	3791	13
Grade 9-12, No Diploma	5860	25	5330	21	6110	22	5638	19
High School Diploma	1750	7	2360	9	2365	8	5789	20
Trade or Other College	6295	27	7760	30	9280	33	9588	32
University/Non-University Without Degree	1935	8	2355	9	2590	9	n/a	n/a
University Degree	2280	10	2915	11	3510	13	4128	14

Source: Statistics Canada 1986, 1991 and 1996, and the 1999 NWT Labour Force Survey

Illiteracy (less than grade 9 education) is a problem for both Aboriginal men (24%) and women (26%). Low literacy (less than 12 years of education) is also a problem for an equal portion of Aboriginal women (55%) and men (54%). As discussed in the Dogrib Region case study on literacy, Aboriginal women in that region seem to be pursuing higher level education at a greater rate than men. (Appendix C) The results of greater female participation in education are not yet reflected in statistical information on education levels in the Dogrib Region.

The differences in literacy levels between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adults contribute to economic disparities. These disparities are illustrated in average incomes. It is estimated that:

- the average income of Aboriginal males in the NWT is at least 50% lower than that of non-Aboriginal males, and
- the income of Aboriginal women is at least 60% lower than that of non-Aboriginal women in the NWT.

Differences in literacy levels can also contribute to social dysfunction and gender-based tensions. As discussed in the Dogrib Region case study on literacy, the desire for higher level education among women is given as a reason for tensions and violence in some households in that region. (Appendix C)

Literacy is an issue for persons of all ages. (Table 2-2)

- More than half (53%) of NWT persons who are illiterate, are between 25 to 59 years of age.
- \* 43% of NWT persons with low literacy are 25 to 59 years of age.
- Almost half (49%) of NWT persons 60 or more years of age are illiterate.

Table 2-2: NWT Adult Population by Age and Highest Level of Schooling, 1999

	Pop. 15+ years	Less than Gr. 9	Grade 9-12 No Diploma	High School Diploma	Certificate/ Diploma	University Degree	Not Stated
All Persons	29506	3791	5639	5790	9588	4129	570
	100%	13%	19%	20%	32%	14%	2%
15-24 years	6233	576	3110	1883	530	72	63
	100%	9%	50%	30%	9%	1%	1%
25-39 years	11351	1029	1530	2174	4639	1808	171
	100%	9%	13%	19%	41%	16%	2%
40-59 years	9484	985	885	1531	3895	2000	188
	100%	10%	9%	16%	41%	21%	2%
60+ years	2439	1201	113	202	525	249	148
	100%	49%	5%	8%	22%	10%	6%

Source: 1999 NWT Labour Force Survey

The impacts of low literacy differ with age. Literacy problems among

- seniors (60 or more years of age) can increase the challenges these individuals face in caring for themselves and seeking supports to live independently. These challenges were made apparent in a 1990 study that found at least 4% of non-institutionalized elderly people had experienced some form of abuse or neglect.
- persons 25 to 59 years of age can create barriers to participation in the workplace and community.
- youth can play out through difficulties staying in and being successful in school. Lack of school success can contribute to negative social behaviours, low self-esteem, poor participation in the community and difficult personal relationships.<sup>9</sup>

Within the NWT, there is particular concern about literacy issues among adults 25-59 years of age. Compared to all other age groups, persons 25-59 years of age are more likely to have primary responsibility for the economic security of their families and to be in decision-making positions within the community. This group is also most likely to experience difficulty accessing and gaining financial and other supports to attend education and literacy programs. This is mainly due to the lack of educational and social programs targeting this age group.

Persons who have low literacy live in all communities in the NWT. These people comprise a larger percent of the population in smaller communities than in regional centres and in Yellowknife. Nevertheless, the number of people with low literacy in larger communities is still great. In Yellowknife, 2,417 adults are either illiterate (468) or have low literacy (1949). (Table 2-3) The number of people with literacy needs shapes the demand for programs and services. Anecdotal information provided over the course of this research indicates that there are waiting lists for literacy and adult basic education programs in many NWT communities.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Podnicks, Elizabeth. 1990. The National Survey on Abuse of the Elderly in Canada. Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, Toronto

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>Lutra Associates Ltd. 1992. Lessons for All: Factors Contributing to Early School Leaving in the Northwest Territories. Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and Gov't of the NWT

"There are over 240 people on waiting lists to access the Adult Basic Education Program at the three college campuses." <sup>10</sup> Uncertain funding and intermittent programming exacerbate the demand for programs.

Table 2-3: Percent of NWT Adults with Less than Grade 9 and Grade 12, 1999

	Less than Gr.9	Gr. 9-12 No Diploma	Total
NWT (n=29506)	13%	19%	32%
Yellowknife (n=13139)	4%	15%	18%
Regional Centres (n=6933)	8%	19%	27%
Smaller Communities (n=9434)	29%	25%	54%

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics

Note: Regional Centres are Hay River, Fort Smith and Inuvik.

The 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) found that 45% of Canadians with low literacy (level one) were employed compared to 62% of those with level two literacy, 68% with level three and 74% of level four/five. Low literacy and education have been identified in virtually every evaluation, assessment or monitoring effort of the workplace in the NWT as the main reason for poor Aboriginal and youth participation. Regardless of any special initiative or incentive undertaken (e.g. affirmative action policies, northern hire initiatives), low Aboriginal participation in NWT workplaces has been a problem for at least the last five decades.

Slightly more than half (57%) of NWT adults with literacy needs participate in the labour force. (Table 2-4) This compares to a participation rate of 83% among high school graduates and 94% among persons with a university degree. (Table 2-4) Even if persons with literacy

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> July 7, 2000 Motion of the NWT Legislative Assembly for the development of a comprehensive literacy strategy.

<sup>11</sup> see page 15 for definitions

needs are in the labour force, they are more likely to be unemployed than persons with higher levels of education.

Table 2-4: NWT Labour Force Activity by Highest Level of Schooling, 1999

	Pop. 15 & Older (#)	Participation Rate (%)	Unemployment Rate (%)	Employment Rate (%)
All Persons	29506	78	14	67
Less than Grade 9	3791	44	44	26
Grade 9-12, No Diploma	5629	64	25	49
High School Diploma	5790	83	8	76
Other Certificate or Diploma	9588	90	10	81
University Degree	4138	94	5	90
Not Stated	570	61	29	43

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics

Notes: Employment rate is percent of population 15+ years who have a job. Labour force participation rates are

based on persons employed or unemployed and actively seeking work as a percent of the total population

15+ years of age.

Persons with literacy needs who do find employment, are more likely to work part-time than persons with higher level education and literacy. (Table 2-5)

Table 2-5: Type of Employment, Employed Persons 18 Years of Age and Over by Highest

Level of Schooling, Northwest Territories, 1999

	All Persons (n=19334)	Less than Grade 9 (n=940)	Grade 9 – 12 No Diploma (n=2249)	High School Diploma or Greater (n=15897)
Employed	100%	100%	100%	100%
Full-Time	87%	69%	77%	91%
Part-Time	11%	27%	21%	9%
Not Stated	2%	4%	2%	-

Prepared by NWT Bureau of Statistics, August 2000

NWT adults with less than grade 9 education are more likely to be working in lower paying sales and service jobs than persons with higher education levels. (Table 2-6) Adults with literacy needs tend to work in seasonal or casual unskilled or labouring jobs. Persons with literacy needs frequently face uncertain work prospects and encounter difficulties in the workplace. Barriers to employment combined with stresses encountered in the workplace can play out in economic and social difficulties in the home and community.

Table 2-6: Occupation of Employed Persons 18 Years and Over by Highest Level of Schooling, Northwest Territories, 1999

	All Persons (n=19334)	Less than Gr. 9 (n=940)	Grade 9 – 12 No Diploma (n=2249)	High School Diploma or Greater (n=15897)
Management	11%	3%	4%	12%
Business & Administration	21%	6%	17%	23%
Natural & Applied Science	5%	1%	-	6%
Health	4%	2%	-	5%
Social Science & Education	12%	5%	3%	14%
Culture & Recreation	4%	4%	1%	4%
Sales & Service	20%	39%	35%	17%
Trades & Transport	17%	26%	31%	14%
Primary, Manufacture & Utilities	5%	13%	6%	4%
Not Stated	2%	2%	2%	1%

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics, August 2000

#### 2.2 National Literacy Surveys

- It is estimated that 50% of NWT adults may not have the required literacy levels
  to successfully participate in society.
- The Aboriginal population in the NWT has lower literacy than non-Aboriginal people in the NWT and Aboriginal people in southern Canada.
- Literacy levels of non-Aboriginal adults in the NWT are higher than in Canada as a whole.

Canada was one of seven countries that participated in the 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). The intent of the IALS was to determine the literacy levels of adult populations, regardless of their level of educational achievement. The survey included testing of a representative sample of adults in three literacy areas:

- Prose the knowledge and skills required to understand and use information from texts, including editorials, news stories, poems and fiction.
- Document the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables and graphics.
- Quantitative the knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations, either alone
  or sequentially, to numbers embedded in printed materials such as balancing a cheque
  book, figuring out a gratuity, completing an order form or determining the amount of
  interest on a loan from an advertisement.

Test scores were grouped into five literacy levels. National results of the 1994 IALS were:

- 20% of Canadians have level one literacy. These people have difficulty reading and few basic skills or strategies for decoding and working with text. Generally, they are aware that they have a literacy problem.
- 25% of Canadians have level two literacy. These are people with limited skills who read but do not read well. At this level, Canadians can deal with material that is simple and clearly laid out. People at this level often do not recognize their limitations.
- 34% of Canadians have level three literacy, which means that they can read well but may have problems with more complex tasks. This level is considered by many countries to be the minimum skill level for successful participation in society.
- 21% of Canadians are at levels four or five literacy. These people have strong literacy skills, including a wide range of reading skills and many strategies for dealing with complex materials. These Canadians can meet most reading demands and handle new reading challenges.

IALS data are unavailable for the NWT. For this report, IALS data for a comparative population in Canada were analysed to provide an estimate of literacy levels in the NWT. This approach considered such variables as age, education and Aboriginal status. (Appendix D) This comparative analysis suggests that: (Table 2-7)

- The overall population with low literacy (level one) in the NWT is 24% compared to 20% in Canada. This result is surprising given the youthful and ethnic composition of the NWT population and the expectation of a much larger gap in literacy rates.
- Among the non-Aboriginal population, literacy levels are much better in the NWT than in Canada (9% vs. 19%). This may be due to a younger non-Aboriginal adult population in the NWT than in Canada in general.
- Regardless of age, the Aboriginal population in the NWT has lower literacy levels than non-Aboriginal people. Further, the literacy levels of Aboriginal people in the NWT tend to be lower than those of Aboriginal people living in southern Canada.
- The overall proportion of the NWT population with high literacy is somewhat lower in the NWT than in Canada (18% vs. 21%) despite considerably higher literacy levels among the non-Aboriginal population (29% vs. 21%).

The IALS suggests that level three literacy is the minimum skill level required to successfully participate in society. With this in mind, estimated literacy levels in the NWT indicate that: (Table 2-7)

- 50% of NWT adults do not have adequate literacy skills to successfully participate in society.
- the literacy problem is significantly greater than what is suggested by measurements based on educational attainment.
- the socio-economic gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people may be even wider than what is suggested by existing data.

Table 2-7: Estimated Literacy of NWT Population by Literacy Level, 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) by Percent of NWT Adult Population

#### Literacy Levels as Defined by IALS (see page 15 for definitions)

	<u>Level 1</u> (%)	<u>Level 2</u> (%)	<u>Level 3</u> (%)	<u>Level 4/5</u> (%)
All Ages	24	26	32	18
15-24 years	21	32	32	15
25-44 years	17	25	36	22
45-64 years	33	25	28	14
65+ years	76	15	7	2

#### 2.3 Literacy in Other Official Languages

- Aboriginal language use, fluency and literacy are declining throughout the NWT.
- French language fluency and literacy seem to be stable.

".... for most, if not all of the Canadian Aboriginal languages, this is their homeland. If the languages are lost here, they are lost forever to the world. The enormity of this loss is still not fully understood or acknowledged. In fact, the rapid loss of Aboriginal languages that is occurring today may well constitute the final assault on Aboriginal people in a long history of colonization." 12

Between 1986 and 1996, the Canada Census showed a clear decline in the use of Aboriginal languages in the NWT and a steady increase in the use of English. These trends are recognized in the plans of each NWT Aboriginal language community.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Crosscurrent Associates. 1999. Languages of the Land. A Resource Manual for Aboriginal Language Activists. NWT Literacy Council

- "The Dogrib language is not used as much in our communities as it has been in the past. It
  is not used for every communication as it once was, and in some contexts its use has
  diminished significantly." There are an estimated 33 people with some level of Dogrib
  literacy. (from the Dogrib Communities Languages Plan. May 1999, Dogrib Community
  Services Board)
- 2. The Chipewyan language is in decline. In 1996, only 44% of people in the NWT who learned Chipewyan as their mother tongue now use it as the main language at home. Approximately 80% of adults over the age of 45 are fluent in the language while less than 10% of people age 24 and under are fluent. (from the Akaitcho Territory Government Chipewyan Language Plan. February 2000)
- 3. "For every 100 people who learned Cree as a first language, only 17 now use it regularly as their home language.....At this rate, use of the language in the region could easily disappear within a generation or two." (from the Cree Language Plan. May 1999, South Slave Metis Tribal Council)
- 4. There is declining knowledge and use of South Slavey. (from the Deh Cho First Nations Language Strategy. May 1999)
- 5. In 1996, 85% of people in Deline who learned Sahtuot'ine still used it in their homes, a drop from 90% in 1991. Over the same period in Radeli Ko, use of the Dene language in the home dropped to 37% from 46% in 1991. In Tulita, 46% of people who learned the language still used it in their homes in 1996. The majority of people in Radeli Ko and Tulita list English as their first language. In K'ambamntue (Colville), 50% of people who learned the language still used it in their homes in 1996 compared to 80% in 1991. (from the Sahtu Region Dene Language Planning Report. March 2000, Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated)
- 6. The Gwich'in language is threatened with extinction in the region. (from the Gwich'in Language Plan. April 1999, Gwich'in Tribal Council)

7. The number of Inuvialuktun speakers is estimated at 400 of a population of 3000, distributed over three different dialects. A Cultural Resource Centre survey of 450 Inuvialuit found that 38% say they can speak Inuvialuktun. Use of the language is greatest in the community of Holman. Overall, Inuvialuktun is rarely heard or seen in the communities or at events and most homes use English as a first language. (from the Inuvialuit Language Plan. April 1999, Inuvialuit Cultural Resource Centre)

A survey conducted in 1992/93 tested Aboriginal language literacy levels.<sup>13</sup> This study found that all Aboriginal language groups have low levels of literacy (Table 2-8) and the majority of Aboriginal persons of all ages have no literacy. Compared to males and persons with lower

Table 2-8: Literacy Levels by NWT Aboriginal Language Groups, 1993

	Chipewyan n=140	Cree n=50	Dogrib n=221	Gwich'in n=161	Inuinnaqtun n=71	Inuvialuktun n=176	North Slavey n=160	South Slavey n=193
None	82%	10%	81%	58%	4%	35%	51%	49%
Some	14%	48%	15%	36%	28%	28%	41%	34%
Average	1%	30%	2%	3%	11%	20%	3%	10%
Good	1%	6%	2%	1%	19%	8%	3%	6%
Very Good	2%	6%	1%	2%	38%	10%	3%	1%

Source: New Economy Development Group. 1993. Evaluation of the Canada - NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages in the NWT. Government of the NWT

levels of formal education, women and those with higher levels of formal education were more likely to have good literacy skills in their Aboriginal language.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>New Economy Development Group. 1993. Evaluation of the Canada-NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages in the NWT. Government of the NWT, Yellowknife

A study in 1987 asked Dene and Metis respondents to self-assess their writing skills in the Dene languages.<sup>14</sup> The study found that individuals use syllabics or Roman orthography. Regardless of the writing system used, only a small portion of the population had some level of literacy. (Table 2-9) Statistics Canada's Aboriginal Peoples Survey (1991) corroborated these data showing low literacy levels among Dene and Metis persons in the NWT. Data reported in the 1991 survey also illustrated lower literacy levels than those reported in the 1987 survey.

Table 2-9: Ability to Write in a Dene Language by NWT Language Group, 1987

	Dogrib n=373	Cree n=229	Chipewyan n=229	South Slavey n=193	North Slavey n=160	Gwich'in n=161
Write Well	2%	0%	4%	4%	6.2%	5.3%
Write Some	4%	0%	4%	6%	8.6%	9.3%
Write None	92%	100%	93%	88%	85.2%	85.4%

Source: Lutra Associates Ltd. 1987. 1987 Audience Survey. Native Communications Society of the Western NWT.

Notes: Dogrib Communities = Rae-Edzo, Gameti, Wekweti, and Wha Ti, Dettah and Yellowknife

Chipewyan Communities = Fort Smith, Pine Point, Fort Resolution, Lutsel K'e

Cree Communities = Fort Smith and Pine Point

South Slavey Communities = Fort Providence, Fort Simpson, Fort Liard, Jean Marie, Trout Lake, Nahanni

Butte, Wrigley, Hay River/Hay River Reserve

Gwich'in Communities = Inuvik, Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Tsiigehtchic

North Slavey Communities = Tulita, Norman Wells, Colville Lake, Fort Good Hope

The declining use, fluency and literacy in Dene languages are concerns of Aboriginal people throughout the NWT. The plans of Aboriginal language communities are intended to address these concerns. Many of the current plans of Aboriginal language groups include initiatives that support the development of reading and writing skills. Enhancing literacy skills is identified as one way of maintaining and developing the languages.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Lutra Associates Ltd. 1987. 1987 Audience Survey. Native Communications Society of the Western NWT.

Even though language development activities in the NWT have been underway for at least three decades, some of the Aboriginal language plans identify the lack of resource materials as a barrier to language development and maintenance. For example, the Dogrib language plan identifies only 40 resource references available in that language. Collecting and inventorying existing language materials are priorities of some Dene language plans. It is expected that the Aboriginal Languages Strategy under development by the GNWT Education, Culture and Employment will recognize and visibly support the work of Aboriginal language communities.

The Canada Census found that less than 3% of the NWT population have French as their mother tongue. Another 3% identify both French and another language as their mother tongue. French fluency and literacy have remained stable over the past decade. Funding for the development and maintenance of French as an official language is allocated to the Federation Franco-TeNOise and local Francophone associations. Funding is also allocated for French language education. French language education to grade 12 is available in Yellowknife. Census data indicate that the vast majority of the NWT's Francophone population reside in Yellowknife.

#### 2.4 Literacy in Daily Living

The 1994 IALS found that adults with low literacy generally believe that their lack of literacy skills do not create difficulties for them in daily living activities. <sup>15</sup> As discussed previously in this chapter, literacy skills have a direct impact on socio-economic characteristics and circumstances. The significant force that literacy plays in daily living is confirmed in social research in the NWT and elsewhere in Canada. "Canadians with low literacy skills are more likely to be unemployed and poor, to suffer poorer health and to die earlier than Canadians with high levels of literacy." <sup>16</sup> Canadians with low literacy tend to practice high risk social and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>Organisation for Economic Co-operation, Development and Human Resources Development Canada. 1997.
Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society- Further Results from the International Adult Literacy Survey.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Health Canada, 1999. Towards a Healthy Future: Second Report on the Health of Canadians.

health behaviours that have consequences not only for the individual but also for families and communities.

#### 2.4.1 Literacy and Poverty

- In the NWT, the annual income of persons with a university degree is 111% higher than the income of persons without literacy skills (less than grade 9).
- The annual income of persons without literacy skills is 46% less than that of high school graduates.
- Illiterate persons generally use income support to meet basic living needs at some time over the course of the year.
- Low literacy and low income threaten basic human security.

"When talking about literacy, we must also talk about poverty and unemployment. People with literacy problems in Canada have two-thirds the income of other Canadians, are twice as likely to be unemployed, and many more times likely to receive some form of social assistance. Jobs available to lower-literacy adults tend to be the lowest-paid, and the most insecure." 17

The economic plight of Canadian adults with low literacy is documented in the 1994 IALs.

- 47% with level one literacy were living in low-income households compared to 8% of persons with level four and five literacy.
- The likelihood of living in a low-income household fell from 47% to 22% by having skills just one level above the lowest level of proficiency (e.g. between level one to level two literacy).

Illiterate persons in the NWT have personal and household incomes which are 46% lower than persons who have graduated from high school and 111% less than persons with a university

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>National Anti-Poverty Organization, "NAPO Facts", October, 1992

degree. 18 The average income of NWT:

- persons with less than grade 9 education is \$29,843.
- high school graduates is \$43,619.
- persons with a university degree is \$62,952.

Illiterate persons in the NWT are likely to use income support to meet basic needs at some time over the year. They are also more likely to use income support than any other group of northern adults. In smaller NWT communities, where 29% of the population are illiterate, approximately 15% of the population use income support. (Table 2-10) In Yellowknife, the percent of the population with less than grade 9 education and those using income support is similar.

Table 2-10: Population Receiving Income Support and with Less than Grade 9 Education by Selected NWT Locations, 1999

	1999			
	Percent of Population Receiving Income Support	Percent of Population (15+) with Less than Grade 9 Education		
NWT	8.5%	12.8%		
Yellowknife	3.9%	4%		
Hay River, Fort Smith, Inuvik	8.3%	8%		
Other NWT Communities 14.6%		29%		

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics. 1999

The effects of poverty and illiteracy are wide ranging. Persons with low literacy and low income experience the greatest difficulties:

<sup>18</sup> Bureau of Statistics, GNWT

- securing housing. The greatest need for suitable, adequate and affordable housing is in smaller NWT communities. 19
- meeting their own nutritional needs and those of their family. Meeting nutritional needs is extremely challenging for people in small NWT communities where the costs of living are up to 110% higher than in Edmonton.<sup>20</sup>

#### 2.4.2 Literacy and Child Development

- Literacy levels of parents/caregivers directly impact their child's development.
- Parents/caregivers who read to their children support their educational successes.
- Early childhood programs including family literacy programs, have positive impacts
  on the literacy levels of both parents/caregivers and young children.

Lack of literacy skills among adults has a direct impact on the development of NWT children and youth. NWT children and youth who depend on adults with low literacy skills, are likely to live in poverty. In 1994, the GNWT estimated that 20% of NWT children live in poverty. Low literacy and poverty are factors that place children at risk of low birth weight, poor health, alienation from peers, developmental delays and lack of educational successes. In part, low literacy and poverty also contribute to the reported incidents in the NWT between 1992 and 1997, of:

- child sexual abuse, increasing by 12% (per 1,000 children),
- child physical abuse, increasing by 88% (per 1,000 children), and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Bureau of Statistics. 1999 NWT Housing Needs Survey. Gov't of the NWT

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Cost of living differentials are calculated for food, transportation and personal items but do not include shelter.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>Education, Culture and Employment. 1994. People: Our Focus for the Future A Strategy to 2010.

children coming into care, increasing by almost 60%.<sup>22</sup>

The 1994 IALS found strong linkages between the literacy skills of children and their parents' level of education. Children of parents with low literacy are at risk of exhibiting low reading skills and lack of interest in reading. "By and large, parental support of children's education reproduces the parents' own educational background. The strongest relationships are between education, reading and academic performance.....parents with a university degree have a much greater probability of reading to children." 23

In recent years, prenatal nutrition, parenting and early intervention programs have targeted children and families who are at risk for or already experiencing developmental delay due to social, emotional, behavioural, physical and/or environmental factors. Early childhood programs are helping to break the cycle of illiteracy. <sup>24</sup> It is expected that an early childhood action plan currently under development by the GNWT Departments of Health and Social Services, and Education, Culture and Employment will consolidate early childhood development efforts and strengthen the role of literacy in these programs. "Getting the early childhood stuff right is important to reducing needs and costs in the future." (NWT stakeholder view)

The majority (79%) of NWT and Nunavut educators participating in an education survey reported that early childhood programs play an important role in student successes at school. <sup>25</sup> Young children who participate in early childhood development programs are prepared for school. "In 1998, 49 of 50 children in Hay River screened for kindergarten had participated in some type of early childhood development program/service. The child who did not attended an early childhood program was easily identified by public health staff conducting the screening,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Health and Social Services. 1999. The NWT Health Status Report. Gov't of the NWT

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>de Broucker, Patrice and Lavallee, Laval. 1998. "Getting Ahead in Life: Does Your Parents' Education Count?" in Canadian Social Trends. volume 49, pages 11 to 15

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Heyland & Associates. 1996. Early Childhood Intervention Programs and Services in the Provinces and Yukon Territory. Education, Culture and Employment and Health and Social Services, Gov't of the NWT

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Education, Culture and Employment. 1999. Strategic Plan Update -Educator's Survey. Gov't of the NWT

as lacking readiness for school.... Children with early childhood program experience are quicker to adjust to school; know routines; have better social skills; have a good grasp of numbers and letters; and an interest in books and new ideas."<sup>26</sup> In another case, a follow-up monitoring study of a 12-week family literacy program found that:

- child participants maintained the literacy gains made;
- a high proportion of parents had continued to pursue study to enhance their own literacy;
   and
- parents were likely to be involved in their child's school.<sup>27</sup>

#### 2.4.3 Literacy and Health

- "However health is defined or measured, people with limited literacy skills are worse off
  than others with higher literacy skills. Literacy is a major factor underlying most other
  determinants of health."
- Persons with less than grade 12 years are twice as likely as those with post-secondary education to have high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and obesity.
- Persons with low literacy levels are more likely to smoke cigarettes, use medical services, die prematurely and experience poor emotional and mental health.
- The relationship of literacy and health status appears not to be well understood in the NWT.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>Lutra Associates Ltd. June 1999. The Second Year Evaluation of the Healthy Children Initiative. Education, Culture and Employment, Gov't of the NWT

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup>Brooks, G., Gorman, T., Harmaan, J., Hutchison, D., Kinder, K., Moor, H., and Wilkin, A. 1997. Family Literacy Lasts- The NFER Follow-up Study of the Basic Skills Agency's Demonstration Programmes. Basic Skills Agency, London, England

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>Perrin, B. 1990. Research Report: Literacy and Health Project Phase One. Ontario Public Health Association, Toronto

"People who are living at a socio-economic disadvantage are biologically more susceptible to becoming sick and to dying prematurely." Numerous studies have explored the relationship of low literacy to the health status of Canadians. Regardless of age, low literacy has a direct impact on health status. Low literacy results in:

- incorrect use of medication. Almost one-half (45%) of adult Canadians may have difficulty administering medicine including infant formula and common treatments for childhood diseases; following practices for personal hygiene; reading labels; complying with written medical directions; or understanding the risks of inappropriate medication.
- difficulties understanding safety precautions. The incidents of death, injury and disability in the NWT are high. These incidents are related to a lack of understanding of safety precautions for the use of chemicals in household or workplace applications; operating machinery, tools and firearms; and the consumption of food, alcohol and drug products.
- poor eating habits and nutrition. Lack of understanding of food values and daily nutritional requirements together with difficulty reading labels and recipes combine to undermine the health of persons with low literacy.

Persons with less that 12 years of education are twice as likely as those with 16 or more years of education to live with high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and obesity. Compared to persons with higher level literacy, persons with low literacy are less likely to have good mental and emotional health. Persons with low literacy lack:

- · independence,
- a sense of well-being, and
- choices and control over life decisions and circumstances.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>Federal, Provincial and Territorial Committee on Population Health. September 1996. Report on the Health of Canadians. for the meeting of the Ministers of Health

The 1994 National Population Health Survey corroborates other research about the relationship of literacy and health status. In the NWT, the Survey found that:

- 70% of respondents with grade 12 or more education rated their health as "very good" or "excellent" compared to 50% of those with no high school diploma, and 33% of persons with less than grade 9 education.
- 73% of respondents with less than grade 9, 55% of those with grades 9-11 and 52% of those with high school or more education are physically inactive.

The 1996/97 National Population Health Survey found that NWT persons with low literacy are likely to use tobacco. Tobacco use is highest among persons who have some high school education. The reasons for this may be related to a slightly better financial position than persons with less than grade 9 education. These data are corroborated in the 1996 NWT Alcohol and Drug Survey.

National Population Health Survey	NWT Alcohol and Drug Survey	
NWT Tobacco Users	NWT Tobacco Users	
Less than grade 9 - 50%	Less than grade 9 – 52%	
Grade 9-11 – 87%	Grade 9-11 – 67%	
Grade 12 or more – 46%	Grade 12 or more – 35%	

A study in Manitoba compared health status in a northern region with Winnipeg. The study found that the northern region had:<sup>30</sup>

- six times the rate of hospitalization due to infectious disease and pneumonia.
- 19 times the rate of hospitalization for influenza and seven times the rate for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup>Sarginson, Robert. 1997. Literacy and Health: A Manitoba Perspective. the Literacy Partners of Manitoba. (38% of the adult population in the northern region had less than grade 9 education compared to 9.1% in Winnipeg.)

tuberculosis.

- twice the hospitalization rate for children.
- four times the rate of motor vehicle accidents.
- six times the rate of drowning.
- twice the rate of poisoning.
- five times the rate of death due fire and flames.
- five times the murder rate.

The Manitoba study concluded that "literacy programming is cheaper than medical care, hospital stays, physician visits and medi-transit." Health Canada has concluded that health status improves with every step up the education, income or social status 'ladder.'<sup>31</sup>

In the NWT, low literacy skills among human service providers and within the population as a whole, have been identified as barriers to health and well-being. A recent report on health and social services in the NWT states that "...people are aware of the dangers of bottle caries, addictions, unprotected sex and poor diet, but carry on as if they do not know." 33 Behaviours of stated recognition but avoidance in action are discussed in numerous health studies as a direct consequence of low literacy. Addressing literacy in health promotion campaigns, and in the work of Community Health Representatives and other community service providers will undoubtedly positively impact on the health status of northerners and the costs of medial and social services in the NWT.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup>Sarginson, Robert. 1997. Literacy and Health: A Manitoba Perspective. the Literacy Partners of Manitoba.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Little, L., Auchterlonie, S. and Stephen, B. 2000. Living with Disability....Living with Dignity Needs Assessment of Persons with Disabilities in the NWT. NWT Council for Disabled Persons, GNWT Health and Social Services, Yellowknife Association for Community Living, GNWT Education, Culture and Employment, YWCA of Yellowknife, Human Resources Development Canada, MaryAnne Duchesne

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Government of the NWT. 2000. Our Communities Our Decisions – Let's get in with it! Final Report of the Minister's Forum on Health and Social Services. page 6

#### 2.4.4 Literacy and Government/Community Services

- Leaders in the NWT do not seem to appreciate the value of strong literacy skills.
- The quality and equity of social, economic, environmental and political processes and services now and in the future are at risk due to poor literacy.

"In this fast paced technological world, strong leaders are more critical than ever. Our leaders are required to sit across the table from captains of industry and senior ranks of government bureaucracy and negotiate wisely, fairly and effectively on behalf of their people." <sup>34</sup>

Literacy levels are a significant factor in the effectiveness and efficiency of public and Aboriginal government and non-government organizations. Literacy affects the quality of information flow, analysis, decision-making and the extent to which organizations are accountable. Literacy is inherent in the democratic principles upon which structures in our society operate. Literacy affects both the extent to which community members can benefit from and equitably participate, and elected leaders and public servants can serve the public and discharge their responsibilities.

In the NWT, a number of the documents listed in Appendix A have identified the impacts of low literacy. These impacts are also documented in the Dogrib Region case study on literacy in Appendix C. Low literacy:

- creates uncertainty and difficulties for community groups preparing funding proposals,
   understanding decision-making processes and fulfilling funding and legislative
   requirements.
- impacts on decision-making competencies within community organizations and various levels of government.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Economic Strategy Panel. 2000. Common Ground -NWT Economic Strategy 2000. Government of the NWT

- contributes to irregularities in policy implementation and program practices.
- threatens to undermine the extent to which self-government, land claim and impact benefit agreements are understood and implemented.
- limits the quality of services available to the public.

Canadian adults with low literacy use a variety of coping behaviours and strategies when interacting with government and other large institutions. Persons with low literacy:

- tend to avoid encounters with government or other institutions who are likely to require reading, writing or numeracy tasks (e.g. banking, insurance and medical services).
- prefer face-to-face interaction (e.g. persons with low literacy tend to ignore correspondence in the hope of forcing a telephone call or face-to-face interaction).
- tend to equate interaction with government or other institutions as "trouble". 35

As shown in the Dogrib Region case study on literacy, difficulty performing daily reading and writing tasks creates risks for numerous community residents. For example, failure to deal with government correspondence related to taxation can have legal consequences both for the individual as well as for service providers who themselves, may be unable to provide appropriate assistance due to low literacy.

Low literacy limits participation in the community. Persons lacking literacy skills are less likely to become involved in volunteer activities compared to those with higher levels of education. (Table 2-11)

<sup>35</sup> Cogem Research Inc. 1997. Information Needs and Strategies of Canadians with Lower Literacy Skills. Revenue Canada

Table 2-11: Volunteer Activities by Persons 18 Years and Over by Highest Level of Schooling, Northwest Territories, 1999

Joseph Market State Communication Communicat	All Persons (n=27646)	Less than Grade 9 (n=3446)		High School Diploma or Greater (n=19470)
Took Part in Volunteer	41%	21%	30%	48%
Activities	<u> </u>			

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics, 1999

The relationship between literacy and participation was also highlighted in a recent study of NWT persons with physical, sensory, learning, cognitive and intellectual disabilities. The study found that over 61% of persons with moderate to severe disability are illiterate and another 21% have not achieved a secondary school education. These individuals experience tremendous difficulty coping with the demands of daily living both as a factor of disability and low literacy. Participating in and gaining support from the community and accessing appropriate services are among the most significant challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the NWT. Similar findings have also been reported in studies on NWT youth and seniors.

#### 2.4.5 Literacy and the Workplace

- Nine years of education has no relevance in the workplace in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, virtually all jobs require strong literacy, technological and information management skills.
- The yast majority of jobs including entry level jobs require 12 to 17 years of education.
- Coalitions of business, labour, government and community organizations are
  achieving successes by working together to ensure that workers have the essential
  skills to function in the workplace in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup>Little, L., Auchterlonie, S. and Stephen, B. 2000. Living with Disability....Living with Dignity - A Needs Assessment of Persons with Disability in the NWT.

The Canadian workforce at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is unlike the workforce of past decades. Human Resources Development Canada reports that the workforce is increasingly dominated by 'knowledge workers' or workers with strong literacy, technological and information management skills.<sup>37</sup> Twelve to 17 years of education are required to develop these essential or basic skills. The skill intensive nature of Canada's workforce is reflected in occupational changes that occurred between 1971-1996. Over this period, the share of knowledge and management workers:

- grew by six-fold in trade occupations,
- tripled in construction and manufacturing occupations, and
- doubled in mining, transportation, finance, service and government occupations.

Human Resources Development Canada also reports that:

- three million working-age Canadians lack basic workplace skills.
- 44% of working age Canadians lack the skills required in a knowledge-based economy.
- over one-third of youth do not have the skills required to read a technical manual.
- one in four high school graduates in Canada lack basic literacy skills.
- low literacy and education levels among Aboriginal Canadians continue to exclude this population from employment opportunities and the socio-economic benefits available to other Canadians.

For adults, the impacts of low literacy and lack of education result in barriers to:

- getting a job, keeping a job and advancing in a career.
- participating within the workplace.
- good health and safety in the workplace.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> from Human Resources Development Canada presentation to the Roundtable Discussion on Workplace Literacy, Yellowknife, September 11, 2000

- geographic, job and economic sector mobility.
- trust, performance and morale in the workplace.

For employers, the impacts of low literacy and lack of education are also significant. Low literacy contributes to:

- health, safety and performance issues.
- workplace/business image and credibility issues.
- higher turnover rates.
- higher recruitment and training costs.
- difficulties training and developing a sustainable work force.
- higher business costs.
- workplace disciplinary, morale and interpersonal issues.

In 1989, 64% of all employed persons in the NWT/Nunavut were born outside the territory. Today, more employed persons in the NWT were born in the territory but as discussed in section 2.1, employment disparities continue to exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal northerners. Low literacy and education are reasons that:

- only 22% of the GNWT's workforce are persons of Aboriginal ancestry and only 1% are persons with disability.<sup>38</sup>
- Aboriginal people had limited opportunities to benefit from short-term industrial developments such as the expansion of the Norman Wells oilfield and the building of the Norman Wells pipeline.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Department of Executive. 1999. Government of the Northwest Territories Annual Report on the Affirmative Action Policy 1998 Volumes 1 and 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Government of the NWT, no date. Review of the Norman Wells Project Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Future Projects. Yellowknife

The recent experiences of the BHP Ekati Diamond Mine are an example of the extent to which low literacy and education impacts on the industrial workplace at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Ekati has found that:

- a significant number of northern adults cannot complete an employment application or pass
   a trades examine.<sup>40</sup>
- 67% of BHP's employees who have Aboriginal ancestry, are in unskilled and semiskilled jobs even though 40% of the company's jobs are classified as unskilled and semiskilled.
- 78% of BHP's current workforce do not have the basic skills to enable them to progress in the workplace.<sup>41</sup>
- 20% of BHP's current workforce have high literacy needs, 24% can't read basic signage and 34% rely on oral instruction.

The Ekati Mine and northern people alike share a frustration that higher level/skilled positions must be filled by non-residents due to low literacy and education levels in the NWT. As discussed in the Dogrib Region case study on literacy, BHP is launching a workplace literacy initiative in an effort to address literacy needs among its workforce. (Appendix C)

Elsewhere in Canada, the need to address workplace literacy issues has given rise to multisector partnerships involving business/industry councils, labour organizations and government. These partnerships have seen government partners play a central coordination and support role to business and labour decision-makers who bring literacy programs into the workplace.

 $<sup>^{40}</sup>$  Tim Butler, BHP Human Resources in a presentation to the GNWT Standing Committee on Social Programs, June 1,2000

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Anne Marie Dawe, BHP Human Resources in a presentation to the Roundtable Discussion on Workplace Literacy, Sept. 11,2000, Yellowknife

The multi-sector or coalition approach to addressing workplace literacy and essential skill needs has been successful in:

- creating more awareness and support for workplace literacy and essential skills activities.
- providing workplace literacy programs that enable employees to gain confidence, acquire
   new skills and better participate in their workplace, community and family.
- linking workplace, family and school-based literacy programs.
- encouraging the use of clear language materials such as employee, health and safety manuals.

Workplace literacy programs in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta offer models for addressing workplace literacy issues in the NWT.

### 2.4.6 Literacy and School

- NWT community schools are graduating about 260 students each year.
- The quality and performance of the education system are key factors in low literacy levels in the NWT.
- Literacy problems in the NWT are compounded by the absence of policies, programs and funding to provide consistent and appropriate literacy, educational and training supports to persons disadvantaged by virtue of their socio-economic, disability or other special circumstances.

Throughout the 1990s, educational opportunities for northerners improved by virtue of greater access to higher-level secondary school grades in more NWT communities. At the same time, a variety of post-secondary and adult programs were made available in some communities. Post-secondary and adult programs include adult basic education (ABE), pre-employment, job skills, community literacy, college certificate and diploma, and university transfer programs. Improved access to education is one of the factors contributing to greater participation in secondary level education, and slowly improving education levels among the adult population.

A wide range of issues face the NWT education system and each impacts on the state of literacy of the northern population. <sup>42</sup> For example,

- Poor literacy skills of children and youth are barriers to student successes, graduation rates and learning opportunities. As discussed in the Dogrib Region case study on literacy, many children have delayed language acquisition skills and do not have a strong foundation in either English or their Aboriginal language. (Appendix C) Early childhood, family literacy and Aboriginal language programs have proven to be effective in enhancing language acquisition skills.
- Social dysfunction including family violence and substance abuse, impact on student attendance, performance and successes in school. Consistently confronting these issues and easily accessible individual and family supports have proven to be effective approaches to reducing the impacts of social dysfunction.
- The GNWT estimates that as many as one-third of NWT primary and secondary school students have special needs that cannot be met by the regular school program. Resources and supports are inadequate to implement the NWT Inclusive Schooling Policy. The Policy states that all students including those with special needs, are to receive the same quality of education.
- About 13% of the NWT population are limited in daily living activities due to physical, sensory and/or other disabilities. A recent study of persons with physical, sensory, cognitive, intellectual and learning disabilities reported that among NWT persons with moderate to severe disability, 32% have learning disability and 25% have intellectual disability. Brain-related disabilities pose particular challenges to efforts to develop a literate population. Developing strong literacy skills among adults with disability is made

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Minister's Forum on Education. 1999. **Draft Report**. Education, Culture and Employment

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Statistics Canada, 1991 Health and Activity Limitation Survey

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Little, L., Auchterlonie, S. and Stephen, B. 2000. Living with Disability ....Living with Dignity – A Needs Assessment of Persons with Disability in the NWT.

more difficult by the lack of public educational and social policy and programs for this segment of the NWT population.

"The dismal results of Grade 12 graduates required to write an entrance exam for apprenticeship programs are an example of disturbing problems in our education system. Each candidate failed. The majority of the test required a Grade 10 equivalency – the exception was the mathematics section which required a Grade 12 equivalency." <sup>45</sup>

High quality programs and strong performance of the NWT education system are essential to developing a literate and educated northern population. To some extent, the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) illustrates the performance of the NWT education system. SAIP is a national testing program sponsored by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). It measures Canadian students' knowledge of reading, writing, mathematics and science. In 1998, the CMEC anticipated that:

- 75% of students 13 years of age would attain level two or above in reading and 80% in writing, 46 and
- 72% of students 16 years of age were expected to achieve level three or higher in reading and 75% in writing. 47

Canadian students in both age groups achieved expected reading and writing levels. By comparison, NWT students demonstrated a much lower level of reading and writing ability. (Table 2-12)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Economic Strategy Panel, 2000. Common Ground NWT Economic Strategy 2000. Government of the NWT

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup>Reading: be able to interpret, evaluate and explore surface and directly implied meanings from straight forward text and some more complex texts. Writing: grasp of the elements of writing, even if it is uneven or uncertain.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup>Reading: be able to interpret, evaluate and explore meanings in complex and some sophisticated texts. Writing: demonstrate a general control of the elements of writing.

Table 2-12: Percent of Students Performing at or Above Acceptable Levels of Reading and Writing, 1998 School Achievement Indicators Program

	NWT	Canada	Expected Outcomes - Canada
Reading – 13 Years of Age	55%	78%	75%
Writing – 13 Years of Age	79%	95%	80%
Reading – 16 Years of Age	50%	72%	72%
Writing - 16 Years of Age	60%	85%	75%

Source: Northwest Territories, Education, Culture & Employment. 2000. Towards Excellence - A Report on Education in the Northwest Territories. Yellowknife: Government of the Northwest Territories.

"Today, with the advent of the 'information age', the need for education is even more critical.

A decade ago, a high school certificate provided access to a variety of jobs in the workplace.

Today most good 'entry-level' jobs require additional training." 48

An estimated 260 students graduate each year from NWT schools. Less than one-quarter of Aboriginal youth (22%) graduate from high school compared to 81% of non-Aboriginal youth. Early school leaving results from a complex set of circumstances in the home, school, community and personal lives of NWT youth. Literacy problems are a factor in these circumstances. Within the school environment, low literacy contributes to:

- youth dissatisfaction with the education they receive,
- problems with school rules and relationships,
- problems with specific school courses/subjects, and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Economic Strategy Panel. 2000. Common Ground NWT Economic Strategy 2000. Government of the NWT

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> calculated by the GNWT Bureau of Statistics (1999) as a percent of persons 18 years of age in the NWT.

difficulties keeping up or responding to the demands of school.<sup>50</sup>

Yellowknife Catholic Schools (YCS) estimates that 25% of its enrolment leaves before completion; 50% cannot handle the Alberta curriculum; and 30% have language development delays, delay in speech leading to delay in writing and reading, and auditory processing problems. TCS is tackling the problem of low literacy skills among its student population by moving toward a full-service school model and incorporating literacy into the K-12 curriculum. YCS recognizes that the many early childhood, youth and adult programs needed to address low literacy, cannot be done by one party alone. YCS is partnering with a wide variety of business, government and community organizations to address literacy needs.

One of the clearest messages conveyed by the results of the International Adult Literacy Survey is that literacy is not simply the result of schooling. Literacy acquisition can and in many cases does, continue after schooling stops. Unfortunately, the study also shows that skills can be lost after leaving school". 52

It is estimated that Aurora College campus and community-based programs produce 47 college-ready graduates each year. As discussed in some detail in the Dogrib Region case study on literacy, the success of adult learners seeking to develop or regain literacy, are impacted by a number of factors:

 access to an appropriate literacy or adult education program, or adult learning environment.

Lutra Associates Ltd. 1996. Securing Our Future: A Planning Framework for Supporting NWT Youth. Education, Culture and Employment

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Education, Culture and Employment . 1997. Give Youth a Chance – An Action Guide for Working with Youth. Gov't of the NWT

Lutra Associates Ltd. 1992. Lessons for All: Factors Contributing to Early School Leaving in the Northwest Territories Volume 2-Summary Report. Canada Employment and Immigration Commission NWT Directorate and the Department of Education, Government of the Northwest Territories

<sup>51</sup> Personal communication, L. Baile, Yellowknife Catholic Schools

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and Human Resources Development Canada. 1997.
Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society.

- access to the emotional or social supports to encourage return to school.
- the financial means to attend a literacy or adult education program.

Within the Dogrib Region, a variety of players are endeavouring to evolve a continuum of literacy and basic education services to meet the variety of adult learner needs. Efforts to evolve a system of adult learning in the Region continue to be stymied by piece-meal policy, program and funding approaches to adult learning.

#### 2.4.7 Literacy and the Justice System

- Low literacy is a factor in incarceration rates in the NWT, particularly among the Aboriginal population.
- Aboriginal people make-up the majority of the prison population in the NWT.
- Rehabilitative efforts of the penal system in the NWT are negated by the lack of literacy skills.
- Literacy levels impact on the effectiveness of other elements of the justice system.

"... an inmate with a level of education of grade 6 or less has already been sentenced to a hard life regardless of any sentence imposed by the courts." <sup>53</sup>

There are no complete statistical data on literacy levels among the NWT inmate population.

Available information from the Offender Risk Assessment Management System (ORAM) for a

1.5 year period based on a sample of 411 sentenced adults show that:<sup>54</sup>

- 26% had completed grade 7 or less, and
- 74% were attending school or completed grade 8 or more.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup>Hansard June 29, 2000 comments attributed to Mr. Delorey, MLA Hay River

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup>personal communications Roy Kaiser, GNWT Justice. A new central data management system is expected by October 2000 (Correction Offenders Management System for adults) and will provide data on education level but will not test literacy.

Data maintained internally by staff at the Yellowknife Correctional Centre over the past six years provide a longitudinal profile of the inmate population in that facility.<sup>55</sup>

- The average self-reported grade level was 6.7 years but few inmates seeking upgrading while in jail, test out at the grade level they have stated.
- 90% of inmates state their occupation/employment as labourer.
- At least 90% of inmates have Aboriginal ancestry.
- Inmates in upgrading are usually 20-30 years of age.
- An estimated 80% of inmates are repeat offenders.
- Inmates with higher level education are less likely to re-offend and return to prison

Correctional facilities in the NWT are described as "institutions that are paper driven". (stakeholder view) A written record of virtually every transaction or request is required within this environment. Literacy skills impact on the ability of inmates to access services, request temporary absences, input into pre-sentencing reports and case management plans, prepare for parole board hearings or complete the two-page early release form. Literacy levels impact on the ability of inmates to successfully participate in Alcohol Anonymous programs (e.g. maintain a journal) or the rehabilitative programs (e.g. cognitive skills, anger management, healthy relationships) required for early release.

Low literacy also impacts on citizen participation in other facets of the justice system. Victims with low literacy face barriers completing impact statements and may feel intimidated by the legal process. Anecdotal information collected over the course of this research indicates that many crimes are not reported or charges are not laid due to literacy issues. This impacts on the understanding of and efforts to address such issues as family violence. Similarly, individuals with low literacy may also feel that they cannot participate in community justice processes

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup>personal communications Bill Chipman, Adult Educator, Yellowknife Correctional Centre

because they are unable to read and understand police reports.

#### 2.5 In Summary

Literacy is not a one-dimensional issue. It does not have borders. The profile contained in this chapter is a revelation of the seriousness of the literacy problem in the NWT and the effects that low literacy have on the quality of life, particularly of Aboriginal northerners. With as many as half of the adult population affected by literacy problems, the NWT's socio-economic and political health is at great risk.

It is clear from the profile and the Dogrib Region case study that literacy issues have been with the NWT population for a long time; will not be fixed overnight; and no one party can address this issue alone. The case study on literacy describes how communities in the Dogrib Region are trying to respond to literacy needs. (Appendix C) Other groups identified in this profile are also endeavouring to address literacy problems. These experiences provide valuable lessons and a platform for addressing this serious and pervasive issue.

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# 3. Literacy Legislation, Policy and Programs

This chapter describes the legislation, policies and program environment for literacy and adult basic education (ABE) programs in the NWT. A summary of legislation and policy is provided in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1: Current Legislation and Policy Affecting Literacy and Basic Education in the NWT

Legislation/Policy	Student Supports	g Literacy and Basic Education Literacy and Basic	Eligibility
	The state of the s	Education Program	
NWT Education Act	Inclusive schooling policy enabling access to an education program in a regular classroom.	School academic curriculum provides for literacy, fluency and numeracy. ECE funding for adult learners in NWT schools is via the schools budget.	All students from 5-20 years of age. DEAs may have special provisions for learners 21+ years.
Employment Insurance Act	Territorial benefits and measures (through Labour Market Development Agreement -LMDA). Loans and grants for education and training costs (tuition, books, childcare, transportation, living).	Claimants may access upgrading and skills programs within a 52 week period in an accredited program. Claimants must demonstrate that the program can be completed.	Supports for insured participants only with priority to EI claimants.
Social Assistance Act	Income Support. Basic and extended benefits are combined with productive choice referral to a training/education program.	Community Skills for Work funding for community education/skills and work experience projects mainly where there is no community learning centre.	Targets adults and youth 18 years and older. Community Skills for Work projects target IS clients.
Student Financial Assistance Act	Grants and loans for post - secondary education. UCEP funds for approved college preparation upgrading. SFA may fund tuition for ACCESS to an approved college program.		Full-time students attending an approved program leading to a college diploma or university degree.
Public Colleges Act	Establishes Aurora College.	The purpose of a college is to deliver adult and post-secondary education, including university level programs.	
Continuing Education Policy	Approved 1987	Guides the development and delivery of adult literacy and basic education	Aurora College identified as the main provider of adult basic education.
Adult Literacy and Basic Education Policy 2000	Approved 2000	Framework for developing, delivering, co-ordinating and evaluating literacy and basic education programs for adults.	

# 3.1 Literacy and Adult Basic Education (ABE) Responsibilities and Directions

## 3.1.1. Policy and Program Framework

Literacy and ABE are not fully mandated public services in any Canadian jurisdiction.

Responsibility for literacy and ABE is largely discretionary and has little regulation. Across Canada, literacy and ABE programs exist through a variety of funding arrangements. Funding guidelines are variable, influencing student eligibility, access and program delivery. A similar situation exists in the NWT.

The responsibility for literacy and ABE rests with the GNWT's Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE). Historically, the 1987 Continuing Education Policy provided the framework for discharging this responsibility. In 1999, ECE drafted the Adult Literacy and Basic Education Directive to provide a more current policy framework for these programs. The Directive was circulated to stakeholders and feedback was given by Aurora College. The Directive was approved in September 2000.

The Continuing Education Policy required programs that maximize accessibility to all NWT adults. It identified Aurora College as the main provider of ABE. The Adult Literacy and Basic Education Directive:

- expands the responsibility for literacy and ABE programs beyond Aurora College to include
   ECE, other service providers, Aboriginal governments and community agencies.
- affirms the ABE curriculum as the tool for standardizing services and receiving funding.
- identifies a two-pronged approach to funding literacy and ABE. 1) contributions to non-government organizations, and 2) base funding for salaries, operation and maintenance for the delivery of ABE through Aurora College.
- gives priority to strengthening Aboriginal languages.

A variety of other documents articulate ECE's vision for ABE or link literacy and ABE programs to other human development activities - 1989/90 Strategy for Literacy, 1994 People: Our Focus for the Future Strategy, 1995 NWT Income Support (IS) Program and 1997 Bridge to

My Future. The common vision or theme in these documents is community-based literacy and ABE programs:

- with relationships throughout the community (e.g. as part of a "community learning network").
- that use a case management approach to assess and respond to the needs of adult learners in a manner consistent with the NWT IS Program.

ECE's strategic plan for 2000 to 2005 reaffirms this vision. The strategy is to focus resources on early childhood development, school programs, community high schools and human resource developments linked to economic growth and employment. Human resource development initiatives:

- seek linkages between ABE and community high schools;
- support Aboriginal and community groups in the delivery of literacy and ABE programs; and
- seek basic skill development for income support clients.

ECE's strategic plan envisions access to community-based literacy and ABE programs being maintained by Aurora College through partnerships.

#### 3.1.2. Program Delivery

Literacy and ABE programs are in decline in virtually every jurisdiction in Canada. In an era of fiscal restraint, these programs are judged as a poor investment compared to primary and secondary education, and early childhood development. In addition to funding, a wide variety of other problems have impacted on literacy and ABE programs. The most significant of these are adequate:

- student financial support;
- social/family support;
- learning supports, and
- support for literacy and ABE teachers.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Butterworth, B. November 1996. Provincial/Territorial Trends in Adult Basic Education (ABE)

For at least the last two decades, programs in the NWT have encountered similar problems. These problems continue to persist despite policy and program changes in related spheres. For example, while revisions have recently been made to the NWT Student Financial Assistance Program, adults pursuing literacy and basic education are ineligible for this assistance.

The problems confronting literacy and adult basic education programs are identified in the Dogrib Region case study on literacy in Appendix C and were articulated recently by the NWT Legislative Assembly as:<sup>57</sup>

- instability and uncertain quality due to part-time instructor positions and dependencies on insecure, inadequate, short-term funding.
- inadequate resources to assist adults.
- discrepancies in program access and in programming in smaller and larger communities.
- lack of program delivery options and flexibility to meet student needs.
- lack of tracking of the successes of adult learners in various learning environments.
- lack of co-ordination and communications resulting in ineffective programming and lapses of valuable training resources (e.g. in the apprenticeship program).
- weak linkages with such programs as early childhood development.
- weak or ineffective partnerships for literacy and adult education.
- lack of training and support for ABE instructors, particularly with respect to implementing a
  new curriculum.

The GNWT has endeavoured to address issues associated with the lack of supports available to adult learners with disabilities. To this end, the NWT Study Grant for Students with Disabilities has been put in place to supplement education-related costs for post-secondary education. This initiative does not include supports for persons with disabilities enrolled in literacy or adult basic education programs.

Literacy and ABE programs have also been impacted by reforms in social assistance which are reflected in the NWT Income Support (IS) Program. The NWT IS Program:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup>NWT Legislative Assembly, Hansard, June 29,2000

- requires income support clients to seek a productive choice including enrolment in a literacy or ABE program;
- targets support to youth and adults for productive choices;
- links living subsidies, education, training and employment; and
- targets funding to income support clients living in communities without an adult educator.

Income support reforms provided the rationale for the 1994 - 1996 GNWT/HRDC Investing in People Strategy. Under this Strategy, \$8 million was committed to productive education, training and work experiences in the NWT and Nunavut and to the Northern Skills Development Program (NSDP). NSDP supported training partnerships with Aurora College and community groups/employers. The 1997-1999 Northern Employment Strategy committed an additional \$5.5 million in the NWT and Nunavut to community work experience and NSDP-type projects. Investing in People was replaced in 1998 by the Community Skills for Work Program that was terminated in March 2000 and then reinstated four months later. Investing in People/Community Skills for Work funding has enabled a wide variety of community-based literacy, ABE, skills training, pre-employment and literacy awareness projects. Discretionary funding for Investing in People/Community Skills for Work projects has been declining in recent years.

Since 1988/89, Aurora College has received additional ECE funding to expand the delivery of community-based literacy programs primarily in communities without an adult educator or basic education program. ECE's 1989/90 Strategy for Literacy confirmed and strengthened the thrust toward community-based literacy projects. The Strategy created a Canada/GNWT cost-shared fund for community groups to undertake literacy projects. Community sponsored literacy projects were intended to:

- parallel or supplement Aurora College's literacy and ABE programs.
- increase community involvement in literacy through partnerships with voluntary and private sector organizations.
- demonstrate a commitment to literacy in all NWT official languages.

The 1990-1995 Aurora College Strategic Plan gave priority to literacy and ABE, expanding access, and making more programs available. The 1995 Aurora College Corporate Plan to 2000 continued this direction and reaffirmed the College's commitment to delivering ABE at the community level. The 2000 (Draft) Aurora College - A Plan for a New Millennium departs from this direction. The new plan states that:

- communities can deliver literacy programs better than the College, and
- partnerships at the community level are an appropriate avenue for delivering ABE.

Across Canada, a trend is emerging toward spending on those with higher rather than low levels of education/literacy. Consistent with these trends, Aurora College is considering targeting base funding for adult basic education at higher level ABE programs such as preparatory studies for entry into college level certificate, diploma and university programs.

In 1996, the National Training Act and Unemployment Insurance (UI) Act were replaced by the Employment Insurance (EI) Act to reflect social reforms throughout Canada. The EI Act has two parts - Part 1: EI benefits, and Part 2: Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs). Part 2 responsibilities were devolved from Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) to GNWT ECE. LMDAs give authority to ECE for territorial training programs. HRDC has withdrawn from the direct purchase of training seats. LMDAs are a source of funds for tuition, books, childcare, transportation and living expenses associated with education and training at accredited programs/institutions. About two-thirds (65%) of LMDA funding is allocated to eligible EI claimants (e.g. EI recipients). The remaining funds (35%) are allocated to training for insured EI claimants (e.g. people who pay into EI). These guidelines redirect financial assistance away from programs to the individual student. Students may be hampered in their efforts to access accredited programs/institutions due to the lack of clear guidelines. Community groups offering literacy and basic education programming may be ineligible for accreditation, further limiting the educational options available to northern adults.

HRDC has also evolved special arrangements with First Nations/Inuit organizations to put human resource development decision-making and funding into the hands of Aboriginal groups (mainly

claimant organizations in the NWT). These multi-year funding arrangements were developed initially as Pathways or Bilateral Agreements and in 1997, became known as Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDA). AHRDAs are intended to help Aboriginal people acquire skills to find and keep jobs. NWT Aboriginal groups have targeted AHRDA funds at individuals rather than program deliverers (e.g. topping up funding received under the NWTSFA, and funding for literacy, ABE programs and community-based training projects). As discussed in the Dogrib Region case study on literacy (Appendix C) and at a recent workplace literacy conference in Yellowknife, Aboriginal organizations prefer to invest AHRDA funds in job-skills rather than literacy and basic education programs. Literacy and basic education are viewed as a public government responsibility. <sup>58</sup>

#### 3.1.3 Funding

In the NWT, funding for literacy and ABE is either base or discretionary, <sup>59</sup> originating in GNWT ECE, Health and Social Services and HRDC/National Literacy Secretariat budgets. Literacy and ABE are identified as core (funded) services in ECE's People: Our Focus for the Future Strategy (1994). In the last half decade, base funding for literacy and ABE has remained stable and discretionary funding has diminished. (Table 3-2)

#### Base Funding

Base funding to Aurora College for literacy and ABE has enabled access for persons with various levels of literacy. For example, between 1991/92 and 1998/99:

almost 50% of those completing ABE/English and 79% of those completing ABE/Math, did so at the lower literacy levels (English/Math 110 to 130).

A College plan to expand the range of ACCESS to diploma and certificate programs provides opportunities for additional funding and should increase completion rates at higher literacy

<sup>58</sup> September 11,2000 proceedings from the Roundtable on Workplace Literacy

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup>Discretionary funding is year-to-year or project specific while base funding is a multi-year arrangement subject to the GNWT's annual budgeting process.

levels.60

Table 3-2: Funding for Literacy and ABE, 1995/96 to 1999/2000

Budget	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00
Aurora Campus Academic (Base)	\$726,250	\$701,929	\$789,780	\$902,867	\$749,550
Aurora Campus Access (Base)					\$487,642
Aurora CLCs/ABE (Base)	\$1,163,000	\$1,141,658	\$1,002,213	\$968,627	\$1,257,028
Aurora ABE Administration (Base)	\$342,000	\$422,386	\$421,385	\$421,387	\$387,541
A. Sub-Total ABE Base & Access (Base)	\$2,231,250	\$2,265,973	\$2,213,378	\$2,292,881	\$2,881,761
Tree of Peace	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$95,000	\$95,000	\$95,000
Aurora ABE/Skills				\$635,000	\$299,874
B. Sub-Total Aurora/Community ABE				\$3,022,881	\$3,276,635
Community Literacy Projects Aurora/Communities	\$290,000	\$273,618	\$290,000	\$290,000	\$280,993
Community Work Experience				\$505,128	\$525,020
Aurora Curriculum Development				\$50,000	\$50,000
Total				\$3,868,009	\$4,132,648

Source: Office of the Bursar, Aurora College & ECE, Finance

Note: Disaggregated data for the NWT (not including Nunavut) are unavailable for a number of years.

#### In 1999/2000,

- ECE's contribution of \$3.44 million (\$2.56 million base and \$875,000 of discretionary funding) represented 83% of the \$4.13 million expenditure on literacy and ABE programs in the NWT.<sup>61</sup>
- H&SS' base contribution of \$413,000 to Aurora ACCESS programs and the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) discretionary contribution of \$250,000 made-up the remaining 17% of funding.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> In 1999/2000, Aurora College increased ACCESS to diploma programs and received \$487,642 mostly from H&SS to supplement ABE base funding.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup>exclusive of Aboriginal languages funding.

Additional base funding in 1999/2000 is due to an increase in the delivery of ACCESS to diploma programs and new responsibility for the Holman Community Learning Centre. It is expected that the base allocation for literacy and ABE will continue to increase in 2000/2001 to satisfy the ratification of a new collective agreement.

In 1999/2000, the vast majority of expenditures (excluding Aboriginal languages funding) for literacy and ABE programs (82% or \$3.4 million) were channeled through Aurora College.

- In 1998/99 and 1999/2000, the College used almost 94% of its base and discretionary funding allocation to support the administration and delivery of Academic Studies/ABE at campuses and community learning centres.<sup>64</sup>
- In 1999/2000, Aurora College budgeted more of its funding to expanding college entry ACCESS programs at the three campuses, and increased funding to Community Learning Centres (CLCs) primarily to compensate for the Holman CLC. The expansion of ACCESS programs has increased revenues to the College from partnership funding and tuition recovery.
- The remaining Aurora funding allocation (from ECE and NLS) was allocated to community-based literacy projects and curriculum development. Aurora College's community literacy project fund is intended for partnerships with communities. The value of this fund has not changed significantly in the past five years.

In 1996/97, Aurora College altered its method of calculating full and part-time enrolments.

- Based on current calculation methods, ABE enrolment made up 17% of the total Aurora
   College enrolment in 1991/92.
- In 1998/99, ABE enrolment made up 28% of the total Aurora College enrolment.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup>Holman was part of Nunavut Arctic College until April 1,1999.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup>for Aurora College instructional staff

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> \$3.18 = \$3.4 x 94%

In 1998/99, the annual investment supported an enrolment of 184 full-time and 1007 part-time students in Academic Studies/ABE. (Table 3-3) To meet this demand, varying levels of full or part-time programming were available in 32 NWT communities (full-time programs in 15 communities and at the three campuses, and part-time programming in 14 other communities). Campus-based programs served 48% of the enrolment and the remaining 52% were served in communities.

Table 3-3: Aurora College Enrolment in ABE, 1993/94 - 1998/99

	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
College Full-Time	321	289	537	211	250	184
College Part-Time	348	290	182	1042	1202	1007
College FTE	356	318	555	315	370	285
On Campus Full-Time			213	120	140	94
On Campus Part-Time			24	450	575	441
On Campus FTE			215	165	198	138
CLC Full-Time			324	91	110	90
CLC Part-Time			158	592	627	566
CLC FTE			340	150	173	147

Source: Aurora College. 2000. Adult Basic Education Enrolments

Note: Aurora College calculates 10 part time course equivalent to one full-time enrolment (FTE).

Different methods of calculating full and part-time enrolment account for significant changes in enrolment between 1995/96 and 1996/97. Enrolments may not include ACCESS programs.

A system-wide priority and approach to literacy and numeracy skills in NWT schools does not exist for the K-12 curriculum. Nevertheless, community schools have emerged as a source of literacy and adult basic education programming. ECE makes base funding available for literacy and ABE delivered in community schools. This funding has been employed in a variety of ways.

Adults in Rae-Edzo have been enrolled at the Chief Jimmy Bruneau School since grade extensions were implemented in the early 1990s. Annual enrolment has ranged from 30 to 70 mature students.

- In Fort Providence, more courses are offered to both adult learners and secondary school students through sharing resources, personnel and space between the CLC and the community school.
- In other communities, creative partnerships among community schools, Aurora College and First Nation Councils have resulted in sufficient funds to hire an additional instructor for high school students and part-time evening instruction for mature students.

As shown in the Dogrib Region case study on literacy, mature students are likely to enroll in community schools if other education options are unavailable. The cost of enrolment in communities where populations are small is higher than the average. In 1998/99, the average cost per student was \$8,900 ranging from \$7,400 in Yellowknife to \$11,400 in the Deh Cho.

## Discretionary Funds

Base and discretionary funding sustain community literacy projects and ABE programs across the NWT. Discretionary funds for example from the Investing In People/Community Skills for Work Program, may be used to supplement instruction costs in communities without base funding for an adult educator. The Investing In People/Community Skills for Work Program has become an integral part of community literacy and ABE programming. In 1998/99, discretionary funding of \$635,000 from the NSDP component of the Program, enabled:

- four full-time (Fort Good Hope, Fort Liard, Norman Wells, Wha Ti) and 14 part-time community instructor positions in communities without base funded CLCs and adult educators.
- enrolment of 72 full-time and 87 part-time adult learners (28% of the total enrolment in campus and community ABE programs).

The Investing in People/Community Skills for Work Program reached its maximum funding level in 1994/95. Since that time, funding has been diminishing and ECE terminated the Program in March 31, 2000, only to reinstate it in July 2000. The Program may contribute as much as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup>For example where a community has a population under 500 and 10 or less students at each grade level, funding is \$12,625 per full-time enrolment (FTE) X community indices.

\$650,000 to community literacy and ABE in 2000/2001, down from \$1.14 million in 1998/99. Investing in People/Community Skills for Work funding is allocated to Aurora College (\$290,000) and to community groups (\$360,000). Phased reductions in discretionary funding for Investing in People/Community Skills for Work together with program uncertainty have reduced opportunities for literacy and ABE programs including English as a Second Language (ESL). ESL programs are no longer available in the NWT.

Discretionary funds through AHRDA and EI - LMDA are mainly used in community partnerships for short-term skills or job preparatory training in order to quickly move participants into the workforce. These Agreements have impacted on the funding available to community literacy and ABE programs and students.

- The decision by HRDC to replace the direct purchase of training seats (or funding directly to education/training institutions) with funding allocations directly to students has: 1) eliminated a funding source for some training programs and 2) stimulated competition for scarce resources among training groups.
- LMDA funding for EI recipients and AHRDA funding for Aboriginal people have fragmented education/training resources. This has challenged partnership arrangements and raised access and equality issues.
- Federal multi-year agreements have stabilized funding and enhanced the capacity of program administrators to plan and manage. Depending on the administrative guidelines used, multi-year agreements may provide students with greater funding security.

Discretionary funding for literacy-related programming is also available through a variety of ECE or other GNWT programs including the Healthy Children Initiative (HCI). Like the Community Skills for Work Program, related initiatives are:

delivered at the regional and/or community level.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup>Hansard June 29,2000 - the Minister of ECE suggests that of the \$650,000 Community Skills for Work Program, \$290,000 goes to the College and the rest (\$360,000) is divided among the three NWT regions.

 unlikely to have strong relationships with adult employment, training and career programs/services or District Education Councils/District Education Authorities and Aboriginal government organizations.<sup>67</sup>

The Beaufort-Mackenzie Delta Region and the Dogrib Region provide examples of efforts to increase the effectiveness of regional funds, and to link early childhood and adult literacy programming. In the Beaufort-Mackenzie Delta, regional funding decisions are made by an advisory group comprised of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Gwich'in Tribal Council, Inuvik Regional Health and Social Service Board and Beaufort Delta District Education Council. This multi-interest committee takes a holistic and cooperative approach to addressing human development needs.

## Aboriginal Language Literacy Funding

ECE's Languages Unit administers the Canada/NWT Cooperation Agreement for French and Aboriginal Languages. Between 1999-2004, the Federal Government committed to funding the implementation of French as an official language and the revitalization, maintenance and enhancement of Aboriginal languages. Under the Cooperation Agreement, the Federal Government agrees to contribute a total amount not to exceed \$17.5m to Aboriginal languages between 1999/2000 to 2003/04. Information on GNWT contributions to Aboriginal languages is unavailable. Since 1997, Canadian Heritage has provided additional funding to revitalize Aboriginal languages. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) administers this funding to community-based projects throughout the country.

Since the enactment of the 1984 <u>NWT Official Languages Act</u>, Canada/NWT Languages Cooperation Agreements have provided funding to support Aboriginal language activities including:

the development of general, medical, legal and Aboriginal languages specialists and interpreter/translator training programs which included written materials.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup>Lutra Associates Ltd. June 1999. The Second Year Evaluation of the Healthy Children Initiative. Education, Culture and Employment, Gov't of the NWT

- support for Teaching and Learning Centres to develop materials and support Aboriginal languages and culture in schools and communities.
- support for Aboriginal broadcasters.
- grants and contributions to community and language organizations (e.g. language camps, traditional knowledge research, language lessons, developing dictionaries, adult literacy classes, publications and terminology development.)<sup>68</sup>
- literacy programs including the NWT Literacy Council's Read to Me public awareness campaign.

Federal funding for Aboriginal languages has declined from a high of \$6 m per annum between 1991-1994. Today, the annual federal contribution of \$1.9m for Aboriginal languages is disbursed to seven main Aboriginal language communities (\$1.2m), and teaching and learning centres and Aboriginal broadcasters (\$.7m). Language communities are represented by Aboriginal political, cultural or human service agencies. Each Aboriginal language community has developed short and long-term plans to revitalize, maintain and/or enhance the language. Aboriginal language plans recognize the important of literacy to the health of the language.

With the decline in federal funding and the decision of the GNWT to fund language communities, the role of public government in Aboriginal language development and maintenance has also diminished. Some stakeholders participating in this research suggest that Aboriginal languages are not a political or leadership priority. While the expression of language and culture is intrinsic to the spirit and intent of Aboriginal land claim agreements, these agreements may not have provisions for resource allocations to Aboriginal languages.

Not all Aboriginal language communities have the capacity or the commitment to address language needs among their members. Currently, Education, Culture and Employment is developing an Aboriginal Languages Strategy. At the time of writing, it is unclear how this Strategy will define the role of public government in Aboriginal language activities or address the lack of capacity among Aboriginal language communities.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup>Lutra Associates Ltd. July 1996. The Richness that Language and Culture Bring. Department of Executive, Gov't of the NWT

## 3.2 Summary of the Current Environment for Literacy and ABE Programs in the NWT

Over the last decade, the legislative, policy and program environment for literacy and ABE has not been synchronized with literacy needs. Policy and program changes have not contributed to focused or systematic approaches to addressing the serious literacy problem in the NWT. If anything, the lack of structure and system for literacy and ABE programs has further contributed to literacy problems.

## Summary of Trends in Literacy and ABE in the NWT

#### 1988 - 1995

- Priority for adult literacy and basic education
- -Policy support and resources for program deliverers and students
- -Recognition of the central role of Aurora College in literacy and ABE
- -Funding to community groups for literacy
- -Community partnerships to support literacy and ABE
- -Recognition of Aboriginal language literacy
- -Strengthening of linkages between literacy/ABE and employment
- -1996 2000
- -Continued government recognition of low literacy and employment skills as major barriers to equitable participation
- -Shifting delivery responsibility from Aurora College to communities
- -Access to adult literacy and basic education programs more heavily reliant on partnerships
- -Continued support for community ownership of adult literacy and basic education programs without formal consultation with communities
- -Assumption that communities and individuals give priority to literacy and basic education
- -Coupling of adult literacy and/or ABE with employment or skills-based skills training
- Declining resources for Aboriginal languages

As the GNWT prepares to respond to the July 7,2000 motion of the NWT Legislative Assembly for a comprehensive literacy strategy, there are a wide variety of barriers to overcome. These barriers are significant in light of the current GNWT vision of a more self-reliant and self-determining northern society.

 Changes in the policy and direction of literacy and ABE have not been discussed with or endorsed by stakeholders in the NWT.

- Responsibility for low level literacy and ABE programs has become unclear in light of the trend towards community partnerships. First Nations generally view the GNWT rather than themselves as responsible for funding and delivering literacy and ABE programs. With some exceptions, NWT schools have not made a clear commitment to addressing literacy issues within the K-12 curriculum.
- Human development programs have not been implemented as envisioned/designed. Few if any, social programs including the NWT IS Program use case management. Relationships within a "community learning network" have not developed because these networks have not evolved. Partnerships have been stymied or undermined by a host of factors including fragmented and competitive visions and funding arrangements.
- Changes to and instability of discretionary funding for literacy and ABE have undermined consistent and progressive programming.
- Funding to support universal access to low and higher levels of literacy and ABE programs has dwindled. Only 11 of the 33 NWT communities have based funded Community Learning Centres and three more have access to College campuses. Between 1995/96 and 1999/2000, Aurora College utilized base and discretionary funding to provide full-time programming in 15-18 communities and three campuses, and part-time programming in as many other communities as possible.
- The GNWT is looking to non-renewable resource development as both the reason for, and source of funding for literacy and ABE. The Premier and ECE's Minister have stated that part of the \$500,000 being sought by the GNWT for oil and gas training will be dedicated to literacy.<sup>69</sup> It is unclear how this will occur when the opportunity to obtain a driver's licence and complete driver training is viewed as part of an overall literacy strategy.
- No documentation is available that clearly articulates the vision of Aboriginal governments or the Federal Government for literacy and ABE in the NWT.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup>Hansard. June 29, 2000

## 3.3 Meeting Literacy and ABE Needs in the NWT

As discussed in Chapter 2, 9,429 persons 15 or more years of age in the NWT had not achieved grade 12 in 1999. This constitutes the need for literacy and ABE programs in the NWT.

Currently, adult literacy and ABE needs are met by:

- community school programs,
- community literacy projects including family literacy/early childhood and Aboriginal languages projects,
- skills-based training projects, and
- ABE programs. (Table 3-4)

Table 3-4: Program Options to Meet Adult Upgrading/Literacy Needs in the NWT

Type of Program	Comments
High School Diploma - Community Schools	For students 15 to 20 and some mature students with a commitment to learning. Currently, a small number of adult learners are enrolled in community schools (e.g. in Rae, Kakisa).
ABE/Academic Studies at Aurora College or CLCs	High and low level literacy programs. Serves the majority of the upgrading enrolment.
Community Literacy Projects	Low level literacy skills. Serves as a bridge to lifelong learning for those not ready to enter ABE upgrading.
ACCESS Programs	High level literacy skills. Serves a small but growing portion of the enrolment for upgrading.
Workplace Literacy	High and low level literacy skills. Serves a small but growing group of workers. Could increase demands for ABE. No programs implemented to date.

In addition, adults incarcerated in federal penitentiaries and territorial correctional centres have access to adult literacy training that focuses on preparation for GED testing.

NWT community schools meet an estimated 27% of adult literacy needs. This estimate is based on annual enrolments of about 2500 working age students (age 15-19 years). Stabilizing at an 80% participation rate, the 2541 individuals age 15-19 years participating in schools are assumed

to comprise the majority of the increasing enrolment in grades 9-12.<sup>70</sup> By 2004 enrolment in NWT schools is expected to marginally increase (average .5% per annum) to accommodate more individuals age 15-19 years. Currently, NWT schools have the capacity to meet increased enrolment

An estimated 13% of adult literacy needs are met by an annual enrolment of about 1200 adult learners in full and part-time ABE programs sponsored by Aurora College. The following are some of the characteristics of the Academic Studies/ABE enrolment over the past ten years.

- Between 1993/94 and 1998/99, enrolment in Aurora College ABE courses shifted from full and part-time to primarily part-time. (Table 3-3) The reasons for this are unknown.
- The grade achievement entry level is improving. In 1991/92, 50% of the ABE enrolment had grade 7 or less. In 1995/96, 40% had grade 7 or less.<sup>71</sup>
- Most adult learners begin their basic education at the 120/130 level.<sup>72</sup> Course delivery is
  designed to enable a full-time student to complete one full level of courses in one year or
  two semesters. (College staff have verified that one year is needed to complete each level
  of ABE courses.)
- The ratio of Aboriginal to total enrolment shows that programs and services are suitably targeted at the population with the greatest needs. Most of the ABE enrolment (92%) has Aboriginal ancestry. This is consistent with the literacy needs of adults in the NWT.
- Course completion may be no less than 35% of enrolment. A smaller number of students withdraw before completion (21%) while the remaining 44% progress in their courses. The Course completions have been declining since completions peaked in 1995/96. The reason for this is unknown.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup>Education, Culture and Employment, 2000. **Towards Excellence-A Report on Education in the Northwest Territories**. The average is comprised of three years senior secondary enrolment ending 1998/99, with enrolment of 2580 in 1996/97 and 2730 in 1998/99.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup>ECE, 1997. The Bridge To My Future.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup>ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup>ibid

Aurora College English and Math annual completion data between 1991/92 and 1998/99 suggest that 20%- 50% of annual course completers may be acquiring the literacy and numeracy qualifications for continuing education in post-secondary certificate, diploma, and degree programs.<sup>74</sup> For example, of the 1191 full and part-time students enrolled, 80 English and 41 Math 140, 150, 160 level courses were completed in 1998/99.

Adult literacy needs may also be met by a smaller and declining number of community literacy programs. Unfortunately, data are unavailable to determine the extent to which community literacy programs respond to adult literacy needs. Stakeholders participating in this research suggest that community-based literacy programs including family literacy are important vehicles for promoting awareness of literacy. Community-based literacy programs likely contribute to enrolment in ABE programs. Further, the research into early childhood programs with family literacy components identify these initiatives as having a significant impact on encouraging parents/caregivers to seek further education and enabling children to enjoy successes in school.

Literacy and education needs may also be addressed in some NWT workplaces. As discussed in the Dogrib Region case study on literacy (Appendix C), BHP's Ekati Diamond Mine provides a good example of workplace literacy training. BHP has made a commitment to providing literacy and education supports to full-time employees in order to ensure workplace safety and efficient execution of job responsibilities. The company has also recognized other benefits of a fully literate work force such as:

- less barriers to career advancement
- a sustainable, reliable and efficient workforce
- lower recruitment costs
- more content employees (improves employee self esteem and confidence)
- employees better equipped to help their children with homework and encourage them to
   stay in school
- helping BHP meet and sustain its northern employment targets.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup>Completion of English 140, 150 and 160 is part of the criteria for entry into degree, diploma and certificate programs or for acquiring a high school diploma.

BHP is working with Bow Valley Community College in Calgary, Alberta and Skill Plan in British Columbia to launch the Ekati Literacy/Essential Skills Project in 2000. The Project will have voluntary participation from any full-time BHP employee and will serve 10-15 employees at any given time. Training will be based on a curriculum and materials relevant and tailored to the workplace environment, particularly pit and processing plant operations. Participants will take workplace literacy training for two hours every second day. BHP estimates the cost of investing in a sustainable northern work force may be as much as \$250,000 per year for instruction and o&m (excluding planning costs of \$157,000 and the costs for backfilling positions).

At the present time, BHP funds a five-month adult educator contract at the mine site to:

- provide literacy support to employees; and
- establish the literacy program (e.g. develop the curriculum; and identify resources, location and participants).

Other employers may also address literacy needs. For example, community governments and other organizations may ask employees to attend upgrading programs. In some cases, the costs of courses and/or materials may be reimbursed.