

# A Northern Approach:

A Guide to Embedded  
Literacy and Essential Skills



## Acknowledgments

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*Photo credit: Sue Folinsbee*



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## Introduction

This resource guide on a northern approach to embedded literacy and essential skills (LES) was developed as part of a pan-territorial project sponsored by the Northern Alliance for Literacy and Essential Skills (NALES). NALES is a consortium of three northern literacy organizations: the Yukon Literacy Coalition, the NWT Literacy Council and Ilitaqsiq – Nunavut Literacy Council. The NALES project began in December 2014 and ended in June 2018.

### About the three territorial literacy organizations

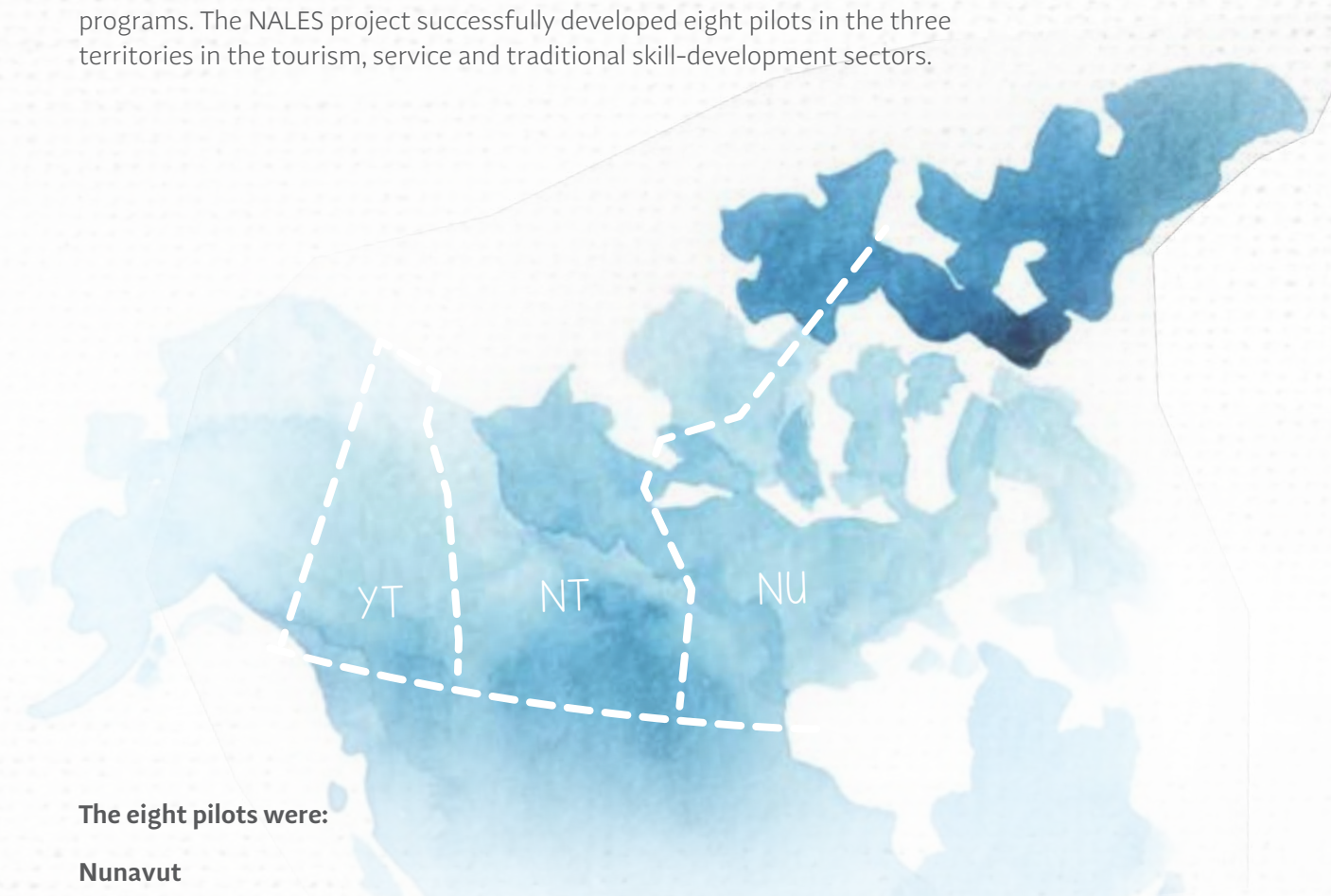
We are passionate, experienced northern educators who are dedicated to developing or enhancing made-in-the-north programs that support northern participants. We have worked in partnership with local and territorial organizations to embed literacy, language and essential skills into workplace and non-formal community programs for Indigenous youth and adults.

We believe in inclusive and holistic programming that addresses the needs of community members and the whole person. Our programming strives to address the different learning styles, education levels and backgrounds that participants bring to learning. Such an approach brings success for the organizations and participants we work with. We come to this work with openness, integrity and resourcefulness. We also offer ongoing support and mentoring to program coordinators for embedded LES programming in our northern communities.

*For more information about the work of each literacy organization, please see Appendix 1.*

## About the NALES project

The goal of the NALES project was to support northerners in each territory to build literacy and other essential skills for work. Each literacy organization worked with partners in their territory to develop and embed LES into new or existing training programs. The NALES project successfully developed eight pilots in the three territories in the tourism, service and traditional skill-development sectors.



### The eight pilots were:

#### Nunavut

N-Camp Project (Traditional skills)  
Niqitsialiurniq (Food Preparation) Program (Service Sector)  
Project Iqaluit: Polar Outfitting Project (Tourism Sector)

#### NWT

Tourism Training for Front Line Workers (Tourism sector)  
Introduction to Retail and Customer Service (Service Sector)

#### Yukon

On-site Training for the Burger Shack in Mayo (Service Sector)  
On-site Training for the Tagish Kwan Photo Parlour in Carcross (Tourism Sector)  
Trapping Education Workshop (Traditional Skills)

*Please find a summary of each of the eight pilot projects in Appendix 2.*

## Purpose of this resource guide

We prepared this resource guide for our partners, funders, non-profit organizations, community coordinators, and others who work in a northern context. The guide will also be of interest to, and useful for, all northern organizations involved in formal and non-formal learning for adults and youth.

Many northerners face barriers to employment or training opportunities because of low literacy. Literacy, like any other skill, can be increased through positive and meaningful learning and training opportunities. Intentionally embedding LES into learning programs is one way of addressing these barriers.

The three literacy organizations work with territorial and local partners to develop or enhance non-formal learning and training programs by intentionally weaving LES into these programs. The goal is to support northerners' preparation to get jobs, to access training, and move on to higher learning and education.

This resource guide will assist organizations and individuals involved in training for youth and adults. It will help you understand how embedding LES into existing learning and training programs might be a good fit for your organization.



# A Northern Approach to Embedded Literacy and Essential Skills

This section of the resource guide explains what a northern approach to embedded LES programming entails. We start off the section with our values and beliefs about learning. Then we move to how we work with communities. Following these themes, we discuss definitions of non-formal learning, literacy and essential skills, followed by what embedded LES is and how it works to support northerners in learning programs. Examples of what programs with embedded LES look like in practice are given as well as a rationale for this approach in the North.

## Values and beliefs

As northern educators, we have identified the values and beliefs that drive our practice. These values and beliefs described below are aimed at ensuring that northerners experience success in embedded LES programs and achieve positive results. These values and beliefs apply across our northern programs in all three territories.

### Strength-based approach

We believe in the importance of tapping into and building on the natural talents of participants rather than focusing on what they don't know or cannot do. Participants come to learning with rich life experiences and knowledge in many areas. We also encourage participants to take on the role of informal teachers in the group in the areas where they have knowledge to share.

A second aspect of a strength-based approach is tapping into what the community has to offer which will enhance the program and equally give back to the community.

### Learner centredness

A learner-centred program connects closely to a strength-based approach. It means being aware of what is going on in the learning space, ensuring that people are learning, and picking up on further opportunities for learning “on the spot” with the group. It also means being able to adapt the learning spontaneously to address something that has come up in the group or to change direction if something is not working.

Participants want to see value in what they are learning and be able to apply their learning to real life situations and goals.

### Safe and respectful environment

We stress the importance of building a safe and respectful environment and creating trust. This means fostering an environment where participants and instructors respect each other and learn to work together. Confidentiality within the group is also essential.



Participants may feel shame if they do not know or understand something. They need to know that it is okay to make mistakes and not know something. The importance of starting with what people know and building on it is paramount. Elders and other instructors telling their own stories make them human and model that making mistakes is a necessary part of learning. A respectful, supportive, positive environment will encourage people to take risks.

For the embedded LES component of learning, we model what is expected so that participants understand the expectations for an activity. We don't put people on the spot by asking them to do activities they may not be comfortable with such as reading aloud in the group.

### **Feelings of belonging**

Many northerners, especially those who have left school early and /or are out of work, have felt excluded from formal education. Our belief is that all northerners have a right to quality and effective learning experiences. We acknowledge the importance of building a positive community spirit among participants as part of creating a learning space that fosters belonging.

### **Accessibility**

An important aspect of our approach is the belief that for participants to be successful in learning they may need support so they can access and complete programs. Financial support to attend programs, child care support, a convenient location, and programming offered at suitable times, are all important aspects of accessibility.

### **Respect for the culture and language of participants**

The importance of building traditional values, beliefs and practices into embedded literacy programming is key. These values, beliefs and practices will vary across different Indigenous groups. This means that programs must be place based, culturally relevant, and provide learners with a sense of identity. Embedded literacy programs may include language learning in participants' mother tongue. In many of our programs, Elders are instructors or advisors. They may instruct in traditional knowledge, skills and language, and provide wellness support.

### **Inclusion of healing and wellness**

Using a trauma-informed practice for northern programming is important. We believe in the importance of hiring trauma-informed experts to train our project staff or hire staff who have experience with these issues and can navigate them. Learning may not be possible unless these issues are dealt with. The focus of a trauma-informed approach is on physical, emotional and cultural safety and engagement. Trauma-informed practices are strength-based and build resiliency and coping skills among participants.

### **Clear language**

The importance of writing and speaking in a way that participants can understand is paramount. Clear language, also known as plain language, is about responding to the needs of your audience. Everyone can benefit from communication that is presented clearly. Using clear language means writing and speaking in a way that breaks things down and does not assume prior knowledge of a topic. When using documents, this also means making them visually appealing by using a logical sequence, lots of white space, headings, and visuals.



## How we work with communities

When we are invited into communities to develop new programs or embed LES into existing programs, we do a community consultation to find out how an embedded literacy program will benefit a community and whether it is a good fit. During the initial stages of a project, we spend time in communities building relationships with those we will be working with. We find out what the needs are and what employment opportunities are available after the completion of training.

The results of the consultation determine the program focus and the shape of the embedded literacy component. During this initial phase and the program development stage, we work collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders. Together, we make sure that the programming offered responds to community needs and that there is capacity on both our part and that of our partners to offer the program. If the programming doesn't meet community needs, it won't be successful. We have found that it is important to have a community champion, passionate community members and overall community buy-in for programs to succeed. The programs give back to the community and the community gives to the program.

## Non-formal learning

All the embedded literacy and essential skills programs offered through the NALES project were non-formal. Non-formal learning is structured learning planned in a flexible way. However, there are no formal credits granted and participation is voluntary. This type of learning may be offered by an institution or organization outside the formal learning system.

Formal learning is intentional, organized, and structured. Instructors are usually formally trained and certified. In formal learning, there is a curriculum or a formal learning plan. Students who complete formal programming are graded. They get credit or formal recognition for completing a program successfully.

Non-formal learning programs with an embedded LES component often serve as a stepping stone into formal learning.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>All eight of the initiatives that were developed as part of the NALES project involved non-formal learning. Please see Appendix 2 for a summary of these initiatives.



Two participants from the Niqitsialiurniq Program were accepted and completed the Nunavut Arctic College Pre-Apprenticeship Cook training programs and passed the Trades Entrance Exam following the program. They now both work as cook apprentices for Agnico Eagle Mines.

## Literacy and essential skills

Literacy and essential skills are the skills that people need and use in all aspects of their lives, including the workplace. These skills are: reading, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, thinking, computer use, and continuous learning. These skills provide a foundation for learning other skills for work and life. These skills help workers advance in their jobs and adapt to changes in their workplaces.<sup>2</sup>

Northerners may consider other essential skills for work in their territory or community. For example, knowing and using an Indigenous language and cross-cultural knowledge may be important essential skills for work in northern communities or workplaces. Other essential skills in a northern context include on-the-land skills. For example, how to dress for the weather, deal with the different weather conditions, and make decisions based on your surroundings are important on-the-land skills. Many people work on the land as a means of employment (guiding, touring, selling products/food that were gathered on the land) so these skills are essential to succeeding in their workplace.

Skills around health and wellness are also important essential skills. This includes understanding yourself and how to make healthy choices. Building capacity in one's health and wellness should be the starting point for building capacity in any of the other essential skills.

<sup>2</sup>See <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/essential-skills/definitions.html>



## Embedded LES programming

### What is embedded LES programming?

Embedded LES is the deliberate inclusion of LES instruction and support into non-formal learning or training that focuses on another subject area. Thus, participants learn content or technical skills as well as LES. LES can be embedded into any content area. However, on the NALES project, LES learning was embedded into tourism training, training in the service sector, and mentorship with a focus on traditional skills.

The Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment (ITI) asked the NWT Literacy Council to work on the NorthernMost Host training program, a program to prepare front-line workers to work in the NWT tourism sector. ITI wanted to work with the NWT Literacy Council to embed LES activities into the program so it would be more accessible to community members. ITI recognized that there would be many people who would have the cultural and practical skills for tourism jobs but might be challenged by some of the concepts presented in the training.

### Who develops and instructs embedded LES programming?

Literacy practitioners and content specialists work together to design programming with embedded LES. The literacy practitioner advises and works with content specialists on how to embed LES activities into their programs to address literacy barriers. In other cases, literacy practitioners and content specialists may develop and deliver the program together. Content specialists include Elder instructors.

Literacy practitioners from Iilitaqsiq worked with staff from the Department of Fisheries and Sealing on their N-CAMP program. They offered a literacy workshop with practical strategies to support the staff in making the program more accessible to the participants. This included practical strategies for weighing and using a ruler, sampling data recording sheets, and adapting the training to be more in line with adult education principles.

### Why do we embed LES in programs?

There are two reasons to embed LES into programs. The first reason is to address and remove literacy barriers in short, specific training programs. Strategies to remove literacy barriers include revising existing training materials so they are clearer and easier to understand or adding activities and supports to create better understanding of the training content. The second reason to embed LES into programming is to provide opportunities for LES development as part of the training using content relevant to the program and participants' lives.

The two approaches are not mutually exclusive. In the first approach to embedded LES, participants will still learn some LES. In a program where LES development is woven in, program developers will also remove literacy barriers by adapting materials or adding in support.

One way of thinking about embedded LES is that the program content, culture, and LES are three strands braided seamlessly together to make a program.





Although the Yukon Environment's Trapper Education Workshop is hands-on, the skills needed to be a trapper are very specific and detailed. Some of the skills needed are skimming and scanning text for information, filling out documents, reading regulations, reading maps, making estimates, measuring, budgeting, problem solving, decision making, communicating with others, and continuously learning new information such as new approaches to trapping and new technology. These complex activities require a baseline of general literacy if individuals are going to be able to access information. A literacy practitioner worked with the instructor of the program and audited the Trapper Education Workshop and reviewed how the course was conducted through a literacy and essentials skills lens. She wrote a review of the course along with recommendations.

### The rationale for an embedded LES approach in the North

We have found that embedded LES programs create success and interest in learning for those participants who attend. These programs fill a gap in available learning and training opportunities by focusing on adults and youth who may have left school early and had negative experiences with learning.

Weaving in LES (reading, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, thinking, computer use, and continuous learning) into content learning provides a natural opportunity to improve these skills and for participants to have success in their program. The content learning is the hook for participants which encourages and motivates learning in the LES component. These programs are non-formal and create a safe learning environment. Participants are immersed in relevant content and the learning is accessible. Embedded LES programming involves culture-based learning and is responsive to real-life opportunities for skill development.

Embedded LES programming is holistic with a focus on personal development which leads to capacity development, increased quality of life and wellness outcomes for participants. We see skill development outcomes in a wide variety of areas.

### Outcomes of embedded LES programs in the North

#### Tangible results for participants

*I have more confidence and I am more willing to put myself out there with strangers. I learned about photography, culture, communication, and interacting with confidence. I look forward to coming to work.*

~ Participant, Photo Parlour Project

*I am learning skills that I never had—baking skills, but also literacy skills.*

~ Participant, Niqitsialiurniq Program

We have recorded a wide range of outcomes from embedded literacy programming. First, participants build their confidence and re-engage in learning. They are more independent and start to make healthier choices and lifestyle changes. They build transferable skills that they can use in employment and in their lives. Participants improve their foundation or LES skills. Many of our participants go on to further learning and education, obtain employment or start a home business. Overall, their quality of life improves.

In the Niqitsialiurniq Program, 100% of the participants who completed the program either went on to further learning and education or entered the work force. Some were accepted into programs at Arctic College or other non-formal learning programs. Other participants obtained work in the food industry or started their own home businesses making and selling specialty items; and others got jobs in other sectors such as mining, office work, and childcare.



### Communities benefit as well

There are many outcomes of embedded LES programs for communities as well. One outcome is that those participants who get to develop work skills through a work component in the training develop employability and transferable skills. Participants who gained employment after a program are no longer on income assistance. They contribute by being positive role models in their community for their peers. Their peers are then motivated to take training and build their skills for possible employment. Businesses in the community also have a larger pool of skilled candidates to hire from.

After the Project Iqaluit training for outfitters, Polar Outfitting hired five of the trainees to be guides. They have provided customer service to clients around the world who came to Iqaluit for an authentic cultural experience. In the future, the hope is that the program will expand to other communities.

Another outcome is that more Indigenous culture is being built into the tourism industry.

The Tagish Kwan Photo Parlour embedded LES project in Carcross brought community members together to perform through drumming and dancing for tourists. It was an opportunity for community members to share their culture.



Embedded LES programs are also seen as building community pride.

One component of the Niqitsialiurniq Program was a community soup kitchen. Participants prepared and served the food in the soup kitchen. Community members saw the program and the soup kitchen as having a positive impact on the community. They saw the program as addressing the needs of those who need it most. Participants took the learnings into their homes, but it was also a program that the whole community could take pride in.

### What our partners are saying

Partners in our pilot projects had two main reasons for their involvement. The first reason was that they wanted to address the LES barriers in their training programs and make their programs accessible to community members. The second reason was that the partners wanted to provide accessible training that would give participants a concrete skill while improving their LES leading to employment or further training and education.

Our partners recognize that we have something unique to offer that is beneficial to them. They've told us, "We need their skill-set to help us do what we are doing," and "The partnership was very helpful. It will make a difference to our program."



# Effective Practices for Embedding LES: Lessons Learned

This section confirms effective practices and lessons learned for embedded LES programs in a northern context. The effective practices detailed below came out of the work on the NALES project. Many of the effective practices have been touched on in previous sections of this guide.



## Effective partnership development

There are two types of partnerships. The first type is where we work with another organization to support their programming with an embedded LES component. Included in this partnership is usually in-kind or financial compensation. The second type of partnership only offers financial or in-kind support for an embedded LES program. These partners are not involved in programming. All partners will have specific expectations of what outcomes and deliverables they want from the embedded literacy program/project.

Effective partnership development means building a relationship and exploring together whether the partnership is a good fit with meaningful outcomes for each partner. A balanced partnership is one that works.

The terms of the partnership need to be agreed upon in writing through a simple contract or letter of understanding. These terms should include the roles of each organization in the partnership, the deliverables and outcomes expected through the partnership, and what each partner will contribute. It also needs to include a decision-making process for how the organizations will be acknowledged in any published materials they have contributed to.



## Community consultation and buy-in

Community consultations and organizational needs assessments are key. We determine community, organizational and programming needs in each community and with the organizational partners we work with. Although the context for learning is different in each territory, the process of conducting a community consultation follows the same overall steps.

Through the consultation we find out how an embedded literacy program will benefit a community and/ or an organization. We identify the overall LES needs and any barriers that participants might experience in attending the program. Where appropriate, we find out what employment opportunities are available after the completion of training and if there is a match between the training and available employment.

## Staffing for embedded LES programs

Successful embedded LES programming relies on selecting staff that fit each particular program. We hire instructors, program developers and coordinators with certain characteristics. These characteristics include being personable, compassionate, and approachable. Our staff has a positive, welcoming attitude and the ability to work as a team. They are trustworthy, confidential and have the ability to embody and model what we are expecting of participants.

## Program development and delivery

We follow a structured but flexible process for program development and delivery to make sure that programming objectives are on track to meet the needs of participants, partner organizations and communities. Once we have finished our consultation, we develop and design the embedded LES program in consultation with our partners. The program design is based on the needs identified in the community consultation. Our programs involve participatory, hands-on learning where participants can apply what they are learning right away. For programs that we deliver, we ensure that they are accessible to participants and offered at the right time of year and day.

We conduct a needs assessment with participants before the program or in the first week to find out their goals, strengths, and needs for a positive learning experience. We ensure the program is relevant to participants, adjusting as we go along. Participants see value in what they are learning and that they can apply their learning to real-life situations. In our program development we look at ways to include healing and wellness and how to address the social and emotional effects of trauma during the programming.

The embedded LES components need to be relevant to participants and reflect a northern context. In addition, LES objectives are made explicit to program participants. For example, in a cooking program, LES could be linked to credible resources on line, budgeting, and food security. Program content needs to reflect a northern context and northern examples familiar to participants. Feedback from one of the pilots indicated that participants had a hard time relating to videos that focused on southern living, cities and non-Indigenous people.



## Respect for the culture and language of participants

Across the pilots, the importance of building traditional values, beliefs and practices into embedded literacy programming was identified. These values, beliefs and practices will vary across different Indigenous groups. Embedded literacy programs may include language learning in participants' mother tongue.

## Excellent communication with our funders and partners

Effective and regular communication with funders and partners is essential to make sure we are all on the same page. It is important that everyone involved agrees on the project deliverables and expected outcomes and that this is clearly acknowledged in writing. If changes need to be made to project activities, these changes must be agreed upon before they are made.

Providing funders and partners with an up-to-date workplan as the project progresses is essential. We also suggest regular check-ins with partners and funders throughout the project to update them and get their input and feedback. All communication should be well-documented.

Having a well-planned communication strategy with partners and funders will ensure that the project runs smoothly and better transitions when there are staff changes in our organizations or theirs.

## Evaluating our results

Program evaluation is an important component of our embedded literacy programming. As part of our monitoring and evaluation work, we collect data on the outcomes and expectations as agreed upon with our partners.

An evaluation should be planned at the beginning of a project with data collected throughout. Data collected through an evaluation not only captures outcomes and impacts of embedded LES programs, it also identifies lessons learned and informs needed changes for the next time.

## Outcomes are in proportion to the length and intensity of the embedded LES programming

We have learned that program outcomes are usually related to the length and intensity of a program. For example, in all programs participants developed self-esteem and got employability skills that were transferable and increased their LES. In longer programs, like the four-month Niqitsialiurniq Program where participants came every day, all participants obtained employment after the program or went on to further education and training.



# Our Invitation to You: Get Involved in Embedded LES Programming

We are interested in working with you to enhance your existing programs or create new programs with embedded LES. We believe we provide expertise with respect to embedded LES that your organization can take advantage of. Please contact us for a consultation meeting to discuss how embedded LES programming might be a good fit for your organization.

## Contact Us:

### Yukon

Yukon Literacy Coalition  
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867-668-6535  
<http://www.yukonliteracy.ca/>

### Northwest Territories

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### Nunavut

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## Appendix 1: About the three NALES partners

### NWT Literacy Council

We are a territorial not-for-profit organization and registered charity that promotes and supports literacy and essential skills in all the official languages of the NWT.

The NWT Literacy Council was established in 1990. We believe that everyone has the right to literacy and that literacy involves everyone – individuals, families, communities, business, labour, and governments. Literacy and essential skills are the foundation of lifelong learning. They support active participation in the social, economic and political life of our communities, our territory and our country.

We help NWT communities build their capacity to support literacy and essential skills programs. We develop resources and learning materials, and mentor, train and support local literacy workers and projects. We also design, write and edit plain language documents and promote, research and share information about literacy and essential skills. Finally, we monitor and respond to territorial and national literacy and essential skills policies. Our programs and work focus on the following areas:



### **Embedded literacy and essential skills (LES) work**

The NWT Literacy Council embeds LES in our youth-literacy programs. We also work with other organizations throughout the territory to embed LES in curriculum and training programs.

### **Indigenous languages**

Indigenous languages and culture are important in the NWT. We actively promote literacy in all of the NWT's nine official Indigenous languages, as well as English and French.

### **Family literacy**

Family members are a child's first teachers. Playing, singing, reading and talking with children during their early years builds a solid foundation for strong language skills and learning success.

### **Adult literacy and essential skills**

Today's changing world means that as adults we must continuously use and grow our skills at home, in the community and at work.

### **Youth literacy**

Youth represent the future of the NWT. They're the next leaders, parents, employers and employees. Finding ways to keep youth engaged in learning is an important part of our work.

### **Immigrants and refugees**

Our Community Connections program provides varied activities for immigrants and refugees. We work within the newcomer community to offer non-formal literacy programming.

### **Plain language**

Plain language design, writing, and editing can get your message across clearly to everyone, whatever their literacy skills. We provide training, writing, and editing services on a fee-for-service basis.

## **Ilitaqsiniq - Nunavut Literacy Council**

Ilitaqsiniq – Nunavut Literacy Council was founded in 1999, becoming one of 13 provincial-territorial literacy coalitions in Canada. We are a registered charity, governed by an elected board of directors who reside in and represent three different regions of Nunavut. Ilitaqsiniq currently employs 4 full-time staff members and several shorter-term employees including Elders to support the delivery of pilot programs.

Ilitaqsiniq's mandate is unique in Nunavut: it is the only organization within the territory with a sole focus on supporting the development of literacy skills in Nunavut's official languages. In 18 years, Ilitaqsiniq has developed a strong reputation for work that considers the unique social, cultural and linguistic context of Nunavut. We work to apply the principles of adult learning, community development and capacity building with a focus on work in the following areas:

### **Non-formal, culture-based learning programs**

Ilitaqsiniq creates, pilots and evaluates innovative models of non-formal, culture-based learning programs embedded with literacy, language and other work and life skills. Cultural content includes traditional and contemporary Inuit sewing, food preparation, local fisheries research and development and hockey camps. Ilitaqsiniq has captured the outcomes of embedded literacy programs through comprehensive Inuit-led community-based research.



### **Intergenerational or family literacy initiatives**

Ilitaqsiniq supports parents and other caregivers to support children's language and literacy skill development. This work includes the creation and delivery of workshops for communities as well as regional training workshops. Ilitaqsiniq has also produced several resources to support children's Inuktitut language and literacy skill development including children's storybooks, activities and games. We have recently developed an electronic application that will allow families to access our current and future resources on tablets.

### **Workplace-based initiatives**

We work with private industry, Inuit organizations and government to conduct inclusive, employee-driven workplace needs assessments (WNA). Reporting is driven by data collected through confidential interviews and focus groups with a diverse cross-section of employees and analyzed with feedback and guidance from worker-based advisory committees. We support implementation of customized workplace learning/training based on action-oriented recommendations developed based on needs identified through this holistic process.

### **Community-based research**

We identify current issues related to literacy skill development and conduct cutting edge research to address gaps in knowledge. We work with community partners to carry out the research and train community members to collect data, interpret results and make recommendations for changes to various stakeholders. The results of our research drive best practices in programming and are intended to contribute to the development of policy and funding criteria that support new approaches to learning.

## **Yukon Literacy Coalition**

The Yukon Literacy Coalition (YLC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of the people of the north by providing accessible and culturally-appropriate learning opportunities. We serve the territory in several ways. We offer LES embedded workshops and programs at no cost; and we conduct and participate in regional and national community-based research projects. We also operate the Family Literacy Centre (FLC) at the Canada Games Centre in Whitehorse and run a vibrant Yukon-wide outreach program. We work in partnership with First Nation governments, Yukon government, municipalities and other non-profit organizations.

### **Embedded LES projects**

We are currently working with several First Nations to develop LES embedded projects. These projects are designed to combine wellness, non-formal learning and formal hard-skills learning. We work in the classroom and on site. Much of our work is deeply rooted in traditional, cultural and land-based approaches.

### **Family literacy**

YLC works with families across the Yukon. We run daily programs at the Family Literacy Centre located in the Canada Games Center in Whitehorse. In the summer, we run programming at the Pioneer Hotel, which is a heritage building at Shipyards park by the Yukon River. Our programming is designed for the entire family to learn together. One stream of our work is dedicated to kindergarten readiness.



### Outreach program

Our outreach program is designed to provide learning opportunities for all Yukoners. We participate in culture camps, fish camps, fairs, and education forums. You can find us in schools, colleges, cultural centres and daycares; anywhere people want to learn, we will teach. In the summer we set up our “literacy tent” in locations all over the Yukon, providing Yukoners with even more learning opportunities.

### Financial literacy

We run financial literacy courses in Yukon communities and are in the process of developing an interactive financial literacy page on our website.

### Women, violence and learning

Most recently we completed a 3-year research study Changing Systems- Women, Violence and Learning funded by the Status of Women Canada. The results of this research have informed further work in this area.

**If you are interested in life-long learning with a non-formal, northern, and culturally- relevant approach please contact us.**

## Appendix 2: A description of the NALES embedded LES pilots

This section describes the eight embedded LES pilots offered through the NALES project by literacy organization and sector (hospitality, service or natural resources).

The target groups for the NALES project were Indigenous youth and adults who were out of school and unemployed or underemployed, with low levels of LES, and living in northern and remote communities. The project goal was for these youth and adults to develop more transferable skills, be more employable, have access to employment, and have more success in the northern economy.





## NWT Literacy Council

### Tourism Training for Frontline Workers (Tourism sector)

The NWT Literacy Council worked with the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI) to embed LES into NorthernMost Host, a two-day training program being developed for frontline workers in the tourism sector for the territory. The program focused on customer service. Program topics included communicating with customers, handling complaints and offering good customer service. ITI wanted the program to be accessible to the range of community members who might take the training. ITI recognized that there would be many people who would have the cultural and practical skills for tourism jobs but might be challenged by some of the concepts presented in the training. The accessibility of the program was especially important because of a heightened focus on Indigenous tourism in the NWT.

### Introduction to Retail and Customer Service (Service Sector)

The NWT Literacy Council partnered with Aurora College to research, develop, pilot test and revise a short six-week course, Introduction to Retail and Customer Service. The course was designed for participants at the 120 level – the second adult literacy level. The course embedded literacy and essential skills with technical skills required for the retail sector. The course is an introduction to the retail field and prepares participants to get and keep a job in the sector.

## Ilitaqsiniq Nunavut Literacy Council

### N-Camp Project (Traditional skills)

Ilitaqsiniq partnered with the Department of Fisheries and Sealing to embed LES into the N-Camp training offered by the Department of Fisheries and Sealing. N-Camp is a training program for Nunavut communities that are interested in starting a commercial fishery. There were two components to N-Camp: three days of classroom-based training and an on-the-land component. In the classroom-based training, participants learned about N-Camp, data sampling and licensing requirements for fishing. They got hands-on sampling in a lab. Then participants went on the land for three or four days to sample 200 fish and record data such as weight, location, size, wind speed and direction on the fish that goes to the DFO.

Staff from the Department of Fisheries and Sealing identified literacy and numeracy components in their N-Camp training as a barrier for participants when they conducted their pilots. The training was too academic and needed to be more practical. Ilitaqsiniq worked with the Department to make the training and training materials more accessible through an embedded LES component.

### Niqtsialiurniq Program (Service Sector)

The 4-month embedded LES program focused on modern and traditional Inuit cooking. It was modeled on Ilitaqsiniq's award winning Miqqut Program, a non-formal, traditional sewing program with embedded LES. The program was offered from May to August with twelve participants attending the program. All were unemployed. There were four instructors—a chef, a literacy instructor and two Elder instructors. The Elders led the traditional food preparation and also acted as counselors and language teachers.

The chef's role was to do all the planning and ordering ahead of time. The literacy instructor developed and led the embedded literacy component. The program ran from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. five days a week.



### **Project Iqaluit: Polar Outfitting Project (Tourism Sector)**

This pilot focused on the first component of five, to train youth and adults in traditional skills to be outfitters and guides. It took place in the spring. The five-day on-the-land training program included learning about teamwork, communication, and problem solving as issues came up. Trainees had to plan out supplies to take on the land, how to place nets, learn about fish flow and hunting, and how to make calculations such as tracking animals, where to find them and knowing what direction they are going in. Upon completion of the training program, the individuals secured employment with Polar Outfitting. The pilot was a partnership between Ilitaqsiniq and Polar Outfitting. Polar Outfitting saw a need for more outfitters as there is more interest in sport hunting related to tourism in Nunavut. The project also provided employment opportunities to those who may not have completed their basic education and could not find employment in Nunavut.

## **Yukon Literacy Coalition**

### **On-site Training for the Burger Shack in Mayo (Service Sector)**

The Yukon Literacy Coalition partnered with the Na-Cho Nyak Dun (NND) First Nation government in Mayo to develop and offer customized customer service training with embedded LES and follow up support for the Burger Shack supervisor and employees in Mayo. The Burger Shack was an initiative of the NND First Nation. It was created to employ First Nation citizens and also meet a community need. The program and follow-up support took place over a three-month period in the summer. The intention of the training was to increase participants' ability to work with the public and have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities at work. Participants would also develop transferable skills through the program that would prepare them for other employment situations.

### **On Site Training for the Tagish Kwan Photo Parlour in Carcross (Tourism Sector)**

Carcross is a historical site and tourist destination. The community was on the trail to the Klondike gold fields during the gold rush and it is also the traditional territory of the Carcross Tagish First Nation (CTFN). The CTFN recently built a commons area with many shops providing business opportunities. The YLC had previously run an Old Time Photo Parlour. YLC partnered with the Carcross Tagish Management Corporation and the Carcross Tagish First Nation to partner on a social enterprise that was dedicated to LES embedded workplace skill development. The concept of the Photo Parlour was that visitors dressed in Klondike costumes and had their picture taken in a wall tent with props. Some participants dressed in their traditional regalia for the photos. At the same time, staff provided the history of the Gold Rush, First Nations' history and how contact impacted the First Nations people. Elders were on site for storytelling and prayers, and traditional dancers made occasional appearances. The program included a blend of technical photography skills, employment and essential skills, and healing and wellness. The off-site training was two weeks and on-site training was throughout the summer.

### **Trappers Education Workshop (Traditional skills)**

Environment Yukon asked the Yukon Literacy Coalition to audit the Trapping Education Workshop. The purpose of the audit was to look at the course through a literacy lens in terms of making it more accessible for participants. The project rationale was that literacy and essential skills are required to be successful in both the Trapper Education Workshop and as a trapper. The course activities require a proficiency in literacy and essential skills, and trapping requires many aspects of LES in order for individuals to be successful. A YLC staff member worked with the instructor of the program and audited the Trapper Education Workshop and reviewed how the course was conducted through a literacy and essentials-skills lens. She wrote a review of the course along with recommendations.





