

# ***ORGANIZATIONAL EVALUATION***

## **Final Report**



**Prepared for:**  
**Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon**  
*“The right to learn, the power to achieve”*



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In summer 2011, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon (LDAY) contracted an evaluation company, Proactive Information Services Inc., to undertake an organizational evaluation of LDAY and, subsequently, to develop a tool kit for ongoing evaluation. This summary highlights the results of the evaluation which included:

- Review of internal LDAY documents,
- LDAY staff interviews,
- Key informant interviews to include early childhood, First Nations, rural, school and Yukon College perspectives,
- Web-survey of LDAY clients, former clients, Board Members, volunteers, tutors, partners and funders,
- Focus group with parents of LDAY children/youth clients,
- Focus group with adult clients,
- Interviews with youth and children who are LDAY clients.

## Outcomes of LDAY programs and services reflect key areas of activity.

### Advocacy and Services for Children & Youth

- Parents accessed LDAY supports and resources and reported satisfaction with access.
- Parents reported that they gained information they could use to help their child.
- Parents expressed satisfaction with LDAY

***I don't think I would have made it if I didn't have the support, I really don't. It was huge. And really ongoing. Whenever you need them, they're here,*** (parent).

- and particularly appreciated the personal and emotional support they received.
- Children reported accessing assessments, tutors and camps. They expressed satisfaction with tutoring, but had some suggestions how to improve camps.

### Advocacy and Services for Adults

- Adult clients agreed that they received information to help them access supports and that they were able to access appropriate supports and resources.
- Adult clients reported they received information they were able to use to help themselves.
- Adult clients reported satisfaction with LDAY programs and services.

### Awareness Raising and Education

- Parents agreed that their child's self-confidence, as well as academic, social and literacy skills have improved.
- Children and youth most often reported they improved in reading skills, but also identified spelling, mathematics, handwriting, and "remembering stuff."
- Adults reported an increase in their understanding of their disability and their coping skills.
- Adults also reported their academic, social and literacy skills have improved.

***I used to be able to only read small books, but my goal was to read a chapter book and I can do that now*** (youth).

### Outreach

- Some adult clients felt more supported at work because of LDAY's services.
- Collaboration was reported with particular schools, but there are areas where reach could be extended (e.g., rural communities, high schools).
- Some funders and community members believed there are opportunities to increase collaboration with other agencies, including joint delivery of services and learning opportunities.

- LDAY tutors believed they are competent or expert in the skills they have to support learners.

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**Other highlights from the evaluation include:**

- As of February 2012, LDAY had increased their client load over the previous year, with 100 children/youth active clients (excluding camp enrolment) and 40 active adult clients.
- Populations who appear under-represented and would benefit from LDAY supports and services were identified as First Nations communities, rural residents, pre-school children and their families, high school students, and 'struggling families' who do not know how to navigate systems or access available supports.
- LDAY has the respect of its core funders and, while funders are generally pleased with LDAY's reporting, they have expectations that future reporting will be more focused on client outcomes.
- LDAY programs and services generally reflect what is seen as effective practice in the research literature.
- A broader view of literacy with a wider range of strategies to help learners was proposed as was greater availability of assistive technologies.

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**Next Steps**

1. Review and discussion of the evaluation report by the LDAY Board. It is suggested the Board consider the following steps and propose any changes or additional actions they believe are in the best interests of LDAY.
2. Train staff in the use of the evaluation tool kit and begin implementation in July 2012. Among other methods, the tool kit will include a means of gathering feedback from employers as they were not included in this evaluation process.
3. Meet with core funders to inform them of the results of the evaluation and explain the data

that LDAY will generate through ongoing evaluation.

4. Through the Strategic Planning process, clarify the mandate and scope of LDAY's work, considering what LDAY does particularly well and where LDAY might benefit from increased collaboration with partners.
5. Expand the model of literacy support beyond the current focus on Wilson Reading (de-coding) by training tutors in a variety of literacy practices and ensuring the Resource Library has complementary resources.
6. Select a rural community that includes a First Nations presence where LDAY could develop and pilot an initiative for extending their reach.
7. Review the model, scope and objectives for LDAY camps, using input from youth clients as well as staff.
8. Focus acquisitions for the Resource Library on assistive technologies.

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***"LDAY is a vital part of the Yukon community. It provides an invaluable service to society by helping unlock the talents and contributions of people who think outside the conventional cognitive box,"***

(survey respondent).



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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## A. Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon

The Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon (LDAY) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children, youth and adults with learning disabilities. “LDAY works to provide leadership in learning disabilities advocacy, education, programs and services to advance the full participation of children, youth and adults with learning disabilities in today’s society.”<sup>1</sup>

LDAY offers a range of programs and services. The first step to accessing most services is to attend an intake meeting. LDAY staff meet with people to discuss concerns and see if LDAY services and supports are appropriate. These include:

- **Academic Tutoring** – Tutoring is available for adults, youth and children. One-on-one tutoring matches the needs of the learner to the skills and qualifications of a qualified tutor.
- **Assessments** – LDAY can make referrals to qualified, independent psychologists who can conduct psychological educational assessments to determine if a learning disability is present. If so, they offer recommendations strategies and accommodations.
- **Assistive Technology** – LDAY provides information about equipment or specific programs that help with the learning process or work situations.
- **Camp Raven** – LDAY hosts day camps in the summer and at March break for children ages seven to 14 with learning disabilities. Each camp is led by skilled counsellors who work with campers to create a fun, safe and non-threatening environment.
- **Parent Support** – LDAY can support parents to work together with their child’s school and/or other agencies by providing suggestions or accompanying parents to meetings. LDAY promotes a collaborative, partnership-based approach to advocacy.
- **Resource Library** – The Laura Briggs Library houses many resources related to learning disabilities including books, books on tape, DVDs and learning tools.

<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.ldayukon.com>



- **Walking Group** – Once a week, Walking Group is a way for adults with ADD/ADHD to share struggles and successes while being active.
- **Workshops** – LDAY staff conduct workshops about learning disabilities to specific groups, businesses, organizations and the general public. From time to time, LDAY also brings in expert guest speakers on topics related to learning disabilities, health and education.
- **Youth Leadership Adventure Club (YLAC)** – YLAC provides opportunities for youth with LDs to build new skill sets and increase self-confidence. The camp is an outdoor experiential education trip for youth ages 14 to 18.

## B. Evaluation of LDAY

LDAY wanted to conduct an evaluation that will generate knowledge, support improvement in client services, and provide a basis for continual evaluation of program effectiveness. With a new Executive Director and a new strategic planning cycle in the offing, this work was timely for the organization. Ultimately, improving programs and services for people with learning disabilities to support them in reaching their full potential is at the heart of the enterprise. After a call for proposals, LDAY contracted with contracted with Proactive Information Services Inc., a Western Canadian-based social research and evaluation company to work with them to develop and to conduct the evaluation.<sup>2</sup>

The following **evaluation questions** were developed to provide the focus for the evaluation.

### 1. Clients

- a. What are the characteristics of LDAY's current clients?
- b. Are there other priority populations who would benefit from LDAY services? Who are they? Are there barriers to their accessing LDAY services? How could these other populations be reached?

### 2. Partners

- a. What types of relationships exist between LDAY and its partners?
- b. What are opportunities for future collaboration, synergies, enhanced reporting and/or more effective resource utilization?

<sup>2</sup> Proactive Information Services Inc. was established in 1984 specifically to provide research and evaluation services to clients in the public and non-profit sectors. Proactive's clients include ministries of education, school districts, foundations, community agencies, and other NGOs in Canada and internationally. For more information on Proactive, visit [www.proactive.mb.ca](http://www.proactive.mb.ca).







### 3. Programs

- a. How do LDAY's programs and services reflect effective and promising practices for people with learning disabilities?
- b. What are the outputs of current programs and services for children, youth and adults?

### 4. Results

- a. To what extent is LDAY achieving the outcomes as articulated in the program logic model?<sup>3</sup>
- b. How efficient is LDAY in its use of resources? (cost per client by program/service)
- c. What, if any, are the other unanticipated results of LDAY programs and services?

### 5. Future Focus

- a. What are the challenges for LDAY?
- b. What are opportunities for enhanced and/or more efficient LDAY services?
- c. What are possible directions for future LDAY programming? (related to Questions 1b and 2b)
- d. What should be the processes and tools for ongoing organizational evaluation?

A logic model was created during the first stage of the evaluation process. In addition to the LDAY strategic plan and constitution, the evaluator reviewed all the contracts LDAY has with its funders to search for goals/objectives/outcomes that could be reflected in the logic model. The logic model included in this document also reflects input from the former Executive Director and the current Executive Director. Finally, it was reviewed by the Evaluation Advisory Committee and revisions made based on their feedback.

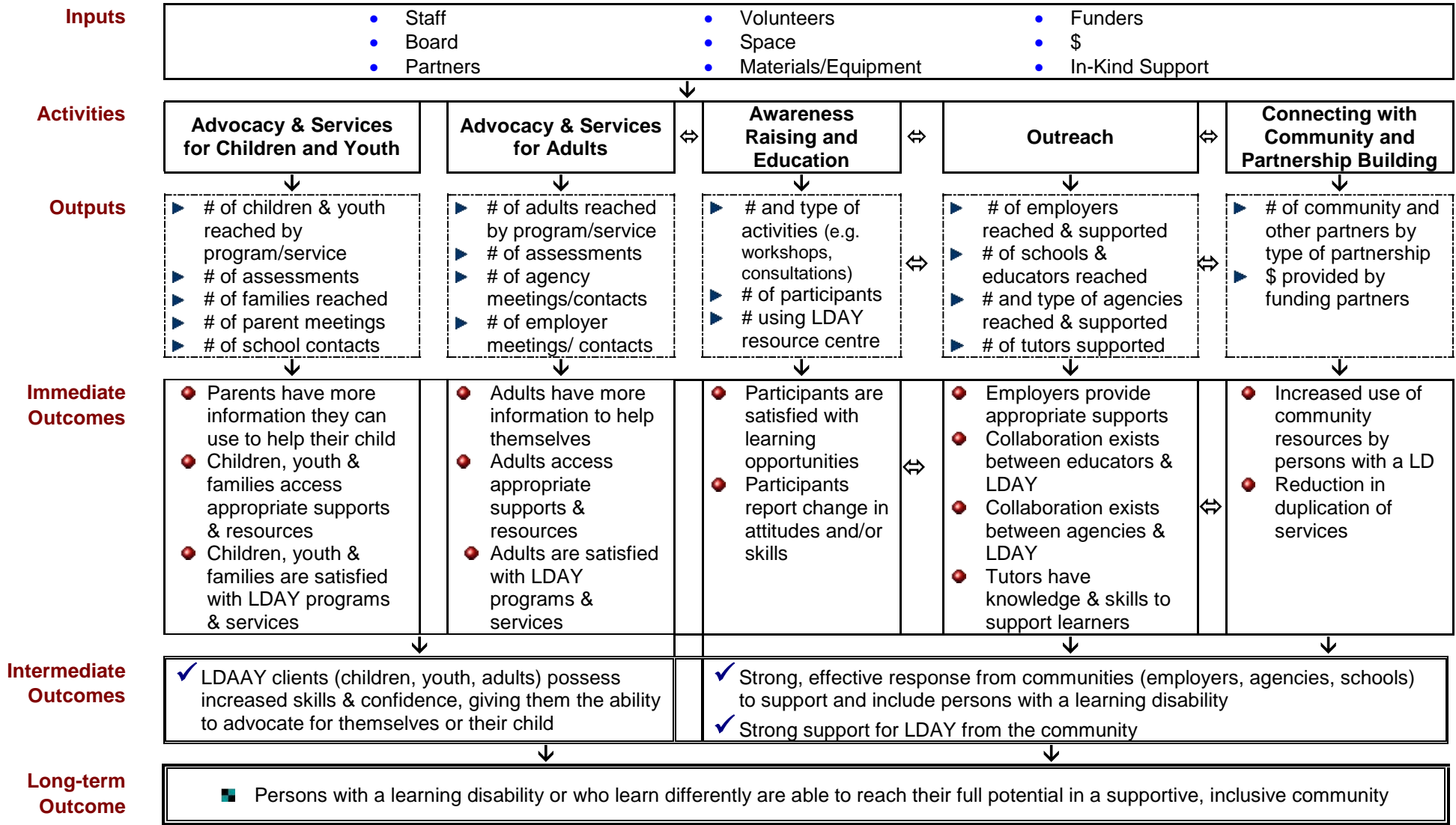
The evaluation itself was multi-faceted and included input from clients (both adult and youth), former clients, partners, funders, other key informants and stakeholders, as well as current and former LDAY staff. A detailed discussion of the methodology is found in Chapter 3.

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<sup>3</sup> The question as to what extent LDAY is "addressing the objectives as stated in existing contracts, core funders' relevant strategic objectives, LDAY's constitution and LDAY's strategic plan" has been subsumed under the question of outcomes from the logic model as these objectives were used to develop the outcomes present in the logic model.



**LDAY Logic Model – “The right to learn, the power to achieve.”**





## CHAPTER 2: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### A. IN SUMMARY

The summary represents a synthesis of the results obtained through the various data collection methods that incorporated the voices of LDAY staff, funders, key community informants, youth clients, parents, adult clients, as well as – through the web-survey - parents of former clients, LDAY Board members, tutors and other LDAY partners. Conclusions follow the summary in each sub-section.

#### 1. Clients

##### a. Characteristics of LDAY clients

- Most LDAY clients are located in the Whitehorse area.
- There is a general consensus, including those at LDAY, that most clients are of middle to upper socio-economic status.
- Most youth clients are in the K-12 system, often at the elementary level and into the lower secondary grades.
- Overall, clients do not appear to be representative of the Yukon population, given the concentration of clients in Whitehorse and their socio-economic status.

##### b. Other Priority Populations

- Other populations who may be under-represented and would benefit from LDAY supports and services were identified as First Nations communities, rural residents (overlapping in many cases with First Nations communities), pre-school children and their families, high school students, and 'struggling families'<sup>4</sup> regardless of their geographic or cultural characteristics.
- A variety of barriers exist, most frequently identified as lack of awareness of LDAY and distance.

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<sup>4</sup> 'Struggling families' were often described as those of lower SES who did not know how to navigate systems or access available supports.



- The February 2012 activity summary reports that LDAY made a presentation to the Council of Yukon First Nations, Education Liaisons which may be the connection point that respondents suggested was needed. Patience and being physically present were also suggested as strategies.
- For rural communities, the need to be physically present in the communities was suggested, perhaps using the College campuses as an entry point.

**It can be concluded:** LDAY is funded to deliver services to Yukon residents and there are families and communities that could benefit from LDAY supports and services who currently do not. However, the barriers to their accessing LDAY are not insignificant.

## 2. Partners

### a. Relationships Between LDAY and its Partners

- LDAY is respected by its core funders.
- LDAY has partnerships with other agencies/organizations which often involve mutual client meetings. The largest number of meetings in 2010/11 was with Yukon Council on disABILITY (YCOD).
- Partners responding to the web-survey perceived LDAY to be successful in its work.

### b. Future Collaboration, Synergies, Reporting and/or more Effective Resource Utilization

- Funders and some key informants suggested that there were opportunities for greater collaboration between LDAY and other community agencies/organizations/systems in terms of delivery of service, offering events to community, and participating in joint professional development opportunities.
- Given the expected tightening of government budgets, it was suggested that LDAY may wish to explore sharing physical space and administrative costs with another agency(ies) with complementary mandates. The issue of mandate and interface between YCOD and LDAY was also raised in discussion at the Evaluation Advisory Committee.



**It can be concluded:** while LDAY has partnerships and connections with other community agencies/organizations, fiscal realities and the benefits of more integrated services to clients suggest that increased opportunities for collaboration should be explored.

- While funders were generally pleased with reporting by LDAY, they had expectations that future reporting would be more focused on client outcomes.

**It can also be concluded:** while LDAY is responsible in its reporting to funders, there are expectations regarding an increased focus on client outcomes.

### 3. Programs

#### a. LDAY Programs and Services Compared to Effective and Promising Practices

- LDAY supports clients in obtaining an assessment and subsequent diagnosis. The literature – as well as feedback from LDAY adult clients – points to the need for persons with learning disabilities to have their challenge(s) identified so they can move to the stages of understanding, compartmentalization and, ultimately, transformation.
- The purpose of LDAY camps corresponds to what the literature suggests is good practice by giving children and youth with learning disabilities outdoor and community experiences and, thus, supporting social competence. However, interviews with youth suggest the model for the camps warrants review in order to keep the camp experience engaging for repeat campers.
- LDAY has had a focus on Wilson Reading which effectively supports learners with a particular issue (de-coding). While this has produced results for certain learners, the literature (and the discussion at the parent focus group) suggests a wider array of strategies and a broader view of literacy.
- The use of technology – and particularly assistive technologies - as a tool for literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is well documented in the literature. Having a wide range of such technologies available for client use warrants consideration by LDAY.

**It can be concluded:** while LDAY programs and services, to a large degree, reflect what is viewed as effective practice, there are



opportunities to enhance existing services through considering an updated camp curriculum based on youth feedback, expanding literacy strategies and having current assistive technologies readily available through the resource library.

**b. Outputs of LDAY Programs and Services**

- LDAY’s current collection of output data (as presented in the monthly activity reports) documents virtually all the outputs in the logic model. (See Chapter 2:B.) However, a few areas require tracking; number of families reached, number of people using the LDAY resource centre, number of educators reached, as well as a breakdown of types of partnerships.

**It can be concluded:** overall, LDAY programs and services are generating the desired outputs. Documenting future outputs will be addressed in the tool kit for ongoing evaluation.

**4. Results**

**a. Achievement of Outcomes**

The following table provides an overview of the outcomes and corresponding results or status of data collection.

<b>Table 1: LDAY Outcomes as Identified in the Logic Model</b>			
<b>Activity Areas</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Results and/or Status</b>
Advocacy and Services for Children and Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents have more information they can use to help their child</li> </ul>	Parent Focus Group  Web-survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents report they gained information to help their child.</li> <li>• All parent respondents agree they obtained information to help their child.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children, youth and families access appropriate supports and resources</li> </ul>	Output Data  Parent Focus Group  Children & Youth Interviews  Web-survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output data document use of programs and services.</li> <li>• Parents report accessing appropriate supports and resources at LDAY.</li> <li>• Children and youth report accessing assessments, tutors and camps.</li> <li>• Parents report satisfaction with how to access supports</li> </ul>



Activity Areas	Outcomes	Methods	Results and/or Status
Advocacy and Services for Children and Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children, youth and families are satisfied with LDAY programs and services</li> </ul>	Parent Focus Group  Children & Youth Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents express satisfaction and also identify areas for enhancement.</li> <li>While children and youth express satisfaction with tutoring, they have some suggestions about how to improve the camp experience and keep it engaging for repeat and older campers.</li> </ul>
Advocacy and Services for Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults have more information to help themselves</li> </ul>	Adult Focus Group  Web-survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult clients report they received information that they were able to use to help themselves.</li> <li>Adult clients agree they received information to help them access supports.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults access appropriate supports and resources</li> </ul>	Output Data  Adult Focus Group  Web-survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Output data document use of programs and services.</li> <li>Adults report accessing appropriate supports and resources.</li> <li>Adults report satisfaction with how to access supports.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults are satisfied with LDAY programs and services</li> </ul>	Adult Focus Group  Web-survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults express satisfaction with LDAY programs and services.</li> </ul>
Awareness Raising and Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants are satisfied with learning opportunities</li> </ul>	Output Data	<i>No data currently available - will be addressed in tool kit</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants report change in attitudes and/or skills</li> </ul>	Output Data Parent Focus Group  Children & Youth Interviews  Adult Focus Group  Web-survey	<i>Will be addressed in tool kit</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents report changes in their child's skills.</li> <li>Children report changes in their skills, particularly in reading.</li> <li>Adults report change in their understanding of their disability and their coping skills.</li> <li>Parents agree that their child's self-confidence, as well as academic, social and literacy skills have improved</li> <li>Adults report that their academic, social and literacy skills have improved.</li> </ul>





Activity Areas	Outcomes	Methods	Results and/or Status
Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers provide appropriate supports</li> </ul>	Web-survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some adult clients felt more supported at work. <i>Employers will be part of the tool kit.</i></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration exists between educators and LDAY</li> </ul>	Output Data  Funder, Key Informant and Staff Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While the data shows connection with a variety of schools, this does not necessarily mean 'collaboration.'</li> <li>Respondents report instances of collaboration (with particular schools), but recognize that there are areas for extended reach (e.g. rural communities, high school)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration exists between agencies and LDAY</li> </ul>	Output Data  Funder and Key Informant Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Output data document connections between LDAY and other agencies.</li> <li>Respondents believe there are opportunities to increase collaboration, as well as joint delivery of services and learning opportunities.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tutors have knowledge and skills to support learners</li> </ul>	Web-survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tutors believe they are competent or expert in their knowledge and skills to support learners.</li> </ul>
Connecting with Community and Partnership Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased use of community resources by persons with LD</li> </ul>	To be determined for future evaluation	<i>While identified as 'immediate outcomes' these require data collection over time. These 'immediate outcomes' will be re-considered in the development of the evaluation tool kit.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in duplication of services</li> </ul>		

**It can be concluded:** overall, LDAY programs and services are generating the desired outputs. Documenting future outputs will be addressed in the tool kit for ongoing evaluation.

**It can also be concluded:** there are a number of outcome areas that need to be more fully addressed. Processes and tools will be included in the evaluation tool kit.

**b. Use of Resources (cost per client by program/service)**

- Adult LD/ADHD employability cost per client was \$1,312.
- On average, tutor costs were \$139 per student per month.



- Camp costs for children/youth were \$1,251 for summer camp, \$859 for winter camp, and \$2,690 for the Youth Leadership Adventure Camp. However, it should be noted that the summer camp is two weeks in length, while the winter camp is one week.

The per program client costs (see Chapter 4:B3) provide a baseline for future comparisons.

**c. Other Unanticipated Results**

- The results that emerged were those intended and articulated in the logic model.

**5. Future Focus**

**a. Challenges for LDAY**

- Challenges for LDAY include; establishing a focus/priorities for their work as numerous suggestions have been made for service enhancements, exploring possibilities for increased collaboration and synergies with other agencies/service providers, as well as furthering collaboration with the education system (e.g. engagement of more schools/school principals), and extending LDAY's reach into under-represented communities which may be the greatest challenge.
- The related challenge is maintaining quality of service, which is so much appreciated by clients, as LDAY considers new initiatives.

**b. Opportunities for Enhanced and/or More Efficient LDAY Services**

- Key informants, partners and funders appear open to increased collaboration and joint initiatives, including learning opportunities.
- Possibilities may exist for moving into a common office location with another/other NGOs.

**c. Possible Directions for Future LDAY Programming**

- LDAY's core services are valued by clients, both youth and adults; therefore, maintaining quality of service is key.
- Future directions for programming need to be realistic and should be outlined through a new strategic plan, after the 'next steps' are taken.



#### **d. Processes and Tools for Ongoing Organizational Evaluation**

- A tool kit including processes/protocols and instruments for ongoing internal organizational evaluation will be developed. Staff will be trained in their use.

## **B. NEXT STEPS**

Upon finalization of the evaluation report, the following steps are recommended:

1. Review and discussion of the evaluation report by the LDAY Board. It is suggested that the Board consider the following steps and propose and changes or additional actions they believe are in the best interests of LDAY.
2. Train staff in the use of the evaluation tool kit and begin implementation in July 2012. Among other methods, the tool kit will include a means of gathering feedback from employers as they were not included in this evaluation process.
3. Meet with core funders to inform them of the results of the evaluation and explain the data that LDAY will generate through ongoing evaluation.
4. Through the Strategic Planning process, clarify the mandate and scope of LDAY's work, considering what LDAY does particularly well and where LDAY might benefit from increased collaboration with partners.
5. Expand the model of literacy support beyond the current focus on Wilson Reading (de-coding) by training tutors in a variety of literacy practices and ensuring the Resource Library has complementary resources.
6. Select a rural community that includes a First Nations presence where LDAY could develop and pilot an initiative for extending their reach.
7. Review the model, scope and objectives for LDAY camps, using input from youth clients as well as staff.
8. Focus acquisitions for the Resource Library on assistive technologies.



## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### A. EVALUATION STAGES

The evaluation was divided into four stages; development, data collection, analysis and reporting, and tools and processes for ongoing evaluation.

#### 1. Stage 1: Development

A detailed evaluation plan was created that included the evaluation questions, logic model, methodology, evaluation framework, and proposed workplan. This document was reviewed by the Evaluation Advisory Committee and was revised based on their feedback.

The evaluation work began with the refinement of the evaluation questions, based on the advice of the Evaluation Advisory Committee at its first and second meetings and in consultation with the current Executive Director and former Executive Director. As previously mentioned, a logic model was also developed during the first stage of the evaluation process.

#### 2. Stage 2: Instrument Design and Data Collection

This stage represented the bulk of the evaluation work. The stage began with a brief scan of the research literature. This final report includes a brief evidence synthesis<sup>5</sup> that focuses on what is known about effective and promising practices for persons with learning disabilities.

The evaluation itself incorporated mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative). Interviews were semi-structured, allowing the respondents to elaborate on their responses and to raise unanticipated issues. Similarly, the focus groups utilized moderators' guides with approximately six to eight key discussion questions. A web-based survey was also developed and a link embedded on LDAY's web-site home page and Facebook page.

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<sup>5</sup> The evidence synthesis was not envisioned at the time of the original proposal and should not be considered extensive; rather it looks at some of the recent literature on effective and promising practices to support persons with a learning disability, with a particular focus on children and youth.



At the same time as instrument development, criteria and protocols for selection of those to be interviewed were developed. Members of the Evaluation Advisory Committee provided suggestions as to potential key informants.

### **3. Stage 3: Analysis and Reporting**

This stage focused on analysis and reporting. For the digitally recorded focus groups, the discussion was transcribed verbatim. Content analysis revealed prevalent themes. Interview responses were put into a matrix corresponding to key questions. Qualitative analysis revealed cross-cutting themes.

Data support staff undertook the process of coding the open-ended survey responses, cleaning the data files created through the web-survey, and conducting the statistical analysis under the direction of the project director. Analysis of quantitative (survey) data was undertaken using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

This final report includes a description of the purpose and methodology, a summary of key results and directions for the future, and a discussion of the results of all evaluation activities. The report is structured so the first two chapters can be excerpted as a shorter version of the full report. The document also includes a brief executive summary. The appendices present the data collection tools used for the interviews and focus groups, as well as the detailed tables presenting the survey analysis.

### **4. Stage 4: Ongoing Evaluation**

Once the final report is completed, the evaluation consultant will develop, in consultation with LDAY, a set of processes, protocols and instruments that LDAY can use for ongoing internal evaluation. These materials will be compiled into a tool kit that will be burned to a CD. As well, LDAY will establish a physical location in which to house the printed materials. If desired, the evaluator will facilitate a session with LDAY staff on the use of the tool kit.

## **B. Evaluation Framework**

Table 2 summarizes the evaluation questions in relation to corresponding performance indicators, information sources, and tools/methods. Some



methods will be used to address multiple questions.

<b>Table 2: Summary of Questions, Performance Indicators, Information Sources, &amp; Tools/Methods</b>			
<b>Questions</b>	<b>Performance Indicators (where applicable)</b>	<b>Information Sources</b>	<b>Tools/Methods</b>
<b>1. Clients</b>			
a. What are the characteristics of LDAY's current clients?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ LDAY reaches a diverse clientele</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Current LDAY clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Survey</li> </ul>
b. Are there other priority populations who would benefit from LDAY services? Who are they?	<i>not applicable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Core Funders</li> <li>✱ Key Informants</li> <li>✱ Other Funders &amp; Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Interviews</li> <li>✱ Interviews</li> <li>✱ Survey</li> </ul>
Are there barriers to their accessing LDAY services? How could they be reached?	<i>not applicable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Core Funders</li> <li>✱ Key Informants</li> <li>✱ Other Funders &amp; Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Interviews</li> <li>✱ Interviews</li> <li>✱ Survey</li> </ul>
<b>2. Partners</b>			
a. What types of relationships exist between LDAY and its partners?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Variety of relationships exist</li> <li>✱ Partners see value in their relationship with LDAY</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Other Funders &amp; Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Survey</li> </ul>
b. What are the opportunities for future collaboration, synergies, enhanced reporting, and/or more effective resource utilization?	<i>not applicable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Core Funders</li> <li>✱ Key Informants</li> <li>✱ Other Funders &amp; Partners</li> <li>✱ Internal LDAY information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Interviews</li> <li>✱ Interviews</li> <li>✱ Survey</li> <li>✱ Secondary analysis</li> </ul>
<b>3. Programs</b>			
a. How do LDAY's programs and services reflect effective and promising practices for people with learning disabilities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ LDAY's programs and services reflect effective and promising practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Evidence synthesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Comparison of evidence synthesis to LDAY practice</li> </ul>
b. What are the outputs of current programs and services for children, youth and adults?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ LDAY programs and services perform as intended</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Internal statistics and documentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Secondary analysis</li> </ul>
<b>4. Results</b>			
a. To what extent is LDAY achieving the outcomes as articulated in the program logic model?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ LDAY achieves articulated outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Clients, Board, volunteers, partners, funders</li> <li>✱ Parents/Families</li> <li>✱ Youth</li> <li>✱ Younger Children</li> <li>✱ Adult Clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✱ Survey</li> <li>✱ Focus Group</li> <li>✱ Interviews</li> <li>✱ Interviews</li> <li>✱ Focus Group</li> </ul>



**Table 2:  
Summary of Questions, Performance Indicators, Information Sources, & Tools/Methods**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Performance Indicators (where applicable)</b>	<b>Information Sources</b>	<b>Tools/Methods</b>
b. To what extent is LDAY achieving the objectives as stated in existing contracts, core funders' relevant strategic objectives, LDAY's constitution and LDAY's strategic plan?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LDAY achieves objectives as reflected in logic model (above)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clients, Board, volunteers, partners, funders</li> <li>Parents/Families</li> <li>Youth</li> <li>Younger Children</li> <li>Adult Clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey</li> <li>Focus Group</li> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Focus Group</li> </ul>
c. How efficient is LDAY in its use of resources?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LDAY achieves reasonable cost per client in relation to program/service provided</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LDAY budget/financial information and statistics on client participation by program/service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of cost per client</li> </ul>
d. What, if any, are the other unanticipated results of LDAY programs and services?	<i>not applicable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clients, Board, volunteers, partners, funders</li> <li>Parents/Families</li> <li>Youth</li> <li>Younger Children</li> <li>Adult Clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey</li> <li>Focus Group</li> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Focus Group</li> </ul>
<b>5. Future Focus</b>			
a. What are the challenges for LDAY?	<i>not applicable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LDAY Staff</li> <li>Core Funders</li> <li>Key Informants</li> <li>Clients, Board, volunteers, partners, funders</li> <li>Parents/Families</li> <li>Youth</li> <li>Younger Children</li> <li>Adult Clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Survey</li> </ul>
b. What are the opportunities for enhanced and/or more efficient LDAY services?	<i>not applicable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clients, Board, volunteers, partners, funders</li> <li>Parents/Families</li> <li>Youth</li> <li>Younger Children</li> <li>Adult Clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus Group</li> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Focus Group</li> </ul>
c. What are the possible directions for future LDAY programming?	<i>not applicable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis across data sets</li> <li>Consultation with LDAY staff and Advisory Committee</li> </ul>	
d. What should be the processes and tools for ongoing organizational evaluation?	<i>Will represent a tool kit for use by LDAY staff.</i>		

### C. SOURCES, METHODS AND RESPONSE

The Table 3 provides an overview of the specific sources, accompanying methods and response rates. All interviews and focus groups were





conducted by the evaluation project director from Proactive Information Services Inc.

<b>Table 3: Information Sources, Methods, and Response Rates</b>			
<b>Source</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Response</b>	
		<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Internal Documents	Review of Strategic Plan, Constitution, Funder Agreements, Activity Statistics	<i>(not applicable)</i>	
LDAY Executive Director & Staff	Interviews	6/6	100%
Core Funders	Interviews	3/3	100%
Key Informants: Principal, College (2), Early Childhood, Rural, and First Nations*	Interviews	5/5	100%
LDAY Clients, Former Clients, Board Members, Volunteers, Tutors, Partners, and Funders	Web-Survey	42 respondents**	
LDAY Clients and Families	Focus Group with Parents/Caregivers	10 parents, representing 8 families	
	Youth Interviews	5 secondary school age youth	
	Interviews with Younger Children	3 elementary school age children	
	Focus Group with Adult Clients	3 adult clients	
* Two representatives of Yukon College were interviewed together.			
** A breakdown web-survey respondents by group is found in the section of the report discussing survey results.			

While the staff interviews were conducted in August 2011, the remainder of the data collection occurred between November 22, 2011 and April 2, 2012.

## **D. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS**

The methodology was developed with the goal of trying to include as many relevant perspectives as possible within the time and resource parameters for the evaluation. As with any methodology, a number of challenges and limitations were present.





The web-survey was originally intended to be 'live' for approximately a one month period. However, as responses were few, the survey was kept available to respondents for an additional month. This increased response from 26 to 42 respondents. Numerous attempts were made by LDAY to advertise the existence of the survey. The evaluator also emailed suggestions and a reminder to Evaluation Advisory Committee members to publicize the survey. Given the survey was open to all potential constituents; there is no way to calculate a response rate. Findings must be viewed as responses from interested parties and may not represent the views of the overall population with connections to LDAY.

While 12 people (plus alternates) were invited to the adult client focus group, three attended. It is not known if others were too busy, had scheduling conflicts or did not feel comfortable participating. In hindsight, it might have been preferable, in order to increase the comfort level and ensure anonymity, to have conducted individual in-person interviews with adult clients as was done with youth clients. It is possible that the interconnectedness of the Whitehorse community might make clients hesitant about sharing their experiences in a group with other adults from the community.

One missing perspective is that of employers. They were not identified through the key informant identification process and, thus, were not included in this evaluation. However, they are a stakeholder group that can be included in the evaluation tool kit.

The monthly activity summaries, while they list the workshops and learning opportunities delivered, no formal data collection was done to document participant learning or satisfaction. Again, this is an issue that will be addressed in the evaluation tool kit.

Cost per client is an approximation, based on the LDAY 2010/2011 Activity Summary, LDAY Annual Report 2010/2011 and the dollars specified in the funding contracts and agreements. The allocation of overhead costs was not broken out and only costs for some specific programs can be calculated.



## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results and discussion of findings will be presented by method. The previous chapter integrates the results of the various methods within the answers to the evaluation questions.

### A. EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS

While it was not possible within the scope of this evaluation to conduct an extensive literature review, a brief evidence synthesis is provided. Given the fact that much of the research literature focuses on children and youth with learning disabilities, the evidence synthesis is weighted towards this population. However, much of the research on youth with learning disabilities can be reasonably generalized to adult learners.

Academic self-concept is highly correlated to self-efficacy; self-efficacy referring to whether or not a learner thinks s/he can do the task (Bandura, 1997; Marsh & O'Mara, 2008). Almost universally, learners with learning disabilities report lower levels of academic self-efficacy than their peers (Klassen, 2002). Research also suggests that “students with a more positive perception about their exceptionality had a more positive view of their academic abilities, and also higher achievement than those students who had a more negative view of their exceptionality” (Loreman et al, 2008). (List of References is found in Appendix A.)

In addition, a 1999 study (Cosden, Elliott, Noble & Kelemen) reported that up to 25% of students with exceptionalities had not been told they had a disability, even though they were in special education classes. Not being aware of why they were struggling was seen to be a possible contributor to lower levels of academic and global self-concept. Furthermore, there is evidence that social factors are as important as academic ones; if students feel competent socially they are also likely to feel academically competent (Welsh, Parke, Widamen & O'Neil, 2001).

While inclusive educational settings appear to be preferable to separate ones for students with learning disabilities, “inclusive versus separate



settings may not be the most important variable in predicting the outcomes of students with learning disabilities” (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). In terms of a learning environment, certain factors appear to have positive impacts. For example, authentic experiences outdoors and in the community (place-based learning field trips) have been shown to create positive peer interactions (Holtz, 2012). There is also evidence to suggest that if a child’s strengths are identified early those can sometimes be used to help a child work on areas of weakness. While the education system is based largely on the notion that a learner has to master the basics before going on, depending on what advanced work means “sometimes you can have enormous trouble with the basics but have just the kind of mind, and interest, to do spectacular things with advanced work” (Eckman, 2000).

In the high school context as well, teacher perceptions of student needs do not always match what the research literature has shown. For example, high school students with ADHD often have difficulty with reading comprehension because of fluency difficulties (speed of reading) rather than decoding issues or lack of motivation. Teaching good reading comprehension strategies can assist in reducing student frustration and increasing motivation; “In fact, teaching subject specific reading strategies can benefit all students” (Chaban, 2010). Similarly, if teachers use diverse instructional strategies, multisensory materials and multiple modalities (e.g., visual, kinesthetic, auditory) not only are LD students are able to participate more successfully in the classroom, but all students benefit (Eckman, 2000, Allen, 2000).

Reading programs specifically have been subject of much debate. Some have argued for a balance of methods that incorporate both direct instruction and meaning-based approaches (McIntyre & Pressley, 1996; Morrow & Tracey, 1997). Some educators prefer the term “differentiation” where the teacher assesses each student’s needs and creates individual and group experiences accordingly (Camilli & Wolfe).

Perhaps some students need direct instruction in decoding skills; perhaps none do . . . . Direct instruction in phonics is necessary for certain at-risk kindergarteners, but only if embedded in a print-rich, comprehensive literacy program and delivered in brief, individualized lessons. . . . The important recommendation here is that systematic phonics instruction may be valuable when added to a comprehensive literacy program, but imparts



little value when used as the *only* reading instruction for all students.

However, the whole issue of what constitutes 'literacy' in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and what role technology plays is prevalent in the educational research literature. In 1998 the National Research Council report Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children recognized the growing demand for different kinds of literacies.

The definition of full-fledged literacy has shifted over the last century with increased distribution of technology, with the development of communication across distance, and with the proliferation of large-scale economic enterprises . . . . High school graduates need to be more than merely literate. They must be able to read challenging material, to perform sophisticated calculations, and to solve problems independently (National Reading Council, 1998 as cited in Tell, 1999).

Accessibility features in today's common technology applications can help struggling students, while providing benefits to all students (Sliver-Pacuilla & Fleischman, 2006). Simultaneous multiple modes of input can gain and retain a person's attention and improve memory. A 1996 study (Lewandowski & Montali) which compared poor readers and skilled readers who were taught through text-to-speech applications with simultaneous highlighting of the spoken word, showed that experiencing text visually and aurally enabled poor readers to perform as well as skilled readers in word recognition and retention. Text-to-speech also lifts the burden of decoding for struggling readers, allowing them to focus on comprehension (Wise, Ring & Olson, 2000). Other technologies that have been shown to help students who struggle with academic tasks include speech recognition that helps struggling writers and spellers get their ideas on paper, graphic organizers that tap into students visual and spatial abilities, as well as the range of e-resources that help address vocabulary and knowledge gaps (Sliver-Pacuilla & Fleischman, 2006).

Finally, a 20 year longitudinal project that traced the lives of 41 individuals with learning disabilities who attended the Frostig Center, sheds light on the stages the individuals moved through the distinct stages of 'coming to terms' with the realities of their disability and the social/emotional impact of



being labeled, as well as the success attributes that led certain individuals to positive life outcomes.

Individuals were interviewed regarding the changes in their past and present attitudes, emotions, conceptions and meanings related to their learning disability. The notion emerged which they described as 'acceptance of the learning disability', followed by a shared set of understandings regarding the journey from awareness to transformation (Higgins et al, 2002). The stages identified were:

- **Awareness of a Difference:** All described a time when they were aware of being different from other children, generally in terms of academic differences, but nonacademic difficulties were mentioned as well, although only a few characterized their 'differentness' as solely non-academic.
- **The Labeling Event:** Many described not so much as single event, but a process whereby adults in their lives were attempting to identify what was 'wrong' with them. The task in this stage was ultimately not only to identify which label(s) actually reflected their difficulties, but also to reject the negative labels, settling on more neutral descriptive terms.
- **Understanding/Negotiating the Label:** During this period individuals struggled with (a) understanding exactly what having an LD meant in terms of what they could and could not do, and (b) resolve confusion about what kind of help would be effective, particularly in the context of the school environment.
- **Compartmentalization:** The task of this stage is to minimize weaknesses and maximize strengths, both inside and outside the classroom.
- **Transformation:** Some individuals reached this final stage of acceptance of their LD in which they saw it as a positive force.

Some successful adults moved through the stages almost in unison while others did so in a more sequential way. "Most of our successful participants had achieved a degree of compartmentalization . . . but only a few of the most successful showed evidence of reaching the level of transformation where the LD is perceived as a positive influence in their lives" (Higgins et al, 2002).



Results of the 20 year study also revealed a set of personal characteristics, attitudes, and behaviours that were predictive of success (Raskind et al, 1999 and 2002). The 'success attributes' (Raskind et al, 2002) included:

- **Self-awareness:** general self-awareness as well as learning disability awareness
- **Proactivity:** learning to be proactive about education but also in social, employment, interpersonal, familial and recreational contexts
- **Perseverance:** including the educational/academic/cognitive but also in the areas of physical, psychological, employment/career, social/interpersonal, recreation/leisure, and religious/spiritual
- **Goal-setting:** again developing academic/educational goals but also goals for other areas of life success
- **The Presence and Use of Effective Support Systems:** including awareness and knowledge of how to access and utilize supports for education and employment, and also social/inter-personal relationships, psychological health, financial/independent living, family relationships and recreational activities
- **Emotional Stability:** awareness of emotional/psychological stages and the development of coping strategies to deal with stress, frustration and adversity.

This research suggests a re-evaluation of educational practices. Traditionally, the focus has been heavily weighted towards intervention strategies to improve academic skills. This study points to the need to pay at least as much attention to developing success attributes in persons with learning disabilities as to improving academic skills (Raskind et al, 1999). This approach is consistent with an identification of individuals' strengths and assets, the use of multiple strategies within an expanded concept of learning and literacy all of which would benefit those with learning disabilities and other learners as well.



## B. LDAY EXISTING INFORMATION

### 1. Internal Documents

Funding agreements for the following projects/programs were reviewed by the evaluator; assessment, core funding, adult LD/ADHD Employability, training consultant, tutor project, career focus, youth club, Dawson Literacy Club, summer camp, winter camp, Youth Leadership Adventure Camp, LMA Employment Program – winter camp, and Canada Summer Job – summer camp.<sup>6</sup> The descriptions, objectives and/or deliverables and/or indicators were summarized and used to create the logic model. However, it is also notable that there is little consistency between the accountability or evaluation requirements of the various funders. For example, agreements are focused strictly on reporting outputs, while others move towards outcome data.

### 2. LDAY Activity Statistics

For the 2010/2011 fiscal year, LDAY provided an activity summary (outputs) in their Annual Report. The total number of active clients as of March 31, 2011 was:

- K-12 Clients = 74
- Adult Clients = 28

As of February 29, 2012, the total number of active clients suggests an increase in client load over the previous year:

- K- 12 Clients = 100
- Adult Clients = 40

The Table 4 provides an overview of LDAY activity for the last two years with totals and monthly averages. Active clients have increased, while there is a variation in the volume of other activities. It should be recognized that 2011/12 has seen transition to a new Executive Director, the addition of a new Client Services Facilitator, the leave of the former Executive Director, and the conducting of the evaluation process which has added to the LDAY workload.

<sup>6</sup> LMA Employment Program – winter camp and Canada Summer Job – summer camp are other sources of funding for LDAY's winter and summer camps.





**Table 4:**  
**LDAY Activities 2010/2011(12 months) and 2011/2012 (10 months)\***

<i>Client Group</i>	<i>Activity/Intervention</i>	<i>Number 2010/11</i>	<i>Monthly Average 2010/11**</i>	<i>Number 2011/12</i>	<i>Monthly Average 2011/12**</i>
K-12	Referrals from schools	10	.8	15	<b>1.5</b>
	Parent Support Meetings	170	<b>14.2</b>	95	9.5
	Tutor Matches Made	33	2.8	50	<b>5.0</b>
	School-based Advocacy Meetings	70	<b>5.8</b>	47	4.7
Adult	Adult Support (various)	229	<b>19.1</b>	124	12.4
	Employment Counseling Sessions	37	3.1	36	<b>3.6</b>
	Literacy Tutoring Sessions	21	<b>1.8</b>	15	1.5
	Assistive Technology Orientation & Training Sessions	32	<b>2.7</b>	5	.5
Youth & Adult	Partner Agency Mutual Client Meetings	76	6.3	69	6.9
Outreach	New Tutors***	22	<b>1.8</b>	5	.5
	Tutor Support Meetings***	103	<b>8.6</b>	33	3.3
	Employer Consultations	6	.5	10	<b>1.0</b>
	Community Visits	7	<b>.6</b>	2	.2
Workshops	Number of Workshops	19	<b>1.6</b>	11	1.1****
	Number of Participants	390	<b>32.5</b>	117	11.7

\* Activity data are available from April 2011 to February 2012, with the exception of May 2011; i.e., 10 months.

\*\* The higher monthly average appears in **bold**.

\*\*\* More new tutors (for whatever reasons) would suggest the need for more tutor support meetings.

\*\*\*\* LDAY also had a display table at the YTA Conference where approximately 800 educators were present.

The monthly activity summaries also document the topic of workshops and the agencies with which LDAY had mutual client meetings. As of the end of February 2012, LDAY connected with nine different agencies/organizations regarding youth and 14 different agencies/organizations regarding adults. The agency/organization with whom LDAY had the largest number of contacts was Yukon Council on disABILITY (YCOD) with eight total contacts, seven of which were with adult clients.





While the monthly activity summaries list the workshops and learning opportunities delivered, no formal data collection was done to document participant learning or satisfaction.

### 3. Cost Per Client by Program

The Table 5 provides the cost per client by program, where it is possible to match activity numbers with funding. These provide a baseline from which to track costs per client going forward.

<b>Table 5: Budget Amount, Number of Clients and Cost Per Client by Program 2010/2011</b>			
<b>Program</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b># of Clients</b>	<b>Cost Per Client</b>
Adult LD/ADHD Employability (50% of salary for direct client service)	\$36,730	28	\$1,312
Tutor Project (from September 1/11 to March 31/12)	\$38,994*	40 (7 months)	\$139 per client per month
Camp Raven – Summer Camp (2 weeks in duration)	\$50,047	40	\$1,251
Camp Raven – Winter Camp (1 week in duration)	\$17,179	20	\$859
Youth Leadership Adventure Camp (costs can vary considerably from year to year depending on the activities)	\$32,283	12	\$2,690
* Cost \$26,348 + \$12,646 (fees paid by families or a third party) = \$38,994			

Assessments are funded for children and youth (\$10,000) and for adults (\$22,047); however, this money flows through LDAY and is not used in support of LDAY's programs or direct services.

It should be noted that one of LDAY's main services is advocacy and support for parents and adults, which is highly valued by both groups. (See focus group results.) While LDAY does not receive funding directly for this type of activity, a significant proportion of LDAY staff time is devoted to it. As this service is embedded in many of the programs listed, it is not possible to place a 'dollar value' on it.



## C. LDAY STAFF INTERVIEWS

Six LDAY staff were interviewed, including the current and previous Executive Directors. When asked what they believed LDAY did particularly well, virtually all staff talked about the connection to clients and the emotional and resource supports that are provided.

*Clients come in frustrated and stressed and leave the office going; it's OK, we have support, we have options. We do that well. People here are very client centred . . . gives people peace of mind and hope.*

*Clients appreciate the support. A box of Kleenex is the most used thing in my office. . . Information and resources can help lessen their fears. And I have them read about success stories to give them hope.*

Staff were able to identify a variety of areas for future organizational growth including; increased networking opportunities for parents of children with a learning disability, systemic advocacy within the Yukon community, more or enhanced partnerships in support of youth, expansion in services to adults, more training for tutors, and a stronger system for volunteers.

*There's a stigma with LDs so you walk a fine line between figuring out what people know – or don't – and educating them.*

The issues that staff saw as facing the organization included the small client base, resulting from being in a small community, coupled with the stigma that is still often attached to learning disabilities. The parents of the children served by LDAY were viewed usually being of higher socio-economic status and not necessarily representative of the total population. Specifically, concerns were expressed regarding LDAY's ability to reach First Nations communities and LDAY's capacity to outreach successfully into rural communities.

While LDAY provides supports to adult clients and assists with supported employment, there was concern that many adults may not be aware of LDAY and that employers may be hesitant to engage with LDAY; *“employers are a hard nut to crack. I went where I was invited. They find the law scary – the duty to accommodate – which doesn't help the stigma or stereo-typing.”*



Other issues raised by staff included funding uncertainty and broad spectrum of learning disabilities that children and youth bring when they participate in certain programs, such as LDAY camps: *“Some kids just struggle with reading, but some are FASD, autism spectrum, some with abuse issues. . . . eight [youth at camp] had full time EAs but only two had Inclusion Workers. Do we have the skills to deal with these kids?”* This staff member went on to suggest that perhaps the target groups for various camps should be reassessed.

In terms of other directions for the future, moving away from one-shot workshops was recommended, coupled with doing more in partnership with other organizations or systems in order to engage more people in a collaborative learning community. Internally, it was suggested by more than one staff member that it might be time to think about how staff responsibilities are divided; for example, should it be by client age or by service? Another suggestion was that LDAY could acquire new tools/technologies to support clients.

## D. CORE FUNDER INTERVIEWS

LDAY’s core funders are Health and Social Services and Education, both Advanced Education and Public Schools. Two of the core funders participated in a review of the draft logic model. All three provided feedback on designated evaluation questions regarding priority populations for LDAY services, funder expectations, and future opportunities and challenges for LDAY.

Funders identified a number of potentially under-served communities including First Nations, rural areas, high school students, and families of lower socio-economic status. It was suggested that increased collaboration with other agencies, and the possible sharing of resources might help free funds to extend reach. Increased connectivity across the sector might also help clients to access more resources and to more successfully navigate systems.

*NGO’s in Whitehorse struggle to get into communities.*

In addition to congruence with government mandates, funder expectations entailed a clearer focus on articulating outcomes, coupled with a plan for ongoing monitoring and evaluation, with reporting linked to the outcomes.



Related to this expectation, for one funder, was the need to see the client level results of LDAY services. While funding supports staffing, this should translate into direct service to clients, thus leading to the desired client outcomes.

In terms of challenges, increasing demands on government budgets may make optimizing collaboration and capitalizing on partnerships a necessity for LDAY and similar organizations. However, opportunities exist for LDAY to take advantage of new initiatives, such as new training initiatives for under-represented groups.

From the public education system, LDAY is welcome to attend in-services and workshops offered to educators regarding literacy and instructional strategies.

*There is a need to look at literacy from a wider perspective . . . keep current with literacy development – literacy across the curriculum, balanced literacy, digital literacy – the broad scope of literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

Again, LDAY participating in or hosting joint trainings with education is an efficient use of resources and expertise and also holds the potential to enhance connections with the education system. Opportunities exist in many schools to work more closely as a team that includes the school, parent, child and LDAY tutor or LDAY staff member.

Funders also pointed to good relationships with LDAY noting “LDAY has a good reputation for getting things done” and “they are very ethical and client-centred in their approach to service.”

## **E. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS**

The following key informants were interviewed; a principal, representatives of the Learning Assistance Centre (Yukon College), Partners for Children (early childhood), a representative from Kwanlin Dūn First Nation, and someone representing a rural perspective. While their comments cannot be taken as generalizable to their various sectors, they all are experienced in their fields and knowledgeable of the Yukon context.



*Parents who advocate for their children have a leg up . . . it's the children who are struggling but for whatever reason their parents can't get their heads around advocacy . . . often it is parents who are struggling themselves.*

The key informants agreed that there were a number of communities who could be viewed as under-served. These included; First Nations communities, rural areas, pre-school children, and 'struggling families' (i.e., those who have barriers to accessing services and navigating systems) regardless of their geographic or cultural characteristics. They had a number of suggestions to increase access. For example, it was suggested that LDAY needs to take the necessary time to make connections with First Nations; *"you need to be asked for by the people, so it may take time to get people comfortable. Get the right person to make the connection, then patience and wait to be invited."* The importance of time and trust building was emphasized by more than one respondent, plus:

*First Nations is a group that does not get well serviced, and it's not because LDAY doesn't want to. It's a different demographic and special education has a negative connotation. The area needs to be addressed but there is a lot of healing to do . . . but LDAY has to help if the dollars they are getting are for everyone. And we are still white people trying to 'fix it.' We don't have the answers, but LDAY could be part of it [finding some answers].*

However, the First Nations representative cited the fact that staff people in First Nations who are the logical entry points often have many responsibilities and must prioritize the serious issues that arise; *"We have small resources that have to stretch a long way, so the potential to be proactive and plan is limited."* Consequently, it is important to find existing points of connection where LDAY could reach multiple First Nations, such as the President's Advisory Committee on First Nations Initiatives at Yukon College and the Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee. In addition, Kwanlin Dün has two workers, one at the elementary level and one at the secondary level, who are there to help Kwanlin Dün students. It was suggested that LDAY ensure that these people know about LDAY services and supports.

Regarding rural communities, some of the same dynamics were seen to be at play. One respondent's experience suggested that in rural communities *"people get the 'why bother' attitude because service does not come*



*regularly as promised by agencies.*” It was suggested that the relationships need to be worked on – *“relationship building, put your all into it.”* A physical presence in rural communities was deemed essential to the process – *“get on the road,”* perhaps using Yukon College campus sites as an entry point.

*Maybe just show up in a town with coffee and muffins. There’s a campus in every community which would be an entrance into communities.*

Support for pre-school children was another area where it was thought that LDAY could strengthen connections with early childhood agencies and service providers. LDAY currently attends CDC transition meetings and is recognized as a partner. However, the transition to kindergarten was still viewed as problematic for many children and families *“because the moment they hit kindergarten, all services are gone.”* It was suggested that LDAY might do more to assist families, particularly those families who are *“trying to hang on”* and navigate confusing and changing systems.

Respondents recognized that LDAY already works with many schools. The principal interviewed believed the best option was to have teachers working with tutors in the classroom, but *“while I would like more time with them [LDAY] it is almost impossible in the school setting.”* LDAY tutors and resources were viewed as valuable and an asset to parents; *“parents need someone at the table but it often brings LDAY into conflicts with power structures.”*

In addition to the College campuses being a possible reentry point for LDAY in rural areas, those interviewed at the Learning Assistance Centre felt that it would be beneficial to talk about how to work together and better coordinate services for post-secondary learners. They also noted concern for people at transitions points, in this case transition out of the public school system. For example, they suggested that LDAY could advocate for more assistive technologies in schools prior to young people moving on to post-secondary. They also believed it was important to get young adults to gain self-knowledge, self-acceptance and move to self-advocacy and that LDAY helps clients with this process.

Other suggestions for moving forward again included doing joint workshops for parents and the public. As stated by another respondent, *“we are way ahead of where we were, but there is still stigma and, for some people, a reluctance to engage. So maybe there is a need for more public education.”*



Echoing the comment of one funder to move to a broader concept of literacy, it was suggested by another respondent that while “*not to give up on systems like Wilson – some are also always going to struggle with decoding – make the transition from learning to read to reading to learn.*” Finally, on a different note, one respondent recommended, “*continue the LDAY newsletter.*”

## F. CHILDREN AND YOUTH INTERVIEWS

Parental permission was obtained prior to interviewing children and youth. In all cases, a parent accompanied the child to the LDAY office where the interview was held. Children were also explained the purpose of the interview and how the comments they gave would be used.

Eight children and youth were interviewed, five of whom were in Grade 7 or 8. Three were males and five were females. Many of those interviewed described their involvement and success in out-of-school activities including music, dance and sports.

The children and youth interviewed had worked with tutors and were most likely to identify improvement in reading, although spelling, math, handwriting and “*remembering stuff*” were also mentioned.

*A good teacher is someone being nice and helping you out. A good tutor is pretty much the same thing.*

*I used to be able to only read small books, but my goal was to read a chapter book and I can do that now, although some of the words are still a bit tricky.*

*I have dramatically [sic] improved! I read way better now I'm at Grade 7. I just finished a post-test and I'm reading at grade level. I was diagnosed in Grade 3 and reading at a Grade 1 level.*

Five of the respondents had also attended an LDAY camp. While three said they had liked camp, four of the five also expressed some concerns. One said that s/he liked it but “*it didn't help me with anything.*” Another liked both summer and winter camps, especially doing crafts but “*there was a real problem when we had to wait for someone who wasn't co-operating.*” Another did not like crafts and would have preferred more sports. Finally, one respondent had some suggestions.





*I liked it but then it got a little more strict, or maybe I just got older and it got less fun. We did the same activities every year. . . . at camp instead of two groups we should have more groups for different ages.*

When asked if they had any final thoughts or comments one respondent noted how s/he preferred tutoring at the school, but could no longer do so, while another preferred tutoring outside the school setting at the library. One youth had a final self-reflection; *“One other thing. Since I had my tutor I can read really well and spell really well. So now I go for days not thinking I have a learning disability.”*

## **G. PARENT FOCUS GROUP**

Ten parents, representing eight families, attended the focus group which was approximately an hour and a half in duration. Their connection with LDAY ranged from approximately six months to over 20 years.

Parents had originally found out about LDAY through a variety of ways including word of mouth, seeing LDAY’s signage because of its Main Street location, through their family doctor, and at the kindergarten fair.

*At the kindergarten fair . . . and it was for our youngest who was going into kindergarten and they get shots and things like that and [LDAY staff person] had a booth for LDAY. I stopped, and it wasn’t for the youngest at that time it was for the kid in Grade 2, and I took [the staff person’s] card. At the time I wasn’t willing to admit. I kept his card in my back pocket for a year and a half before I actually called him, because I wasn’t willing to admit the whole learning disability thing . . . but I knew what it was, I knew it. But I didn’t call him until it was – ‘til it was tragic - and that’s when I called.*

*Our doctor recommended a psycho-education assessment and we just weren’t getting it at school. So we thought we would go ahead and do it ourselves and that’s really what brought us down here. I’m really glad we did.*





## 4. Impact of LDAY

*I don't think I would have made it if I didn't have the support [of LDAY], I really don't. It was huge and really ongoing. Whenever you need them, they're*

Parents reported using a variety of LDAY supports and services including; assessment, advocacy and support at school meetings (often IEP meetings), attending workshops, referrals to other services and funding sources, using the LDAY library, tutoring for their child, and attending the national learning disability conference that had been held in Whitehorse. While all services were valued, the personal and emotional support they received from LDAY staff was highlighted. Many parents spoke of the emotional turmoil they had been through and how LDAY had helped them.

*I've burst into [the ED's] office screaming and crying. It happened to me because there are a lot of issues with teachers in school that I don't agree with and then some of the teachers were really downgrading my son.*

*When you're so desperate you're crying yourself to sleep because you don't know what to do, you find your resources pretty quick. So I just started looking . . . I sort of found out LDAY was there. I didn't go out seeking like an association for this.*

Along with the personal support, the ongoing assistance with advocacy was also viewed as crucial, particularly in terms of connecting with the education system.

*For me, the advocacy has been the big thing. Because I don't really know how to advocate in regards to this yet . . . I know how to advocate for my profession but this is totally different.*

*It's not that I want to speak directly about teachers but there's a lack of knowledge . . . and regardless of whether the child has a disability or not, it's respect for the individual, the child. If you're teaching a child where they're at and your child centred not curriculum*



*centred, it doesn't make any difference if they have a disability. But this is what I'm seeing in the education system – if your kid doesn't fit in the box, good luck.*

When asked what difference LDAY supports and services had made for their child, four parents cited the tutoring support and the use of Wilson reading which had made a difference in their child's reading ability. However, a number of parents stressed the importance of their child developing self-awareness and self-knowledge.

*My daughter will pipe up and say 'well, I have a learning disability' to her friends. My oldest daughter would have been horrified to say that. . . This organization has helped to normalize it a bit for a different generation.*

*The most important skill for my kid is knowledge. If you don't have knowledge about what is and is not a problem, then you don't have the skill set to deal with it.*

## 5. Issues

Some of the issues that parents raised included the issue of LDAY tutors being unable to work in classrooms. However, they recognized that this was a sensitive issue, given one of LDAY's core funders is the Department of Education.

While Wilson Reading was cited as having made a difference for a number of children, it was noted in the parent group that it has a specific application related to encoding and decoding and that a broader range of literacy strategies are needed; *"Wilson has become the be all and end all in this town and there are other programs . . . there's not a selection all the time."*

Parents expressed confusion over whether diagnosis is a 'good' or 'bad' thing. One parent mentioned that getting the diagnosis was the single biggest benefit of connecting with LDAY because *"that's what triggered everything,"* but another felt there were mixed messages about the importance of a diagnosis.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that the Yukon education system is non-categorical when it comes to labeling learning disabilities in students.



*The school doesn't want to label; they have lots of philosophical reasons why they don't, which is interesting because part of what you get is in terms of what is legally bound in the classroom is based on diagnosis. So go figure, my head is spinning.*

The issue of diagnosis led to a discussion of IEPs (Individual Education Plans) and their importance. Parents felt they had needed support in learning about IEPs and, in some cases getting them in place for their child.

*And [the LDAY tutor] says, don't you [your child] have an IEP? No. And she says if you don't get one this year, and we can't show record of the fact you had an IEP for all these years, you're going to try to go to university and they won't give you any support. So she immediately had us get on that and get a diagnosis, which turned out to be the exact same diagnosis [my child had] had seven years previous. We got an IEP in place so that when [my child] went to university she would have access to resources. And you know what; she had major access to resources. The kid now has a couple of degrees. She's going on to achieve things. . . . But had that tutor not been in the school and had not told us that, we would have been out of luck, too bad.*

While some parents were able to tell success stories, others were still confused about IEPs as well as the difference between IEPs and SLPs (Student Learning Plans). No one in the group was sure whether an SLP would hold the same benefits or have the same legal status as an IEP; “*very confusing, very confusing.*” Ultimately, the discussion pointed to the need for more information being provided to parents.

## 6. Suggestions for the Future

One of the suggestions for the future was that LDAY could do more in terms of education for parents; “*LDAY could do a lot to educate parents more about IEPs, what the responsibility of the school is in the Education Act to meet the needs of our individual students.*” The workshops that have been provided by LDAY were valued and parents believed that more could



be done. In addition, they suggested more opportunities for parents to connect with one another; for example, LDAY could facilitate networking through the establishment of a parent advocacy group.

*As parents we have demonstrated to each other that we have a common connection to LDAY and it's through that connection we can lean on each other.*

However, parents also viewed advocacy as being broader than assisting individual parents or even creating a parent group. They felt that more needed to be done proactively in the community.

*Advocacy means you need to be out there in the community. You need to help the First Nations understand that there are resources available. I work up at a First Nation community too, I know that tons of those kids have learning disabilities and there is nobody reaching out to them. . . . And even for new immigrants coming to Canada, I mean they're struggling in the school system, they're struggling with the language just to start with, so to get help for their kids . . . Those definitions need to broaden a bit for LDAY to be successful in being progressive, because right now they're kind of maintaining the status quo.*

Parents also discussed LDAY camps. While viewed as important for self-esteem and leadership, there was some concern over the extreme behaviour of some children. They suggested LDAY review the model, perhaps considering training and use of peer mentors.

Parents in the group also discussed how they felt sometimes they needed more dialogue, guidance and advice from LDAY when they were making decisions about their child, such as the decision whether to keep a child in French Immersion.

*Maybe LDAY has evolved in this, and I have found they are becoming a little more family centred, but not really that much yet . . . and what I mean by that is when I came in here with my oldest daughter, I didn't have any information and they didn't really give me much when I asked for it . . . I think they're trying to leave it in the parents' hands sometimes without us having the knowledge. . . you're leaving*



*the family to make some decisions, but in order to do that really well, you've got to give the family the information they need to work with and be able to direct them to that information and not say 'well you could check the website, or you could go talk to someone'... You actually have to hand it to people. Because when parents walk in those doors, they're so scared, and they're so tired and they just want you to give them a package ... and then you can take it home and go over it.*

Parents provided these suggestions in the spirit of moving forward with an organization they felt was very important to them and for whom they felt a strong attachment: *"I'm just thankful for everything LDAY has done for us."*

*This office [LDAY] has really helped her [my daughter] because they know the kids, they know our community. They know her skill set, they know her strengths and they were able to provide references for her for jobs that she has just excelled in such a big way right now because she has been able to get those avenues. So this kind of community based thing is extremely important because these people don't just know our faces, they know our families. And there is a really an attachment that is community-based that is really powerful here.*

## **H. ADULT CLIENT FOCUS GROUP**

Three adult clients attended the focus group, which was approximately an hour in duration. They had found out about LDAY through word of mouth or referral by a medical service provider.

### **1. Impact of LDAY**

The adult clients emphasized the importance of their assessment, as well as the personal and emotional support provided by LDAY. They spoke first of the assessment being important in understanding their issues and learning about their strengths and weaknesses and how to *"work on these things."*



*Getting diagnosed was life-changing for me. Then they gave me some reading material, as well as his [psychologist's] report, and some background information on my diagnosis. It was like reading my life on a piece of paper . . . . It was liberating. It answered my 'why' question.*

*Whenever I need them, they're there. And also, it's very confidential. I don't have to worry about overhearing something or someone else barging in . . . it's very well done and very professional.*

They also spoke of how LDAY was a “safe place” where people were “absolutely caring too.” They gave examples of how LDAY had not only provided them with access to professional help, but also with other resources and supports. One example was of an LDAY staff member helping one of the adult clients with a video conference with his boss in another Canadian city: “she took time out from her busy schedule to help me do well in front of my boss, so that was good.” The National Conference was also mentioned as having been a great learning experience.

The changes that adult clients identified as having occurred in their lives included being happier, being less depressed, being able to “speak for myself,” and improving their work skills and situations.

*It took me a long time to come to a professional and say, 'hey, there's some frustration here.' That took a long time . . . what triggered it, I think, was that I was a bit against a wall [at work]. But fortunately it worked out better than I thought. They [employer] were quite receptive. Things are working out. We had a plan to work it out. It didn't change my job description, just a different approach.*

## 2. Suggestions for the Future

While LDAY was highly valued by those in the focus group, they did have a number of suggestions for future directions for LDAY. They would like a wider network of professionals and treatment options at their disposal; “a better

*I think they [LDAY staff] go above and beyond the call of duty.*



*cross-section of professionals . . . some are pro-medication and they don't look at alternative therapies."*

The focus group participants also suggested that LDAY should do more outreach or advertising to make the availability and scope of their services more widely known, including in communities outside Whitehorse.

*I like the internet, I like the newsletter. But you only get the newsletter if you're a member of LDAY. Because I do know, I met this person at one of the Attention Deficit groups and I said LDAY and he goes 'what's that?' And now he's joined up and he's getting health stuff.*

The adult clients also suggested that LDAY could facilitate more networking among adult clients with similar issues, such as the creation of a neuro-diverse group, "so LDAY could help me network with some other people."

One of the participants followed-up by email with another suggestion:

*I would like to see LDAY have . . . a computer in their library with assistive technologies on it, like Dragon Naturally Speaking, textaloud, and there is even an electronic See-N-Read. That way they can demo products that can help with LDs and have clients test them out. Computers are available for free to non-profits at Computers for Schools.*

## I. WEB-SURVEY

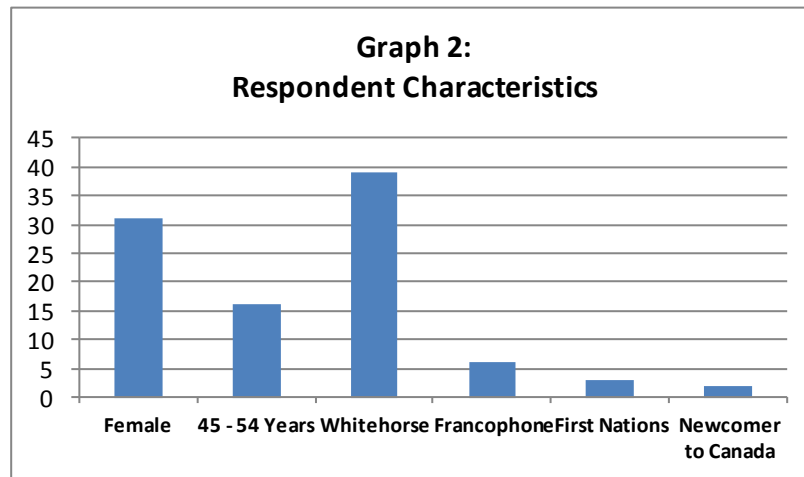
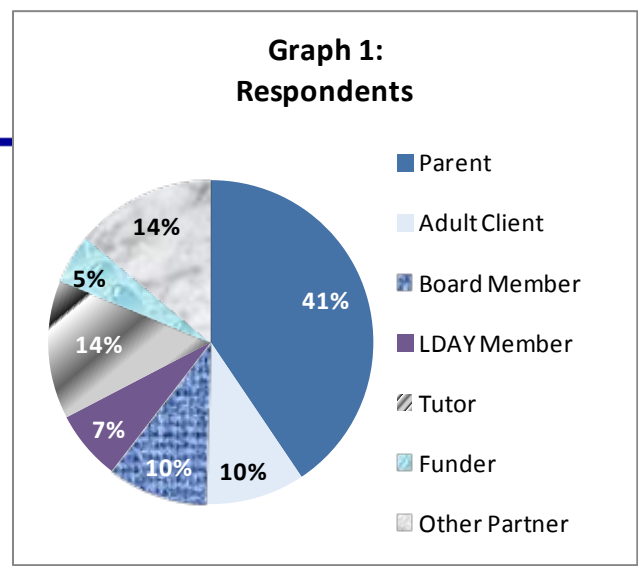
### 1. Respondent Characteristics

In total, 42 people responded to the web-survey. The largest percentage was parents (n=17 or 41%) of children who had received or who were currently receiving LDAY services, followed by tutors (n=6 or 14%). and other partners (n=6 or 14%).



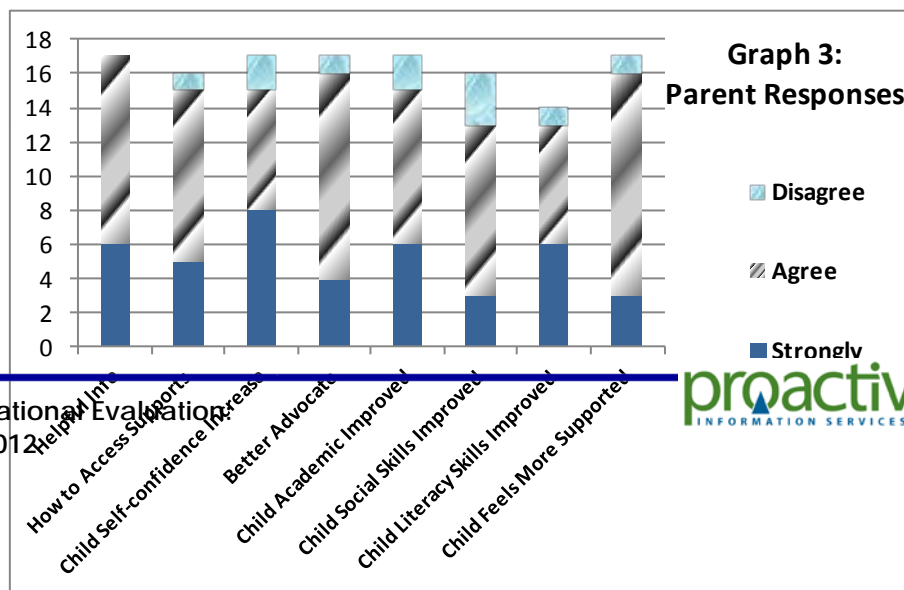


Most respondents (n=31 or 74%) were female. In terms of age group, respondents were most often 45 to 54 years old (n=16 or 38%). (See Graph 2.) There were no respondents under 25 years of age. Ninety-three percent of respondents (n=39) lived in Whitehorse and its surrounding area. The two people who lived elsewhere in Yukon were parents of children who had received LDAY services in the past.



## 2. Parent Respondents (n=17)

Parents were positive about the changes that had occurred as a result of their connection to LDAY. All agreed/strongly agreed that they had received information they could use to help their child. They were most likely to strongly agree (n=13) that their child feels more supported at school. While the majority agreed that their child's social skills had improved, three disagreed. (Note: "Disagree" is a combination of "disagree" and "strongly disagree.")





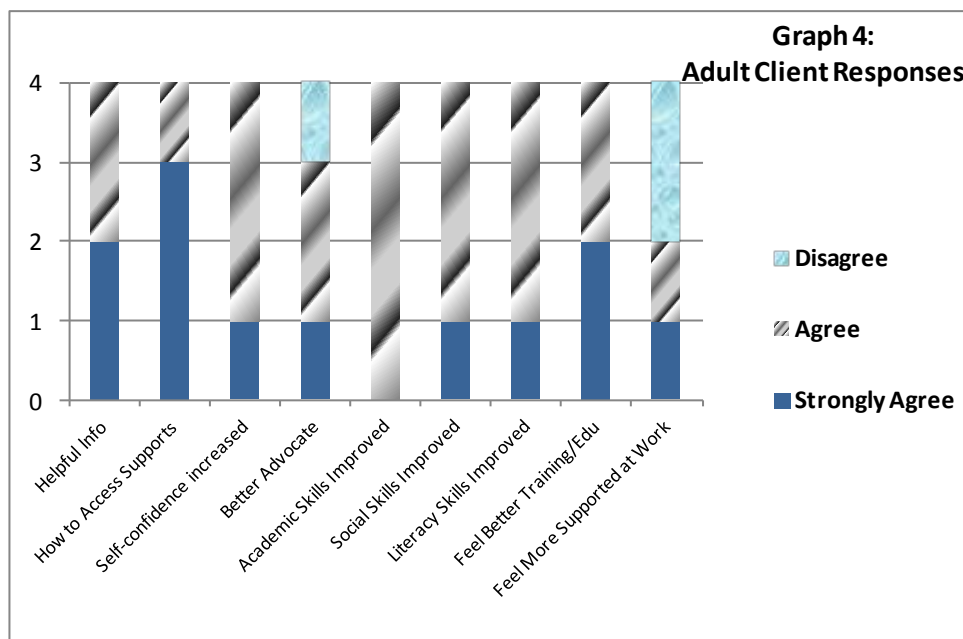


isagree”

A number of parents also commented on LDAY’s helpfulness, including their advice in dealing with the education system, feeling welcomed and supported, having access to tutoring resources, and helping to develop a sense of understanding and empathy for other children with learning disabilities. (For all individual comments, see the detailed tables in Appendix C.)

### 3. Adult Client Respondents (n=4)

Two adult client respondents were age 25 to 34 years, while the other two were age 55 to 64. Adult clients were positive about the changes they had experienced as a result of their connection to LDAY. They were most likely to strongly agree (n=3) that they had found out how to access supports and other resources. Two people disagreed that they felt more supported at work.



Note: “Disagree” is a combination of “disagree” and “strongly disagree.”



Respondents also mentioned other positives, such as feeling comfortable at LDAY and the importance of the walking groups and social skill practice lunches.

#### **4. Satisfaction with Services Used (n=21)**

All (100%) of those who used the following services indicated that they were satisfied/very satisfied with each one:

- Assessment (n=14)
- Academic Tutoring (n=13)
- Camp Raven (n=9)
- Youth Leadership Adventure Camp/Club (n=4)
- Walking Group (n=4)
- Help with Finding Training Opportunities (n=6)
- Help with My Employer (n=3)

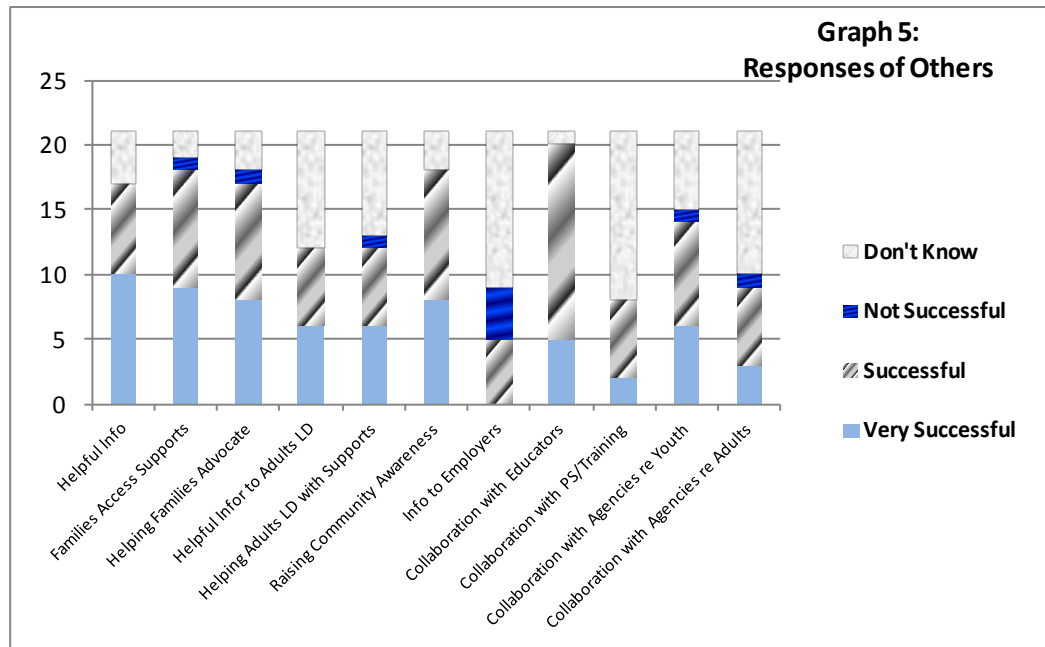
Six of the nine people nine who had used assistive technology were satisfied/very satisfied, while three not very satisfied.

#### **5. Other Respondents (n=21)**

Those people who identified themselves as providing funding or grants to LDAY (n=3), donating to LDAY (n=6), providing services to LDAY clients (n=12), referring people to LDAY (n=16), working on joint initiatives with LDAY (n=8), sitting on the LDAY Board (n=4), volunteering with LDAY (n=7), being a member of LDAY (n=8), and/or an LDAY tutor (n=7) were asked their perceptions regarding the success of LDAY.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that respondents could place themselves in more than one category.



Note: "Not successful" is a combination of "not very successful" and "not successful at all."

Respondents were least likely to be familiar with the services provided by LDAY in support of adult clients and were most likely to think LDAY was unsuccessful in providing information to employers (n=4 of 9 respondents). However, in all areas, those who felt familiar enough with LDAY services to respond indicated that they believed LDAY was successful.

Funders and other organization partners were also asked about whether they perceived there were any barriers to certain populations accessing LDAY services and supports. Concerning First Nations peoples and rural residents, respondents were most likely to indicate the barrier was a lack of awareness of LDAY on the part of these groups (n=4 for each). Regarding Francophones, language barriers were most often identified (n=3).

Tutors were also asked to respond to some specific questions. Of the seven tutors three were currently tutoring LDAY clients, while the other four had done so within the last two years. All seven felt that they were expert or competent regarding knowledge of the field of learning disabilities, knowledge of their learners' particular disabilities, and having the skills necessary to support their learners.



All survey respondents had the opportunity to provide final comments which are found in the detailed tables in Appendix C.

*LDAY is a vital part of the Yukon community. It provides an invaluable service to society by helping unlock the talents and contributions of people who think outside the conventional cognitive box.*

- Survey Respondent