



# NORTHWEST TERRITORIES JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN – GRADE 12 INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AND EDUCATION POLICY

## PURPOSE

This *Northwest Territories (NWT) Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 (JK-12) Indigenous Languages and Education Policy* (Policy) is in place to support the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) and education bodies in welcoming all students within learning environments that centre, respect and promote the Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages of the community in which the school is located.

## PRINCIPLES

The Department of ECE should work with education bodies to establish, maintain and monitor supports for JK-12 Indigenous language and education.

Education bodies should provide quality Indigenous language instruction and relevant culture-based school programs for students as part of the education program for the education district.

## SCOPE

This Policy applies to all education bodies, with regard to use of funding for JK-12 Indigenous language and education programming.

## RATIONALE

As the *Education Act* sets out, the NWT education system recognizes the relationship between languages, culture and learning and that school programs must be based on the cultures of the NWT. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is committed to working with education bodies to provide Indigenous language instruction and culture-based school programs to JK-12 students.

In 2004, the Department of ECE released the *Aboriginal Language and Culture-Based Education (ALCBE) Departmental Directive* (Directive). The Directive provided direction for the funding allocation for Kindergarten to grade 12 Indigenous language and cultural programming, ensured that schools supported and reflected the culture of the community and described the roles and responsibilities related to culture-based education programs. Moving from a directive to a policy is a more effective and efficient way to support education bodies in providing Indigenous languages and education.

This Policy highlights the Department of ECE's ongoing commitment to reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples of the NWT by ensuring Indigenous language instruction and culture-based school programs are supported and resourced, and reflect the Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages of the community in which the school is located.

Indigenizing education in the NWT should centre Indigenous knowledge, models, methods and content grounded in the Minister-approved foundational curricula of *Dene Kede* and/or *Inuuqatigiit* within the regular education system. Furthermore, Indigenizing education connects with 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning approaches and competency models, as developed in the *NWT Education Renewal and Innovation Framework and Action Plan: Directions for Change*.



## DEFINITIONS

**Culture:** The living expression of ideas, behavioural norms, worldviews, and traditional knowledge of a group of individuals who have a historical, geographic, religious, spiritual, racial, linguistic, ethnic or social context, and who transmit, reinforce and modify those from one generation to another. Culture includes heritage; things we inherit from the past and bring forward to the future.

**Key Cultural Experiences:** Authentic and relevant activities and learning experiences that reflect, validate and promote the worldviews, cultures and languages of the Indigenous peoples of the NWT. The significance of each activity is strengthened by accompanying storytelling and traditional teachings, being on-the-land and active use of Indigenous languages.

**Dene Kede:** An NWT foundational curriculum that encompasses the Dene languages, cultures and worldviews of five Dene Nations: Gwich'in, Sahtú, Dehcho, Tłı̨chǫ and Akaitcho.

**Education Body:** A District Education Authority (DEA), a Divisional Education Council (DEC), commission scolaire francophone (CSF), Tłı̨chǫ Community Services Agency (TCSA) or all of them as the case may be.

**Education Program:** A program of education from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 based on the curricula established or approved by the Minister.

**Elders:** Elders are individuals identified and recognized by the community as leaders, traditional knowledge holders and/or language speakers, who have strong traditional and cultural skills.

**Indigenizing Education:** A pedagogical shift that centres Indigenous content and cultures, within which every subject at every level is examined to consider how and to what extent current content and pedagogy reflect Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledge. This is strengthened through teaching and learning practices that are holistic, spiral, experiential and relational.

**Indigenous Languages:** The NWT *Official Languages Act* gives legal recognition and protection to nine Indigenous languages: Chipewyan, Cree, Gwich'in, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey, South Slavey and Tłı̨chǫ.

**Inuuqatigiit:** A NWT foundational curriculum that encompasses the worldviews of the Inuit grounded in the belief of the Elders that education must be community-based.

**Learning Environment:** The diverse physical locations, contexts and cultures in which students learn, including schools, classrooms and on-the-land. This also includes the worldviews, cultures and languages reflected within the school climate, classrooms and school-community relationship.

**Reconciliation:** The ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership.

**Worldview:** A worldview is a way of perceiving and conceptualizing everything in existence through a set of beliefs, values and ways of knowing, considering how people interact with the world around them, including land, animals and others. The worldviews of Indigenous peoples are distinct and expressed in different ways, with different practices, stories and traditions.



## PROVISIONS

Effective use of Indigenous languages and education funding requires collaboration between education bodies and communities to develop and deliver effective programs. The conditions of authorized expenditures will be detailed in an *Indigenous Languages and Education Procedures Manual*. Funding under this Policy must be spent exclusively on Indigenous language and education programs, and should broadly support the following defined principles:

1. Schools must actively implement *Dene Kede* and/or *Inuuqatigiit* to bring forward, in all instruction, the Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages of the community in which the school is located by:
  - a. Allocating resources to support JK-12 educators in actively implementing *Dene Kede* and/or *Inuuqatigiit*.
2. Schools should welcome all students within learning environments that centre, respect and promote the Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages of the community in which the school is located, through building the school-community relationship, offering educator training and employing a whole school approach to Indigenous language use by:
  - a. Allocating resources to help build the school-community relationship, including mandatory Elders in Schools programming;
  - b. Allocating resources for educator training to ensure all school staff are aware of the Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages of the community in which they live and work, including two days of mandatory cultural orientation; and,
  - c. Allocating resources to employ a whole school approach to Indigenous language use.
3. Schools should work toward Indigenizing teaching and learning practices, Indigenizing the content of curricula and programming and providing opportunities for all JK-12 students to engage in authentic and relevant key cultural experiences throughout the school year by:
  - a. Allocating resources to support educators to ensure their teaching and learning practices are holistic, spiral, experiential and relational;
  - b. Allocating resources to support educators in Indigenizing the content of curricula and programming to ensure it reflects the Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages of the community in which the school is located; and,
  - c. Allocating resources for authentic and relevant key cultural experiences, including on-the-land cultural camps, throughout the school year.
4. Schools that provide Indigenous language instruction must offer dedicated time for Indigenous language instruction within the regular education program and actively implement the *Our Languages* curriculum by:
  - a. Allocating resources to support core Indigenous language instruction;
  - b. Allocating resources to develop resources for the *Our Languages* curriculum;
  - c. Allocating resources to support community connections related to Indigenous language instruction; and,
  - d. Allocating resources to support Indigenous language instruction through an immersion approach, where and when possible.



## **AUTHORITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Under section 128(1) of the *Education Act* the Minister may, by means of a contribution, provide funding required for the delivery of the education program.

Funding provided to education bodies for Indigenous languages and education must be used for the sole purpose of supporting students and teachers in accordance with this *NWT JK-12 Indigenous Languages and Education Policy*. Education bodies must maintain appropriate and detailed financial and activity records on how and for what purpose funding has been spent.

Education bodies will be required to include details regarding Indigenous languages and education programming within their annual Operating Plan and Annual Report for each of their schools and communities using established indicators and timelines.

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

1. *Indigenous Languages and Education Procedures Manual*
2. *Indigenous Languages and Education Handbook*
3. *School Funding Framework*
4. *Education Accountability Framework*