



Northwest Territories Education, Culture and Employment

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NWT K-12 Culturally Appropriate Teacher Orientation Beginning 2010-2011

As recently discussed, beginning in the 2010-2011 school year, all DEC/DEAs will be required to dedicate a minimum of two full days of on-the-land culturally appropriate orientation for their teaching and school administrative staff. This is to be done at the beginning of the school year, so new teachers will receive maximum benefit.

The Northwest Territories Teacher Association (NWT TA) has been consulted and agrees that all teachers need annual opportunities to learn about the culture and language of the students they serve. This will help them to be better teachers and to be better prepared for living and working in their particular region.

The two day cultural orientation should help teachers understand the unique culture, history, traditions and values of the First Nations, Metis and Inuit people in the Northwest Territories (NWT), and in particular of the people in the region.

Each DEC/DEA will be responsible for determining the exact content and context of the cultural orientation. However, it is highly encouraged that this annual orientation involve as many community Elders and leaders as possible so that the teachers and local people can interact.

The following are topics that should be covered during the orientation:

- History of formal education in the NWT, including the residential schools experience
- Traditional ways of learning, doing, and teaching children prior to the formal NWT school system
- Hearing and learning significant legends and stories of the community and region
- Learning basic conversation in the community/regional Aboriginal language
- Participating in key cultural experiences on the land and within the community
- Learning important customs and taboos of the community and culture

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- Learning about culture-based education and how to incorporate Dene Kede or Inuuqatigiit in all K-12 subjects areas and academic disciplines
- Viewing and playing the CD, "Trails to Becoming"
- Tour of significant places and people in the community

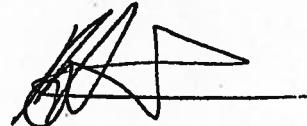
Providing teachers and school administrators with the opportunity to learn about the community they live and work in should help them to begin developing positive relationships with their students and parents, as well as with the community at large.

The ultimate goal is that teachers will make the choice to become part of the community and to stay for a long period of time, allowing the school to have consistent staff and to reduce the turnover of teachers and principals.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment will provide you with \$450 for each teacher in your DEC/DEA to assist you to provide this orientation.

If you have questions, comments or concerns about this mandated cultural orientation please do not hesitate to contact me at (867) 920-8061 or by email at roy_erasmus@gov.nt.ca

Sincerely,



Roy Erasmus
Assistant Deputy Minister

c. Mr. Dan Daniels
Deputy Minister, ECE

Mr. David Reid
President, NWT TA

JUN 17 2011

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2011-2012 Cultural Orientation Days and Use of CD Rom: *Trails to Becoming*

This letter is to follow up on discussions at our May 25, 2011, meeting in Yellowknife about DEC/DEA plans for the 2011-12 school year regarding the two days of teacher Cultural Orientation and the use of the new CD Rom: *Trails to Becoming*.

Cultural Orientation

As I indicated during the meeting, ECE will again provide funding to DECs/DEAs to help off-set the cost of organizing two rich and meaningful Cultural Orientation days for all teaching staff. This is a continuation of the funding provided last school year. In response to your requests, I am giving more direction to provide jurisdictions with a better idea of what is expected during the 2011-2012 orientation and in reporting on it.

ECE expects that this orientation will include a detailed explanation of the culture(s) and language(s) of the people, community, and the region in which the teacher is working, as well as an overview of the NWT. It should also assist staff to better understand the history of education in the NWT, specifically the residential school experience.

The orientation must be on the land and must include an explanation of culture-based education using the Aboriginal people of the region. Activities such as camping, cooking food over a campfire, or eating dryfish/drymeat in the bush without an explanation are not sufficient. Everything that is done should include an explanation of why people did it, how they did it and who did it: women, men, or children.

Some teachers have indicated that they do not want to go through the exact same thing year after year. This is understandable. Where possible, please ensure that teachers who already have had an orientation will be exposed to new experiences.

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***Trails to Becoming* CD Rom**

I expect that all DECs/DEAs will not only introduce the *Trails to Becoming* CD to all education staff, but that all teachers will finish going through the CD during the 2011-12 school year. I want to ensure that all staff go through, explore, and discuss with their colleagues their understanding of NWT culture-based and culturally appropriate programming. The *Trails to Becoming* CD is an excellent tool to help accomplish this.

During the May 25 meeting, I reiterated that ECE will ensure that Superintendents receive a personal copy of the CD to use for their own personal exploration. ECE staff will also be pleased to offer a more detailed in-servicing on the CD if Superintendents request it.

Requested Response by August 22, 2011

To ensure that you understand what it is we expect, please provide me with the following information no later than August 22, 2011:

1. A detailed schedule/agenda of the two teacher Cultural Orientation days for the 2011/2012 school year for each school, including the overall goals and objectives of each day. This should include what information and key cultural experiences each participant will have, as well as outlining what participants will learn specifically about the culture(s) and language(s) of the region and community they are teaching in.
2. A detailed plan of how all education staff will be properly introduced to, and have completely reviewed, the *Trails to Becoming* CD during the 2011-12 school year. You should also indicate how you intend to ensure that all teaching staff will thoroughly review the CD and discuss its application in fulfilling their responsibility of teaching *Dene Kede*, culture-based education, and culturally appropriate programming.

ECE staff will develop a template for reporting on your cultural orientation days. The template will be provided to you prior to the start of the next school year. I look forward to reviewing your plans. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or concerns.

**Original Signed By
Roy Erasmus**

Roy Erasmus
Assistant Deputy Minister
Education and Culture

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