BARRIERS TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN NUNAVUT

A Research Report and Action Plan

Nunavut Literacy Council

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ABOUT THIS PAPER

In the course of its ongoing work the Nunavut Literacy Council identified low literacy levels as a barrier to employment for many Nunavummiut, including youth. This paper is the result of a research project to identify:

- Other barriers that face youth seeking employment in Nunavut;
- Re-engaging marginalized youth in education, employment and community life; and
- The extent that literacy is a barrier to youth employment.

The research is based on the following assumptions:

- Literacy is the foundation upon which people learn other skills.
- People need other essential employment skills, even for low-skilled jobs.
- Not all youth will participate in formal skills training to prepare to participate in the paid labour market.
- Not all youth will be interested in preparing to participate in the paid labour market.

To carry out the research:

- We facilitated two focus groups in each of three Nunavut communities: Rankin Inlet, Cambridge Bay, and Iqaluit. The focus groups took place in February 2006.
- We interviewed individuals who wanted to participate in the project, but were unable to attend the focus groups.
- We developed two questionnaires to guide interviews and focus groups: one for employers and educators and one for youth in and outside the labour market. See Appendix A for the questionnaires.

Nunavut organizations participating in the Northern Workplace/Workforce Literacy Partnership reviewed the questionnaires and identified potential participants for the focus groups. These groups included Nunavut Arctic College, the Department of Education, the Municipal Training Organization and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI).

Appendix B has a list of individuals that attended focus groups and who agreed to have their names included in this report. Other participants agreed to take part in the interviews, but did not agree to have their names published.

Fifty-four people provided insights into employment barriers for youth in Nunavut, including youth, representatives from Nunavut Arctic College, secondary schools, 10 businesses and four literacy training programs. This paper reflects their insights.

The research report includes information from a review of scholarly, popular and government literature on the northern economy, employment trends and requirements, Inuit culture, approaches to work and learning, and history. The literature review informed the questionnaires and the report's analysis.

The research paper was the subject of discussion at a half-day workshop held in Iqaluit in March 2007. The purpose of the workshop was to identify additional barriers and recommendations and to determine how to move forward to implement the recommendations. Appendix C includes a list of workshop participants.

CONTEXT

Nunavut formed Canada's newest territory in 1999 and Inuit form about 85% of the population. The self-government and land claim agreement combined three Inuit regions into one territory. The new territory has a publicly elected legislature with responsibility for many aspects of the day-to-day lives of its residents, including education and employment.

The Nunavut economy is in transition from one based on traditional activities on the land to a cash-based economy. Where Inuit hunted and fished to sustain themselves, their families and their communities, they are now expected to get a job and receive cash in exchange for their time, skills and labour. The skills people need to work in the cash economy may be vastly different from those they need for traditional land activities.

A recent international study on living conditions in the Arctic involved six countries, including Canada[1]. The Canadian data are based on 60-minute interviews with 4,700 Inuit from Nunavut, Nunavik, the Inuvialuit region and Labrador. The findings across all six countries show a persistent combination of paid work in the cash economy and traditional work in the land-based economy. Almost three-quarters of the Canadian respondents reported having hunted or fished in the previous year and over half reported having worked for pay in the previous week. This demonstrates that both kinds of economic activity are important to Inuit. It could be expected that youth would follow similar patterns.

It is worth noting that there is a greater focus in Nunavut to increase the employability and skills of individuals with lower educational achievement than would normally be the case[2]. This is largely because of two things: mining companies have made commitments to the communities in which they operate; the Nunavut land claim has a goal of 85% Inuit employment in the public service.

Despite the economic demand for local employees and a strong commitment to education and training in Nunavut, young Nunavummiut are often not finding their way into available jobs. Many forces are at work in Nunavut that have impacts on the participation of youth in the paid work force.

[1] Poppel, Birger, Jack Kruse, Gérard Duhaime, Larissa Abryutina. 2007. SLiCA Results. Anchorage: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage. Retrieved from http://www.arcticlivingconditions.org/

[2] International comparative literature has demonstrated a consistent "under-investment" in low-skilled workers, across countries. Tergeist, W.O. a. P. (2003). Improving Workers' Skills: Analytical Evidence and the Role of the Social Partners. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. p. 4.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

The purpose of the research was to identify barriers to employment, other than literacy, and to understand to what extent literacy is a barrier. This section of the report identifies and discusses each of the following barriers, referring to the literature and the findings from the focus groups and key informant interviews:

- Racism and colonialism and their effects;
- Inuit language and traditional learning style;
- Family/school divide and other challenges to the school system;
- Limited opportunities within Nunavut communities and the Arctic college system;
- Learning disabilities;
- Lack of literacy skills, including workplace skills; and
- Policy and program supports.

RACISM AND COLONIALISM AND THEIR EFFECTS

Inuit and First Nations peoples in Nunavut and the NWT have experienced racial discrimination throughout their history of contact with people of western European descent. Colonization and racial discrimination have been and continue to be factors that undermine people and destroy traditional languages and ways of life and learning.

People of European descent exploited the land's natural resources and sought to 'civilize' or, more accurately, Europeanize Inuit and Aboriginal peoples. The dominant culture actively worked to displace Inuit languages and has contributed to the loss or potential loss of those languages.

Inuit were a minority among Aboriginal peoples in the Northwest Territories (NWT) and far removed from its capital in Yellowknife. As the NWT gained more authority over time, the minority status continued, exacerbating a long history of colonization.

Increased Inuit autonomy through the Nunavut land claims and self-government is a fact of 21st century life in Nunavut. But the effects of colonization and racism are entrenched and may take generations to overcome.

Focus group participants, government reports and key informant interviews all identified persistent reminders of colonial governance and racism by non-Inuit and non-northerners. These reminders include emotional scars associated with the relocation of young Inuit to residential schools and on-going battles for community wellness. People struggle to deal with the results of historical abuse, exposure to alcohol and the resulting addictions and illnesses that have scarred many families and communities, and the changes in family structures and economic activity forced by a colonial power and oppression.

People from southern Canada hold many government positions as teachers, nurses and with many other government/community services. They may not be familiar with the Inuit culture or language; they may have lower expectations of the skills and abilities of Inuit students and employees; they may not know how to best support Inuit youth in the classroom and in the workplace.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Communities are healing from scars caused by racism and colonization within which many Inuit were raised. The report of the Nunavut Integrated Health Strategy[3] outlines steps communities are taking to restore community wellness. These include integrated systems approaches and the development of effective working relationships that contribute to wellness and community capacity as well as to the success of education programs. Healing is underway, but not yet complete, and likely has a continuing impact on youth, their self-esteem and what they believe is possible.

A 2004 study on Aboriginal and Inuit people in Canada's labour market[4] includes First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit. It is based on information from 1991 and 2001 sources and provides some combined data and a breakdown by specific group of other data. The study paints a clear picture of the situation the new territory and government inherited, and does not reflect any changes in policy or practice that came after division.

The report shows that Aboriginal and Inuit people collectively are increasing in number in the labour market at a rate six times that of the population as a whole. It shows that Inuit are younger than other Aboriginal groups and have a larger, younger working-age population, and a much larger group of young people entering the labour market in coming years.

The report shows that in the NWT and Nunavut – reported together – Aboriginal and Inuit peoples have an unemployment rate more than one-and-a-half times that of the general population. Between 1991 and 2001 the gap lessened.

A recent report on the status of Aboriginal and Inuit Canadians in the labour market confirms that the barriers facing youth are not theirs alone. This report identified that about 40% of First Nations people and Inuit had more than 26 weeks of work in the year 2000, compared to nearly 60% of non-Aboriginal Canadians.[5] Aboriginal and Inuit Canadians generally have a lower proportion of their workers in high-skilled jobs, especially in the private sector. Inuit are the most under-represented, with only 23% of workers in high-skilled jobs, compared to 30% for all Aboriginal peoples and more than 60% for non-Aboriginal workers.[6]

INUIT LANGUAGE AND TRADITIONAL LEARNING STYLE

Inuit form about 85% of Nunavut's population and the government has the goal to make Inuktitut the working language for the territory. At the same

[3] The New Economy Group, PILIRIQATIGIINNGNIQ – Working Together for the Common Good, published by NTI, Health Canada and the Government of Nunavut, 2006. Retrieved from http://www.nunavuteconomicforum.ca/public/files/library/healthy/Integrated%20Health%20Initiative.pdf

[4] Mendelson, Michael. Aboriginal People in Canada's Labour Market: Work and Unemployment, Today and Tomorrow, Caledon Institute of Social Policy, 2004.

[5] p. 4.

[6] Op. cit., p. 11.

time, most Nunavummiut recognize that people need English and/or French as well as Inuktitut. Many employers need employees who can speak and read English so they can communicate with other organizations, often in the south. The ideal employee is likely to be literate in both Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun and English.

Focus group participants and key informants reported a quandary facing governments and other employers: Preserve the culture and create a society and economy that can trap its citizens or lose the distinct culture that sustains the Inuit and create a workforce that can compete anywhere in Canada or the world. Most seek both or at least a balance between the two extremes, but many interviewees describe the tension as irresolvable.

Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun are oral traditions, with various dialects that do not have identical spelling, pronunciation or use. The syllabics and roman orthography writing systems were relatively late arrivals in Nunavut and writing Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun is fairly recent. All this contributes to the fact that although Inuit and their languages form the great majority within Nunavut, they are still overwhelmed in many ways by a dominant English language and culture.

Key informants and focus group participants in both territories described the challenges of providing services to unilingual people whose mother tongue is one of the Inuktitut dialects. Unilingual people are primarily elders who often cannot understand service providers who do not speak their language, particularly in health services. Some people may read only Inuktitut and some may have few or no reading skills at all, even for things like signs. These people find it difficult if not impossible to complete forms or follow signs in a public building such as a health centre.

Interpreters are one solution, but employers often cannot hire enough to meet the need. Despite government policy and a high unemployment rate, employers – including government and Inuit organizations – reported that they are not always able to find Inuktitut-speakers qualified for the jobs available. Too often it is difficult to find people skilled in health and other professional services delivery, including teachers, who can work in Inuktitut. This forces elders and other unilingual Inuktitut-speaking people to rely on children or grandchildren for help, which may necessitate their absence from work or school.

The emphasis on Inuktitut can be an additional barrier for many working-aged youth. They may not have learned Inuktitut at home or at school, especially the written form. The school system now offers programs in Inuktitut during the first years and the youth from these programs may be better equipped in the future. But this program is too new to affect most working-aged youth right now.

Key informants and focus group participants described the difficulties of learning in a second-language. This is a greater issue for those already in the workforce or those seeking jobs. People on the job need to be able to read, understand and use materials such as policy manuals,

personnel policies, employment standards and laws related to the issues they deal with such as health and safety. Many of these texts are available only in English or French and most are not written in plain language, whether in English, French or an Inuktitut dialect.

Learning Style

One educational philosophy paper describes the traditional ways of learning as swimming in an ocean, where the ocean represents knowledge.[7] From an early age children are submerged in a world surrounded by knowledge, with no formalization of how and when they absorb that knowledge. The more structured approach to learning used in the school system is like forcing knowledge through a tap with someone else deciding how, when and what knowledge to dispense and for how long. The school system may create barriers to learning that can seem insurmountable to families more accustomed to the traditional approach.

Traditional learning in Nunavut is a less formal and more all-pervasive process: learning by doing, rather than learning by talking about it. Children learn by watching parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and neighbours, not by reading about or listening to descriptions of how to do things such as hunt, fish and prepare food and clothing in the home. The cultural norm and practice is to learn by doing. This is true for children and it is also true for adults.

Most training and literacy programs and elementary, secondary and post-secondary programs use written texts. It is clear that written texts are important in the workforce, but it is only one way to transfer knowledge from educator to student. An important element to successful learning is to supplement written text with practical hands-on learning, particularly for adults with limited understanding of the language of the written material.

Even when we are allowed to work with people who are doing what we want to do, we aren't allowed to actually do it ourselves. We just get to hang around with the mechanics, not to try it ourselves.

Focus group participants – educators and youth – recommended supplementing written texts with practical learning. Youth learners described, for example, wanting to learn to weld. They want to do it, not just read about it; they want to learn from those who do it, not just from those who know about it.

The literature review and focus groups confirm that youth prefer to learn by doing and parents support more practical education. The Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy echoed the same theme in its fifth objective, to:

…restructure vocational, apprenticeship and trades programming and promote them as viable career options[8].

[7] Rasmussen, Derek. "Qallunology: A Pedagogy for the Oppressor", in Philosophy of Education Society Yearbook, 2002. pp. 85-94. Retrieved from http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-yearbook/2002/85-rasmussen%2002.pdf/

[8] Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy, Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, October 2006. p. 26.

FAMILY/SCHOOL DIVIDE AND OTHER CHALLENGES TO THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The cultural differences between western European/southern Canadian approaches to education and those of the Inuit are significant and they contribute to the family/school divide. But these issues go beyond simple cultural approaches.

Educators, employers and youth all described the divide – some would say abyss – that separates home and traditional land-based activities and the school system. Many parents are not involved in the classroom part of their children's education. They may have had very negative experiences in their own classroom education, including being relocated to residential schools outside their communities.

In focus groups, educators reported that parents often seem uninterested in their children's formal education, including making sure their children attend school. Parents reported a communication breakdown between school and family, where basic information critical to success in both spheres is not transmitted.

I couldn't understand why my son was getting such poor grades in math. I finally found out, many months later, that his math class started a half-hour earlier than I thought classes began.

This is an extreme example, but stories along these lines were common among those interviewed.

On the other side of the divide, educators reported that families were often unwilling to disclose the issue that was keeping a student from attending school. In many situations, land-based activities or family dynamics and events require that the older children in particular stay home to supervise pre-school children. Such events may be rare or intermittent, but lead to students being 'pulled-out' of school.

Other Challenges to the School System

This research focused on access to employment for youth who are soon to graduate from high school or who have left the school system. Much of the literature on access to employment and much of the discussion in focus groups pointed to the importance of the kindergarten to grade 12 school system (K to 12).

Completing high school is now widely considered as a minimal educational requirement for access to the labour market and lifelong learning. The skills and knowledge acquired through high school are valuable foundations for the future of youth. Both educational and labour market transitions are influenced by an individual's possession or lack of a high school diploma[9].

[9] Bushnik, Tracey, et al. In and Out of High School: First Results from the Second Cycle of the Youth in Transition Survey, 2002. Statistics Canada, 2004, p. 5.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

Almost all parents, educators and some employers in the focus groups expressed frustration with Nunavut's primary and secondary education system.

They identified 'school readiness' as one issue – the preparation children receive before they enter the school system Children must make the difficult transition from the more traditional, extended family where learning is informal and continuous to the more formal 'southern' school system In the school system, young children have fixed start and stop times, more sitting and less activity, fewer educators per child and some set curriculum. Teachers report that the transition is easier for children who are accustomed to having adults read to them and for children who have some experience with other activities that enrich early learning. Many children arrive in pre-school or elementary school without such experiences.

The experiences they do have – being with parents and grandparents on the land, living in a multi-generational household – are not helpful to them in this new environment. Pre-school programs such as Head Start or child care with an early learning focus are reported to be a place where the two worlds can connect and bridges built between them.

Nunavut students who leave before graduation may be pulled out by family responsibilities, pushed out by a system that does not serve them well or may drop out for many different reasons. Whatever the reason, the premature school-leaving rate is alarmingly high. The Statistics Canada Youth in Transitions Survey shows 3% of 17 year olds in southern Canada left high school without completing their studies. Non-completion rates in Nunavut are reported to be as high as 75% in 2001[10].

In an effort to staunch the loss of students, Nunavut has adopted a policy to advance students more or less along with their peers, to encourage them to stay in school. Educators then have students in the class who have not completed the prerequisite work for the current material. This practice may be well intentioned, but it ignores and does not cover over the lack of the necessary literacy and other fundamental skills students need to succeed.

Educators describe the overwhelming task of teaching with too many students in the classroom, many of whom lack the literacy skills to absorb what is being taught. They describe high absenteeism rates and the inevitable discouragement students feel when they are in over their heads.

In a further attempt to promote school completion, Nunavut has a compulsory attendance policy that took effect in 2002. A very recent paper analyzes the impacts of this policy[11]. The paper's author taught

[10] Kwarteng, E. Fredula. "Implementing Nunavut Education Act: Compulsory School Attendance Policy", Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, Issue #55, September 8, 2006. Available on-line at http://www.umanitoba.ca/publications/cjeap/articles/kwarteng_nunavut.html

[11] Ibid. p. 17.

in a Nunavut community and uses that experience to examine in detail the policy's requirements. The paper argues that the policy is the wrong one to increase school completion; it is not effective in a situation where the problem may be with the school or the system itself, rather than with the parents and families. The author argues that it does not give local communities sufficient flexibility to achieve higher attendance locally.

There are schools where local partnerships, leadership and encouragement of culturally appropriate content have achieved remarkable results. In Sanikiluaq's Nuiyak school, half the teachers are Inuit and half are non-Inuit; one co-principal is Inuit and one is from the Toronto area. This school was selected as one of 10 case studies to demonstrate successes in Aboriginal education[12].

The report of the case studies identifies elements common to the schools, including:

- Strong leadership and governance structures, often with long tenure.
- Multiple programs and supports for learners.
- Exceptional language and cultural programs.
- Secure and welcoming climates for children and families.
- Respect for Aboriginal and Inuit culture and traditions to make learning relevant.
- High percentage of Aboriginal and Inuit staff and quality staff development.
- Assessment linked to instructional and planning decisions.
- Vigorous community partnerships and beneficial external alliances[13].

LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN NORTHERN COMMUNITIES AND THE COLLEGE SYSTEM

Northern communities have constraints such as isolation, small populations, and limited resources. Many communities are challenged to fill positions for educators, administrators, and other child – or youth –supporting jobs. Yet strong community-based champions are critical to help youth acquire the skills they need.

Nunavut Arctic College offers basic adult education, including some basic literacy, pre-trades training and the classroom portion of apprenticeship programs. Community learning centres exist in almost every community, to reach learners wherever they live. Staffing levels vary, but most centres in smaller communities have only one or two staff people. Learning centres are not always fully staffed and there is often little continuity among educators and school administrators.

[12] Fulford, George, et al. Sharing Our Success: More Case Studies in Aboriginal Schooling, Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, Kelowna, BC, February 2007. Executive summary retrieved from http://www.saee.ca/publications/A_035_HHH_EXECSUM.php. Additional information from "Nuiyak School Gets an A+", by Derek Neary, Nunavut News/North, March 26, 2007. p. 3.

[13] Fulford, et. al. Sharing Our Success, Executive summary retrieved from http://www.saee.ca/publications/A_035_HHH_EXECSUM.php

Other than the challenge of keeping the centres staffed with people with the right training and linguistic skills, the main challenges for community learning centres include:

- A formal curriculum;
- A lack of continuity for learners from one semester or school year to the next; and
- With few exceptions, only full-time courses offered.

Basic education, pre-trades and trades courses have a formal curriculum with a set of prescribed skills and related materials that require full-time attendance. This works well for some students, but it does not work well for others who may have other responsibilities that prevent them from attending full-time or regularly. People may have family responsibilities such as child or elder care, hunting or other personal issues to deal with. They can be away from home only for part of each day or during certain seasons.

Many subjects in adult programs lack culturally appropriate materials that are relevant to the learner's lives. Without relevant materials it is much more challenging for learners to absorb concepts and ideas. Educators may develop some creative new ways to teach with a more adapted curriculum. We find an interesting Northwest Territories example in some of the pre-trades courses at Aurora College in Yellowknife. Students use GIS technology to map their family's trap lines and then use the GIS-based maps to visit the trap lines and verify that the map is correct.

Nunavut Arctic College is rarely able to offer courses in sequence. For example, students may not be able to take follow-up courses in the year after they complete the pre-requisite courses. They may also not be able to go from basic education classes in one semester or year to pre-trades the following year. Learners may find this frustrating and allow other life events to intercede, and abandon their education and training.

Youth may need to leave their home community to get the education and training they need or to fulfill their employment aspirations. Community learning centres may offer introductory courses or pre-trades training, but most Nunavut learners need to travel to the larger centres or points further south to complete their training and education.

Many students are unable or unwilling to leave their community to take adult learning courses. Those willing and able to attend institutions outside Nunavut often face family opposition to their relocation, requiring determination and courage to actually leave their community to get training and education. In a culture so embedded in community and family, relocation can be daunting.

Relocation is challenged by other factors such as lack of housing or family supports such as day care. Many communities face housing shortages and overcrowding in existing housing, making relocation within Nunavut especially difficult. It is almost impossible to find affordable housing in Iqaluit, and housing availability and cost may be even greater deterrents in southern Canada. People may be reluctant to leave extended family, take their children away from their home community, or may not

have access to supports such as child care in a new community.

Several interviewees spoke of the emphasis on academic education streams in secondary school, often at the expense of investing in pre-trades training. Students and educators spoke of the increasing demand for skilled workers for resource extraction industries and for local services, from construction to equipment maintenance.

There is a workshop space in our school, but we're told we can't afford to provide equipment in it, or teachers to provide classes. It's a waste, given that most youth want to work in the trades and we need trades people.

The Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy recommends nine specific actions, many of which would address identified barriers to youth employment. One action particularly resonates with what key informants had to say about increasing employment opportunities for youth:

Provide practical, hands-on opportunities for learners to engage in pre-trades or access year programming at the community level and develop a program to allow interested individuals to be exposed to possible employment opportunities in trades through job mentoring and job shadowing[14].

To date, this has not generally been the experience, however, a number of school-based pilot programs are now taking place.

A research paper identifies the increasing correlation in Canada and internationally between educational attainment and employment opportunities. The paper has specific advice about out-of-school youth[15] and recommends interventions as soon as possible after school leaving. The interventions need to mitigate against the spiral that comes with little education and little employment opportunity, exacerbated by the lack of employment experience over time. Training programs must overcome the disadvantages of less schooling, connect out-of-school youth with employers and provide on-the-job training that combines formal learning with employment experience[16].

Nunavut youth may not have access to the training and licensing required for many of the jobs currently going vacant or being filled by people from outside Nunavut. Community learning centres may not offer basic education and pre-trades training in sequence. People may not have access to a certified journeyman to acquire sufficient hours to get through an apprenticeship to certification, except perhaps in the mining industry.

Adult role models have an influence on employment choices. We asked youth in focus groups what they would like to do if they could get the training. They almost all picked occupations they see in their own immediate environment: welders, plumbers, mechanics, government administrators and perhaps nurses.

[14] Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy. Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated. October 2006. p. 27.

[15] Kapsalis, Costa. "Occupational and Skill Parity of Aboriginal Canadians". Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. 2006.

[16] Op. cit. p. 5.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

The cash economy is expanding and Nunavut has a high need for skilled and professional people to meet the needs of self-government and resource development. Nunavut is making a concerted effort to train Nunavummiut for the new economy and government. Right now government continues to import workers from the south and Inuit youth may see few local role models in their communities filling these positions.

Focus group participants described the difficulty in finding entry-level positions, even for qualified youth. Many employees in entry-level positions are either unable or unwilling to advance to higher-level positions and create a barrier to those entering the labour force for the first time. This was especially true in employment with the Government of Nunavut and, to a lesser extent, in health and social services.

As time passes, youth may see more and more adults leave the community for education or to work at mine sites or for other employment. Youth will have more role models as the number of Inuit legislators, lawyers, teachers, nurses, doctors, trades people and others in their community increases. With more role models we can expect youth aspirations and expectations to rise, and for them to recognize that education is useful and that they need to complete high school.

Some communities are reaching out to youth who are not likely to return to formal education. They work with them to build more traditional skills that they can use to support their families and communities. These programs can be very effective in re-engaging marginalized youth in an effort to reduce social and economic barriers and decrease youth isolation and societal alienation. See Appendix D for examples of these programs.

Some youth fare better in activities with a traditional focus. Social and economic impact agreements pay attention to traditional economic activities and often include benefits to those who continue to rely on land-based economic activity. Some non-formal community-based programs support traditional activities, although funding for these kinds of programs is often difficult to find.

LEARNING DISABILITIES

The rates of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE) in some First Nations and Inuit communities are much higher than the national average. FAS and FAE exist in the context of the effects of oppression and loss of culture caused by racism and colonialism.

FAS and FAE include a range of learning disabilities that make it hard for people to acquire skills. People with FAS or FAE may find reading, writing, using documents and other essential skills almost impossible.

I come to class every day, and I get a lot of help from the instructor and other students, but I just can't seem to learn, no matter how hard I try.

Public education aims to encourage young women to not drink during pregnancy. It aims to prevent this learning disability from continuing in future generations.

As well as FAS and FAE, people in Nunavut communities experience other learning disabilities as much as Canadians in general. All these disabilities are less likely to be diagnosed or treated in the north due to things such as isolated communities, high costs and high turnover or lack of teachers and other professionals.

LACK OF LITERACY SKILLS, INCLUDING WORKPLACE SKILLS

There was broad agreement that the gap between available jobs and local youth to fill them related primarily to a lack of literacy and essential skills. Work readiness skills include things such as appropriate behaviours in the workplace, showing up for work on time and on a regular basis, basic technical skills and other essential skills including literacy.

Nunavut's largest single employer, the Government of Nunavut, often requires only grade 10 to enter the public service, even for clerical and administrative jobs. Entry-level jobs may be filled with people with limited literacy skills. These jobs are often the end-point rather than the starting-point for employees. This makes it difficult to fill higher-level positions from existing employees and difficult for new labour market entrants to find entry-level positions.

The recently completed Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy addressed the historic under-employment and under-representation of Inuit in Nunavut's labour market.

The major barriers to participation have been issues associated with literacy (English, Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun), lack of education and formal training, lack of recognized certification and the lack of opportunity[17].

In addition, two surveys of literacy levels in Canada point to the urgent need to address literacy deficits for many Canadians, including Nunavummiut.

The 1996 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) national report demonstrated that the tendency is to increase the skills of people that already have skills rather than provide support to those at the lower end and increase the pool of highly skilled workers. While Nunavut was not included in the 1996 IALS, similar practices take place in the north. Nunavut adult education and training programs exclude a significant number of people due to their low literacy skills. These are the people who, given the opportunities to improve their literacy skills, could provide Nunavut with the workforce that it needs to become more economically stable.

The 2003 International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (IALLS) included Nunavut. The results demonstrate the urgent need to raise literacy levels for the large proportion of the population with the lowest literacy levels. Nunavut ranked lowest among the territories and provinces in all categories.

IALLS measured English and French literacy in four categories: prose literacy, document literacy, numeracy and problem solving. IALSS scaled tasks by difficulty

[17] Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy. Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, October 2006. p. 10.

from 0 to 500 and divided them into five broad literacy levels. Level 1 represents people who find reading impossible or very difficult. Level 5 represents people with the skills to read and analyze very complex documents. Level 3 is considered the minimum level people need to participate in today's knowledge society.

Half of the Nunavut respondents had prose, numeracy and document literacy at Level 1. More than half of those employed in Nunavut were below Level 3[18]. Most existing jobs need people that can read and apply information contained in written documents, along with other essential skills. Other jobs need people with advanced education.

Data indicate that a 2001 test of 13 year olds placed Nunavut students last in terms of mathematical problem-solving skills. Almost all students scored below Level 2, compared to just over 25% for the Canadian average. More than 75% of Nunavut's 16 year olds scored at Level 1, compared to about 5% across Canada[19]. Most of the statistics on transitions into training and/or employment are not available for Nunavut or for other territories.

Some youth taking courses described the challenges of learning essential literacy skills when they might already have some of the other essential skills. Participants in focus groups and interviews described how literacy levels play out in the classroom and the workplace. Youth interviewed emphasized that they want to be doing, not reading or writing, and did not identify low literacy levels as a barrier to employment. This attitude may mask limited literacy skills and a fear of being employed where people need more advanced literacy skills.

The Nunavut Literacy Council has devoted considerable resources and worked for several years with communities to find innovative ways to encourage and develop intergenerational literacy skills and habits. They work to build the capacity of local communities to provide their own literacy and related skills training, and to create resources that are appropriate for use in such programs. These programs are not necessarily tied to labour market participation, but they are important elements in the continuum from low literacy skills to sufficient skills to enter the labour market.

The Council's experience is that optimal learning takes place when it is intergenerational. This is also known as family literacy – elders, parents, youth and children are all involved in a culturally relevant program of real interest to the learners. People participate more consistently and learn in the community. Within these programs, elders teach young adults the skills involved in the land economy, elders and adults are encouraged to look at books with young children, or an organized play group provides ready access to age-appropriate books and books with plain language text in English and other languages. Materials may include stories

[18] Literacy in Nunavut. Nunavut Literacy Council, n.d. Retrieved from http://www.nunavutliteracy.ca/english/pdfs/stats.pdf

[19] Education Indicators in Canada: Report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program, 2003. Statistics Canada and the Council of Ministers of Education, 2003. pp. 91-92.

of ancestors engaged in traditional land-based economic activities. These programs have a positive impact on the readiness of young children for classroom learning in their early school years. Participants of all ages show a wider interest in learning literacy skills as well as the more hands-on skills.

When local community members run these programs, the Literacy Council helps build capacity for individuals who may go on to become adult educators and for communities to meet their own workforce development training needs. The 'train the trainer' approach leaves behind resources – books, manuals and other tools – in the community for interested local people to use to create literacy programs.

Workplace Literacy

Employers and employees were asked if they had offered or taken literacy programs. Almost without exception, those with direct experience with workplace literacy training spoke of it highly and nostalgically. In every case, the programs ended after being funded for only short periods of time. People described various classes:

- Inuktitut as a second language for employees whose first language was English and whose clients were primarily Inuktitut speakers;
- On-site or off-site training in reading and understanding general documents; and
- Training in reading and understanding documents related directly to the workplace such as safety manuals or human resources policies.

Some employers, notably the diamond mines, provide essential skills training on-site as a means to recruit and retrain employees and meet their contract obligations. Employees have access to adult educators, sometimes on their own time and sometimes on company time, to get the literacy skills they need for pre-trades to complete pre-trades and to pass apprenticeship exams. People may train for work that does not need extensive reading and writing skills. But even for less skilled jobs, workers usually take some written tests as part of the process to become qualified. One example is a driver's licence. In some cases, the testers make it an oral test, but this is not the norm.

A small number of other workplace literacy programs are still in place. For example, the City of Iqaluit's employees have special classes and tutoring at the Arctic College campus. When this program first started it ran during work hours and employees were paid to attend. The program is now offered during the evening and participants are expected to attend on their own time.

Less official programs are more common, where employers provide training during working hours, often as a necessity, so that staff can read and understand documents and follow instructions, policies or client requests.

A creative example of combining work with literacy training is the Art and Literacy program offered at the Matchbox Gallery and Studios in Rankin Inlet. Carvers get some literacy training each day and carve or draw for the rest of the day. Carvers/students described the program as successful. They said that six months is

too short a time and when it is over they are forced to find non-art employment that often requires literacy skills they do not yet have.

Many employers described the need for such training and their own inability to provide it, either because of a dispersed workforce or because of lack of capacity and expertise. The dispersed workforce is a special challenge in Nunavut, as employers often have a single or small number of employees in all or most communities. Examples of employers might include NorthwestTel, the northern airlines and the RCMP.

Federal and/or territorial governments and other employers provide many workplace-related materials that employees need to understand and apply to their job. All jobs are subject to health and safety regulations. Many jobs in construction, transportation and other areas require workers to read and carry out important equipment maintenance and repair instructions. Many workplace documents are available only in English and possibly French, and are full of technical language that can be difficult to understand and use, even for those with advanced literacy skills. Workers with lower literacy skills find them even more challenging.

Employers, employees and youth all described the complexity of written material related to occupational health and safety standards and requirements as a barrier to employment. Focus groups and key informants gave the example of federal transport regulations for handling hazardous goods. Regulations such as these are important for airlines that must comply, and for the safety of their workers and passengers. The material is technical and available only in English and French. Adult educators and managers in diamond mines and oil and gas exploration offer similar examples, where worker safety is of utmost importance and businesses must comply with all appropriate government regulations and restrictions.

Employers and Workers' Compensation Board officials expressed concern about what happens when workers don't understand things. They are making some efforts to provide materials in plainer language and in Aboriginal and Inuit languages, but most of these documents and their updates are not easily available in these formats.

Some employers are getting creative as they seek to meet the terms of their contracts with First Nation and Inuit organizations, although this is not the case in every workplace. For example, some employers use matching audio instructions with written signage. The Nunavut Municipal Training Organization is developing plain language manuals in Inuktitut and English to support their municipal training programs.

LACK OF POLICY AND PROGRAM SUPPORTS

Key informants were asked what it would take for them to support workplace training programs as funders, employers, educators or learners.

Government and business can use policies to promote adult learning and local participation in the workforce.

Employers can make commitments to hire and promote local residents. Policy commitments can give people access to employment and the essential skills they need.

Programs to implement these policies are focused largely in the community college system. Other non-government organizations receive some supports to develop resources and the capacity of local residents to promote and deliver literacy programs. Instruments used to implement policies include: public funding such as federal or territorial grants to non-government organizations; education programs such as elementary, secondary, college or community-based programs; and procurement.

Government can insist that service contractors offer essential skills training or release time for people to attend training offered elsewhere. For example, the territorial government can insist that construction contractors keep licensed journeypeople on site and hire a certain number of apprentices. The Nunavut Housing Corporation has recently started a program like this. They require contractors working on a significant expansion of housing units to have certified trades people on all their construction teams. Over time the demand for apprentices increases, apprentices get the on-the-job experience they need under a journeyperson and more apprentices become certified.

Employers can offer training or provide paid leave for training to help reduce barriers to employment. Current practices in the diamond mines offer one example. Mine employees may take basic skills training during working hours, pre-trades employees may take some matching time off for training and apprenticeship employees may take their apprenticeship exams on company time.

Focus group members and key informants described successful programs that had taken place in learning centres or on-site in the workplace. In every case, however, except for the City of Iqaluit, such opportunities were no longer offered, despite their success during pilot stages. Such training included Inuktitut classes for non-Inuktitut speakers in Nunavut and training related to job-required essential skills.

Employers can offer further support and encourage workers to use their literacy skills more generally on the job and in the workplace. For example, employers can encourage workers to read manuals, give them access to documents relevant to their jobs, or provide newspapers and other reading materials in lunchrooms or other meeting spaces. There is compelling evidence that people need to use their literacy skills or they lose them and employers can make an important contribution.

Employers expressed their interest in supporting increased skills among their own workers, and among the general population, to increase the pool of skilled workers from which to draw. They also expressed their frustration in knowing how to assess the needs of their company or their workers, or how to develop the curriculum for such training.

CONCLUSION

There is little doubt that the lack of literacy skills is a huge barrier to youth employment in Nunavut. It is also clear that many other barriers strongly affect whether or not youth successfully seek employment and reach their full potential in the cash economy or doing more traditional activities.

It is also clear that the barriers interact with one another and create a greater impact than if they each acted separately, in isolation. It's important to recognize that the barriers – and the solutions – are interconnected, that there are cumulative effects.

The following action plan and recommendations give direction to employers, educators, governments, communities and the Nunavut Literacy Council. As stakeholders consider the recommendations and work to implement the actions it is important to take into account the cumulative nature of the barriers and the solutions, to work together to help extend positive employment opportunities to all Nunavut youth.

THE ACTION PLAN

At a workshop of stakeholders held in March 2007, educators, youth and employers discussed draft recommendations and approved the following refined recommendations.

Participants agreed that the workshop representatives would each move the recommendations relevant to their sector forward. Appendix C has a list of workshop participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For employers, including the Government of Nunavut:

1. Support apprenticeship training, including building it into government-funded contracts.
2. Offer Inuktitut as a first language classes for employees without full fluency in Inuktitut.
3. Offer literacy and other essential skills training in the workplace.
4. Offer Inuktitut as a second language training in the workplace.
5. Expand housing options available to students relocating to take further training.
6. Explore on-the-job mentoring for youth entering the workforce, anticipating that literacy skills may be incomplete.

For educators:

1. Extend learning programs to include pre-school components, with an early childhood education focus across the territory.
2. Develop and implement programs to engage families of students in the school community. This could be as simple as holding an annual feast to celebrate the start of school.
3. Offer literacy support to all students who are failing to grasp material being taught.
4. Integrate more hands-on learning opportunities and learning by doing, rather than relying heavily on text-based materials.
5. Develop alternatives to written tests to assess students' learning.
6. Increase access to vocational resources and training for secondary school students.
7. Offer evening courses to allow access for people in the workforce.
8. Adapt high school and adult basic education programs to be pre-workforce training programs.
9. Develop part-time options for adult basic education programs.
10. Offer space at school for homework after school hours.
11. Consider developing 'homework clubs' for students.
12. Develop and implement more programs for marginalized youth – those who may never go back to school. See Appendix D for examples of more context-based, non-formal community programs such as traditional skills programs that have a literacy component built in.

THE ACTION PLAN

For governments:

1. Implement a plain language policy for all print materials in all languages.
2. Extend training funding to employers wishing to offer literacy training and/or Inuktitut as a second language training to employees.
3. Apply 'healing foundation' funding to test for FAS/FAE and provide appropriate supports for learning and working for those in need.
4. Fund summer employment in trades-related fields to provide youth with experience and exposure to more skilled jobs.
5. Fund mentorship programs for youth who are more suited to land-based economic activity with elders who possess the necessary skills for success.

For communities:

1. Build on existing resources and models to create programs that will include youth who are not likely to undertake formal training for cash-economy employment.
2. Document promising practices in place in communities, including an analysis of what conditions are necessary to achieve success and what lessons have been learned over the life of the program.

For the Nunavut Literacy Council:

1. Explore and develop workplace literacy materials and programs.
2. Continue to develop community outreach and development strategies to support non-formal learning such as family literacy and programs with a cultural focus.
3. Develop and distribute a template to capture information about successful programs, including necessary conditions for success and lessons learned in delivering the programs.
4. Seek funding to gather completed templates and disseminate them to communities throughout the territory to encourage customization and replication.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS/EDUCATORS

1. How are you involved with youth employment? (Employer? Educator?)
2. What has your experience been in connecting youth to jobs?
3. What contributes to success in making those connections?
4. What factors are involved when the employment connection is not made or is not successful?
5. What do you think needs to be done to prepare youth for jobs, and to find and keep them in jobs?
6. Do you have any other comments or ideas you'd like us to include in our report?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUTH

1. How are you involved with employment? (Employed now? Have been employed? Want to be employed?)
2. What has your experience been in finding and keeping a job?
3. What contributes to success in finding and keeping a job?
4. What stands in the way of finding or keeping a job?
5. What do you think needs to be done to prepare youth for jobs, and to find and keep them in jobs?
6. Do you have any other comments or ideas you'd like us to include in our report?

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

The names listed below include people who gave permission for their names to be appended. Not all participants gave such permission. Employee participants listed are also youth; where youth were among employers, they are labeled as youth participants.

Youth Participants – Cambridge Bay:

- Sarah Jancke
- Clinton Panegyuk
- Julian Tologanak
- Ryan Angohiatok
- Jerilyn Kaniak
- Beverly Uviluq
- Michael Jancke
- Charles Jr. Egotak
- Shelaine Inooya

Employer Participants – Cambridge Bay:

- Kane Tologanak, Director, Embrace Life Council
- Elik Tologanak, Counsellor, Kullik Ilihakvik Elementary
- Brenda Jancke, Regional Director, Education
- Charmian Jenvenne, Language Program, Nunavut Arctic College
- Fiona Buchan-Corey, Kitikmeot Campus Director, Nunavut Arctic College
- Donna Olsen-Hakongak, Community Program Manager, Nunavut Arctic College
- Paul Chaulk, Program Manager, Nunavut Housing Corporation
- Dave Shuttleworth, RCMP

Employee Participants – Iqaluit:

- Don Kunuk, City of Iqaluit
- Joetanie Kanayuk, City of Iqaluit

Employer Participants – Iqaluit:

- Judy Watts, Special Projects Officer, Health and Social Services
- Yvonne Earle, Legislative Librarian and Chair of Iqaluit Literacy Committee
- Ericka Chemko, Inuit Heritage Trust, Youth Coordinator
- Nigel Qaumariaq, Human Resources (Youth Participant)
- Tanya Saxby, Community Program Coordinator, Nunavut Arctic College
- Steven Koonoo, HRSDC
- Hal Timor, Baffin Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Tina Price, Human Resources (Youth Participant)

Employer Participants – Rankin Inlet:

- Janice Seto, Management Studies Instructor, NAC
- Corrine DaBreo, Supervisor, Social Work, Health and Social Services
- Margaret Wallace, Health and Social Services
- Beverly Walker, M&T Enterprises
- Metro Solomon, Director, Economic Development
- Ruthann Johnston, Health and Social Services
- Mike Shouldice, Campus Director, Kivalliq, NAC
- Mariah Aliyak, Health Benefits, Health and Social Services

Employee Participants – Rankin Inlet:

- Angela Cook
- Teresa Amarok

Carver Participants – Rankin Inlet:

- John Kurok, Matchbox Gallery Traditional Skills and Literacy Program (Youth Participant)
- Jack Nuviyak, Matchbox Gallery Traditional Skills and Literacy Program (Youth Participant)
- Jackie Ittigaitok, Matchbox Gallery Traditional Skills and Literacy Program (Youth Participant)
- **Key Informant Interviews:**
- Corrine MacDonald, Student Support Teacher, Kiilinik High School
- Randy Millar, Manager, Canadian North, Rankin Inlet
- Virginia Qulaut Lloyd, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. Youth Policy (Youth Participant)

APPENDIX C: WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS, MARCH 2007

The names listed below include people who gave permission for their names to be appended. Not all participants gave such permission. Employee participants listed are also youth; where youth were among employers, they are labeled as youth participants.

- Chuck Gilhuly, Municipal Training Organization
- Hal Timor, Baffin Business Development
- Ruth Wilcox, Kitikmeot Inuit Association
- Kathy Okpik, Deputy Minister, Education, Government of Nunavut
- Eugene Smith, Nunavut Association of Municipalities
- Glenn Cousins, Nunavut Economic Forum
- Cindy Cowan, Nunavut Arctic College
- Barb Miron, Aurora College
- Navaranna Beveridge, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.
- Saa Pitseolak, Human Resources, Government of Nunavut
- Sheyla Kohola, Director of Training, Human Resources, Government of Nunavut
- Pelagie Owlijoot, Curriculum Development Manager, NAC
- Sue Ball, Curriculum Development, Education, Government of Nunavut
- Ericka Chemko, Inuit Heritage Trust
- Anne Isnor, Youth Counsellor
- Cate Sills, NWT Literacy Council
- Kim Crockatt, Nunavut Literacy Council
- Cayla Chenier, Nunavut Literacy Council
- Havi Echenberg, Facilitator

APPENDIX D: CASE STUDIES

RECLAIMING OUR SINEW

Community: Various Kivalliq Communities, Nunavut

Program Delivery: Nunavut Arctic College Community Learning Centres

Program Partners: Kivalliq Inuit Association and Community Learning Centres

Goals of the Program: To build the sewing and literacy skills of young women, to strengthen awareness of traditional skills and Inuit culture and to build the pride and self-esteem of the participants.

Length of Program: 24-weeks

Description of Program: Reclaiming Our Sinew is a 24-week program with six core courses. One part of the program focuses on preparing participants to go on to upgrading programs, enter the workforce or enhance their employability. The other part of the program focuses on teaching the traditional skill of skin preparation and sewing.

Mornings were spent learning traditional skin preparation and sewing techniques with elders. The program was held in a large room in Maani Ulujuk School. By the end of the program, participants had learned the art of preparing, cutting and sewing skins. They also learned how to make caribou skin parkas, pants, mitts and seal skin kamiks and pants.

In the afternoons, the participants focused on upgrading their academic skills at the community learning centre. They received language instruction in English and Inuktitut, math, computer and typing instruction.

Highlights and Reflections: The idea for the program came from the Kivalliq Inuit Association and is an excellent example of putting Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit[20] into practice. It was also as strong example of a partnership between the territorial and federal government, Nunavut Arctic College, the schools, the Hamlet and the Inuit organization.

"Since I started the course I've made caribou pants, parka, mitts, socks, seal skin mitts and three pairs of kamiks. I'm proud of my sewing and what I have learned from the elders."

Shauna Ussak, Student

[20] Inuit Qaujimajatuqanginut is the past, present and future knowledge, experience and values of Inuit society. It is the Inuit way of doing things.

APPENDIX D: CASE STUDIES

NEW HORIZONS SKILLS LINK PROGRAM

Community: Inuvik, NWT

Program Delivery Agent: Inuvik Youth Centre

Program Funders: HRSDC (main funder); GTC and IRC (regional bands)

Program Partners: Inuvik Youth Centre; Ingamo Hall Friendship Centre; Aurora College; Inuvik Works, Town of Inuvik; Education, Culture and Employment

Goals of the Program: 12 youth participated in this program that was directed at giving the youth an opportunity to gain a number of skills related to employment.

Length of Program: March 12 to June 29 (four months in total)

Description of Program: New Horizons Skills Link was a four-month program designed to give participating youth the skills needed to gain meaningful employment. Youth taking part in this program learned valuable employability skills and gained hands-on experience through a number of workshops, community involvement projects and a three-week work experience placement.

Comprised of three components:

Workshops:
Personal Development Workshops: Participating youth developed goals and a better sense of self through the following workshops colour spectrums, communication, conflict resolution, sports and fitness as well as team building.

Cultural Workshops: These workshops provided the opportunity for youth to participate in a number of cultural activities, including: ice fishing, carving, trapping, storytelling and traditional medicines.

Skill Enhancement Workshops: These workshops were designed to prepare participants with the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence to enter and maintain a job within the workforce. Workshops included: job searching, resume and cover letter writing, rights and responsibilities, first aid and CPR training, computer training, literacy development and money management.

Community Involvement Projects:
Program participants took part in four community involvement projects. These projects gave the participants hands-on experience as well as an opportunity to develop additional skills and a sense of pride in giving back to their community. Moreover, participants were given the opportunity to develop planning and organizing, problem solving skills, cooking, landscaping and carpentry.

Work Experience Placement:
During the last month of the program the participants had the opportunity to gain real life experience in a work experience placement. For three weeks participants gained on-the-job experience with a local partnering organization.

Additional Benefits of the Program: Participants were paid $12 for every hour that they participated in the program. The wage subsidies were provided by HRSDC and the local Aboriginal bands.

Highlights and Reflections: It was expected that only five of the 12 participants would complete this program. Program organizers were very proud that 10 of the participants completed the program, five of whom were offered jobs upon completion. The program was a great success! We are hoping to run this again this coming winter.

TRADITIONAL ARTS AND LITERACY PROGRAM

Community: Rankin Inlet, Nunavut

Program Delivery: The Matchbox Gallery, a private gallery and studio space owned by Jim and Susan Shirley of Rankin Inlet.

Goals of the Program: To help participants meet their personal goals, including developing their ability to earn a living as professional artists and upgrading their numeracy and literacy skills. Jim and Sue believe that arts learning and academic learning complement each other and that student's show impressive progress through this approach.

Length of Program: 14 weeks

Description of Program: The Traditional Arts and Literacy Program is intended as a foundation program from which students can choose their artistic direction. Participants in the program study most areas of the traditional arts, including drawing, painting, ceramics, printmaking and soapstone carving. While some of the students have some experience as artists, others have had no prior experience in the arts.

Basic mathematics, reading and writing are an integral part of the program. The instructors feel that the academic programming is successful because they take an individualized approach to preparing course materials and lesson plans. They use materials with northern content which is relevant to experiences, needs and interests of the participants and they gear lessons to individual levels of ability.

The day begins with mathematics. The students learn new skills and review skills they have studied in previous classes. The instructors also create very relevant word problems for math class. They use the students' names and their experiences in the program or in their lives outside class to pose realistic math problems for the students to solve.

Literacy instruction involves reading texts that are relevant to the students' experiences. The group reads aloud and works on vocabulary development based on the text. Daily journal writing starts the afternoon. Students and instructors deepen their interaction and communication through dialogue journals. This is an opportunity for meaningful writing in which students express their problems, goals and wishes, and instructors respond. The instructors gradually introduce ideas about grammar, punctuation and spelling. Some students work on other writing projects such as autobiographies.

In drawing classes, students study techniques for drawing from observation and imagination. They learn to use various drawing tools and materials to express their imagination in different ways. Concepts and related vocabulary are an important part of the drawing lessons. Jim and Sue see a critical connection between drawing and language as forms of personal expression.

The rest of the afternoon the students concentrate on painting, ceramics or sculpture. The instructors encourage the students to respect and understand the various tools and materials used by the artist. They also encourage people to find a way to express their own unique personality by using these media.

Jim's comments: "This portion of the day allowed people to learn about them, to develop their self-confidence, and to take the issues they have at the core of their humanness and give them a tangible and manageable form."

Highlights and Reflections: Jim and Sue believe that the connection between art and academic learning has been well demonstrated by the success of the Traditional Arts and Literacy Program. Students make remarkable progress in all areas of their learning. Jim and Sue have observed that students show greater progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills than they would in an academic-only upgrading program.

"The gallery also provides an important base for positive social interaction and communal experience. The social environment that students have established among themselves at the gallery has proven to be a significant source for healing and personal growth. The communal learning environment, which is the foundation of the survival of Inuit people since the beginning of time, comes naturally to most of the students. The social environment is an important antidote to the alienation that most people have had to come to terms with in their everyday lives. They learn and work in an environment where their individuality is encouraged, appreciated and supported by their peers.

We feel that there are important implications for this program for the educational system as a whole. Needless to say, we are very excited about what we are doing."

Jim Shirley

MAY HAKONGAK COMMUNITY LIBRARY AND CULTURAL CENTRE COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Community: Cambridge Bay, Nunavut

Program Delivery: Kitikmeot Heritage Society (KHS)

Program Funders: Culture, Language, Elders and Youth; Nunavut Library Services; Municipality of Cambridge Bay; Canadian Heritage; Kitikmeot Inuit Association

Program Partners: Culture, Language, Elders and Youth; Nunavut Library Services; Municipality of Cambridge Bay; Canadian Heritage; Kitikmeot Inuit Association; Ikaluktutiak District Education Authority; Kiilinik High School

Goals of the Program: To deliver a range of cultural and educational programs and services aimed at engaging youth who are unemployed and/or have dropped out of school.

Length of Program: On-going

Description of Program: Through the May Hakongak Community Library and Cultural Centre, the Kitikmeot Heritage Society has delivered a range of programming aimed at promoting and supporting literacy and language skill development in both English and Inuinnaqtun. In 2002, the KHS opened the newly constructed May Hakongak Community Library and Cultural Centre. The centre is a fully integrated public library, school library, cultural centre, museum, archives and art gallery.

The objectives of the centres youth-focused programs are:

- To increase the active participation of youth in the decision making process within our organization and within the larger community;
- To enhance the profile of youth in our community;
- To provide youth with positive role models and mentors;
- To revitalize traditional skills;
- To promote positive interactions between elders and youth in our community;
- To develop a heightened awareness among youth for their heritage, which will help them to understand their parents and grandparents who lived such different lives;
- To enhance personal and social skills necessary to maintain a high self-esteem;
- To increase the understanding of cycles of violence and remedies through capacity-building activities and traditional knowledge;
- To provide insight into traditional skills and culture promoted as an alternative to violence and crime.

The centre offers various traditional skill development programs throughout the year. These include skin preparation and sewing and traditional tool-making. These programs also encourage the interaction of elders and youth. Examples of these programs include the following:

Traditional Bow Making:
Youth and Elders worked together to build traditional Copper Inuit bows, and to talk about their heritage and identity as hunters. This program was intended to strengthen their cultural identity and self-esteem by reinstating their Inuit identity and deep cultural background. This is an important goal in its own right, and an additional outcome was that youth would be less likely to engage in activities that would involve them with the justice system.

Tuktup Mikhaagut Project:
The caribou has been one of the main sources of food, clothing and shelter for the Inuit for many years and is still used today by many people who live in the Arctic. The Tuktup Mikhaagut Project is a way of teaching youth some of the skills needed to prepare the meat and skins, and to produce caribou skin clothing. It is also a way to teach youth about the tools used and how to make them.

The project was broken down into themes which included traditional skin preparation, meat preparation, clothing, bones and sinew. Each theme contained various ways of preparation and construction of tools, games and clothing. There were various Inuinnaqtun terms for parts that the Inuit have used for many years that are no longer in existence and rarely used today were shared and recorded by the elder participants. Their uses and personal stories were also shared by the elders.

Summer Camp Programs:
Each summer the centre runs traditional oral history and archaeological camps. Elders, youth and researchers work together to learn more about the history and prehistory of the area. The camps offer participants with an Inuinnaqtun immersion experience as well. The oral history and archaeological research is then used to develop learner materials and other resources for community use.

These programs are also used as a forum for discussing issues of importance to elders and youth in our community, and to re-engage youth who have become overwhelmed with issues facing their families and who lack the coping skills to deal with such issues.

Highlights and Reflections: The success of the programs and services delivered by the KHS is most certainly due to their ability to base the programs on the culture, language and interests of the community of which they serve.

The following promising practice would not be classified as a "non-formal, community-based program", however, elements of the promising practices used in this classroom-based program are important and could be integrated into any formal or non-formal youth program. For this reason, we have included it in this report.

NATIONAL YOUTH LITERACY DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Community: Surrey, British Columbia

Program Delivery Agent: Surrey School District 36

Program Funders: HRSDC and the Crime Prevention Centre

Program Partners: School District 36, Literacy, BC

Goals of the Program: To build literacy skills, academic knowledge, and the behaviours required for success in school and life.

Length of Program: Three years

Description of Program: Surrey school district began operating a demonstration classroom in 2001/02 to address the multiple challenges of Canadian youth. A significant minority of Canadian children are not developing their literacy skills that will help them succeed throughout their lives. The youth have either dropped out of school or were highly likely to do so because of their poor attendance, behaviour issues and failure to complete previous grades. A common reason for academic difficulties is that many children, for various reasons, do not learn to read by the third grade, making the transition to the higher grades very difficult.

A program was put together with youth between the ages of 15 and 16 that offered two sessions daily that reflects "promising practices" identified by researchers and other schools as being effective in helping youth develop critical literacy skills that can help them throughout their life. Some of these include:

Committed and Qualified Staff:
Whenever a group of high need and often adversarial students are aggregated into the same classroom, highly committed and qualified professional staff is required. The specific nature of those qualifications, however, is important to consider.

Research at the New School and elsewhere indicates that harsh discipline, leading to suspension and expulsion, tend to increase aggressive behaviour in students and further breakdown of discipline. Patience and an ability to confront negative behaviour without resorting to yelling or harsh language are essential attributes for a teacher in this setting.

Close teamwork, in which the teacher aid or counsellor is available to work with a disruptive student, is another factor in maintaining classroom discipline while minimizing disruptive confrontations. Because of ever-changing situations, staff members must have the authority to act individually and collectively to assist students as needed. For this to work well, the staff must be able to work together as a tightly knit team. New School staff felt strongly that their non-hierarchical approach to instructional planning and

counselling was key to their ability to act appropriately and efficiently with students.

Explicit Instruction:
Explicit instruction is a systematic instructional approach that incorporates group instruction with a high level of teacher and student interaction, close alignment of curriculum, a focus on big ideas, building on background knowledge, reinforcement of fundamental skills, modeling, scaffolding, guided practice, corrective action and feedback. However, the students and staff never seemed to have enough time to fully address academic subjects or to provide enriched learning experiences. This was in large part because the program operated on a half-day schedule. Students were in class approximately 12 hours a week, less than half of the hours of students in the standard school program. This gap was mitigated somewhat by the New School's intensive instruction schedule and its focus on essential content, but the students still needed more contact hours with teachers. Having students attend at least 24 hours a week is critical if the program is to address the multiple social, emotional, behavioural issues, remedial needs and academic subjects needed to prepare students to complete high school.

Explicit instruction is part of all aspects of the curriculum. Students must not only be told to read about a topic, they must be taught how to read the text. They must not only be told how to behave in class, they must be helped to understand what appropriate behaviour is and shown how to gain control of their anxiety and antagonism.

Students with severe reading challenges cannot learn well primarily from text-based materials. Short lectures, multimedia and hands-on learning are more effective approaches. Programs that use self-paced independent learning materials (requiring relatively high levels of reading skills and self-discipline) are not appropriate for the type of student enrolled at the New School. Although students can benefit from one-on-one tutorial instruction, there are insufficient resources to use this approach primarily. Moreover, there is significant benefit to be derived from working in groups of various sizes.

Learning How to Learn:
Most students develop successful learning strategies through experience. For the most part, the students at the New School had not done so. They had to be taught how to learn. This includes strategies for organizing materials, focusing on assignments, coping with distractions, reading various types of text materials and avoiding distractions in school, at home and from friends. It is important for teachers to recognize this limitation in the students and to expressly teach and reinforce the basic skills and strategies of learning.

Project-based Learning:
Project-based learning activities are an important component of the program design. They provide alternative ways to engage learning that do not rely principally on reading. The minimal class time during the first three years significantly curtailed these activities. Nevertheless, the weekly art class, which took up nearly one-quarter of the schedule, focused almost entirely

around project-based learning. A variety of other technology-based projects were integrated into various other curriculum activities. With an expanded full-day schedule, project-based learning can be implemented across the curriculum.

Creative Activities:
The creative arts (visual, performing, literary) offer multiple ways for students to experience success while they build their literacy skills. Consistently high attendance on "art days" was evidence of engagement. The arts offer opportunities to engage all of the curriculum topics in creative and meaningful ways that reinforce more traditional learning experiences.

During its first three years, the New School used a model that focused on the visual arts taught by one or two instructors. While this offered a valuable experience for students, a broader exposure to multiple arts and other professional artists is recommended.

The weekly three-hour art class at the New School consumed nearly 25% of the in-class time. Given the overall limited class time, this level of commitment was difficult to justify, although staff felt it was an important component of the overall program design. Given the nature of the art projects, allotting fewer than 2.5 hours (the actual length of involvement) would have been difficult as well. With a full-day schedule, three hours a week for arts activities is a reasonable and positive allocation of time.

Progressive Discipline ~ Restorative Action:
The concept of progressive discipline proved to be essential for the success of the program. A rigid "one strike and you're out" zero tolerance policy can lead to counter-productive antagonistic confrontations that often result in the termination of a student who greatly needs the assistance of the program. The New School evolved a zero tolerance but progressive discipline process that did not accept anti-social and destructive behaviour, but allowed students to grapple with their issues through counselling and coaching and reintegrate more positively back into the class community.

Highlights and Reflections: There has been a significant improvement with attendance, kids are staying in school and also, on average, have raised their reading scores.

APPENDIX E: SUGGESTED READING

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APPENDIX F: ADDITIONAL INTERNET RESOURCES

Program Sites

May Hakongak Community Library and Cultural Centre Programs
http://www.kitikmeotheritage.ca

New Horizons Skills Link Program
http://www.inuvikyouthcentre.org./news/index.html

National Youth Literacy Demonstration Project
http://www.youthliteracy.ca

Reference Sites

The Directory of Canadian Adult Literacy Research
http://www.nald.ca/crd/

ERIC – Educational Resources Information Centre
The ERIC database is the world's largest source of education material.
http://www.eric.ed.gov/

National Adult Literacy Database (NALD)
This is a comprehensive database of adult literacy programs, resources and activities across Canada. Included are links to worldwide sites.
http://www.nald.ca/index.htm

Research Papers

The Challenge to Create a Safer Learning Environment for Youth
Jenny Horsman

This report outlines the findings of a year-long research study carried out in Ontario to:

- Understanding of the complex picture of how violence affects learning;
- Examine how school responses play a part in creating this picture; and
- Strengthen the possibilities to support learning for youth in high schools and in youth literacy and training programs.

The full report: *The Challenge to Create a Safer Learning Environment for Youth* can be accessed at www.jennyhorsman.com/ChallengetoCreate_FinalCopy.pdf

The short report: *The Impact of Violence on Learning for Youth: What Can We Do?* focuses particularly on the words of the interviewees – especially the youth – and their suggestions about what we can do to improve education. It can be accessed at www.jennyhorsman.com/WhatCanWeDo_FinalCopy.pdf

Capstone Project: Inuit Youth and Dropout
Deborah Maguire

The Capstone Project was presented by Deborah Maguire for the completion of a Master's of Education in Teaching and Learning from the University of Calgary. Deborah was a teacher and vice-principal at Netsilik School in Taloyoak, Nunavut. The report focuses on the following questions:

- Why do Inuit students drop out?
- What can schools do?
- What should be done?

Out of Step: Inuit Youth and Dropout
http://www.polarnet.ca/~netsilik/Capstone/AS-I-Search.html

Youth-specific Sites

The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement
The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement brings together the expertise of youth, youth service providers, academic researchers and policy makers to identify, build and implement models of effective practices for meaningfully engaging youth.
http://www.engagementcentre.ca/

youth.gc.ca
A source of information about programs and services for youth at the community level and beyond.
http://www.youth.gc.ca/interim.html

Centre for Research on Youth at Risk
The centre brings together scholars from different disciplines to focus on youth at risk.
http://www.stthomasu.ca/research/youth/background.html

Youth at Risk
Youth at Risk develops programmes that are designed to engage with young people to make a deep and lasting difference to their lives.
http://www.youthatrisk.org.uk/

Youth at Risk: Unlocking Futures
The Mission of Youth at Risk is to decrease the at-risk behaviour of youth and to enhance the effectiveness of the people who live and work with them.
http://www.nyyouthatrisk.org/