



**Building Aboriginal Literacy**  
**Share Your Language, Share Your Culture**

The NWT has eleven official languages -- nine of these are Aboriginal. To maintain and revitalize these languages, it's important for children to learn their language. This booklet will help families support language development within the family. The activities are simple and can be part of everyday living.

The NWT Literacy Council adapted these activities from materials that Harnum & Associates prepared for the GNWT. The GNWT's Early Childhood Development Framework for Action funded this project.



**Language** is an important part of who we are. We use language to pass on our culture, traditions and stories from one generation to the next. For a language to survive, it needs to pass from generation to generation. Ideally, this happens in the home where family members learn the language from birth and use it as part of their everyday lives.

The first few years of a child's life are important learning years. Parents are their children's first and most important teachers. However, everyone in the community can take part in language activities, especially Elders and others who are fluent in the language.

# Speak

*Children learn language by hearing people speak it.*

Speak to your children in your language. Even if you aren't fluent, use what you know. Encourage them to speak back to you in your language.



# Speak

*Children learn language by  
hearing people speak it.*

Speak your language at home. It is one of the most important gifts you can give your children. It gives them lots of opportunities to hear and speak your language.



# Teach

*Children learn language  
through teaching.*

Teach your children  
one new word everyday  
in your language. This  
helps them expand their  
vocabulary.



# Teach

Teach children whole sentences, as well as just words. This gives them key language tools they need to communicate.

*Children learn language through teaching.*





**Sew**

*Children learn language  
through traditional activities.*

Do traditional activities,  
such as sewing, with your  
children. This lets you  
spend time together and  
use your language in a  
meaningful way.





# Dance and sing

*Children learn language through traditional activities.*

Drum dance and sing with your children. These are traditional forms of literacy. They teach children rhythm, as well as stories about their culture.



# Play

Play traditional games, such as string games or hand games, with your children. Children love games and learn many things through playing games.

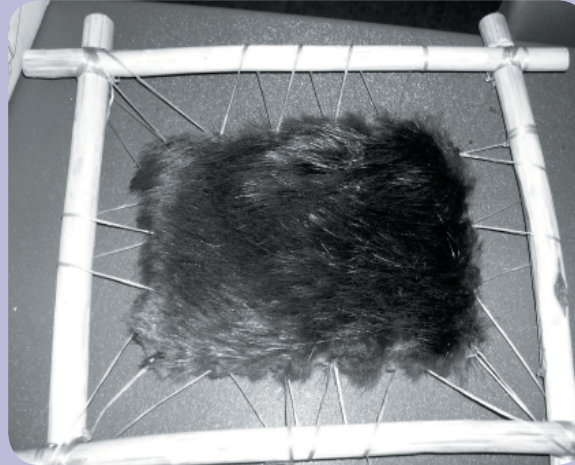
*Children learn language through traditional activities.*



# Go on the land

*Children learn language through traditional activities.*

Go out on the land with your family. It's one of the best ways to teach your language. You'll have lots to talk about, such as place names, animals, traditions, and so on.



# Tell stories

Invite Elders to spend time telling stories with your family. Storytelling is a traditional way to pass on knowledge.

*Children learn language through stories.*



# Tell stories

*Children learn language  
through stories.*

Tell stories about the past, about the land, about places, about animals, about your family. You can tell stories at home, outside, or in a tipi.



# Listen

*Children learn language by listening.*

Let children listen to others speaking the language. This lets them “see” and hear the language at work. It helps them learn the language.



# Listen

Make tapes or CDs in your language of stories or books. This lets children listen to the language on their own any time they want to.

*Children learn language by listening.*





# Read

Read together everyday.  
This teaches your children  
that reading is important.  
Look for books or other  
written materials in your  
language.

*Children learn language by  
reading and being read to.*



# Read

Make homemade books with your children. This engages them in reading that is relevant to their lives. Books can be about your family, animals, the community and so on.

*Children learn language by reading and being read to.*



# Play

Play is children's work.  
Let your children talk to  
puppets, dolls or other  
toys. This lets them play  
and use language at the  
same time.

*Children learn language by  
playing.*



# Play

*Children learn language by playing.*

Play with your children.  
It's fun for everyone. Talk  
to your children in your  
language while you play.



# Sing

*Children learn language  
through songs.*

Sing songs in your  
language. This teaches  
children the rhythm of  
your language.



# Sing

*Children learn language  
through songs.*

Singing uses a different part of the brain than talking. At first, for some children, singing is easier than talking.



# Repeat

*Children learn language by repeating things over and over.*

Repeat words and stories over and over again. This helps children remember the language. They love to retell the story by themselves -- even if it's not quite right.





# Model

Model what you want your children to learn. Let your children watch and listen until they feel comfortable trying by themselves. Don't worry if it takes some time.

*Children learn language by copying what they see and hear.*



**Do**

*Children learn language by  
doing.*

Spend time with your family doing things together. This is a good way for children to learn your language. You can do arts and crafts, cook, play games and so on.



**Do**

Make your own resources to tell stories. The materials reflect your language and culture and can get children actively involved in the story.

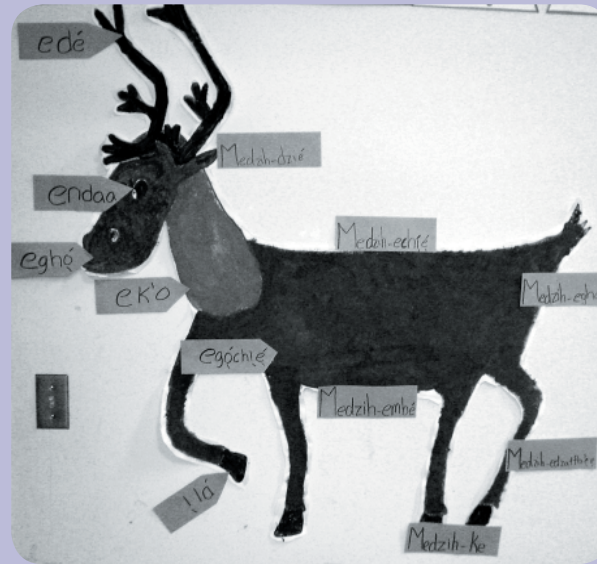
*Children learn language by doing.*



# Write

Label things in your home in your language. This helps children remember everyday words. Writing helps children connect letters to sounds.

*Children learn language by writing.*



# Write

*Children learn language by writing.*

Encourage your children to draw, scribble, colour, paint, etc. This is the beginning of writing. Write children's stories down for them too.



**Have fun!**

Laugh and have fun with  
your language. This makes  
learning easy.

*Children learn language by  
having fun.*



**Have fun!**

*Children learn language by  
having fun.*

**Have fun!**





For more information on family literacy programs, contact

NWT Literacy Council  
Box 761  
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2N6

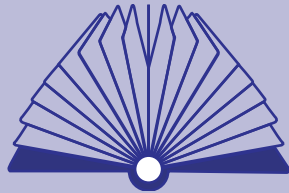
Phone: (867) 873-6166  
Toll free in NWT: 1-866-599-6758  
Fax: (867) 873-2176  
Email: [nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca](mailto:nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca)



### Photos and Photographers

Cover: Holman, Jeri Miltenberger (Fort Smith); Tulita, NWTLC

Inside pages: Fort Resolution, Barb Miron; Fort Resolution, Barb Miron; Lutselk'e, NWTLC; Tsiigehtchic, Shona Barbour; Holman, Jeri Miltenberger (Fort Smith); Holman, Jeri Miltenberger (Fort Smith); Holman, NWTLC; Dettah, NWTLC; Fort Good Hope, Sue Morency; Hay River Reserve, Elaine René Tambour; Holman, Joanne Ogina; Fort Providence, NWTLC; Deline, NWTLC; Fort Resolution, Barb Miron; Kakisa, NWTLC; Hay River Reserve, Elaine René Tambour; Yellowknife, NWTLC; Fort Providence, NWTLC; Fort McPherson, Cathy Blake; Dettah, NWTLC; Kakisa, Margaret Lacorne; Fort Providence, NWTLC; Fort Resolution, Barb Miron; Fort Providence, NWTLC; Fort Providence, NWTLC.



**NWT Literacy Council**



**Northwest Territories** Education, Culture and Employment