

# TOWARDS LITERACY:

## A STRATEGY FRAMEWORK – 2008-2018

### SUMMARY





## Acknowledgements

The Government of the Northwest Territories wishes to thank the following individuals who contributed their time and expertise to the development of *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2008-2018*.

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## A Message from the Minister

I am pleased to present *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2008-2018* on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). The renewed NWT Literacy Strategy builds upon the accomplishments of *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005*. Literacy is an issue that affects the lives of every NWT resident. Good literacy skills provide many benefits that enrich the quality of our lives.

The Literacy Strategy encompasses a full range of literacy programs and services as well as partnerships between government and non-governmental organizations. Recognizing literacy development as a lifelong process that runs throughout people's lives, the Literacy Strategy addresses the needs of NWT citizens from early childhood to the senior years in their roles as learners, family members and active, productive citizens.

The Literacy Strategy presents a vision of literacy in the NWT where everyone can read and write and participate fully in society. We all have a role to play in developing a literate society. Individuals have a responsibility to develop the skills required for success in everyday life, and parents have a responsibility to support their children's literacy development. The NWT Literacy Strategy is the GNWT's commitment to make that task easier for individuals and families by delivering effective programs and services that support literacy development throughout life.



Honourable Jackson Lafferty  
Minister of Education, Culture and Employment





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# INTRODUCTION



*Rbonda Kennedy*

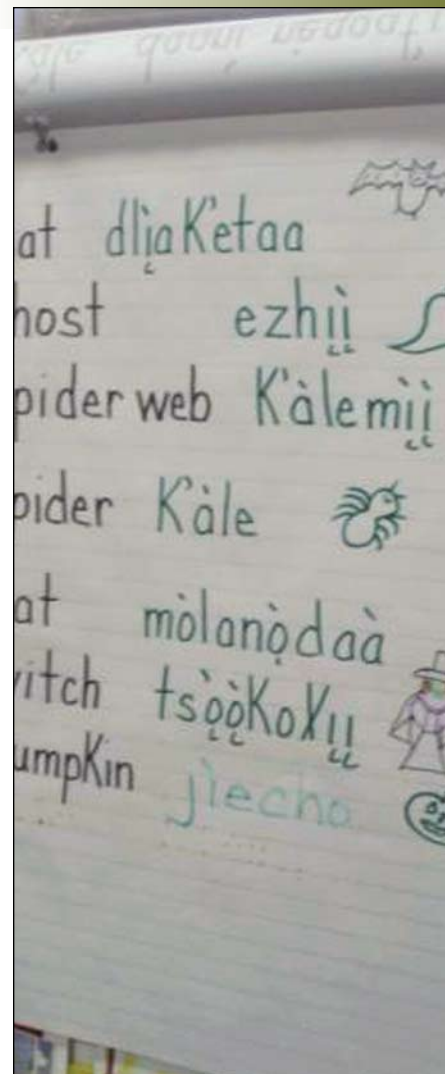


## Preface

The Northwest Territories (NWT) has undergone many changes within the past 10 years, and we can expect more changes in the next decade. Aboriginal land claims and self-government agreements are changing the NWT social and political landscape. Economic expansion in mining and oil and gas industries is increasing the demand for skilled labour and will continue to create new job opportunities for NWT residents. During this time of rapid change, it is important that all NWT residents are able to access the opportunities and benefit from the prosperity brought about by development of our abundant resources.

Literacy is of paramount importance because many NWT residents lack the basic skills to fill the jobs that are being created or meet the entrance requirements of job-specific training programs. Of particular concern is the fact that 70% of NWT Aboriginal adults lack the literacy skills to fully participate in 21st century society, compared to 30% of non-Aboriginals. Literacy is as much a social justice issue in the Northwest Territories as it is a labour market issue. Effective literacy initiatives are crucial for the evolution of an equitable NWT society where all residents are able to access new opportunities and benefit from the prosperity in our region.

Literacy skills are the essential building blocks for the development of a vibrant NWT society and economy. Literacy is a continuum of skill development, ranging from learning to read to performing a complex set of skills. Today, the broad definition of literacy includes reading text, document use, writing, oral communications, numeracy, thinking skills, computer use, working with others and continuous learning. These foundational skills are used in the home, school, community and workplace. Increased literacy skill levels will enable all people in the NWT to be healthy, self-reliant individuals with an improved quality of life.



## Linking Plans and Strategies

The second NWT Literacy Strategy builds upon *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005* by describing how the Government of the Northwest Territories intends to work towards attaining our vision of a society in which all people can participate fully as citizens. Literacy is valued as a lifelong learning process necessary for personal, social, political and economic development.

The members of the 16th NWT Legislative Assembly have committed the Government of the Northwest Territories to doing its part to improve the quality of life for people of the NWT. *Northerners Working Together*, the vision, goals and priorities of the current Government of the Northwest Territories, has identified six goals:

- A strong and independent North built on partnerships;
- An environment that will sustain present and future generations;
- Healthy, educated people;
- A diversified economy that provides all communities and regions with opportunities and choices;
- Sustainable, vibrant, safe communities; and
- Effective and efficient government.

*“literacy is valued as a lifelong learning  
process necessary for personal, social,  
political and economic development”*

The success of the Literacy Strategy is also linked to other GNWT strategies, plans and directives. Together, all of these important strategies lay the foundation for a unified approach to reach our goal of a strong, healthy and prosperous Northwest Territories.

- Adult Literacy and Basic Education Directive
- Aboriginal Language Strategy
- Early Childhood Development Framework for Action
- Income Security Framework
- Career Development Directive
- Labour Force Development Plan 2002-2007
- The Seniors Action Plan 2002-2003 – A Response to the Review of Seniors Programs and Services
- NWT Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities
- Disability Framework and Action Plan
- Strategy for Teacher Education in the Northwest Territories
- Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling
- Aboriginal Language and Culture-Based Education Directive

## Literacy Strategy Background

In 2000, Lutra Associates completed *Making a Case for Literacy: The State of Adult Literacy and Adult Basic Education*, a study on adult literacy commissioned by the NWT Literacy Council. The statistics from the Lutra report, based upon self-reported grade levels from census data, revealed that a significant proportion of the NWT population, especially Aboriginal adults, had serious literacy challenges. The Lutra report also documented the impact of literacy on job opportunities, poverty, health, children, the justice system and community participation.

In response to the Lutra report, in July 2000, the NWT Legislative Assembly passed Motion 6-14(3), recommending the development of an NWT Literacy Strategy. The NWT Literacy Strategy document, *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005*, was subsequently prepared. In January 2001, Cabinet approved the NWT Literacy Strategy, along with the allocation of \$2.4 million of annual funding for literacy initiatives. A variety of literacy programs has been funded through the Literacy Strategy since 2001.

New data from the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS), which measured actual skill levels, revealed significant literacy problems in the NWT, especially amongst NWT Aboriginal adults. Some 70% of NWT Aboriginal adults are below IALSS Level 3, the international standard for functional literacy. There is a continued need for a NWT Literacy Strategy and for dedicated funding for literacy initiatives.

In 2007, *the NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation* evaluated the first five years of Literacy Strategy programming. Research for the summative evaluation included extensive consultation with individuals and organizations involved in implementation of the Literacy Strategy as well as surveys, interviews, focus groups and 10 community consultations. Data collection also included review of program documents and statistics.

The *NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation* identified key successes and challenges of the 2000 Literacy Strategy.

NWT Literacy Strategy successes:

- Increased awareness of literacy throughout the NWT;
- Increased partnerships and networking;
- Investment of \$2.4 million annually into literacy programming;
- Increased evaluation and reporting;
- IALSS data; and
- Expansion of the concept of literacy beyond just reading and writing.

NWT Literacy Strategy challenges:

- Need for long-term solutions;
- Duplication with other GNWT strategies;
- Lack of baseline data at the beginning of the Strategy;
- Data collection and reporting problems;
- Insufficient financial and human resources;
- Staff turnover;
- Lack of multi-year funding at the project level; and
- Inconsistent communication.

ECE drafted a detailed report that cross-referenced IALSS findings with the goals, objectives and actions of the 2000 Literacy Strategy. The new NWT Literacy Strategy has been informed by IALSS data and research from the Literacy Strategy summative evaluation.

ECE established a multi-stakeholder working group, comprised of staff from ECE and other GNWT departments, Aurora College, NWT Literacy Council, non-governmental literacy service providers and Aboriginal organizations, to guide the renewal of the NWT Literacy Strategy. The Literacy Strategy renewal process builds upon the accomplishments of *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005* and anticipates a continued legacy of effective literacy programming in the NWT.

## **NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation Recommendations**

The *NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation: Summary Report* (2007) made a number of recommendations that will help guide NWT Literacy Strategy renewal for 2008-2018.

### **Recommendation #1:**

*Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework 2001-2005* addressed the past five fiscal years and it is now appropriate to update that Strategy to reflect current needs and new political realities. An update of the Strategy should focus on the results gathered through the *NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation* effort, as well as the valuable information identified through the NWT's participation in the 2003 IALSS<sup>1</sup>. Updating the Strategy will ensure that measures developed specific to adult literacy will build from the baseline data generated by the IALSS and address the lessons learned over the first five years of the Strategy's implementation.

### **Recommendation #2:**

The *NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation* effort identifies a clear need to dedicate funding for a full-time GNWT Literacy Strategy Coordinator. This Coordinator must be in place to oversee Literacy Strategy activities, and should be in addition to the dedicated funding for a full-time ALBE<sup>2</sup> Coordinator.

### **Recommendation #3:**

Ensure that the next version of the GNWT Literacy Strategy takes a more targeted approach. The Strategy should focus on making significant positive accomplishments in a few key areas, rather than spreading resources thinly across a wide spectrum of activities.

<sup>1</sup> International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Adult Literacy and Basic Education.

**Recommendation #4:**

Ensure that the goals and objectives of the new GNWT Literacy Strategy are designed realistically. These goals and objectives must be measurable, not administratively burdensome to collect for, and reflect true reporting accountabilities. Evaluation expertise should be used in the development of these goals and objectives. As well, the Strategy should only contain activities that are funded (i.e. no interlinking strategies or initiatives should be included).

**Recommendation #5:**

Adopt a multi-year funding approach for the renewal of the GNWT Literacy Strategy – one that filters down to the project/program level so that they reap the benefits of longer term planning and consistency. This multi-year approach will also signify to key stakeholders that addressing literacy needs cannot be accomplished through short-term or quick fixes.

**Recommendation #6:**

Data collection systems must reflect and address the issues caused by multiple partners spread across a decentralized system. To mitigate these issues, ensure that a new evaluation framework (or RMAF<sup>3</sup>) is designed and properly implemented for the renewal of the GNWT Literacy Strategy, and that all parties are aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding data collection and reporting. In doing so, formal data collection and reporting requirements should be implemented where none currently exist, and those systems where the data is being collected and not used should be streamlined. Ideally, the data that is collected should be synthesized and analyzed on an annual basis (i.e. an annual report) to ensure that Strategy activities stay on target.

<sup>3</sup> Results-based Management Accountability Framework.

**Recommendation #7:**

Design and implement a new communications plan that supports the renewal of the GNWT Literacy Strategy. In doing so, develop orientation materials and back-up plans that can be used to address the turnover of personnel within Strategy key areas. Communication must also be ongoing and consistent amongst all key stakeholders throughout the lifecycle of the entire Strategy.

**Recommendation #8:**

Ensure that Literacy Strategy partners play an active role in the design and delivery of the renewal Strategy in order to solicit their buy-in. These partners must have formalized decision-making roles and responsibilities that will impact the implementation and direction of the Strategy.

# NWT LITERACY AT A GLANCE



*Tessa Macintosh*

Vision



Definition



Guiding Principles



Goals



Objectives



Actions

## Literacy Vision

Our vision for the Northwest Territories is of a society where

- all people can read and write;
- all people can actively participate fully as citizens;
- literacy is valued as a lifelong learning process necessary for personal, social, political and economic development; and
- people value literacy in all official languages of the NWT.

Our vision builds upon *Northerners Working Together*, the 16th Assembly of Government of the Northwest Territories' vision, goals and priorities. The NWT Literacy Strategy vision strongly supports the vision outlined in *Northerners Working Together*:

Strong individuals, families and communities sharing the benefits and responsibilities of a unified, environmentally sustainable and prosperous Northwest Territories.



Tessa Macintosh

## Literacy Definition

There are many definitions of literacy available in today's world, most of which focus narrowly on understanding printed material. In the Northwest Territories, literacy is a pluralistic concept, which is linked to language, social context and cultural identity. Literacy encompasses a broad range of competencies: reading different kinds of printed materials, writing, speaking, listening, observation, visual representation, numeracy, use of technology, critical thinking and problem solving. Development of these multiple literacies is encouraged in the 11 official languages of the Northwest Territories. Literacy is a continuum of lifelong skill development in which there is always room for growth and the risk of decline if skills are not used.

### NWT Literacy Strategy Definition of Literacy

Literacy is  
the lifelong development  
of a broad range of skills  
in one or more of the NWT official languages  
for the purpose of expanding an individual's potential  
for optimal health, personal success  
and positive participation in community wellness and  
development.

### Literacy Skills

Reading printed materials	Numeracy
Writing	Speaking
Listening	Observation
Visual representation	Use of technology
Critical thinking	Problem solving

## Literacy Strategy Guiding Principles

Literacy permeates every aspect of society and has a profound impact on the quality of people's lives. In today's society, skill demands are constantly increasing. The polarized concept of people being either "literate" or "illiterate" is now outdated. Literacy is not so much a matter of whether people can read or not, but rather a matter of how well they can read and use different kinds of information. The guiding principles of the NWT Literacy Strategy reflect the modern concept of literacy as a lifelong process, involving a wide range of skills.

1. Literacy is important for people of all ages.
2. Literacy is a continuum of lifelong skill development.
3. Literacy encompasses a wide range of skills, including reading, writing, numeracy, oral communications, problem solving and computer use.
4. Literacy is a key determinant of the health and well-being of individuals and families.
5. Literacy is a foundation for all learning.
6. Literacy initiatives are most effective when they are implemented through active cross-society partnerships.
7. Literacy programs should be supported in all official languages of the Northwest Territories.
8. Methods and resources of literacy programs should be relevant to the needs, goals and cultures of the learners and the community.

*“literacy is not so much a matter of whether people can read or not, but rather a matter of how well they can read and use different kinds of information”*

## Literacy Strategy Goals, Objectives and Actions

The NWT Literacy Strategy is intended to provide a framework for a broad range of activities that will occur over the next ten-year period. *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2008-2018* builds upon the successes of *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001-2005*. Research from the *NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation* and the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) has also informed the framework.

The NWT Literacy Strategy includes the following four goals:

Goal 1: Increase the literacy levels of people of all ages in the NWT.

Goal 2: Support literacy in the official languages of the NWT.

Goal 3: Build integrated partnerships across the NWT to address literacy priorities.

Goal 4: Build community capacity to meet local literacy needs.

A series of objectives and actions has been developed to address each goal. The objectives and actions provide a framework, which allows progress to be measured over time. The specific objectives and actions of each goal are listed below.

Goal 1: Increase the literacy levels of people of all ages in the NWT.

1.1 Early Childhood	
Objectives	Actions
1.1.1 Ensure early literacy development and family literacy training and supports are available to community-based family support programs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deliver ongoing community-based family literacy training for staff and/or volunteers in early childhood programs, family support programs and other community organizations that support families.</li> <li>2. Ensure early literacy development is a strong component in early childhood education programs.</li> </ol>
1.1.2 Promote the use of Aboriginal culture, language and literacy within early childhood programs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expand the Language Nest initiative in NWT communities.</li> <li>2. Standardize training for Language Nest personnel.</li> <li>3. Develop early childhood Aboriginal language educational resources.</li> </ol>
1.1.3 Increase opportunities for families with young children to participate in family literacy activities in every NWT community.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide funding to community-based groups to support quality family literacy activities.</li> <li>2. Continue to provide support to community-based family literacy projects to provide culturally appropriate materials and outreach services.</li> <li>3. Develop community literacy partnerships to support family literacy in every community of the NWT.</li> </ol>

1.1.4 Keep families and communities well informed, and promote the importance and benefits of early literacy development in all official languages.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to develop appropriate strategies and materials to promote the importance and benefits of family literacy to NWT families.</li> <li>2. Distribute family literacy promotional materials throughout the NWT.</li> </ol>
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### 1.2 School Age Children (K to 12)

Objectives	Actions
1.2.1 Provide support for literacy development in the K-12 school system.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support students' literacy development through school-based Literacy/Numeracy Coaches.</li> <li>2. Staff school libraries to support student literacy.</li> </ol>
1.2.2 Expand family literacy initiatives to include school age children and their families.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support DEAs/DECs to develop literacy programs which include school age children and families.</li> </ol>

### 1.3 Youth (16 to 25)

Objectives	Actions
1.3.1 Provide alternative approaches to support literacy development for out-of-school youth.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement alternative programs for out-of-school youth.</li> <li>2. Implement bridging programs for out-of-school youth to transition into the workplace.</li> <li>3. Develop literacy resources that appeal to out-of-school youth.</li> </ol>
1.3.2 Provide literacy supports for out-of-school youth through community partnerships.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Partner with youth centres and programs to include a literacy component.</li> <li>2. Provide transitional support for youth in correctional facilities to develop literacy skills.</li> <li>3. Provide transitional support for young parents to develop literacy skills.</li> </ol>

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#### 1.4 Working Age Adults (16 to 59)

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##### Objectives

##### Actions

1.4.1 Develop an integrated approach to adult literacy programming, which includes a broad range of support for learners.

1. Research learning barriers and academic success factors.
2. Develop and implement interventions to support adult learners based on research findings.
3. Research non-academic outcomes of adult learners.
4. Incorporate prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) into adult literacy programming to validate learners' knowledge and skills.
5. Provide individual tutoring support for emergent literacy adults.
6. Provide learning support for adults with disabilities.

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1.4.2 Implement innovative approaches to adult literacy programming.

1. Research linkages between workplace competencies and adult literacy programming.
2. Increase learning opportunities through distance education and educational software.
3. Develop and implement embedded literacy programs.

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1.4.3 Increase support for adult literacy practitioners.

1. Deliver annual professional development opportunities for adult educators and ALBE instructors.
  2. Develop relevant instructional resources to support the delivery of adult literacy programs.
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<p>1.4.4 Ensure standardization of ALBE programs in the NWT.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement NWT Senior Secondary School Diploma for Adults.</li> <li>2. Develop an ALBE curriculum placement package.</li> <li>3. Conduct regular revisions of ALBE curricula to keep abreast of evolving skill demands.</li> <li>4. Develop learner assessment instruments for ALBE courses.</li> </ol>
<p>1.4.5 Increase awareness of and support for workplace literacy and essential skills programs.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explore the nature and feasibility of workplace essential skills curricula based on industry needs.</li> <li>2. Establish a recognizable workplace essential skills credential.</li> <li>3. Promote and support the delivery of workplace literacy programs.</li> <li>4. Collaborate with stakeholders to identify incentives for work release and on-the-job-training programs.</li> </ol>
<p><b>1.5 Elders/Seniors (60+)</b></p>	
<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<p><b>Actions</b></p>
<p>1.5.1 Ensure elders/seniors have access to a continuum of literacy supports that enables them to function independently.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a continuum of literacy supports based on seniors' literacy research.</li> <li>2. Develop literacy supports that address health and quality of life.</li> </ol>

## Goal 2: Support literacy in the official languages of the NWT.

2.1 Language Acquisition in Aboriginal Languages	
Objectives	Actions
2.1.1 Support family literacy in the Aboriginal languages.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Conduct a literature review on language acquisition in Aboriginal languages.</li><li>2. Interview elders and community members on traditional language training.</li><li>3. Develop a parent guide to support and encourage Aboriginal language in the home.</li><li>4. Promote traditional learning opportunities to support family literacy in all Aboriginal languages.</li></ol>
2.2 Aboriginal Language Resources	
Objectives	Actions
2.2.1 Develop resources in the Aboriginal languages.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Make the Aboriginal language fonts readily available throughout the NWT.</li><li>2. Provide training on the use of Aboriginal language fonts.</li></ol>
2.2.2 Support language communities in the preservation of traditional stories and knowledge.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Provide training and resources for transcribing, translating and archiving traditional stories and knowledge.</li></ol>
2.3 Community Aboriginal Language Support	
Objectives	Actions
2.3.1 Provide progressive language training in NWT communities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Provide Aboriginal language literacy programs in NWT communities.</li><li>2. Provide methodology language training in NWT communities.</li><li>3. Increase professional development supports for community language teachers.</li></ol>

**Goal 3: Build integrated partnerships across the NWT to address literacy priorities.**

Objectives	Actions
3.1 Support literacy partnerships among GNWT departments and external stakeholders.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish a NWT Literacy Strategy Advisory Committee.</li> <li>2. Implement a Literacy Strategy communications plan to report on literacy activities across GNWT departments and with external stakeholders.</li> </ol>
3.2 Promote the integrated use of literacy resources among stakeholders.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish an action plan to maximize resources available to support literacy programs and services.</li> <li>2. Develop resources to address health literacy issues.</li> </ol>

**Goal 4: Build community capacity to meet local literacy needs.**

Objectives	Actions
4.1 Support community groups to develop and implement community literacy plans.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide expertise and training to enable communities to develop literacy plans.</li> <li>2. Provide communities with literacy programming materials to implement their literacy plans.</li> </ol>
4.2 Increase access to community library services.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase library services for communities without libraries.</li> <li>2. Provide community libraries with the necessary resources to expand their literacy programming.</li> </ol>

# CONCLUSION





## Shared Responsibilities for NWT Literacy Strategy Implementation

Literacy development is a shared responsibility, which involves all sectors of NWT society. All NWT residents can contribute to the implementation of the NWT Literacy Strategy.

- **Individuals** are responsible to develop and maintain their literacy skills. Individuals can adopt a lifelong learning perspective, improve their skill levels through formal or informal learning and maintain their literacy skills by using them regularly. Individuals can also support community literacy initiatives and help others to improve their personal literacy levels.
- **Families** contribute to literacy development by promoting literacy in the home and providing physical and emotional support to relatives who are pursuing learning goals. Parents can pass on the value of learning to their children through everyday interactive activities, including reading and discussions with children. Families can also attend and support family literacy programming in their communities.
- **Communities** have an active role to play in literacy development. Community organizations can sponsor and support literacy programming. Community interagency groups can actively promote literacy as part of an integrated approach to social issues. Community service organizations can donate time and resources to schools and literacy organizations.
- **Educational institutions** deliver quality programs, which allow NWT residents of all ages to improve their literacy levels. Educators can create supportive learning environments and impart a love of learning to their students. Educational institutions can also participate in community and family literacy initiatives.

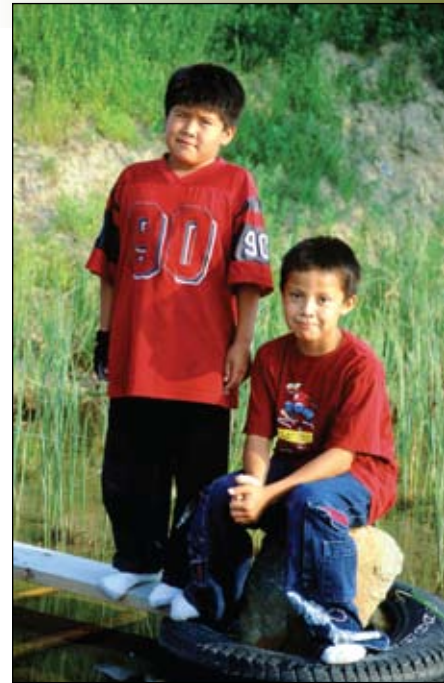
- **Governments** can identify literacy as a priority and allocate financial and human resources to literacy initiatives. They maintain quality of literacy programming through the development of responsive curricula and educational resources. Governments take a lead role in literacy program planning, coordination and evaluation. Governments also facilitate literacy development by working in partnership with non-governmental organizations, industry, labour and communities.
- **Non-governmental organizations** share literacy information to educate the public and raise awareness of literacy issues. They advocate for literacy issues locally and nationally. Non-governmental organizations also contribute to NWT literacy development by offering literacy programming, developing literacy resources, facilitating literacy partnerships, building community capacity and training literacy practitioners.
- **Libraries** foster a love of reading and further learning and serve as community gathering places for literacy-related activities. They provide access to reading material for all age groups, computer technology and research tools. Libraries can also host literacy programs and community activities that promote learning.
- **Employers** can support literacy skill development by sponsoring workplace literacy programs and providing work release time for their employees. They can also promote literacy in the workplace and support community literacy initiatives. Employers can also work in partnership with governments, educational institutions, labour organizations and non-governmental organizations to identify NWT skill demands and develop training plans.
- **Labour organizations** can support literacy by advocating for skills development opportunities in the workplace. They can encourage workers to engage in professional development. Labour organizations can also promote lifelong learning in their communications, support community literacy initiatives and participate in literacy partnerships.

## Afterword

The NWT is a land of rich cultural diversity and abundant natural resources. Our thriving economy is creating many new opportunities for NWT residents. The NWT is also at a crossroads in its historic development. There is a risk that people with low literacy levels will be left behind as the NWT moves into an era of unprecedented economic growth. Increases in literacy rates across the entire population are essential for a fair and equitable NWT society.

Literacy has a profound and pervasive impact on NWT society. Literacy, or the lack thereof, impacts people of all ages and permeates every aspect of our society. NWT residents without adequate literacy skills experience challenges participating in the labour market, earning sufficient income, managing their own health and contributing to community development. Low literacy is frequently associated with a cycle of unemployment, poverty, inequity, poor health, addictions, crime and social isolation. Effective literacy interventions are a key component in breaking this tragic cycle and empowering NWT people to become self-reliant and healthy.

The NWT Literacy Strategy addresses the needs of NWT residents of all ages in the various roles they play at home, in the workplace and in the community. Achievement of the NWT Literacy Strategy goals, objectives and actions will require collaborative partnerships involving all sectors of NWT society. Investing human and financial resources into the NWT Literacy Strategy will yield substantial social, political and economic benefits for NWT society as a whole. More importantly, increased literacy levels will translate into renewed hope, expanded opportunities and improved quality of life for NWT individuals, families and communities.



*Tessa Macintosh*



# APPENDICES





## Appendix A: NWT IALSS Results

Conducted in 2003, the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) provides direct measures of adult literacy skills and data on a range of labour market-related skills. Previous data, including that used for the 2000 Literacy Strategy, was based on a proxy indicator, using educational attainment of grade nine or less as a benchmark for low literacy. For the first time, the NWT has accurate information on actual skill levels of adults.

### IALSS Skills Domains

The IALSS definition of literacy accentuates the modern conception of literacy as a continuum of skill development with diverse applications:

Literacy is using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.<sup>4</sup>

IALSS measured proficiencies in four skill domains:

**Prose literacy** – the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts, such as editorials, news stories, brochures and instruction manuals.

**Document literacy** – the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats, including applications, forms, schedules, maps, tables and charts.

**Numeracy** – the knowledge and skills required to effectively manage the mathematical demands of diverse situations.

**Problem solving** – goal-directed thinking and action in situations for which no routine solutions exist.

<sup>4</sup> *Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003*. p. 55.

## IALSS Skill Levels

IALSS measures skill levels on a 500-point scale. Prose literacy, document literacy and numeracy are grouped into five proficiency levels; problem solving has four proficiency levels. Tasks on the IALSS testing instrument were graded based on a number of mental operations pertaining to using printed information: type of information match, type of information requested, plausibility of distractors and number of information sources. IALSS Level 3 is considered the international standard for functional literacy in the modern knowledge economy:

This level [IALSS Level 3] is the minimum for persons to understand and use information contained in the increasingly difficult texts and tasks that characterize the emerging knowledge society and information economy.<sup>5</sup>

Table 1: IALSS Prose Literacy Difficulty Levels

<b>Level 1</b>	0 - 225	Locate a single piece of information in a short text.
<b>Level 2</b>	226 - 275	Locate a single piece of information in a text with some low-level inferences; may have to compare easily identifiable information.
<b>Level 3</b>	276 - 325	Integrate information from dense or more lengthy texts; generate a response based on easily identifiable information.
<b>Level 4</b>	326 - 375	Perform multiple-feature information matches and synthesize information from complex lengthy texts, using complex inferences.
<b>Level 5</b>	376 - 500	Search for information in dense text; make high-level inferences and use specialized background knowledge.

<sup>5</sup> *Learning a living: First results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (2005)*. p. 35.

Table 2: IALSS Document Literacy Difficulty Levels

<b>Level 1</b>	0 - 225	Locate a single piece of information based on a literal match; enter one piece of information based on personal knowledge.
<b>Level 2</b>	226 - 275	Match a single piece of information, using low-level inferences; may have to examine various parts of a document for information.
<b>Level 3</b>	276 - 325	Integrate multiple pieces of information from one or more documents; examine complex tables or graphs, which contain some irrelevant information.
<b>Level 4</b>	326 - 375	Perform multiple-feature information matches; cycle through documents to integrate information, using a high degree of inference; provide numerous responses without designation as to how many responses are needed.
<b>Level 5</b>	376 - 500	Search through complex displays that contain multiple plausible distractors; make high-level inferences; use specialized knowledge.

Table 3: IALSS Numeracy Difficulty Levels

<b>Level 1</b>	0 - 225	Show understanding of basic numerical ideas by completing simple, concrete tasks in a familiar context. Tasks involve counting, sorting dates, performing simple arithmetic operations.
<b>Level 2</b>	226 - 275	Understand basic mathematical concepts in familiar contexts where mathematical content is visual and quite explicit. Tasks involve estimations with whole numbers, benchmark fractions and percents, performing simple measurements.
<b>Level 3</b>	276 - 325	Demonstrate understanding of mathematical information represented in a range of different forms, such as numbers, symbols, maps, graphs, texts and drawings. Skills required involve number and spatial sense; knowledge of mathematical patterns; the ability to interpret proportions, data and statistics embedded in relatively simple texts; undertaking a number of processes to solve problems.
<b>Level 4</b>	326 - 375	Understand a broad range of abstract mathematical information represented in diverse ways, including texts of increasing complexity and unfamiliar contexts. Tasks involve undertaking multiple steps to find solutions to problems, more complex reasoning, working with proportions and formulas and offering explanations for answers.
<b>Level 5</b>	376 - 500	Understand complex representations and abstract mathematical and statistical ideas, which are embedded in complex texts. Tasks involve integrating multiple types of mathematical information, drawing inferences and generating mathematical justification for answers.

Table 4: IALSS Problem Solving Difficulty Levels

<b>Level 1</b>	0 - 250	Concrete tasks, simple inferences based on limited information in a familiar context.
<b>Level 2</b>	251 - 300	Evaluating alternatives, using a step-by-step linear process; some combining information from different sources.
<b>Level 3</b>	301 - 350	Ordering objects according to given set of criteria; constructing solutions in non-linear manner; dealing with multi-dimensional goals.
<b>Level 4</b>	351 - 500	Judging multiple evaluation criteria which have to be inferred from information; taking into account an entire system of problem solving states and possible solutions.

### **NWT IALSS Results**

IALSS data reveals levels of literacy in NWT adults even lower than the literacy statistics, which informed the development of the NWT Literacy Strategy in 2000. Using grade nine or less as the metric for low literacy, the Lutra report (2000) states “66% of Aboriginal adults and 31% of non-Aboriginal adults do not have the literacy skills needed for daily living” (4). NWT Legislature Motion 6-14(3), which led to the development of the NWT Literacy Strategy, also uses grade nine or less as the metric for low literacy. The motion cites “15 percent of adult residents” and “32 percent of adult residents in the [smaller] communities” as having grade nine or less. The 2003 IALSS data reveals that the percentage of NWT adults below functional literacy (Level 3) is considerably higher than the estimates in the 2000 Lutra report and Motion 6-14(3).

Table 5: Percentage of NWT Adults, 16+, Below Functional Literacy, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal

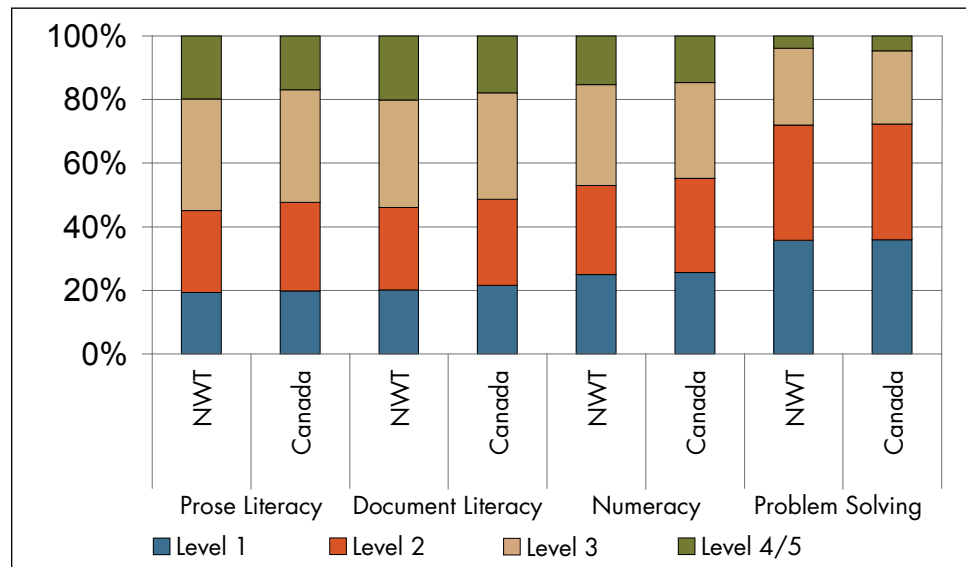
	<b>Aboriginal</b>	<b>Non-Aboriginal</b>
<b>Prose Literacy</b>	68.9	29.8
<b>Document Literacy</b>	71.0	30.1
<b>Numeracy</b>	75.8	38.5
<b>Problem Solving</b>	91.5	59.6

In the 21st century workforce, people need functional levels in all skill domains: prose literacy, document literacy, numeracy and problem solving. IALSS has accentuated the seriousness of the NWT's adult literacy problems.

### **NWT/Canada Adult Literacy Levels**

Overall, the Northwest Territories adult literacy levels are very close to the Canadian average in all skill domains.

Figure 1: Percentage of NWT/Canada Population, 16+, at IALSS Skills Levels<sup>6</sup>



On the surface, it would appear that the NWT does not have a serious literacy problem because, overall, NWT adult literacy levels are on par with the Canadian averages.

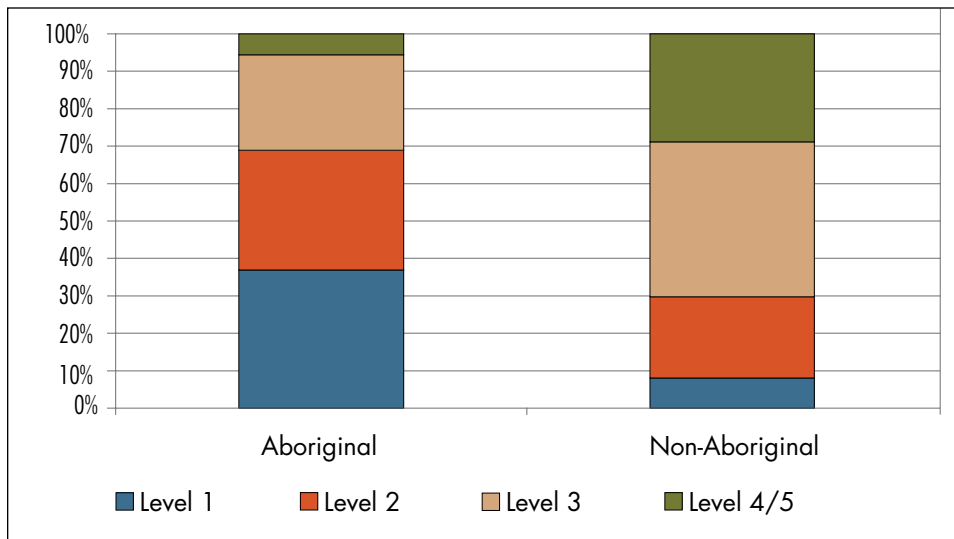
<sup>6</sup> Data for Figure 1 from Table 1.1 of *Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003*.

## NWT Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal Adult Literacy Levels

NWT adult literacy statistics reveal that there is a wide discrepancy between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal literacy levels in every skill domain, in every age group. Non-Aboriginal NWT adults score significantly above Canadian literacy levels, while Aboriginal adults score significantly below Canadian literacy levels.

As Figure 2 shows, 36.9% of NWT Aboriginal adults are at IALSS Level 1 prose proficiency, and 32% at IALSS Level 2. In comparison, 8% of NWT non-Aboriginal adults are at Level 1 prose literacy and 21.8% at Level 2. 68.9% of NWT Aboriginal adults are below Level 3 prose literacy while 70.2% of NWT non-Aboriginal adults are at Level 3 and above.

Figure 2: NWT Prose Literacy, 16+, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal<sup>7</sup>



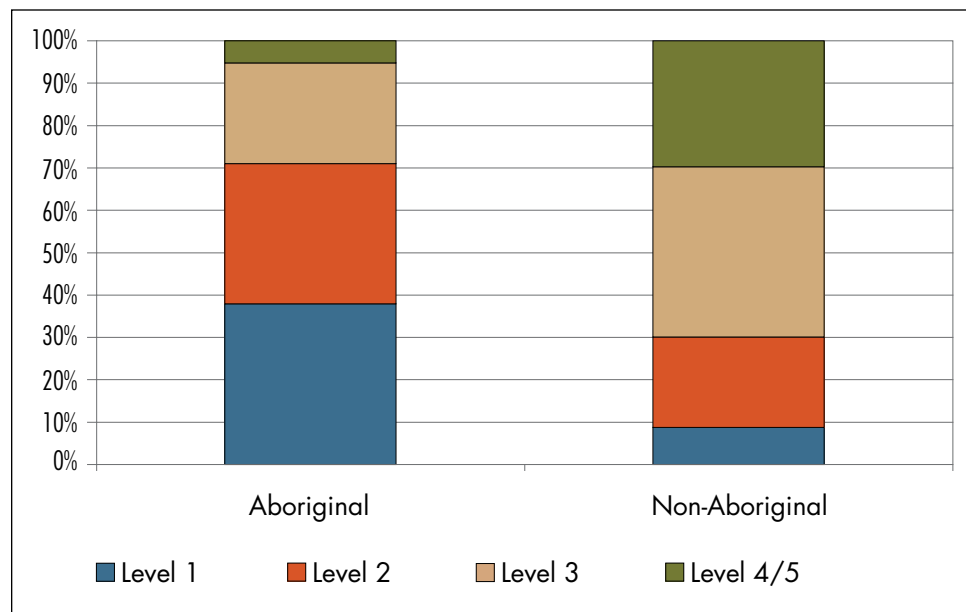
*“in the 21st century work force, people need functional levels in all skill domains”*

<sup>7</sup> Data for Figures 2 – 5 from Table 2.1 of *Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003*.

NWT Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal prose literacy distributions are reverse mirror images.

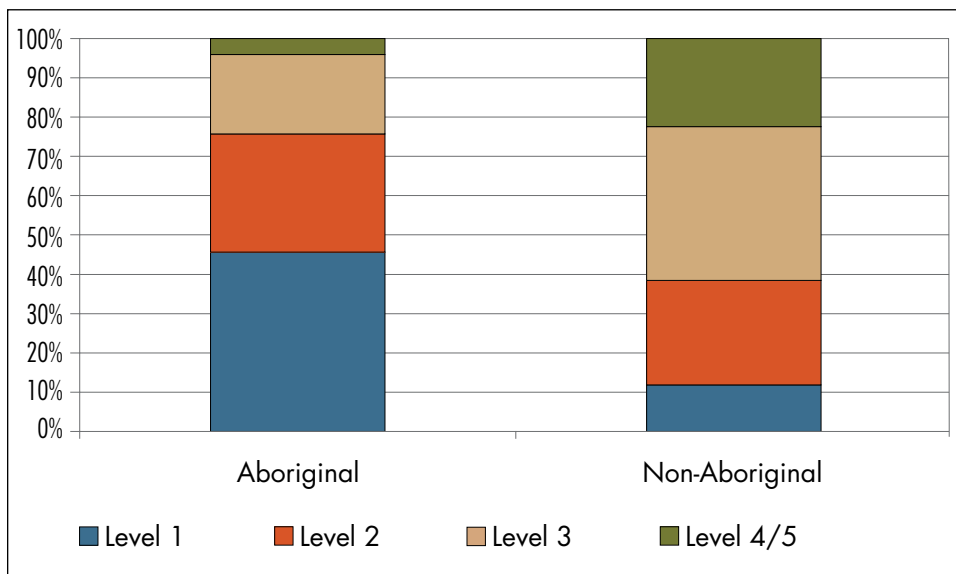
However, skill levels in the other domains are even lower for Aboriginal adults, and the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal divide is even wider. Figure 3 shows that 37.9% of NWT Aboriginal adults are at Level 1 document literacy proficiency and 25.9% are at Level 2. In total, 71% of Aboriginal adults are below Level 3 document literacy, the international standard for functional literacy, compared to 30.1% of non-Aboriginal adults.

Figure 3: NWT Document Literacy, 16+, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal



Numeracy levels among the NWT adult population pose a greater challenge than prose and document literacy. 75.8% of Aboriginal adults and 38.5% of non-Aboriginal adults are below functional literacy (Level 3) in numeracy. Only 4.1% of Aboriginal adults and 22.4% of non-Aboriginal adults have advanced numeracy skills (Level 4/5),<sup>8</sup> which would be required for many scientific and technical labour market positions.

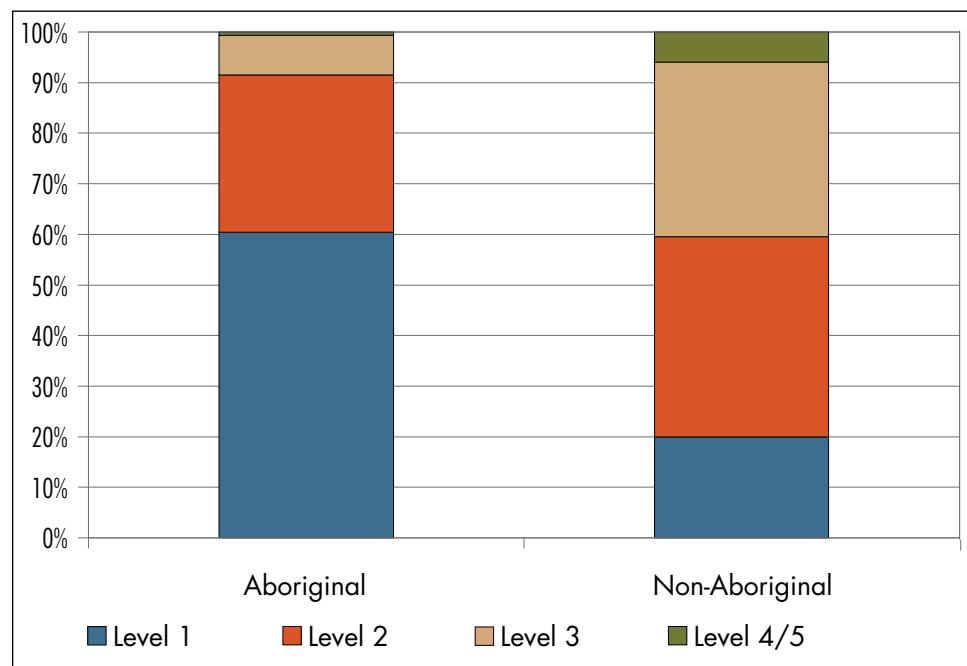
Figure 4: NWT Numeracy, 16+, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal



<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada combines Levels 4 and 5 in IALSS data tables because Level 5 adults comprise a very small proportion of the Canadian population.

Because problem solving is a new IALSS skill domain, the international standard for functional literacy has yet to be decided. At Level 1 problem solving, “concrete, limited tasks can be mastered by applying content-related, practical reasoning.”<sup>9</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, Level 4 problem solving involves “grasping a system of problem states and possible solutions as a whole” and systematically considering “multiple sequences of action.”<sup>10</sup> Only 0.7% of NWT Aboriginal adults and 6% of non-Aboriginal adults have IALSS Level 4 problem solving skills. 60.4% of Aboriginal adults and 20% of non-Aboriginal adults scored at Level 1.

Figure 5: NWT Problem Solving, 16+, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal



<sup>9</sup> *Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003*. p. 83.

<sup>10</sup> *Building on our competencies: The Northwest Territories results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003*. p. 83.

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ISBN 978-0-7708-0180-9