

2001 Yukon Literacy Strategy

defining literacy is difficult

It depends on the needs of an individual, society and the values of a community at a particular point. Historically, literacy has been defined as the ability to read and write. However, literacy and numeracy (the ability to do arithmetic) are very closely linked, as both are basic skills for further learning.

The Yukon Government agrees with the following definition of literacy, as stated by ABC Canada:

Literacy is a person's ability to understand and use information and basic technology in daily activities at home, school, work and in the community in an attempt to reach personal goals and develop individual potential.



A MESSAGE from the minister of education

It is with pleasure that I introduce the Yukon Literacy Strategy.

This Strategy will be the driving force behind the government's efforts to prepare Yukon people for current and future training and employment opportunities. There is a need for change and forward planning for the next millennium and the new challenges that it will bring.

Yukon people should strive to be prepared to take on those activities that will drive new technologies and industries. Upgrading of literacy skills will prepare the foundation necessary for training, employment and participation as active members of the Yukon community.

I would like to thank all of those who participated in this important initiative for their insights and suggestions. I encourage all Yukon people to be aware of the principles outlined in this Yukon Literacy Strategy.

Hon. Dale Eftoda
Minister of Education

PART I introduction

The current Yukon Training Strategy was approved in December 1998. The first strategy was initiated in 1986 and revised in 1992. The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that all Yukon people have access to training that meets their needs and allows them to benefit from social and economic opportunities. This strategy is designed to help Yukon people reach their full potential. The Yukon Training Strategy commits the Yukon Government to:

- respect the needs of all Yukon people regardless of culture, gender, age, ability, financial means or location;
- recognize the important role that volunteers play in our society;
- provide opportunities for individual training and development;
- partner with Yukon College, First Nations, non-government organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders to provide resources so that Yukon people can acquire training
- plan for the long-term benefit of Yukon people through sustainable resource development.

This will be the basis on which we continue to build an inclusive Yukon Literacy Strategy. All programs and initiatives undertaken in the Yukon Literacy Strategy will be consistent with the vision of the Yukon Training Strategy.



Rationale for a New Yukon Literacy Strategy

The Yukon Government has developed a new Yukon Literacy Strategy. Planning for this initiative started in August 1999. The previous Yukon Literacy Strategy was developed in 1993. The need for revision was identified in the Yukon Training Strategy (December 1998). Information made available through ongoing research, current Canadian studies, changing and advancing technology and the exciting new challenges of self-government are the major reasons for the government's decision to develop a new Yukon Literacy Strategy at this time.



In 1994, nine countries, including Canada, initiated the world's first large-scale, comparative assessment of adult literacy. The Canadian results were published in 1996 and entitled *Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada*. Key findings included:

- literacy skill deficits are found to affect not just marginalized groups but large portions of the entire adult population;
- literacy is strongly correlated with life chances and use of opportunities;
- literacy is not synonymous with educational attainment;
- literacy skills, like muscles, are maintained and strengthened through regular use;
- adults with low literacy skills do not usually acknowledge or recognize that their skills may pose a problem;
- socio-economic background and labor force experience are factors influencing literacy skills.

Yukon was not included in the previous international adult literacy survey. Statistics that are available, while outdated, suggest that more than 40% of people in some Yukon communities have low literacy levels (*Yukon Learn, February 2001*). According to the Learning Disabilities Association (LDAY), 15% of Yukon's population have a learning disability; of this group, 87% experience problems acquiring strong reading, writing and spelling skills.

The International Adult Literacy Skills Survey (IALSS), and the Canadian findings, demonstrate that a national problem exists with regard to literacy levels. Combined with what the Yukon Government heard during the consultations on the Training Strategy, the need for a revised Yukon Literacy Strategy is clear.

Building a Yukon Literacy Strategy - Consultation

Input from Yukon People

The Yukon Literacy Strategy is the result of ten months of consultation with Yukon people.



During the period September 6, 1999, to February 28, 2000, staff from the Department of Education partnered with Yukon Learn to consult with Yukon people about literacy. Meetings and interviews were held in each Yukon community. Over 200 people participated in the consultation. Interviews were conducted with 67 people, and 47 people completed the literacy workbook questionnaire. The consultation involved input from:

First Nation Representatives	Yukon Learn Directors/Tutors /Learners
Municipal Representatives	Seniors
School Representatives	Yukon Anti-Poverty Association
Members of the Public	Yukon College
Literacy Coordinators	Chambers of Commerce
Labor Representatives	Yukon Federation of Labor
Justice Representatives	Association of Yukon Communities
Parents	Department of Health & Social Services
Teachers	Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon

Consultation Workbook

A workbook was designed to gather information from stakeholders and interested citizens. The flexible format allowed Yukon people to express their concerns and provide comments. It also provided for efficient analysis of the collected information. The information focused on the literacy levels and concerns of Yukon people and the need to review and adjust services to address those concerns. The consultation provided information on the most appropriate and effective delivery models for literacy services.

Literacy Steering Committee

The development of the Yukon Literacy Strategy was guided by the Literacy Steering Committee, comprising representation from:

- Advanced Education Branch, Department of Education
- Public Schools Branch, Department of Education
- Department of Health and Social Services
- Department of Justice

- Yukon College
- Human Resource Development Canada
- Yukon Learn
- LDAY

Yukon First Nations were met on an individual basis, in the communities.



Definition of Literacy

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Literacy is a person's ability to understand and use information and basic technology in daily activities at home, school, work and in

the community in an attempt to reach personal goals and develop individual potential.

New Yukon Literacy Strategy

Goal:

To provide maximum opportunity for all Yukon people to acquire the necessary literacy skills to be successful in their community, work and personal life.

Objectives:

- To promote the advantages of having effective literacy skills;
- To develop and expand opportunities that allow Yukon people to build on their existing strengths through the development of effective literacy skills;
- To provide creative and appropriate literacy programming that is accessible to all Yukon people
- To develop partnerships with First Nation Governments
- To develop partnerships with educators, corporations, labour organizations, communities and other appropriate stakeholders;
- To cooperate with national and regional partners throughout Canada to

reflect better technological advancement and the changing role of literacy in education and work

- To be consistent with, and benefit from, the current literacy initiatives developed by our federal and provincial partners;
- To address more effectively the global needs as identified in the latest literacy research produced in Canada and elsewhere;
- To understand and address the literacy-based challenges of self-government and land claims both for First Nations and Yukon people;
- To ensure that literacy programs are developed to address workplace literacy needs.

If a person has a broken arm, immediate and intensive action is taken to have it properly dealt with; so you meet very few people with broken arms. Why is this not true for people who cannot read and write? The disability and lost opportunity is just as great!

Literacy Strategy Survey Respondent

Guiding Principles of the Yukon Literacy Strategy

- Literacy is a right;
- Literacy starts at conception; families are the foundation for learning;
- Literacy is a life-long process;
- Literacy is everyone's responsibility;
- Literacy is important to individual worth;
- Literacy programs will be accessible to the learner;
- Literacy programs will be designed to meet the specific needs of the learner and should be learner driven;
- Adult learners shall be included in the development of policy that affects their education;
- Literacy is a pre-requisite for a healthy community and for economic development; Literacy is an integral part of all training;
- Yukon Government departments will work collaboratively to address literacy issues;
- The Yukon Government will foster, encourage and develop partnerships to make literacy training a priority for the partners and a realistic option for all Yukon people;
- Literacy initiatives need to be appropriate to cultural needs.



Implementation

Approach

The strategy will be based on the principles that people know what is best for them. They know their problems and can identify solutions. They know and understand their community and the resources available in the community. They are aware of the importance of timing and context. Thus, they are better able to plan and implement programs and services within their respective communities. However, they often need additional resources to help them do what needs to be done to improve their standard of living, to become self-sufficient and to build economically and socially viable communities. A community-based approach will be implemented and the government will coordinate and facilitate the implementation of the strategy.



Ongoing formal and informal consultation will take place between the partners. This will be done to help ensure that programs and services are well-coordinated and ideas, activities and results are shared.

Criteria

An implementation plan for the strategy will be developed and will be based upon:

- the suggestions and ideas presented during the consultation and follow-up process;
- the literacy needs as identified by individuals and communities;
- community capacity building and community ownership and control;
- the efficient, effective and innovative use of available resources;
- the ability of the service providers and users to take full advantage of all opportunities for literacy advancement in the Yukon;
- innovations and policy development being shared by other jurisdictions;
- the success and/or failure of similar initiatives in other jurisdictions.





PART II from vision to action

A Yukon Literacy Strategy - Action

To help realize the Yukon Literacy Strategy's goal of ensuring all Yukon people are provided with opportunities to reach their full potential, the Yukon Government will undertake eight initiatives targeted at improving the literacy levels of Yukon people. These initiatives are intended to reflect the advice given by Yukon people through the consultation and follow-up process. The initiatives will be action-oriented and designed to utilize existing resources in an efficient and effective manner. The Yukon Government realizes that some new resources will be needed to implement these initiatives. It hopes to take advantage of available resources in an effort to realize Yukon's literacy goals. These initiatives form the basis of a Yukon Literacy Strategy that will continue to evolve through ongoing evaluation and consultation with partners and clients.

Building Partnerships for Literacy - A Team Approach

The Yukon Government will invite all partners to participate in the creation and operation of a Literacy Action Committee. The committee will be comprised of representatives from Yukon College, Yukon Learn, Learning Disabilities Association, Challenge, Child Development Center, Yukon Federation of Labour and business as well as equal representation from the First Nations Education Commission, the identified representative of First Nations on literacy issues. There will be a strong emphasis on having all Yukon communities well represented.



The mandate of this committee will be:

- to respond to the literacy needs of communities and First Nations through the identification and allocation of resources;
- to coordinate and administer the funding allocated to projects that are identified, developed and implemented by community organizations;
- to study and review programs that are seen as showing positive results (such as Kwanlin Dun House of Learning) in an effort to share these successes with all Yukon communities;
- to work with the National Literacy Secretariat and other partners outside of the Yukon to study ways and means for the best practice of to be made available to the communities.



Making Resources Available

The Yukon Government will establish a Community Literacy Fund to be administered by the Literacy Action Committee through a process similar to the Training Trust Funds. The committee will establish funding criteria that will make funds relevant and accessible for communities in order to meet better their literacy needs. The Literacy Action Committee will have the capacity to approve multi-year funding with an emphasis on programs rather than projects.

Community Planning, Coordination and Ownership

The Yukon Government will explore, with community representatives, the creation of Community Education Committees. These committees will monitor, evaluate and influence the design and delivery of all educational programming for their respective community. The Community Education Committee could bring community focus to education and learning as well as a more holistic approach to addressing local needs.

Paying Attention to Early Intervention and Special Needs

The Yukon Government will assist child-serving agencies and organizations in developing training programs for child care workers, day homes, group homes and foster parents. These programs will include specialized training initiatives targeted towards improving literacy programming for pre-school and special needs children in a safe, and enjoyable environment. They will build on the success of existing training trust fund initiatives.

The Yukon Government will continue to support the Department of Education's successful Reading Recovery Program. The program is evaluated annually to ensure that it provides appropriate early school intervention for a child's reading needs. The results after the first two years have been encouraging. Eventually,

longitudinal data will be generated that will allow the department to assess the results and make necessary adjustments.

The Yukon Government will continue to partner with various organizations to work toward meeting the literacy needs of children and families.

Adult Literacy Programming that Works

The Yukon Government will work with relevant partners to identify local economic opportunities. This will entail the design of training programs that, in addition to encouraging local people to find meaningful roles in their communities, will include a literacy and life skills upgrading component consistent with the students' needs, employment training and the requirements of the job. Community Education Committees, if organized, could be an important vehicle to allow this to happen in a coordinated, efficient and effective manner.



The Yukon Government, in collaboration with its partners, will work towards a career development framework policy that links school to college and employment in a manner that motivates students to continue educational programs as a means to achieving personal and community goals.

The Yukon Government, in collaboration with the Literacy Action Committee and individual communities, will examine the best means of identifying and supporting local literacy workers to provide community development/tutor training/tutoring and coordination in Yukon communities.

The Yukon Government will work with the federal government in an effort to fill the gaps in funding for English Second Language (ESL) learners.

Literacy Programming for Families

To support families, the Yukon Government will research and promote the value of Family Literacy Programming. Family Literacy Programming is a growing concern throughout Canada. Some significant early successes have been reported. The Yukon Government will work with Human Resource Development Canada, Yukon Learn, National Literacy Secretariat and other jurisdictions to ensure that these successes are shared with Yukon people and communities. The Yukon Government will work directly with the Literacy Action Committee to develop and implement local Family



Literacy Programs that meet the needs of Yukon Families.

The Department of Education will work closely with the Literacy Action Committee and Council for Yukon First Nations to sponsor a Family Literacy Conference in 2001/2002.

Literacy Research, Monitoring and Ensuring Success

The Yukon Government will partner with the Literacy Action Committee and the Government of Canada in a cooperative and determined effort to conduct research that effectively influences the design and provision of the most appropriate literacy programming for Yukon people. This will include Yukon participation in the 2002 International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, the results of which will provide the territory with valuable information about literacy in the Yukon. This will be the first time the Yukon or any northern territory has been included in such a study. The Yukon portion will involve the highest proportionate representation in all of Canada. The literacy survey will be of great importance as the available statistical information is outdated.



In addition to Yukon participation in national and international studies and surveys, the Yukon Government, in consultation with the appropriate partners, will establish a life series of formal benchmarks. These benchmarks will measure the skill levels of children and adults. The information will become part of a confidential database to understand and accommodate the educational needs of all Yukon citizens

Culturally Appropriate Literacy Programming

The Yukon Government and partners will study the concept of developing a pilot project that is committed to cultural readiness and inclusion. The Department of Education will work with Learning Centres and the Aboriginal Head Start Program to develop a pilot project. The project will be designed to build on current educational/school curriculum and will be based on relevant cultural theme(s). The project will focus on curriculum that is thematic and relevant to First Nations.

The Yukon Government will work closely with the Literacy Action Committee and First Nations (through the First Nations Education Commission) to help build a model Aboriginal Literacy Strategy and to assist the Commission in identifying practical and appropriate research activity to accomplish this initiative.



When do you stop learning to read, in order to start reading to learn?

QUESTION FROM A YUKON SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

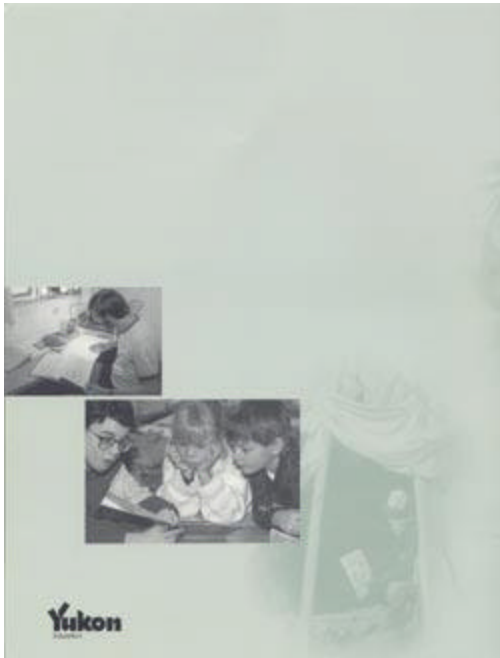
PART III outcomes

Literacy for Life

The Yukon Government will review the effectiveness of these initiatives. This will be accomplished through an annual review involving partners, users of the services and the development of realistic and measurable goals. Some objectives that will be used as a measure of the effectiveness of this strategy are:

- more Yukon people become employed;
- less dependence on social services;
- less dependence on health care services;
- fewer people incarcerated;
- higher enrollment at Yukon College from public schools (including Community College Campuses) and other post-secondary educational programs;
- more students graduating;
- improved relationships with all partners;
- a more productive workforce;
- increased library and computer access.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Yukon Government wishes to thank the many individuals, organizations and agencies who kindly and enthusiastically gave their time and expertise towards making the new Yukon Literacy Strategy a reality. This is truly a community initiative.