



DRAFT

NWT JK – 12

**Indigenous Languages &
Education Handbook:**

*Our People, Our Land, Our Ways,
Our Languages*

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Preamble

The Indigenous Languages and Education (ILE) Handbook: Our People, Our Land, Our Ways, Our Languages is co-created by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) with and following recommendations of the ILE Handbook Ad Hoc Advisory Committee (2017-18).

Among the many powerful topics of conversation explored during the formational meetings, recurring themes focused on the following needs:

- *every NWT educator* to develop an understanding of Indigenous worldviews;
- *every NWT educator* to work towards Indigenous language revitalization and Indigenizing education; and
- *all education in the NWT* to be securely rooted in place and land.

The ILE Handbook: *Our People, Our Land, Our Ways, Our Languages*, aims to embody the foundational Indigenous philosophies that teaching and learning be:

- Holistic, focusing on the development of respectful relationships with the self, others, the land, and the spiritual world;
- Relational, nurturing relationships with self, family, Elders, community and culture, the land and the spiritual world;
- Spiral, revisiting familiar themes over time with increasing complexity as the learning spiral turns; and
- Experiential, purposefully engaging learners in direct experiences, hands on activities and focused reflections to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking.

The Handbook speaks to the mind, heart, body and spirit of the Readers in an ongoing spiral learning journey, encouraging the Readers to engage with the handbook by actively and intentionally reflecting upon each section and putting research-based information and best practices into action. By actively participating in the reflective processes, engaging in complicated conversations, and collaborating with colleagues to implement best practices, the Readers will build healthy relationships, expand their knowledge base and experience the difference that Indigenizing education makes.

The Handbook does not offer quick fixes.

It is written with the understanding that many of the practices within may be revisited and reattempted over time until they work, or until the Readers find the deeper understanding of Indigenous languages and education in their classrooms, schools, and communities. Language Revitalization and Indigenizing Education, like Reconciliation, are ongoing processes of which we are each and every one an elemental part.

A Message from the Minister

To be written for 2019/2020

Acknowledgements

To be written for 2019/2020

Introduction: The Indigenous Languages and Education Policy Background

A 2014 review of the Aboriginal Language and Culture-Based Education (ALCBE) Ministerial Directive highlighted 4 areas of concern:

- 1) Lack of Indigenous language fluency,
- 2) Lack of integration of Indigenous culture and language programming,
- 3) Fragmentation of roles and responsibilities between home, community and school, and
- 4) Ineffectiveness of accountability, monitoring and evaluation.

The Indigenous Languages and Education (ILE) Policy has replaced the previous ALCBE Directive and aims to improve support to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, regional Education Bodies (District Educational Councils and Authorities), and educators alike in welcoming all students within learning environments that centre, respect and promote the Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages of the community in which each school is located.

Supporting Documents

The ILE Procedures Manual further details the funding conditions and reporting expectations associated with the new ILE Policy for regional Education Bodies, including Superintendents, Comptrollers and Principals.

The NWT School Funding Framework (NWTSFF) has been updated to include new, conditional funding formulas associated with the ILE policy. This information is relevant for Education Bodies, including Superintendents, Comptrollers and Principals. The NWTSFF has been developed to improve funding allocations related to Indigenous language and education programming to ensure that all funding is being used appropriately and specifically for the activities it is intended to support. Furthermore, the new accountability measures will provide insight into the impacts of Indigenous language and education programming.

The Education Accountability Framework is intended for use by Education Bodies, including Superintendents, Comptrollers and Principals and contains information related to planning for and reporting on Indigenous Languages and Education programming.

The ILE Handbook is intended for educators, including Principals, Teachers, Indigenous Language Instructors and Educational Assistants, so they may better understand how to put the ILE Policy into practice and to share promising practices regarding Indigenous languages and education programming in the NWT. It also provides information about the NWT School Funding Framework that is available to support ILE Policy implementation.

Our Languages Curriculum is a competency based curriculum that provides NWT Indigenous language educators with the curricular objectives, instructional strategies and assessment tools to deliver language instruction in the NWT core Indigenous language classrooms. As there are nine official NWT Indigenous languages, ECE is developing a new JK-12 Indigenous languages curriculum called *Our Languages* curriculum. The draft curriculum is aligned with the two foundational curricula, *Dene Kede* and *Inuuqatigiit*, which grounds the teaching and learning in NWT Indigenous traditions, culture and place. The curriculum focuses on students' attainment of five language learning levels: Emergent, Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, and Capable by the end of grade 12.

Purpose: Operationalizing the Policy

The ILE Handbook, *Our People, Our Land, Our Ways, Our Languages*, is designed to provide educators with the necessary information, resources, support and guidance to operationalize the ILE Policy by reinforcing its four defined principles:

- 1) Schools must actively implement *Dene Kede & Inuuqatigiit* to bring forward, in all instruction, the Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages of the community in which the school is located;
- 2) Schools should welcome all students within learning environments that centre, respect and promote the Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages of the community in which the school is located, through building the school-community relationship, offering educator training and employing a whole school approach to Indigenous language use;
- 3) Schools should work toward Indigenizing teaching and learning practices, Indigenizing the content of curricula and programming and providing opportunities for all JK-12 students to engage in authentic and relevant key cultural experiences throughout the school year; and
- 4) Schools that provide Indigenous language instruction must offer dedicated time for Indigenous language instruction within the regular education program and actively implement the *Our Languages* curriculum.

How to Use the NWT ILE Handbook

The ILE Handbook, *Our People, Our Land, Our Ways, Our Languages*, is a compilation of the research, examples and anecdotes of lived experiences and information for NWT educators to better understand how to operationalize the ILE Policy. It is also designed to share promising practices regarding Indigenous languages and education programming in the NWT. The Handbook serves as a user-friendly field guide outlining actions and activities that educators can undertake to deliver quality education that promotes and enhances Indigenous languages and education in the NWT. Each section of the Handbook corresponds to the defined principles of the ILE Policy:

- **“Our People: Being a Capable Person,”** the yellow section, corresponds to principle 1, which draws upon the *Dene Kede & Inuuqatigiit* curricula for the definition of a Capable Person;
- **“Our Land: Creating a Welcoming Environment,”** the green section, corresponds to principles 1 and 2;
- **“Our Ways: Indigenizing Education,”** the blue section, corresponds to principles 1 and 3; and
- **“Our Languages: Strengthening Indigenous Language Instruction,”** the pink section, corresponds to principles 1 and 4.

Structure of the Handbook Infographic (Western Approach)

For many years, education in Canada and the NWT has been understood and delivered through a Western Eurocentric lens. In response to the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (2015) Calls to Action, the new ILE Policy and Handbook are rooted firmly in the unique histories, worldviews, perspectives and landscapes of the NWT.



Central Concept: Our People – Being a Capable Person

The concept of a Capable Person draws from the teachings of the Elders and is based on the two foundational curricula in the Northwest Territories (NWT), the *Dene Kede* and *Inuuqatigiit*. The Elders teach that there are two worldviews that exist in the NWT: the Indigenous and Western Eurocentric worldviews. All people have the capacity to live a land-based and evolving lifestyle that combines the Indigenous and Euro-Western ways of being, knowing, doing, and believing. This is the definition of a Capable Person.

The Handbook is designed to enable educators to provide educational programming that will result in each student fulfilling their potential as a Capable Person, one who walks in two worlds and makes the best decisions for their future.

Relational Elements: Our Land, Our Ways, Our Languages

The support required for every person in the NWT to fulfill their potential as a Capable Person can be drawn from three Relational Elements:

Our Land: Connection to and understanding of the Land is crucial for a Capable Person to understand their history, their place in the world, and to make healthy decisions for the future.

Our Ways: Drawing from a solid foundational understanding of Northern values, beliefs and knowledges empowers a Capable Person to make informed choices and solve contemporary problems.

Our Languages: There are nine official Indigenous languages spread across regional clusters of small communities in the NWT. Fluency in one's ancestral language is an integral aspect of developing one's identity and culture. It provides the speaker with an understanding of self, increased self-confidence, and connection with their culture, both past and present.

Educational Commitments: Creating a Welcoming Environment, Indigenizing Education and Strengthening Indigenous Language Instruction

To strengthen and nurture the connection between A Capable Person and the Relational Elements, the following 3 Educational Commitments must be implemented:

Creating a Welcoming Environment: Schools validating the unique Indigenous worldview of each community are learning environments, which help both students and the community to know that their culture is important, and that the accomplishments of their Ancestors, their Elders, their family and their community enrich the school and classroom environment.

Indigenizing Education: Indigenizing education takes on many forms as the process is rooted primarily in local environments, peoples, cultures, languages, worldviews, traditions and practices.

Strengthening Indigenous Language Instruction: Indigenous languages hold cultural wisdom and insight, and the revitalization of Indigenous languages is a vital step in reconciliation. It is the responsibility of every educator in the NWT, whether a classroom teacher or Indigenous language instructor, or an ally to support the revitalization of all nine official Indigenous languages.

Action Areas:

For the Educational Commitments to be effective, action must be taken to put them into practice in specific areas. These areas are called Action Areas and are listed below.

Action Areas 1 to 3 support educators in **Creating a Welcoming Environment:**

1. Building the School-Community Relationship;
2. Strengthening Training for Northern Educators; and
3. Employing a Whole School Approach to Language Use,

Action Areas 4 to 6 support educators in **Indigenizing Education:**

4. Indigenizing Teaching & Learning Practices
5. Indigenizing Content for Curricula & Programming
6. Offering Key Cultural Experiences

Action Areas 7 to 9 support educators in **Strengthening Indigenous Language Instruction:**

7. Strengthening Core Indigenous Language Programs
8. Expanding Immersion Indigenous Language Programs
9. Engaging Community in Indigenous Language Programs

Indigenizing Exercises:

The Handbook also provides the following Indigenizing Exercises to accompany each of the Action Areas to help educators put their teaching and learning into action by:

- Considering the Benefits ...
- Thinking Differently ...
- Taking Action ...
- Promising Practices ...
- Reflecting ...

In Indigenizing Exercise **1) Considering the Benefits**, the Handbook provides connections to recent and salient research.

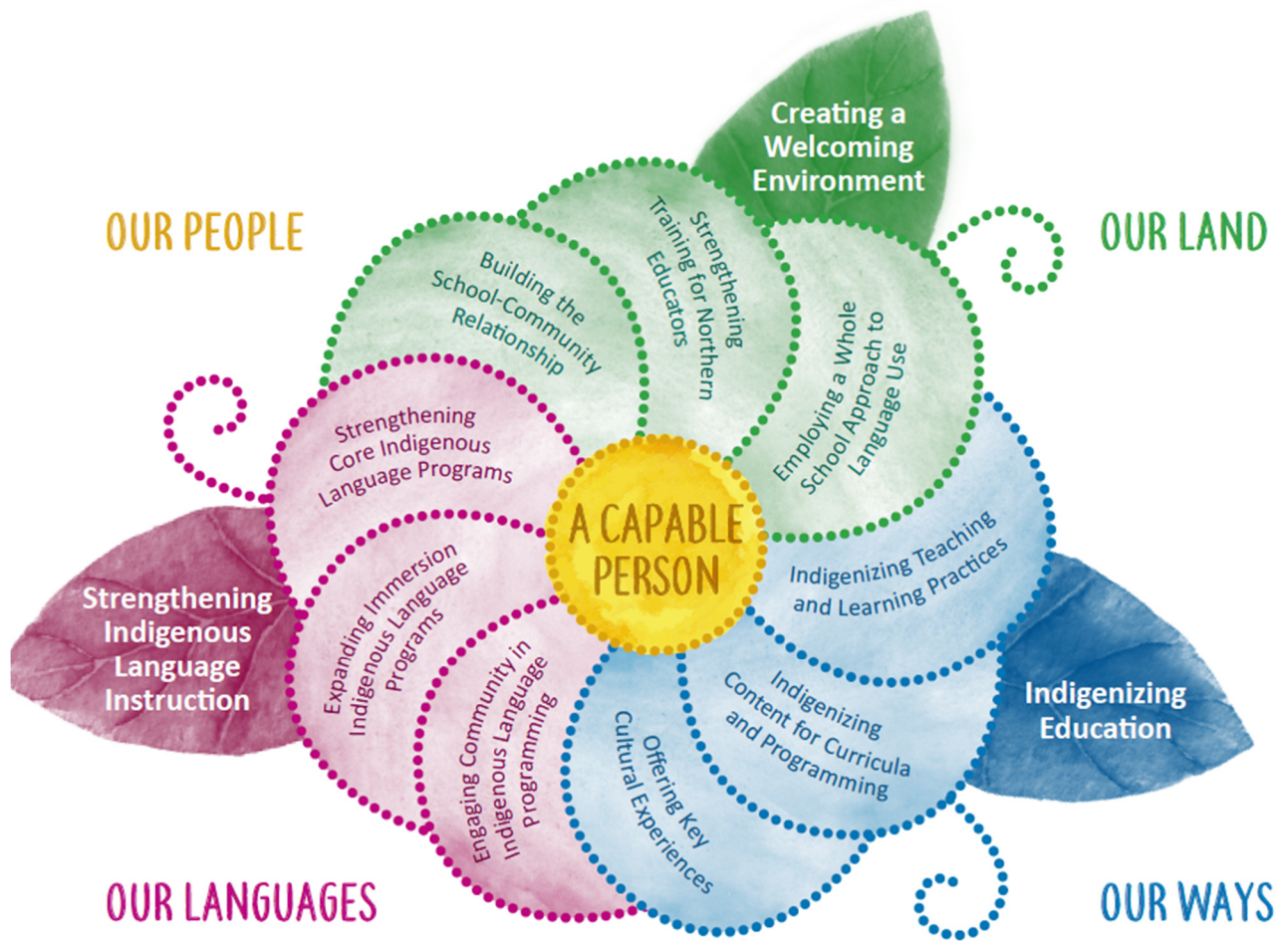
In Indigenizing Exercise **2) Thinking Differently**, the Handbook encourages educators to Indigenize their perspectives, transforming theoretical understandings into information that is personal, relevant and concrete.

In Indigenizing Exercise **3) Taking Action**, the Handbook provides general suggestions of actions that every educator can take to support the corresponding Action Area.

In Indigenizing Exercise **4) Promising Practices**, the Handbook gives examples of the different ways that NWT schools are already implementing the Action Areas for inspiration.

In Indigenizing Exercise **5) Reflecting**, the Handbook encourages educators to connect with Indigenous education and languages on a personal level by engaging in professional reflexivity. This section also facilitates relationship-building and Indigenizing teaching and learning practices as readers complete the reflective questions and activities.

The Arctic Rose (Indigenous Approach)



The Arctic Rose

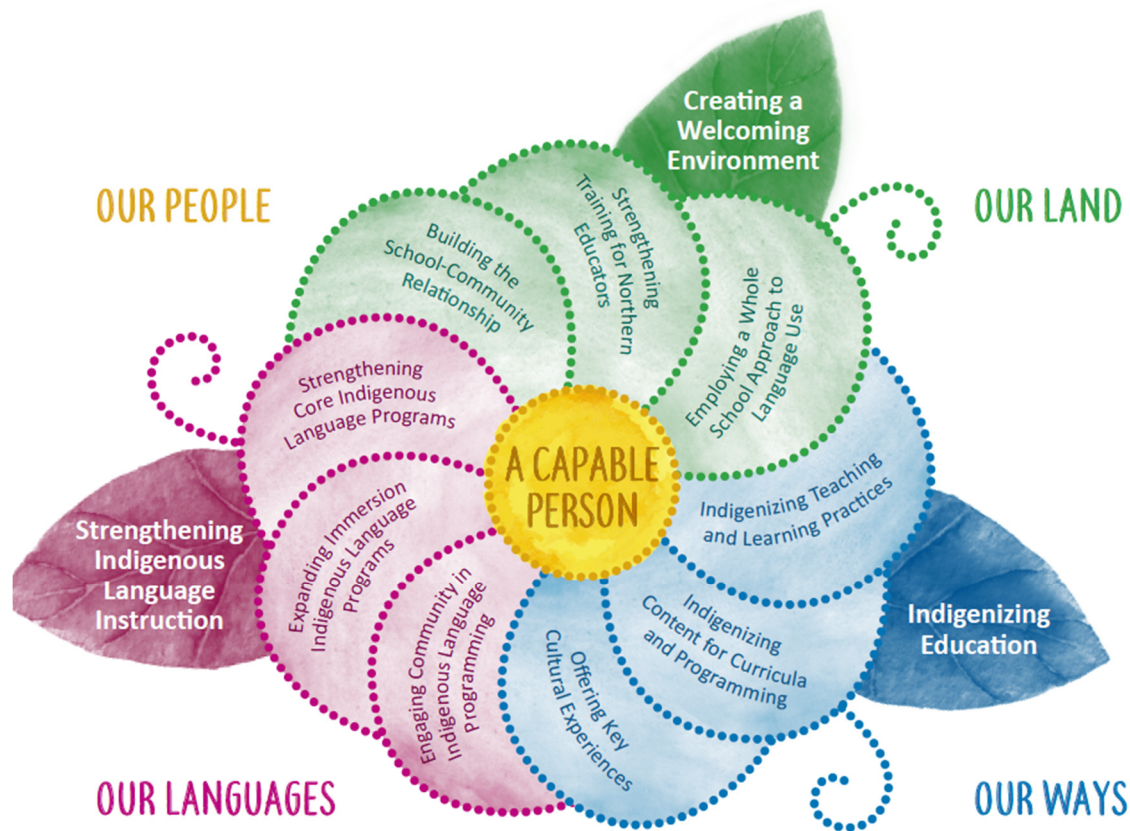
Metaphors play an integral role in making sense and finding meaning in the world around us and this is particularly true in relation to Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, being, and believing. The Arctic Rose is the graphic used to situate the Handbook in the traditions and cultures of NWT peoples' by giving form and breathing life into the concepts and relationships described within the Handbook. The stylized Arctic Rose pattern draws from the traditional design used to decorate clothing, mitts, footwear, and artwork that are displayed and celebrated throughout the NWT. The shape of the Arctic Rose, in turn, illustrates important aspects of Indigenous worldviews and various learning elements that are rooted in Reconciliation, Land, and Spirituality as represented below:

- **Holistic** – the rose is made up of many integral parts that make up the whole of being, knowing, doing and believing;
- **Relational** – the rose exists in constant relationship with its environment, which needs the soil, rain, sunlight and air for its healthy growth and development;
- **Spiral** – the rose's petals emanate from the centre in spiral formation, flowing in life's continuous movement of learning;
- **Experiential** – The rose is alive and endures the elements of life outside itself, as do learners who draw upon outside experiences to shape growth and learning.

The different parts of the Arctic Rose represent the structure of the Handbook in a holistic, relational, spiral and experiential way. The parts of the rose correspond to the different elements of the Handbook as follows:

- At the *heart of the rose* lies the **Central Concept** of a **Being a Capable Person**.
- *Surrounding the rose* are the **Relational Elements** **Our People, Our Land, Our Ways, Our Languages** that make up the environment. As the sun, rain, and soil work together to create a healthy environment for the growth of the rose, the Relational Elements nurture learners as they grow and develop into a Capable Person.
- The *three coloured leaves* attached to their corresponding interior petals represent the overarching **Educational Commitments** that must be made to foster healthy relationships between the Relational Elements. Each leaf exists independently while being interconnected as part of the greater whole.
- The *nine petals whose three colours correspond with the leaves* emanate from the centre of the rose that represent the **Action Areas**, equal in importance and working together, drawing from the past for preservation, into the present learning, and extending into the future of education for the children, families and communities of the NWT.

Our People: A Capable Person



A Capable Person is a concept that originated from the Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit curriculum documents in the mid-1990s, sometimes with different wording yet always with similar meanings. A capable person is one who has integrity in relationships that honour the self, others, the land, and the spiritual world. Through these relationships, a capable person grows and develops a more expansive understanding of the essential physical, mental, emotional and spiritual growth involved in the four parts of human development.

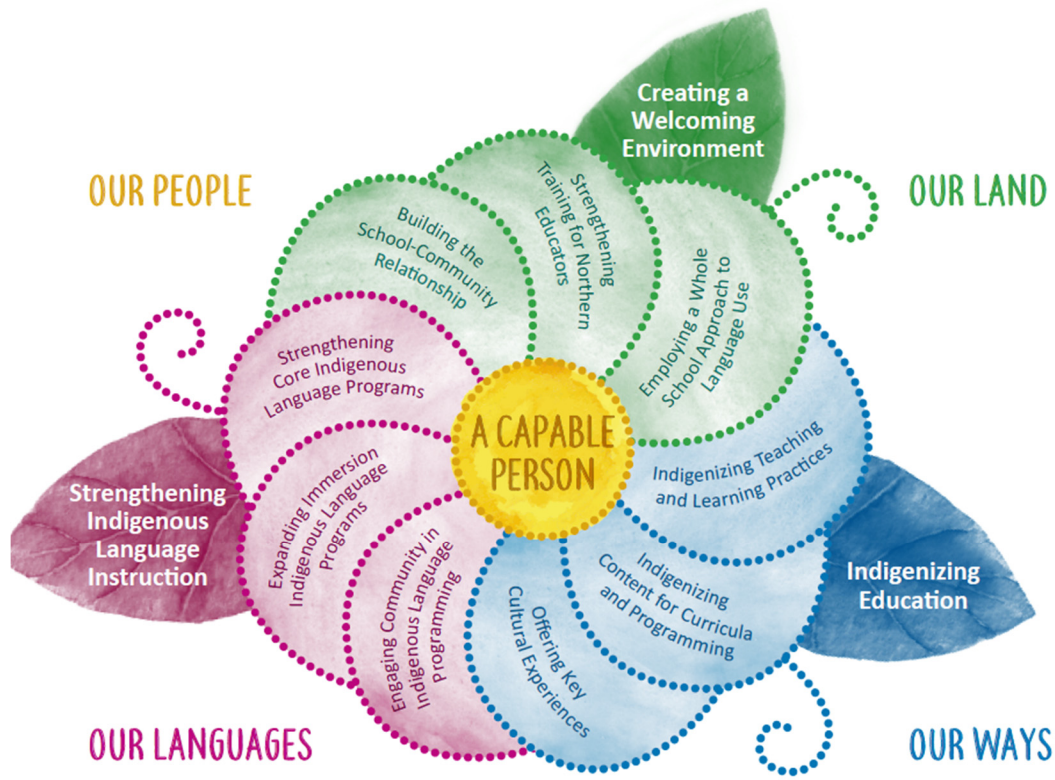
“The concept of a capable person in present day stories finds itself abounding in many related programs, projects and initiatives that celebrate decolonizing and Indigenous education. Examples of these teachings include the Dene Laws, Ojibwe Good Life Teachings, Tipi Teachings, Seven Sacred Teachings, Circle of Courage, The Six Directions, Learning from Native Science, Medicine Wheel, Holistic Lifelong Learning Models, and Circle of Life Teachings outlined in the WNCPC resource, *Our Way is a Valid Way*, (2013, pp. 33-34). These types of programs bring hope in this new century of rebuilding, reconciling and acknowledging the value of Indigenous education in today’s education system,” (James, 2016, p. 42).

As well, many educators, researchers and scholars have expressed ‘a capable person’ philosophy in many ways, including these outlined below:

- *“A happy, healthy human being” (Bopp et. al., 1984, p. 16)*
- *“Living a good life” (Cajete, 1994, p. 46)*
- *“Thinking the highest thoughts” (Cajete, 2000, p. 276)*
- *“Being more fully human” (Friere, 2000, p. 15)*
- *“Working towards a happy life” (Young, 2005, p. 91);*
- *“How to be a good human” (Atleo, p. 99, as cited in Battiste (2013);*
- *“A whole healthy person” (Battiste, 2013, p. 11);*
- *“A righteous human being” (Dorion, p. 34, as cited in Goulet & Goulet (2014)*
- *“I proceed with a good mind and a good heart, ready to listen and ready to act” (Toulouse, 2013, p. 21).*
- *“If you are being a good human being you are accountable to relationships” (Wilson, 2014, YouTube video – Open forum on Indigenous research methodology presented at the University of Manitoba)*
- *“Doing things in a good way” (Dene nahjo, p. 60, as cited in Up Here Magazine, September 2015).*

A capable person is also one who embodies traditional values in a contemporary setting and learns to navigate, narrate and negotiate in both the Indigenous and the Euro-Western worlds. One who values and draws upon the wisdom of the past to create a better future that honours and respects capable ways of being, knowing, doing and believing.

Our Land: Creating a Welcoming Environment



Creating a Welcoming Environment in schools and classrooms can be done by: actively promoting a healthy relationship between the school and the community; by ensuring all educators and school staff understand and respect the Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages of the community; and by making sure that Indigenous languages are spoken and celebrated throughout the school. The value of a welcoming environment is supported by research as illustrated in the excerpts below:

- “If we cannot create an environment in which First Nations students begin to ‘feel at home’ at the [school], all the special programs and support services we can dream up will be of little value in attracting and holding them in significant numbers,” (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1993, p. 5).
- “A welcoming environment for both students and parents/guardians is a necessity to ensure student success. Many First Nation, Metis and Inuit children walk through our schools like strangers. It is as if

we built our schools to change everyone to look like something produced in a big city far away. It is time celebrate our distinctiveness within a larger community,” (Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board & Bluewater District School Board, 2010, p. 56).

- “Many students, Indigenous or not, feel trepidation as they enter a classroom where they may feel uninformed or out of place. Numerically speaking, most Indigenous teaching involves non-Indigenous students, so the issue of such students’ fears is a real one for many teachers... Some teachers draw on their own experiences as a way of connecting to students. Overall, the emphasis is on creating a safe environment in which students can express themselves,” (www.indigenousteaching.com).

Learning involves relationships with ideas, people, life experiences, languages, spirituality, and culture. All are rooted in the place where the learners live and learn, making it essential to connect to the land and people of that place. Helping both students and educators, as learners, to understand where they live and the history of the land around them can better connect them to their communities, cultures and natural environments.

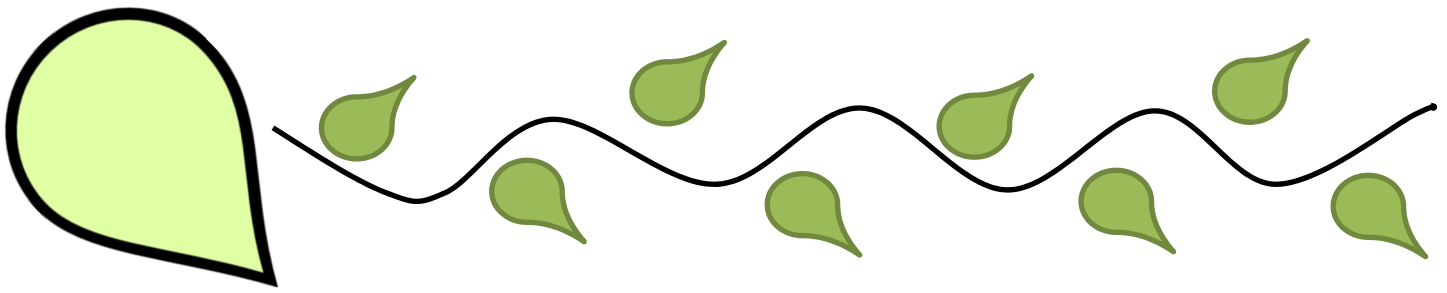
The NWT is the traditional homeland of Dene, Metis and Inuvialuit peoples. As such, it is vitally important for all NWT schools to purposefully and thoughtfully centre, respect and promote the Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages of the Dene, Metis or Inuvialuit. This will also ensure that schools are welcoming and safe for their community members.

When the school validates the unique Indigenous worldview of each community, it helps both students and the community to know that their culture is important and that the accomplishments of their Ancestors, their Elders, their family and their community enrich the classroom environment. When students see their culture reflected within the school environment, from the school’s entrance throughout the classrooms and resource rooms to the staff room, they feel connected to school. Learning then becomes relevant and valued. When community members feel welcomed and safe within the school, they become actively involved in supporting their children in their education.

This section of the Handbook details the first three Action Areas that support – *Creating a Welcoming Environment*:

1. **Building the school-community relationship**, which focuses on growing connections between families and educators;
2. **Strengthening training for northern educators**, which ensures that school staff learn about the community in which they are living and working, from and with community members when possible; and
3. **Employing a whole school approach to language use**, which ensures that the Indigenous languages of the community are used where and when possible, throughout the school.

Each of the three Action Areas above are further explored and elaborated in the next section.



1. Building the School-Community Relationship

“When spring began, I joined the Chief and seven Lutsel K’e hunters on their traditional caribou hunt. We packed our snowmobiles and headed north, above the tree line, to the Barren Lands. We were gone for a week in one of the most remote and rugged terrains. It was an experience of epic proportions – unlike anything I’ve done or seen before. When we came back, we were hauling caribou on the sleds behind our snowmobiles. In keeping with the Dene tradition of food sharing, the hunters gave portions of the meat to family members, friends and elders. In the end it left me with a spiritual appreciation of the Indigenous way of life, a sore back, a new group of friends and a set of memories I’ll cherish for a lifetime.”

~Robin Dhanoa, Teacher, Lutsel K’e (NWTTA newsletter, May 2018)

Building the School-Community Relationship depends on schools’ recognition that communities have many assets and much to offer the education system. It is important for school staff to involve parents and community in school planning and activities, and to share with them the school goals whenever possible. Through meaningful and respectful relationships, people can talk openly, develop shared visions and make decisions in determining the teaching and learning that take place in the school. As well, students can contribute to their community and to their own life-long learning.

Nurturing students’ connections to their communities, cultures and environments, can help to: create positive partnerships between schools and communities; boost student achievement; and improve the community’s overall environmental, social, and economic strength. The school should be an open and inviting place for all community members, as the school and community are intrinsically connected. The active engagement of all partners, including students, family, Elders, community, school staff, educators, Indigenous Governments, businesses, is essential for the development of capable Northern students. Both school and community need to work together to continuously build, maintain and strengthen this relationship.

It is important to understand and respect factors that may prevent one or both partners from reaching out to each other considering:

- some parents and community members may feel that the school is not a safe place due to the legacy of residential schools;
- some students do not see school as relevant or connected to their lives;
- some teachers have difficulty building relationships across cultural differences;

- some parents may feel intimidated by the school environment and may not feel they have a role or voice in the education of their children;
- some teachers and principals see the community as an intimidating place; and
- some community members and students may not trust or invest in teachers and principals as many only stay in the community for a few years.

Although the above scenarios are real and, often, common concerns, it is critical that these issues be worked through so that the school-community relationship can be strengthened. Members of the community need to feel welcome and safe within the school building, and educators need to feel welcome and safe within the community. A positive and healthy relationship between schools and communities can be developed when a welcoming environment exists within the school and when there are authentic ways to involve the community within schools, and schools within the community.

Considering the Benefits of Building the School-Community Relationship



Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit Emphasize Connection

Dene Kede acknowledges that school is not an institution set apart from the community, and that life in school is part of living. Every day, teachers and students in schools turn their attention to some new aspect, some new way of interpreting the world around them. *Inuuqatigiit* recognizes the importance of responding to the natural desire of children to create and extend relationships by taking actions to generate, develop, strengthen and maintain the many types of relationships that exist in schools (Dene Kede, 1993; Inuuqatigiit, 1996).



Family Involvement is Crucial to Student Success

Educational research points to a direct link between family involvement and student success, including positive attitudes towards school, increased attendance, improved behavior and greater academic achievement (James, 2016; Topor, et al., 2010).



Trusting Relationships between Students and Teachers are the Foundation for Learning

A child's interactions, relationships and experiences continue to shape the design of their brain as they grow. As such, trusting relationships between students and teachers have been shown to be even more influential than socioeconomic challenges in the lives of students and community (Harper, 2000; Jones et al., 2015; Kavanagh, 2006; Marchant, 2009).



Learning Must be Rooted in Place

Because learning is rooted in the learner's relationships, connecting learning to the place where students live and to their daily lives is of utmost importance. An educator's job must be to support students in learning about and within their own community and the larger world, and about connections between the two, (Baptiste, 2013; Dion, 2007; Dene Kede, 1993; Inuuqatigiit, 1996).



Teacher Biases Can Present Challenges to Learning

Many educators need first to recognize and then overcome colonial practices in order to build relationships with students, families, and communities in the NWT (Battell & Lowman; Goulet, 2001; Warren, 2005). Connecting with families and communities affirms the value of language, cultural practices and knowledges of the place in which they live and work, and makes it possible for educators and communities to work together to create education that is equitable and just (Goulet & Goulet, 2014).



Safe and Caring Spaces are a Prerequisite to Learning

For Elders, teachers, and youth recovering from the intergenerational effects of residential schools, classrooms can sometimes be unsafe spaces where trauma, philosophical differences, and personal disagreements resurface. Educators, students and community visitors all share equal responsibility in maintaining positive, uplifting classroom environments that encourage learning. A positive atmosphere and optimistic staff are more likely to invite both students and visitors to come to the school and take part in as much as they can (GNWT, 2018).

Thinking Differently

In Building the School - Community Relationship

Parents, Elders, family and communities are a child's first teachers,	therefore...	The school community-relationship will grow when educators see the child through the family's eyes.
Both research and experience show that genuine education is rooted in place and culture,	therefore...	it is important that all NWT schools reflect the culture and values of their community within the school building, routines and programming.
Communities have many strengths and much to offer the education system,	therefore...	it is vital to invite parents, Elders and community into the school to share the school goals and ask for their input and support.
Elders pass on Indigenous knowledge through their wisdom and stories,	therefore...	Elders should be invited into the school often, to help educators become familiar with Indigenous worldviews, cultures, languages and knowledge.
Elders help strengthen the relationships between teachers and their students, parents and the community,	therefore...	educators and students benefit from simply having Elders present in the school, and they should be welcomed as often as possible.
Spirituality, protocol and prayer are an important components of Indigenous culture,	therefore...	it is important for educators to look to and seek out community members to learn traditional protocols and local customs.
The history of the education of Indigenous peoples explains the present and provides direction for the future,	therefore...	educators must make efforts to ensure students, parents and community feel welcomed and safe in the school.
Colonial practices systemically destroyed Indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions and is still referenced texts and resources,	therefore...	educators must do their best to stop all colonial practices despite what existing curricula or resources may say or include.
Educators' own worldviews and cultures influence their teaching,	therefore...	educators need to be aware of and reflect on the influence of their own worldviews and cultures on their students.
Resources that document the residential school experience can be traumatic for students, Elders, parents and community,	therefore...	students should not be required to read all texts or view all films, as the legacy of the residential school experience is impactful and Indigenous and non-Indigenous students may suffer traumatic effects.
The "Sixties Scoop" has compounded the effects of separation of children from families with ongoing consequences,	therefore...	educators must learn about the Sixties Scoop to understand the significance of ongoing trauma and the need to heal relationships between the system and families due to the history of abuse.

Taking Action

For Building the School-Community Relationship

- ☑ Ensure that school events are community-friendly by involving community input in both planning and participation. All events should reflect the cultures, traditions, histories and values of the community members in attendance.
- ☑ Be aware of the history and ongoing legacy of residential schools on a national, regional and community level. Knowing how the residential school system functioned on a macro scale, as well as individual experiences, enables educators to act with empathy and understanding.
- ☑ Take steps to bring the community and community members into the school, for example, by naming rooms after Elders, posting portraits of local Elders, or highlighting the achievements of community members over announcements or on bulletin boards.
- ☑ Pursue active partnerships with community organizations. There are many organizations in place with resources and inter-relationships; working together helps all parties better serve the community. Some examples include Band Councils, Indigenous governments, health authorities, family services and community recreation offices.
- ☑ Reach out to parents early in the school year to build rapport and continue to invite them to participate in the classroom activities throughout the year. Make an effort to get to know families and to form family connections in the community as this will demonstrate kindness and respect.
- ☑ Learn about the local history of the region and community, and learn and respect local protocols and traditions. Accepting corrections and responding with humility when mistakes are made demonstrates resilience, respect and good intentions.
- ☑ Reflect frequently on teaching practice and educational philosophy, question assumptions and be aware of privilege and positionality. At its core, “common sense” is a set of values and beliefs agreed upon by a group, and therefore can vary from place to place.
- ☑ Look to mentors who foster and maintain positive relationships with community members for advice and support. Many educators face the same challenges and veteran teachers have much to offer in the way of advice, insight and even facilitating social connections.
- ☑ Invest time outside of the classroom to build relationships with Indigenous students and families. Due to an educational history that includes residential schooling and high teacher turnover, well into the present day, putting additional effort into relationship-building reveals a genuine caring for students and families.
- ☑ Connect education with community resource people; they are the true experts.

Promising Practices for Building the School-Community Relationship

Welcoming Elders



Involve Elders in the day-to-day operation of schools, as well as within classrooms to build a welcoming relationship with elders and community members. Encouraging Elders into classrooms demonstrates a respectful relationship, between school and community, to the students and also helps them recognize family members in their learning environment.

Showcasing Culture

Hanging pictures of students, Elders, and community members participating in cultural activities shows students that participating and welcoming community members in learning activities helps build trust between communities and the education system, and improves working relationships between all parties.



Embracing Leaders



Inviting community leaders to speak at in-services, which can actively create opportunities for community mentorship for school principals and school staff. A local leader provides students and staff as a role model for the community and encourages students to continue to work hard and help within the community.

Contributing to Community

Participating in community activities and volunteering to show commitment and respect to the community. There are many organizations communities offer to help connect and understand their culture and practices. By helping out with local groups can help build network supports and relationship for educators with community members.



Reflecting on Building School - Community Relationships

Describe your school-community relationship overall, from your own perspective. In what ways is it strong and in what ways could it be strengthened? What challenges, if any, exist to moving this relationship forward?

Describe a time when you witnessed the building of school-community relationships. What happened? Who participated in the activities or events? How did you feel? Why do you feel this experience was successful?

What actions does your school currently take to forge healthy bonds with the community it serves?

Take a moment to think about a member of your community that you are close with. What has this relationship taught you? How has learning from that friend influenced you as an individual and as an educator?

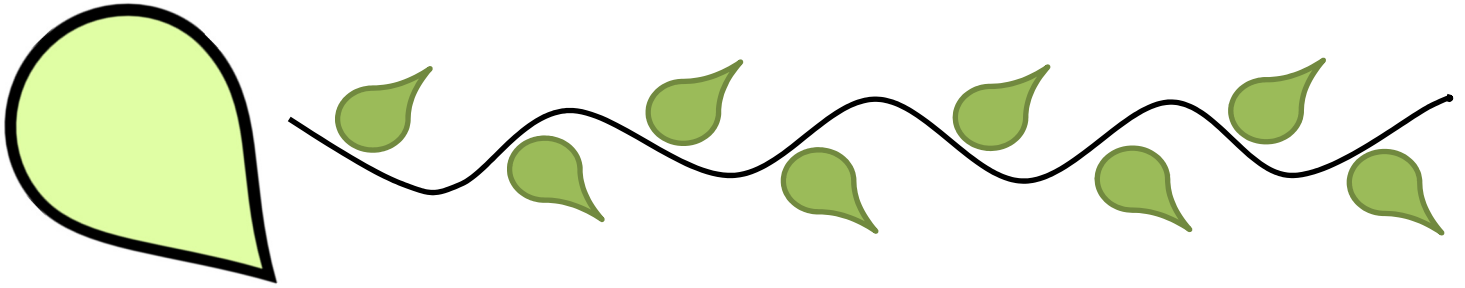
How do you contribute to the building of a strong school-community relationship, as both an educator and a member of your community?

What guidance, advice or resources could help others build the school-community relationship? Where might useful resources be found?

Brainstorm a list of specific actions you could take to help build the relationship between your school and community.

Extension: Set 1 to 3 personal or professional goals for yourself that you could pursue to help build your school-community relationship. Take a moment to think about and list some actionable steps you can take and, perhaps, a timeline to achieve them.

Notes



2. Strengthening Training for Northern Educators

“Through participation in ELP and N2NEC, new teachers and principals work with Elders, experienced teachers and principals from across the territory in a host community and connections are made through on the land activities and interactions with community members. Through a place-based learning approach, ELP and N2NEC participants gain a deeper understanding of land and community. The hope is that these experiences support new teachers and principals working effectively within their own NWT communities.”

- Colleen Eckert, ECE Professional Development Coordinator

Strengthening training for Northern educators is essential in order to provide educators with the background and context from which they can learn more about the community in which they live and work. This provides the foundation for educators to contribute to the ongoing development of positive relationships with students, parents, and the community at large. Building an understanding of the impacts of colonization and learning about constructive steps toward decolonization and reconciliation can and should be realized through individual and school-wide initiatives.

Across the NWT, a significant shift is taking place as educators have awareness and insight into the importance of highlighting Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages in all aspects of classroom learning. The effectiveness of this shift depends upon a review of what is being taught (curriculum), how it is being taught (pedagogy), the tools being used to teach it (resources), the assumptions that are made (expectations), and the ways that students, parents and communities interact (relationships). Furthermore, a significant shift in educator mindset is required to examine personal expectations and cultural biases. Educators must understand the importance of self-reflection and demonstrate a willingness to become an active member of the community. These two qualities or actions will lead to more effective teaching and a higher degree of job satisfaction in the long term.

There are several systems-wide training opportunities in the NWT that aim to help all educators learn about the NWT and the community in which they live and work, including:

- The New-to-the-North Conference in Yellowknife provides an overview of the NWT education system;
- Community or regional Cultural Orientation Days offer a detailed explanation of the culture(s) and language(s) of the people, community, and region in which the teacher is working;

- The Teacher Induction and Mentorship Program pairs new and experienced Northern teachers to help grow an understanding of the local school and community culture; and
- The Educational Leadership Program (ELP) is a mandatory summer training program for principals in the NWT, which is also open to teacher-leaders with a minimum of two years of experience in NWT schools.

The aim of these training opportunities is to better equip educators to build and maintain positive school-community relationships and encourage them to choose to become invested in the community.

Considering the Benefits of Strengthening Training for Northern Educators



Student Achievement is Influenced by Effective Instruction

Studies have shown that a number of personal and professional qualities contribute to improved student achievement. Excellent communication skills, content expertise, a deep understanding and command of multiple pedagogies, professional certification, honed teaching skills and passion for the subject are common characteristics of the most successful teachers. Increasing teacher effectiveness must be central to school efforts to improve student outcomes; therefore, the GNWT is committed to strengthening support and training for its teachers. (Heyck, 2009; Tucker & Stronge, 2005)



Teacher Professional Development (PD) Correlates Directly to Student Achievement

Student learning is most positively impacted when teachers receive between 30 and 100 hours of additional, high-intensity professional development each year. The best forms of PD are: collaborative learning, collaborative action research, observational classroom visits, insightful content knowledge training and teacher induction and mentorship programs, (Wei, 2009).



Teacher Induction and Mentorship Programs Benefit Everyone

ECE implements and supports its teacher induction and mentorship program to provide benefits to: 1) **students**, by offering continuity in instruction and improved teacher performance, 2) **new and beginning teachers**, by offering accelerated success and effectiveness, improved self-confidence and skills, increased opportunity for building connections with the community and improved level of comfort and supports, 3) **mentors**, leadership development, increased collaboration and shared learning, 4) **administrators**, improved principal-teacher relations, leadership development of staff, and greater retention of teachers. 5) **the school and community**, increased student success and understanding of the community and culture and retention of competent teachers within the community (GNWT, 2011).



Educating for Reconciliation Shifts the Paradigm

To ensure that education is equitable and just, it is necessary for all educators to hold a basic understanding of the processes and conditions that have led to the current state of education. Creating such awareness among educators can be difficult because “Canada has generated in its self-narrative a description of a generous, liberal, and progressive society that has overcome its earlier bigotries and prejudices,” (Battiste, 2013, p.125). Privilege is less visible to those who are accustomed to taking their advantages as a given and many educators are unaware of the ways they participate in systems that perpetuate the colonization and oppression of Indigenous Peoples (Freire, 1970; Ranciere, 1990).

Residential School and Cultural Awareness Education

Many Canadians struggle to understand the ways that the unique history of Colonialism in Canada has presented challenges and barriers that specifically effect Indigenous people. The research demonstrates that, although educators overall express commitment to equality and social justice, it is necessary to refocus on equity and responsibility instead. Exploration and understanding of the history and legacy of residential schools on NWT communities and individuals and their intergenerational effects, and teacher awareness and training provide the context for improved teaching and learning environments for NWT Students. Well-planned in-servicing of teachers in these issues can have profound impacts on their understanding of, and their relationships with, both students and the communities they live in. (Campbell et al., 2015; Costello & Higgins, 2011; Dion, 2007; Caouette & Taylor, 2015; Lewthwaite et. al., 2013, 2014, 2015)

Thinking Differently in Strengthening Training for Northern Educators

<p>The NWT has a Teacher Induction and Mentorship program to support new and beginning teachers in their first year in the North,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>teachers arrive with a built-in support system to guide them through their transition to Northern life.</p>
<p>Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practices (STIP) is a three-year pilot project where non-instructional hours are scheduled into the calendar for teacher professional development,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>schools can take advantage of these hours to provide educator training in cultural awareness, anti-racism, cultural competency, key cultural experiences, etc.</p>
<p>All newly hired teachers are invited to attend the New to the North conference before arriving in their communities,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>educators who attend this valuable learning experience have an improved understanding of the context and valuable information to help them adjust more easily to their new school and community.</p>
<p>The Educational Leadership Program (ELP) is a mandated certification requirement outlined in the Education Act for all NWT Principals. All NWT educators interested in leadership are encouraged to take the ELP as well,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>educational leaders in the NWT are better equipped to create a welcoming, safe, Indigenized school environment through ELP which is a place-based leadership training that draws from both Western and Indigenous ways of knowing.</p>
<p>All teachers must infuse cultural teachings and knowledge from Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit into their programming throughout the curriculum,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>teachers draw upon timeless Indigenous teachings to influence their teaching and school norms, to the benefit of student learning. Educators can also use <i>Dene Kede</i> and <i>Inuuqatigiit</i> for their own self-directed learning.</p>
<p>Helping students make connections between existing knowledge and new information is integral to effective teaching,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>northern educators become familiar with the background knowledge and experiences of their students and work outward to scaffold student learning, as best practice.</p>
<p>An authentic, relevant and Indigenized learning experience is key to assuring success for the Northern student,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>educators have the responsibility to engage with and learn about the community in which they live so that they can offer these authentic learning experiences. Best practices point to active, experiential learning, allowing students to assume greater control over their learning experiences.</p>
<p>There are nine official Indigenous languages spread across regional clusters of small communities, and each community holds their own traditions, cultural practices and community protocols,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>educators must know about and understand this diversity and question the assumptions they might carry at all times. Communities sincerely appreciate when teachers take effort to learn language and ceremonies.</p>

Taking Action for Strengthening Training for Northern Educators

- ☑ Listen carefully and observe the school culture and school-community interactions, ask for advice and clarification of mentors and administrators and learn from the writing of Indigenous writers and scholars. Educators who show a desire to learn and take initiative to educate themselves are better prepared to navigate difficult conversations and glean more from professional development.
- ☑ Participate actively in the Teacher Induction and Mentorship Program. Administrators should take care to ensure that novice teachers are receiving the support they need and that mentors are developing as leaders.
- ☑ Use Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practices (STIP) hours for in-services, collaboration and/or Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). The STIP pilot project provides up to 100 hours of non-instructional time for strengthening teacher instructional practices and many educators identify a need for support in forging healthy relationships with their communities.
- ☑ Attend all training opportunities provided (ex: New to the North Conference & Educational Leadership Program) and apply for relevant Professional Development (PD) opportunities. Many courses and conferences dedicated to reconciliation through education exist that educators can learn from and participate in.
- ☑ Read *Dene Kede, Inuuqatigiit & Our Languages* curricula for self-directed learning and seek out local resources. These can be used as professional and personal development resources and are full of timeless Indigenous knowledge that help build bridges of understanding between educators and communities.
- ☑ Be open to learning from students, families and community. In Indigenous worldviews every person has a wealth of knowledge to offer, gleaned from their own lived experience, and everyone, regardless of age, can be either teacher or learner depending on the situation.
- ☑ Communicate with Regional Indigenous Languages and Education (RILE) Coordinators and ECE to coordinate training opportunities.
- ☑ Participate in local events when invited to learn about the community. Events and celebrations are also informal opportunities to learn and develop locally-relevant skills and to build positive relationships.
- ☑ Schedule teachers to participate in their students' Indigenous Language class so that they can learn the language, shoulder to shoulder, with their students and model language learning techniques such as risk taking, making mistakes and having fun.

Promising Practices in Strengthening Training for Northern Educators

Promoting Awareness of the History and Legacy of Residential Schools

With proper awareness and training, educators will be able to provide a safe and welcoming environment within their classrooms and schools. Training will help them understand their community's worldview and will be able to involve community members in the classroom. This training provides educators with an understanding of the traumas that the Indigenous population has experienced and is continuing to heal from.



Recognizing Community Roles

Recognition that Elders, community leaders, parents, and students have much to offer teachers as the experts for land-based professional development. Learning about all the resources that the community has to offer can benefit and expand school community.



Including Indigenous Language Instructors in School-Wide Planning

Some Teacher-Apprentice programs are in place to better prepare Indigenous Language teachers for success in the classroom. Working with Indigenous Language Instructors builds unity in the school with all instructors and provides guidance for all school staff, and especially those who are new to the community.



Reflecting on Strengthening Training for Northern Educators

What was the most helpful training, formal or informal, that you have experienced? What did you learn? Why do you think it was successful?

Describe a moment of clarity, when all of a sudden you understood something that had not been clear before. What was this “A-ha!” moment about? How did it feel?

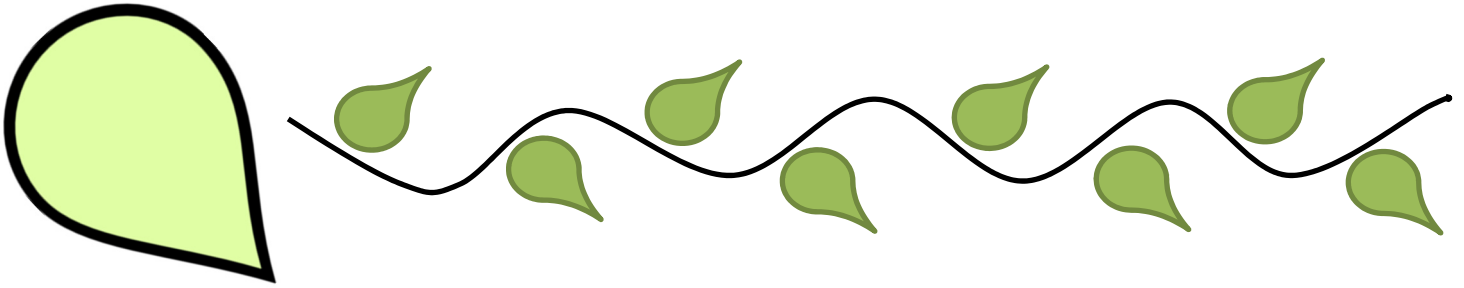
Training can be formal (in-services, professional development, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), Strengthening Teachers Instructional Practice (STIP) groups, etc.) or informal (going on the land, learning a traditional craft, conversations with colleagues, sitting with Elders, etc.). What options are available to you? What sort of training do you wish was available to you?

Choose 3 areas that you would like to develop as a professional and member of your community. Ex: Understanding contemporary impacts of residential schooling; communicating more effectively with parents; differentiating instruction, etc.

What lessons have you learned since you began teaching in your community? What do you wish you had known when you first started out?

Extension exercise: A new teacher is arriving for the upcoming school year. Write a letter or e-mail to them to help them adjust to their new position and community.

Notes



3. Employing a Whole-School Approach to Language Use

“To encourage all of our teachers to learn more of the language and also help with relationship building, I asked my Aboriginal language teachers to work with one teacher each to build lessons together. One group picked physical education and the children were taught how to use the language associated with sport. Because it was physical, the children were engaged and enjoyed using the phrases as they played the games. It helped with the Aboriginal language retention for both the student and the teacher. This was an excellent opportunity for both teacher and student to be learners together. That is what teaching and learning Aboriginal language is all about!”

- Velma Illasiak, Principal at Moose Kerr School, Aklavik (OLC curriculum p. 28)

Employing a Whole-School Approach to Language Use takes steps to bridge a gap created by colonization. Language is one gift that was deeply threatened during the residential school era of Canadian history, which aimed to destroy Indigenous languages and cultures. Whole-School use of the language of the community sets educators along the pathway to reconciliation, which begins with the recognition of the past and an acknowledgement of the valuable gifts that were taken away as a result of the destructive legacy of colonization.

The legacy of the degradation of Indigenous languages lives on as the number of fluent speakers wanes. Today, NWT Indigenous languages are rarely heard in communities and are rarely spoken in community gatherings as they once were, for as Elders pass on, their knowledge of the ancestral languages and tradition pass with them.

Although the 2016 Canada Census documents a 15% decline, since 2011, in the number of people who primarily speak an Indigenous language at home, and an even greater decrease in the number of people who consider an Indigenous language their mother tongue, Northern communities continue to fight to revitalize their Indigenous languages. Some communities actually report a decline of over 50% in the number of fluent speakers.

These statistics are alarming but, there is hope. Hidden within this same data is the fact that some Northern communities reported a rise in the use of Indigenous languages at home and, in these same communities, more people are claiming an Indigenous language as their mother tongue. There are communities where champions of the language have emerged – individuals and groups who promote language usage as a

community-wide priority and whose passion for the resurgence of their languages has spilled over into the community at large, including their schools.

Elders play a critical role as the language-keepers of their communities, but in some cases, these champions are youth themselves, intent on learning and speaking a language that was taken from their parents and grandparents and willing to use innovative strategies to ensure that these languages are not lost forever. Their enthusiasm and ingenuity are hopeful signs that languages can be restored to places of prominence within the communities, and that identity, culture and traditions will be strengthened through its rebirth.

These champions are not alone. Many receive inspiration and support for their cause through the NWT community schools. Language programs in the NWT schools are strategically implementing programs designed to motivate and inspire the youth to become the flagbearers of the movement towards community language revitalization. This commitment takes the energy and effort of the entire staff and a whole school approach towards language.

All school staff have a role in helping to maintain and revitalize the Indigenous languages of the community, regardless of their own ability to speak it, by infusing Indigenous languages throughout the whole school, increasing students' overall exposure.

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Considering the Benefits of Employing a Whole School Approach to Language Use



Languages Teach Us About Culture

Indigenous languages are languages firmly planted in a particular region before the age of European colonization. Language is the principal means by which culture is accumulated, shared, and transmitted from one generation to another. Language expresses the uniqueness of a group's worldview. It defines who you are. Understanding and using Indigenous languages helps educators understand and connect to the place in which they live. (GNWT, 2018; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006).



Revitalizing Indigenous Languages is a Shared Responsibility (New Action Plan, 2018)

Educators committed to answering the calls of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada to teach for Reconciliation, must translate their beliefs into action to create positive change. Even educators who have never spoken an Indigenous language can contribute to language revitalization by learning and using the language. (GNWT, 2018)



A Whole-School Approach Can Improve Student Achievement in All Subject Areas

Research has shown that a whole-school approach to Indigenous language learning can improve student achievement in all subject areas, foster professional development and team-based planning for all teachers, model learning and advocacy among administrators, and involve parents in learning. When everyone makes Indigenous language use a personal and professional responsibility, the languages are sure to thrive. (GNWT, 2018)



Learning Languages Builds Relationships

When students, colleagues and community members begin to see that a teacher respects the language enough to learn and use it, it opens the doors to learning and exchanging. Once the door is open, students will be excited to teach their teachers more words, and Indigenous community members might begin to share more information about culture and tradition. (Battiste, 2000 & 2013; Kavanagh, 2006; Marchant, 2009)



Language Use Creates an Authentic Context for Learning

Literature on language acquisition emphasizes the importance of language play and action-oriented language learning. A child playing in and with a language helps to cement language learning (GNWT, 2018).



Repetition is Important for Cementing Language Learning

Routines may sound simplistic but they reinforce the language and also provide the opportunity each morning for the instructor to introduce new phrases. Ideally, the dialogue, questions, and responses within the routine will vary during the year. This simple routine helps consolidate language learned and also prepares learners to start thinking, listening, and speaking in their language as the class begins. (Archibald, 2009; James, 2016; Kirkness, 1991; GNWT, 2018)

Thinking Differently in Employing A Whole-School Approach to Language Use

Language is the essence of identity and the embodiment of the worldview of its speakers,	therefore...	educators need an understanding of the role of language in learning and forming one's view of the world, of learning preferences, strengths and styles, and of how cultural and community experience provide the foundation for learning and self-esteem.
In schools that employ a whole-school approach to language, Indigenous languages thrive and add life and vibrancy throughout the school,	therefore...	educators are responsible for demonstrating and modeling the value and usefulness of Indigenous languages by using them so that students also see the value in learning their language and have opportunity to use it beyond the door of the Indigenous Language classroom.
Northern teachers are expected to connect languages with authentic learning experience and to support the embedding of traditional knowledge and the cultural content of <i>Dene Kede</i> and <i>Inuuqatigiit</i> into instruction,	therefore...	educators must partner with Indigenous language speakers in order to deliver authentic learning experiences at every opportunity.
When Indigenous languages are restricted to the language learning classroom they do not have the opportunity to flourish and become the norm through usage,	therefore...	schools with a strong language focus move beyond the common and expected. Here, teachers look for links to the language beyond the cultural experiences and infuse language learning into all content teaching.
Indigenous language revitalization is a thriving field of study and new research is continuously being published,	therefore...	principals and educators should familiarize themselves with best practices in the field of second language instruction so they can offer guidance and support to language instructors as they seek to implement programs that are engaging, relevant and inspiring.
The principal sets the tone for the school culture,	therefore...	principals must take an active part in learning and using the language themselves whether it is in greeting staff, students and community members as they visit the school, embedding language in daily announcements or beginning assemblies with language talk.
Language learning is relational: it connects youth to Elders, Elders to teachers, and teachers to youth,	therefore...	when educators learn and use Indigenous languages, relationships are strengthened between all parties.

Encouraging all staff to learn and use the language in their classroom teaching and training Language instructors in effective, research-based strategies (neurolinguistics approach) helps Indigenous languages gain a much-needed foothold in the school and community,

therefore...

principals are responsible for guiding and supporting their staff in Indigenous language revitalization and acquisition efforts.

Taking Action for Employing a Whole School Approach to Language Use

- ☑ Learn greetings and introductions in the local Indigenous language(s), use simple classroom requests and commands, and learn and infuse subject area vocabulary in teaching. In so doing, educators demonstrate that Indigenous languages are valued and useful in all contexts.
- ☑ Use the language in school announcements, assemblies, and special events. Repetition of words and phrases in Indigenous languages will cement the language as a part of the school culture, routines and atmosphere.
- ☑ Put forth effort to learning and practice Indigenous languages in spite of discomfort or fear of making mistakes or failure. This effort is an opportunity for educators to model learning, respect and resiliency to other learners.
- ☑ Download the appropriate regional NWT language app onto mobile devices. The apps were developed alongside language keepers and experts across the NWT and contain a variety of games and activities that educators can use to augment language learning through a relaxed and playful activity.
- ☑ Encourage Language instructors to offer impromptu language lessons in the homeroom classrooms, hallways or staff meetings.
- ☑ Encourage fluent language speakers to remain “in the language” as they interact with students and staff. Ensure that ceremonies including prayer, feeding the fire, paying the land and lighting the qulliq are incorporated into school routines, as language plays a prominent role in all school-organized events such as open-houses, community teas, feasts and concerts.
- ☑ Develop a grammatical understanding of regional Indigenous languages. Insight into the grammar of the local language can help educators communicate more effectively during teaching and social interactions. It also provides insight as some of those grammar rules may be transferred to English language learning activities.
- ☑ Understand that learning Indigenous languages is a privilege and will bring insight and understanding to living in a new community and culture. Much insight is revealed about a place and its people through the language and, due to the history of education that attempted to destroy Indigenous languages, as an educator it is an act of reconciliation to learn and value them.

Promising Practices in Employing a Whole School Approach to Language Use

Using Language Beyond the Classroom

A whole-school approach to language learning moves language beyond the classroom in many ways. In these schools the language is heard in announcements, assemblies and is prominent on school signage and displays throughout the school. Fluent language speakers are encouraged to remain “in the language” as they interact with students and staff. Ceremonies including prayer, feeding the fire and paying respect to the land are incorporated into school routines. Language plays a prominent role in all school-organized events such as open-houses, community teas, feasts and concerts.



Learning the Language

In the beginning of this transformation, teachers commit to learning key phrases so that they can introduce themselves and greet students and parents in their language. Students who hear the language from everyone in the school are better able to connect with the language and culture in the community.



Whole-School Approach

Although commitment from both students and staff is an essential ingredient for making language a central focus of school life, the foundation of this approach is laid by two key individuals, the principal and the Indigenous language instructor. They both have important roles to play in designing and promoting an all-school approach to language learning and success hinges on their commitment, enthusiasm, creativity and drive.



Reflecting on Employing a Whole School Approach to Language Use

Who are the Indigenous peoples and what are the Indigenous languages spoken in your community?

How are Indigenous languages currently represented in your school, in addition to the work of the Indigenous language instructors in Indigenous language classrooms?

How widely are Indigenous languages spoken in your community, and how do your students use their Indigenous languages?

Who are the fluent Indigenous language speakers of the community where you work? Who could you speak to in order to get support as you learn an Indigenous language?

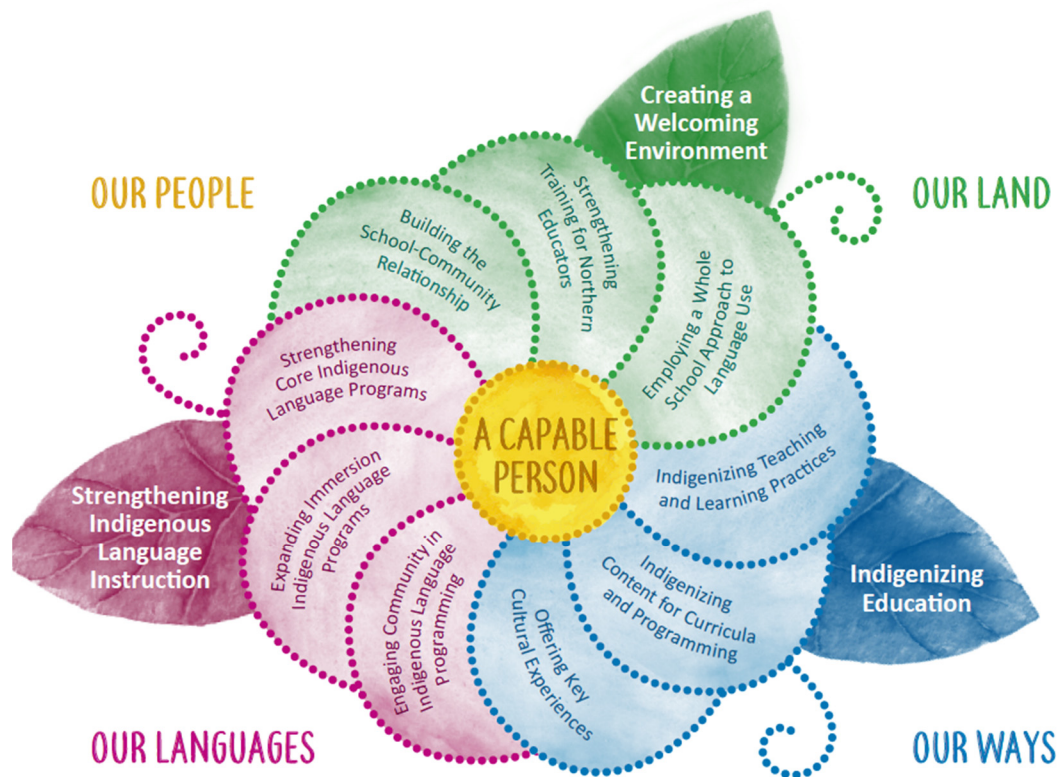
In what ways do you think learning some of the local Indigenous language could help create a welcoming environment? Try to imagine your students' experience as you answer this question or, conversely, try to imagine yourself in a situation where nobody speaks your language.

Extension: To begin your Indigenous language learning journey, complete the following chart. Feel free to replicate this one and add more vocabulary that you feel would be helpful in your community. Note that many words for common plants, animals, places and weather phenomena will be specific and unique to place..

Hello, Goodbye	
Yes, No	
Good, Bad	
Thank you	
My name is...	
I am from...	
How are you?	
Mother, Father	
Grandmother, Grandfather	

Notes

Our Ways: Indigenizing Education



Indigenizing Education is an ongoing process of teaching and learning that pays respect and honour to the Indigeneity of this place. There is no one way to Indigenize education, just as there is no one way to be Indigenous. Rather, Indigenizing education takes on many forms as the process is rooted primarily in local environments, peoples, cultures, languages, worldviews, traditions and practices. Outlined below are several different, but closely connected, interpretations of Indigenizing education and schooling:

- “Indigenizing my teaching is about relationships, curriculum choice, anticipating and correcting racism and it’s also about pedagogy,” – Shauneen Pete (Pete, Schneider & O’Reilly, 2013, p.103)
- “...Indigenizing education is not just about closing the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, but should include “important success goals [that] reflect more of a holistic approach such as a sense of belonging (emotional), student empowerment/leadership (physical), appreciation and knowledge of Indigenous culture and history (social/emotional, spiritual, intellectual),” (Archibald & Hare (2016), p.19).

- “...giving equal credence to and having the flexibility to draw from Indigenous approaches as appropriate. Indigenizing education means that indigenous approaches are seen as normal, central, and useful, rather than archaic, exotic, alternative, or otherwise marginal,” (Mercurieff & Roderick, 2013, p.42).

Indigenizing education requires educators to draw upon the Indigenous principles of:

- **Holism:** Holistic education engages each student intellectually, emotionally, physically and spiritually (the mind, the heart, the body and the spirit).
- **Spiral Learning:** Spiral learning reflects the traditional ways that children learned by being exposed to key cultural experiences that start very basically and advance to more complex levels of theory and practice.

For example, one key cultural experience is learning to build a campfire. Through spiral learning, young children begin by observing how a fire is built. Then, as they get older they learn to work with a small axe and cut small pieces of wood (kindling) and eventually, larger firewood. Ultimately, they work their way up to starting a fire of their own, enjoying its warmth, and experiencing the age-old tradition of storytelling around a campfire. As adults, in turn, they will teach their own children through this age-old practice.

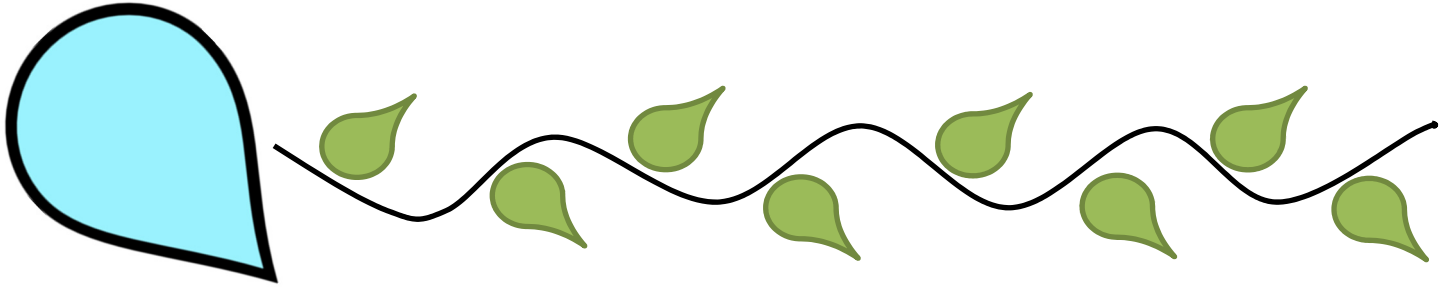
Through spiral learning, children undergo cycles of learning and reach levels of mature capability over time. Initially, they listen to instructions, and then move into learning about stories and legends about fire from family members, guiding them through the lifelong cycle.

- **Relational:** Relational teaching and learning practices nurture relationships with self, family, the community, the land and the spiritual world. Education that is relational emphasizes connection.
- **Experiential:** Indigenizing teaching and learning practices is synonymous with best practice teaching strategies for all students. Many popular pedagogical practices, including inquiry-based learning, student-centered teaching, and self-regulation, have been practiced by Indigenous communities for millennia. Indigenous learners are diverse, as is every classroom, and it would be false to assume there is one specific way to teach Indigenous children. This section shares many practices that educators can use to teach all students effectively.

This section of the Handbook details three Action Areas that help educators under the theme of **Indigenizing Education**:

4. **Indigenizing Teaching and Learning Practices** which encourages a shift from the current western or Eurocentric method and practice of teaching to an Indigenous method and practice of teaching;
5. **Indigenizing Content for Curricula and Programming** which aims to see educators use content and themes that are relevant to students and reflect Indigenous worldviews, languages, cultures and communities; and
6. **Offering Key Cultural Experiences** which ensures that schools are equipped to offer, and students have access to, authentic and relevant cultural experiences.

Each of the three Action Areas above are further explored and elaborated in the next section.



4. Indigenizing Teaching and Learning Practices

[To engage students,] any chance I get I like to combine curriculums. In math for instance, it is easy to incorporate a cooking lesson if you are teaching fractions. You can do a volume and area unit along with a carpentry project. The more students can see the practical side of learning, the more success they will have.

- Lorne Guy, Teacher, Inuvik (NWTTA Newsletter, February 2017)

Indigenizing Teaching and Learning Practices involves bringing Indigenous teaching and learning concepts to all aspects of education. It is necessary first and foremost to recognize the longstanding impact that Eurocentric beliefs and values and ways of doing and being have had on the traditional learning practices in Northern schools. In contrast to contemporary Western forms of education, Indigenous children were traditionally educated by their friends and families. It was understood that children had the ability to learn from the results of their behaviours and actions, therefore non-interference as a pedagogy meant that learners were not usually given specific instructions. Instead, people learned from being still, watching closely, trying and doing. Education was not standardized, and Elders and community members would watch students to see where and how their interests and talents developed.

To Indigenize education and schooling, schools must actively plan and teach using the NWT foundational curricula: *Dene Kede* or *Inuuqatigiit*. Educators committed to Indigenizing education and schooling go out of their way to centre Indigenous topics in units and lessons and offer students the opportunity explore and discover their own histories as well as current issues that relate to their lives. When community members are invited to offer key cultural experiences to students, the students recognize them as primary knowledge keepers in the North, and come to realize that the Northern worldview is based on Indigenous history, teachings and values.

Adopting teaching and learning practices that are holistic, relational, spiral and experiential, developing content and resources for curricula and programming that reflect the Indigenous worldviews, languages and cultures, and actively offering a variety of authentic and relevant key cultural experiences – all are ways to Indigenize education. The process of Indigenizing education goes hand in hand with the recognition of the importance of culture in learning and key cultural experiences. By adjusting our teaching outcomes to

include Indigenous worldviews, concepts, experiences and values, Northern students will deeper understand who they are, the place they come from and the possibilities of where they will go.

Considering the Benefits of Indigenizing Teaching and Learning Practices



Indigenizing Education is Best Practice

Culturally relevant education has been shown to vastly improve learning outcomes for all students. When students see themselves in their learning they are intrinsically motivated to become engaged and see value in their efforts. Additionally, educators must ensure that their expectations remain high, that they teach students how to learn from their culture, and they promote collaborative learning activities where students and teachers partner in education. (Krasnoff, 2016)



Rethink Teacher-Student Relationships

Ultimately, [teachers] honour Indigenous cultures by learning about them and applying their newfound knowledge to their teaching. Students, their families and communities possess a wealth of knowledge and can supplement the [teacher's] blind spots. Teachers who adopt a reciprocal approach to education and position themselves as learners alongside their students are also consistently identified as the most effective and with the most job satisfaction (Kavanagh, 2006; Marchant, 2009).



Culturally Responsive Teaching is the Way to Go

Effective teachers 1) consider how their students define educational success and adjust their teaching methodologies and assessments to accommodate them, 2) reconsider what makes a positive learning environment from the perspective of their students, 3) reposition themselves to create a cooperative and cogenerated learning environment, 4) allow room for students to participate in decision making and 5) establish opportunities for reciprocal learning amongst students and between their students and themselves (Lewthwaite et.al., 2014).



Adopt Cultural Humility as a Teaching Practice

The principle of humility is a common component that links Indigenous worldviews around the globe. The Indigenous Perspectives Society explains that, “by reflecting on what has shaped our views, and what may have impacted the views of others, we can cultivate compassion and meet each person with our cups empty, to be filled with the information they share about who they are,” (ipsociety.ca, 2016). (Battiste, 2000 & 2015; Harper, 2000; Lewthwaite et. Al., 2013, 2014 & 2015; Marchant, 2009; Tanaka, 2016)

Thinking Differently in **Indigenizing Teaching and Learning Practices**

Holistic education is based on the principle that education should involve the “whole” person, and is an important concept for integrating and balancing the needs of all students,	therefore...	strong teachers and educators in the North follow a holistic model of education and pay attention to the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of their students.
Inquiry-based and experiential learning are the most effective methods to reach all learners, drawing from Indigenous knowledges and supporting 21st century skills,	therefore...	Northern educators use these familiar strategies to meet both Western and Indigenous learning outcomes while reinforcing the value of Indigenous knowledges.
While there are some Northern traditions that are more widely followed and will resonate with a wide range of people (ex: the Dene Laws), there are also traditions, which are very unique to specific places,	therefore...	it is important for educators to acquaint themselves with the community’s unique norms, beliefs and practices before making assumptions about classroom protocols and accepted behaviours in their communities.
Students are more likely to respond positively to the learning encounter when they feel safe, respected, and able to voice their perspective,	therefore...	teachers should understand their students as experts in their own experience and value their students’ knowledge as equal to their own.
Students will be more engaged, have better attendance and have better achievement results when instruction includes a balance of instructional strategies and the ability to demonstrate different ways of knowing,	therefore...	Indigenizing teaching and learning practices to include opportunities for experiential learning and alternatives for different ways of knowing will improve engagement and satisfaction of both teachers and students and contribute to their well-being.
Some students have a strong sense of their cultural background while others have limited knowledge. For all of us, our understanding about who we are and where we come from influences our relationship to others and to where we live,	therefore...	educators seeking to Indigenize their teaching and learning practices must be careful not to single out or rely upon Indigenous students’ knowledge; it’s important to respect student input but also do your own research with community, Elders and Indigenous writings.
Schools that report high retention rates of Indigenous students demonstrate their commitment to Indigenizing education and fostering an environment that recognizes the importance of culture, equity and reconciliation	therefore...	Indigenizing teaching and learning practices in schools will promote improved attendance, increased student retention in the upper grades and higher graduation rates.

Taking Action for Indigenizing Teaching and Learning Practices

- ☑ Recognize and understand that Indigenous students from the NWT represent many different cultures and backgrounds. There is no singular Indigenous experience and learning students' individual histories demonstrates respect.
- ☑ Take a holistic approach to teaching and learning. Pay attention to, check in on and discuss students' mental, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing.
- ☑ Incorporate Indigenous teaching methods into the day-to-day school experience. For example, make use of the "talking circle" by organizing the classroom seating in a circle or substitute lecturing for narratives and storytelling.
- ☑ Provide opportunities for oral presentations and feedback in addition to written assignments. Use assessment and evaluation practices that are inclusive, fair and authentic.
- ☑ Handle problematic behaviours with compassion and care, as a student's disruptive behavior, absence or disengagement is not necessarily a demonstration of their lack of commitment. Seek to understand the student's perspective by opening a dialogue.
- ☑ Teaching and learning resources should be local and/or Indigenous. There are many Northern and/or Indigenous writers, politicians, lawyers, artists, scientists, teachers, doctors, civil servants, tradespeople and service industry workers whose works can be used to enrich student learning. Take extra time to learn who they are in the community and source them if required.
- ☑ Acknowledge historical and contemporary Indigenous cultures, traditions and issues in the classroom. As society's understanding of colonialism and history evolves, some resources become outdated or are recognized as Eurocentric; in such cases, use these resources as learning opportunities rather than not at all.
- ☑ Provide opportunities for students' learning to make a positive impact on others. De-emphasize academic cognitive competition, and instead emphasize cooperative and collaborative learning. Include students from lower or higher grades, families, community members and Elders to provide for intergenerational connections.
- ☑ Focus on experiential learning by modeling tasks and processes, and guiding students in practice instead of teacher-led discussions or relying on textbooks.
- ☑ Be sensitive to nonverbal cues and communication. Both students and educators convey a great deal of information through facial expressions, tone of voice, proximity, body language and wait time for responding verbally. Students may be communicating a great deal without saying anything at all, and as can educators.

Promising Practices in Indigenizing Teaching and Learning Practices



Traditional Graduation Path

Ideally, an Indigenized pathway through to graduation allows for alternatives to the traditional graduation path. This model is land and experiential based utilizing the Master Apprenticeship method; this pathway leads to an education that is focused on traditional knowledge, cultural skills, and Indigenous language. The most effective place for students and staff to learn and grow in cultural ways is through on the land experiences.

Embedding Culture in Curriculum

Long range and daily lessons plans are developed to include Indigenous topics, culture and community protocols informed by the foundational philosophies of Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit, along with subject specific NWT curriculum. This is a learning process and teachers receive job-embedded continuous support from Cultural experts and Elders to develop culture-based learning activities in their instructional practice. There is also an opportunity for community members to “adopt” a teacher to ensure that important community protocols and teachings are taught.



Promoting Indigenous Education

Ongoing professional learning to promote Indigenizing education will always be required. Not only do we consider what we are learning, but also how we are learning it. Ways of enacting Indigenous knowledge should include various culturally appropriate methods including a “kitchen table” learning environment that respects individual learning modes, spiral learning and sharing circles.

Reflecting on **Indigenizing Teaching and Learning Practices**

Describe the following concepts in your own words, and what they mean to you: Holistic, Relational, Spiral and Experiential.

How do the above terms relate to education? How do you embody these concepts as an educator?

In what ways does your school draw upon local traditions, protocols, ceremonies and practices? What actions does your school take to honour the local Indigenous culture(s)? If there are no local protocols and ceremonies, how can you be an agent of change to Indigenize your school?

Learning is a lifelong journey. How might you push yourself to honour local Indigenous cultures and traditions more in your role as an educator? If you need to learn more, where will you look?

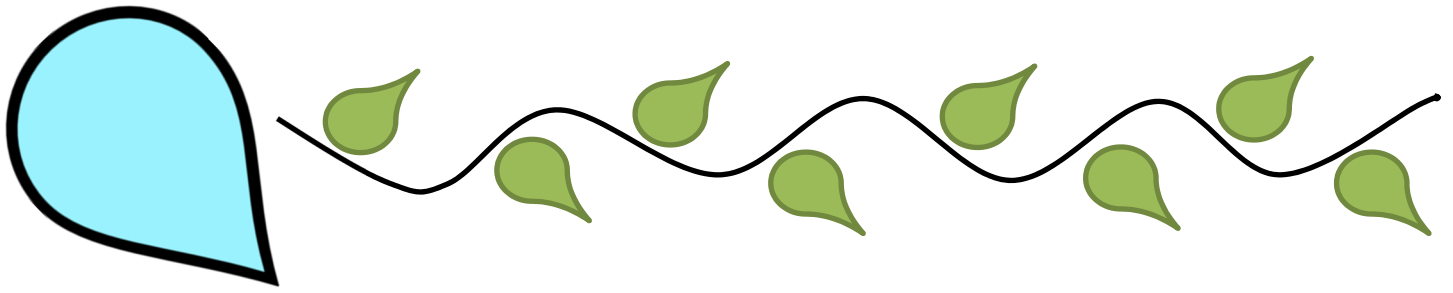
How do your students, their families and your community define success? Do they consider all aspects of the individual? Perhaps their unique success may be their gifts, talents, and interests. What makes their heart sing?

What qualities does your community look for in a “good educator”? If unsure, how will you find out? List resources and people who can help you find answers.

Reciprocity is a key component of Indigenizing education. How do you learn from your students already, and how can you invite them to teach you even more? As well, once you have gained a certain amount of Indigenous Knowledge, how do you practice reciprocity and share it with your colleagues, family and friends?

Remember a time a student challenged you. How do you feel about your reaction? If you feel good, explain why. If you feel you could have done better, describe how.

Notes



5. Indigenizing Content for Curricula and Programming

Indigenizing education means that very subject at every level is examined to consider how and to what extent current content and pedagogy reflect the presence of Indigenous/Aboriginal peoples and the valid contribution of Indigenous knowledge.

- Marlene Brant Castellano, 2014

Indigenizing Content for Curricula and Programming refers to adapting what is taught to where it is taught. Fortunately, the NWT curriculum documents, *Dene Kede* and *Inuuqatigiit*, and NWT subject specific curricula documents have been developed to provide educators with the direction required to develop long range, unit and daily lesson plans in culturally appropriate and relevant ways. In these documents, common outcomes between the curricula are threaded together and Indigenous themes are used as the vehicle to meet the related outcomes. Lessons are delivered through the use of holistic, spiral, relational and experiential activities. Learning activities throughout the grade levels and subject areas should be developed using Indigenous topics and experiences to meet the required NWT curriculum objectives.

Both *Dene Kede* and *Inuuqatigiit* curriculum documents were created to ensure that educators are provided with supportive resources and are incorporating the skills, knowledge and values that represent Northern cultures. In addition, educators encourage the development of Indigenous languages which creates the environment for successful, capable students to thrive. It is nonetheless important that educators supplement these foundational documents with work of their own as they gain experience and knowledge.

Describing one school's successful Indigenization of content for curricula and programming, one Indigenous educator writes that course content was adapted; rather than linear it was thematic and spiral; students were grouped into learning circles, with individual and collective responsibilities that created social relationships and a sense of community (Ragoonaden, 2017). Indigenous scholars agree that fostering a sense of community among students, and among students and teachers, is of utmost importance for student success.

As educators who have been educated in a mainstream Western system, Indigenizing content for curricula and programming can be challenging at first. As with any skill, however, through the experimentation, practice, patience and support, Indigenizing approaches becomes easier in time. Indigenizing content becomes a fulfilling (and fun!) endeavor as educators witness student growth and improved academic performance, engagement and wellness.

Considering the Benefits of Indigenizing Content for Curricula and Programming



Students Do Best When They Are Reflected in the Curriculum

Students who are engaged in and excited by their learning realize higher achievement gains and tend to stay in school longer than those who are disengaged and uninterested (Fredericks, et al, 2011).



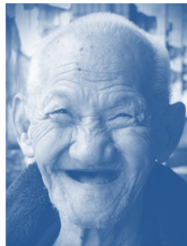
Understand Ways of Believing When Planning Content

For many Indigenous Peoples, the relationship to the land is passed along from generation to generation and rests at the very core of many peoples' identities. For many Indigenous people, this intimate knowledge of Place and Land is an extension of their spiritual beliefs. It is important to acknowledge the meaning, power, influence and spirit of a place in content for curricula and programming. (Battiste, 2009; Kavanagh, 2006; Little Bear, 2000; James, 2016; Marker, 2017; Thorne, 2018).



Offering Inquiry-Based Learning Motivates Students

Traditionally, young people were allowed and encouraged to follow their interests, and community members (their first teachers) would encourage their strengths. Allowing for choice in the curriculum is empowering. Likewise, inquiry based, experiential learning through authentic and meaningful tasks has a long and successful legacy and the approach has been credited with nurturing such 21st century skills as collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity (Bass et al, 2011).



Take Advantage of Local Resources

“The use of authentic resources has also been found to be very useful in learning a language. The literature describes these resources as visual materials.... Printed materials.... Audio clips.... Realia.... Studies have found that using varied and authentic resources increases motivation, stimulates interest and helps to contextualize [learning], focusing the student on content and meaning.... (Oura, 2012).” (OLC 33)



Protocol, Tradition and Ceremony Should Be Honoured in the Classroom

Because the Indigenous cultures, beliefs and landscapes of the NWT are so diverse, there is no one-size-fits-all method for honouring place, land, language, protocol and ceremony in the classroom. This should not be viewed as a deterrent but rather an opportunity for learning and relationship building. Let the Elders or other community members be your guide.

Thinking Differently in Indigenizing Content for Curricula and Programming

Schools that make room and time for co-planning and staff-wide planning that includes Elders, cultural experts and community, recognizing them as knowledge keepers, most effectively Indigenize,

therefore...

successful educators look beyond their typical resources and seek guidance from experienced teachers, community members and Elders for planning and designing courses to ensure local relevance.

Schools and communities across the NWT have resource centres with valuable, place-based, local resources. The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre has a library of edu-kits on a variety of Northern topics available,

therefore...

teachers can access the resources they need by reaching out to local and territorial organizations. These resources are well developed and will be engaging and exciting for students.

When students are involved in making choices and choosing what they are learning, they are more successful,

therefore...

educators should embed choice, inquiry and relevance into all programming.

Dene Laws and other Indigenous traditional teachings are foundational to classroom learning. Students learn, explore and connect the ways people lived together in the past with their lives today,

therefore...

when educators honour and privilege this past, students develop and make sense of school and ways to live that contribute to a healthy and positive environment. Students also gain an understanding of how their Ancestors and Elders worked together to survive and how these traits can be applied to Indigenous peoples today for healing and successful futures.

It is respectful to understand many NWT traditions and teachings, making sure to acknowledge and respect the source,

therefore...

it is imperative that teachers know the make-up of their class. If you are enhancing your program, consider the traditions, teachings and stories of each community. The origin of any traditions or teachings used in class must always be made clear.

Taking Action for Indigenizing Content for Curricula and Programming

- ☑ Infuse Indigenous content into subject area disciplines. Indigenous teaching should not be viewed as supplementary but an equal and vital way of knowing, such as: Indigenous stories as part of English, language arts courses; Ethnobotany and Ethnozoology as part of Biology; Indigenous worldviews as part of psychology.
- ☑ Reach out to local organizations and government to collect resources. Use a variety of resources; guest speakers, materials and books to present both local and global perspectives.
- ☑ Guide students to identify what they feel is relevant and adapt curriculum content to meet their interests. Plan for students to explore appropriate land claim and/or self-governance structures. This is an excellent opportunity to include the local Band Council and other community leaders.
- ☑ Use local stories and legends as reference points whenever possible. Use personal stories and stories from the students' and community to connect curriculum to real life experiences and take a holistic approach to teaching and learning.
- ☑ Incorporate healthy and positive messages about cultural identity. This is critical to provide a sense of connection for Indigenous students. Culture enhancing activities can help reconnect students to their cultural roots from which they may have become disengaged and help them to develop a sense of pride in who they are.
- ☑ Use inquiry-based approaches to student learning to develop engaged and self-directed learners. Support students in making decisions about their learning that integrate who they are and what they already know about their home and community experiences
- ☑ See the curriculum as flexible and adaptive to the lived experiences of students so they see themselves and their lives reflected in daily learning opportunities.
- ☑ Know and build upon students' prior knowledge, interests, strengths, and learning styles and ensure they are foundational to the learning experiences in the classroom and the school.
- ☑ Differentiate instruction and provide a wide range of methods and opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning, ensuring both academic rigour and a variety of resources that are accessible to all learners.

Promising Practices in Indigenizing Content of Curricula and Programming



Culturally Relevant Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities that are language and culture based have been developed and improved for use within our schools, including Dene and Northern games, sewing and beading, drumming, on the land survival, storytelling, cleaning, fleshing, cooking and drying meat, fish and other traditionally harvested animals

Resource People

Project and inquiry-based learning are ideal strategies when learning through Indigenous themes. Students and community resource people are the knowledge keepers; which is re-discovered through using these approaches to learning. This learning also provides opportunities for our students to define their own learning experience and delve more deeply into topics of interest and community concern. Real problems are identified, worked through and solved. Partnerships with community organizations are developed. The knowledge discovered is shared and presented in public places reinforcing the authentic purpose of learning.



Indigenizing Classrooms

Educators ensure culturally appropriate materials as well as Northern, community and family printed resources; legends and stories are being utilized within the classroom. Embracing the culture(s) in the community helps students create and develop a sense of belonging and comfort within the school environment.

Reflecting on **Indigenizing Content of Curricula and Programming**

How do you currently draw upon Dene Kede & Inuuqatigiit curriculum documents in your practice as an educator. List explicit curriculum connections you've made and materials you've used as well as lessons and learnings from these seminal documents. How have these resources influenced your teaching strategies as an educator.

Who are the cultural resource people in your school and community that can help you to understand and integrate the Dene Kede and/or Inuuqatigiit curricula in your classroom activities?

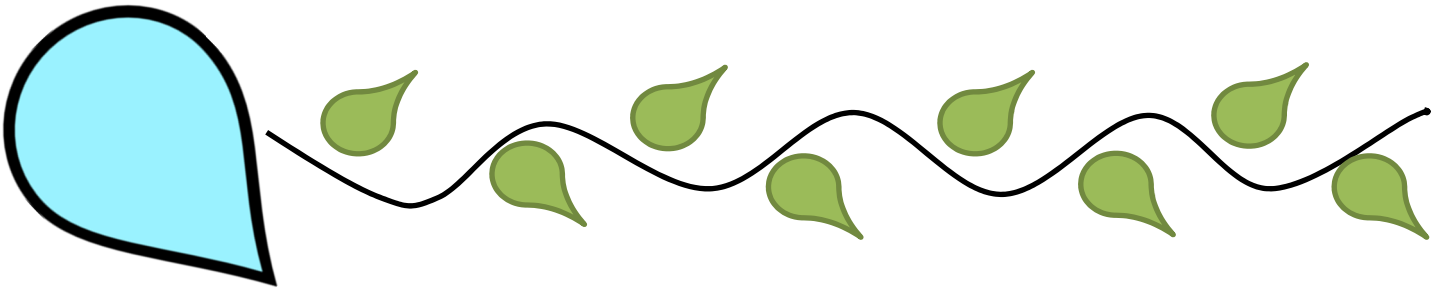
What are some of the hot topics in your community right now? Ex: self-government, caribou management, loss of languages, devolution, Indigenous arts, infrastructure, housing, childcare, etc. How can you find ways to incorporate these salient topics into your curriculum? Take a moment to brainstorm and plan.

How do you incorporate the traditional values of your community in your educational practice, both explicitly and implicitly? What are some additional ways you could do so? If you require help for ideas, reach out to the cultural resource people that you listed above.

Reflect upon the various needs of your students. Multi-level classrooms are common in the North and differentiated learning is a must. Traditionally, Indigenous children were allowed to learn at their own pace, with their teachers meeting them at their own level. How do you do this currently and how could you further develop your ability to adapt to your students' needs?

Extension: Read through Dene Kede or Inuuqatigiit, (whichever is applicable in your case) and plan at least 3 strategies to incorporate this material in your practice as an educator. If you already do this, challenge yourself to consider new ways. If this is a struggle, seek out help from a mentor, trusted colleagues and community resource people.

Notes



6. Offering Key Cultural Experiences

I think my dad really was a good teacher for me. Now, I think back, and I think to myself ... Good teacher is ... Everywhere he went, he would take me along. How they call, he's got no book. He don't know how to write, he's not going to write and say, "okay you learn this." You have to do things with them. I really believe this myself. Taking kids out on the land, they have to be out there to see for themselves. And you know, everything that is taught to them, they gotta feel it and do it themselves. That's the only way to learn, exactly, that's how I was taught.

- Elder Mary-Effie Snowshoe, Fort McPherson (in James, 2016)

Offering Key Cultural Experiences is the backbone to Indigenous education. Students learn best by doing. Key cultural experiences are authentic and relevant activities and learning experiences that reflect, validate, and promote the worldviews, cultures, and languages of the Indigenous peoples of the NWT. The significance of each activity is strengthened by including storytelling and traditional teachings, being on-the-land, and active use of Indigenous languages that include history, reasoning and connections based on Indigenous pedagogy. *Dene Kede* and *Inuuqatigiit* are the foundational documents for offering key cultural experiences.

The best key cultural experiences are planned and delivered with community members. Prioritizing time for organizing Key Cultural Experiences should be at the top of the educator's list. In addition to enriching the learning experience by providing relevance and engaging the senses, Key Cultural Experiences also strengthen relationships between all participants - students, educators and community members included. Not only do key cultural experiences improve educational outcomes, but they are shown to increase a sense of belonging and overall wellbeing. What's more, key cultural experiences use Indigenizing teaching and learning practices, and Indigenized content. Through participation and close observation in key cultural experiences, educators can learn new ways to Indigenize their practice and begin to develop a lived understanding of the community's world-view.

Considering the Benefits of Offering Key Cultural Experiences



Traditional Learning Took Place on the Land

Traditional learning happened on-the-land where specific skills, attitudes and knowledge that was needed for everyday life was handed down from generation to generation. “Given the importance of the natural world in everyday life, learning from the land was a critical part of the Indigenous ‘classroom,’ (The Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). Therefore, to effectively pursue Indigenizing education, students must be taught about the land and their connections to the land through land-based learning experiences.



Key Cultural Experiences Engage/Teach the Whole Child

A hands-on and land-based approach to learning offers even greater advantage to the student. By infusing land-based content and traditional knowledge, through authentic tasks, into academic instruction, Indigenous students are able to connect to a wealth of knowledge and experience that lies deep within their cultural psyche. Authentic tasks and classroom experiences that respect and build from this body of knowledge and the student’s own experiences and world-view are correlated to enhanced academic success, greater self-efficacy and higher rates of school retention among Indigenous students. (Demmert, 2001; McCarty & Lee, 2014; Mmari et al, 2010).



Identity and Self-Esteem Are Strengthened When Students Experience Success

“Engaging the students in authentic tasks and activities helps to focus them on the act of communication (Willis, 1996, p.7). Instruction disconnected from authentic dialogue and opportunities to practice this in real tasks can serve to limit success and prevent the learners from achieving the competence that they seek and strive to achieve.” (GNWT, 2018, p.33)



Enhance Relationships Outside of School

Key Cultural experiences also offer opportunities to include experiences important to the students’ culture and to establish relationships with various community members. This recognizes and respects the value of the students’ culture and language and encourages them to learn through their culture and personal strengths. Cultural experiences also enhance relationships outside of the school environment and provide leadership roles to many of the students and their families. This change in dynamic enhances the partnership between educators, students and their families. (Krasnoff, 2016)



Authentic Learning Can Take Place in the Classroom

Additionally, many traditional skills and experiences can be addressed within the classroom. While where you are learning is important, what you are learning, how you are being taught and the authenticity of the content is critical to effective key cultural experiences. By providing key cultural

experiences in the school, you are developing a positive culture within the school that values and respects students' home culture and language. School activities that highlight the students' culture are power balancing strategies, which strongly promote a safe and caring school environment where students are free to risk and learn (Krasnoff, 2016).

Thinking Differently in Offering Key Cultural Experiences

<p>Students develop skills necessary to be a successful contributor to the community through their day-to-day life experiences,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>educators should take students out to do traditional activities with the community. i.e.) Story time, beading, on-the-land programs. Participating with community promotes contributing to community</p>
<p>Elders are the PhD knowledge holders of the land,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>all cultural experiences should be planned in conjunction with knowledge keepers. The non-Indigenous teacher's role is to facilitate and actively participate.</p>
<p>The land is a place of learning and is an important part of the successful learning of Indigenous languages and cultures,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>spending time on-the-land, respecting its history and local protocols and all the stories and learning experiences it has to offer are of utmost importance in Northern education.</p>
<p>Key cultural experiences are culturally authentic, realistic, natural, and are best done in an Indigenous language,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>every effort should be made to hire local cultural experts who are language speakers as facilitators.</p>
<p>Key cultural experiences are activities that are experienced repeatedly in a person's lifetimes,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>participants become more skilled or knowledgeable in a spiraling fashion. The same key cultural experience can be experienced multiple times and still yield new learnings.</p>
<p>A key cultural experience may be composed of several, component experiences that together represent a balanced perspective,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>these component experiences have the potential to deal with a person's Spiritual relationships, relationships with the Land, relationships with other People and relationships with the Self.</p>
<p>The Western education system is beginning to recognize the value and benefit of experiential, hands-on learning through authentic tasks and research is also proving its worth,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>teachers and educators should consider the varied and positive benefits of education beyond the classroom and work with the community to improve and enrich the learning experience of students.</p>
<p>Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit curriculum documents are foundational to offering key cultural experiences,</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>educators should rely regularly upon these documents when planning key cultural experiences.</p>
<p>Key cultural experiences support the whole student and allows them to gain a greater understanding of how their experience impacts their own learning.</p>	<p>therefore...</p>	<p>authentic purpose is provided as motivation and enhances learning objectives for students while fostering positive relationships within the community.</p>

It is critical that key cultural experiences are not provided in isolation,

therefore...

follow-up activities that extend student learning utilizing Indigenous learning modes should always accompany activities. These activities provide opportunities to link other subject area curricular outcomes to these experiences.

Taking Action for Offering Key Cultural Experiences

- ☑ Make sure to plan with local cultural experts whenever available. At the very least, have plans reviewed by a cultural resource person to ensure the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual safety of all participants.
- ☑ Spend time on the land, and with community members, outside of the school to building foundational knowledge of the place and community.
- ☑ Participate and offer key cultural experiences again and again, to engage in and allow for spiral learning.
- ☑ Be open to new experiences, including ones that may be challenging or uncomfortable at first. View experiences, traditions and practices through a local, cultural lens.
- ☑ Advocate for on-the-land trips and experiences, offer assistance in the preparation and planning process, and chaperone or participate whenever possible.
- ☑ Collaborate with community members to provide students with opportunities to go hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering and preparing traditional food. Seek introductions to community experts who are able to teach sewing, snowshoe making, drum making, and other traditional skills.
- ☑ Guide students to find connections between key cultural experiences, their world and their learning. It is critical that students have many opportunities to explore their understandings and develop their own sense of importance. Always create follow-up lessons and activities to cement learning.
- ☑ Attend and participate in traditional activities such as drum dances and feasts outside of school hours. Find out protocol surrounding wedding, funeral and other ceremony attendance.
- ☑ Host classroom visits by Elders and knowledgeable community members. These, too, count as key cultural experiences when planned well.
- ☑ Embed key cultural experiences in unit and lesson plans for a wide variety of themes and consult cultural resource people to gather ideas.
- ☑ Ensure that, throughout these experiences, students are aware of the various connections and implications of their learning. Units that encompass traditional Indigenous activities can be designed to meet curriculum objectives at all grade levels.

Promising Practices in Offering Key Cultural Experiences



Traditional Teachings

Cultural experiences reflect the traditional calendar and include the terms of items around the camp as well as traditional teachings.

Cultural Development

While different learning approaches support key cultural experiences, it is also important to provide students with lots of hands on opportunities. Students actively participate in the key cultural experiences. Activities evolving from these experiences allow students to further develop their own skills at appropriate levels. These opportunities are provided in a flexible and safe manner that engage students and promote ownership



Heritage Fairs

Northern schools support Learning Fairs that combine Science and Heritage Fairs to include traditional knowledge. Students are encouraged to choose cultural topics that can be investigated and recorded. Presentations are made throughout the school and community. Students excel in their role as teachers of their culture. Information is gathered by students, then kept and used to build capacity of artifacts documenting culture in the local area.

Reflecting on Offering Key Cultural Experiences

Describe your most memorable key cultural experience. What makes this experience stand out in your mind as particularly positive or negative? Why was this experience such a success, or, if the experience was negative, why was it unsuccessful?

What key cultural experiences does your school currently offer?

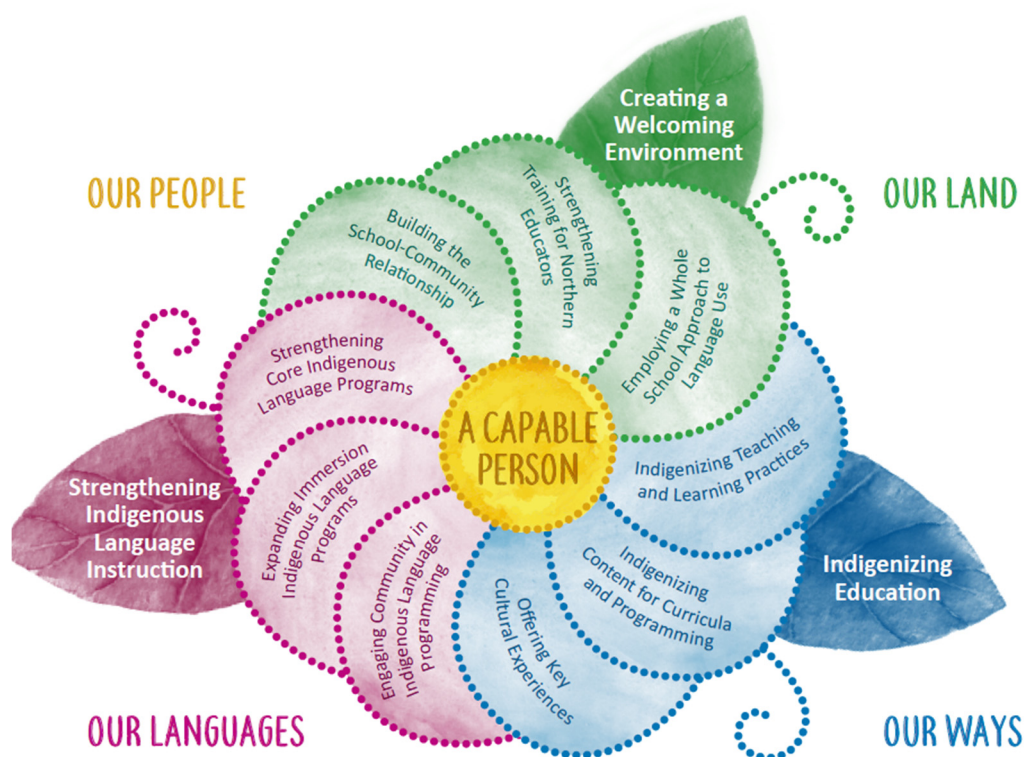
What additional key cultural experiences would you like to see your school offer? What challenges must be overcome and what resources are needed to make this a reality?

Key cultural experiences are happening in the communities outside the school all the time. How are you currently involved in community events and activities? If you feel you could be or would like to become more involved, take a few moments to plan how you can do so.

Extension: List 3 key cultural experiences that you could offer as a part of your teaching or in your role as an educator that relates directly to your subject matter. If you require assistance, which colleagues and community members can you reach out to? Contact them to make your plans.

Notes

Our Languages: Strengthening Indigenous Language Instruction



Strengthening Indigenous Language Instruction is a necessary step in Indigenous language revitalization. Elders often speak of the ancestral timeline of their Indigenous history – a time when the Indigenous language was the language of the land, spoken in homes, with families, around campfires, on trails, and during community gatherings. It was also the language of trade, oral history, ceremony, spoken both in prayers and celebrations. Traditional knowledge and cultural practices were also strong, and, naturally, Elders assumed the role of keepers of sacred stories and knowledge, and were conscientious in passing on the ancient cultural and spiritual teachings and language to their children, families and community.

Many of these teachings were shared through storytelling, in which storytellers painted vivid images with their language as they told tales of humour, courage, wonder, sacrifice, and misfortune. Some Elders today still remember these stories and legends as told to them by their Ancestors many years ago.

Today, it is a tragedy that few youth have heard these stories as told by Elders in their ancestral language. Limited numbers of youth possess the capacity and fluency of their language to understand, pass on knowledge, or even be captivated by stories that once were told in the ancestral languages. Time and circumstances have not been kind to the Indigenous languages in the NWT. In many northern communities, few Indigenous adults, and even fewer Indigenous children and youth speak their Indigenous languages, as in the time of the Elders and Ancestors.

However, in the face of such loss and despair from the last century, there has emerged a strong movement toward Indigenous languages revitalization. Many people are taking steps to reclaim their languages and trying hard to restore the languages to the prominence that they once held. In this new era, many early childhood centres, schools, post-secondary organizations, and communities in the NWT, and across Canada, have embarked on an active campaign to revitalize Indigenous languages. This movement is founded on the belief that the Indigenous languages cannot only survive, but thrive, if sufficient time, energy and resources are committed to Indigenous languages revitalization. The research supports this:

- “Language holds cultural, historical, scientific and ecological knowledge. First Nations people know what happened in their community in the past and what the land needs. Knowledge of the land is important in maintaining good health.” (Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Center, 2012)
- A 2012 UNESCO study demonstrated the following positive outcomes when students receive instruction in their mother tongue: 1) children receive a good foundation, 2) children perform better, 3) fewer children repeat grades, 4) fewer children drop out of school, 5) children have more family support, and 6) cycles of exclusion are broken, (Fontaine, 2012).
- Norris (2001) explains that immersing students in language-rich experiences that connect to strong cultural values and traditions offer other research-proven benefits. Many studies link learning an Indigenous language to key social and cultural benefits such as a heightened sense of self-worth and a stronger cultural identity and pride.

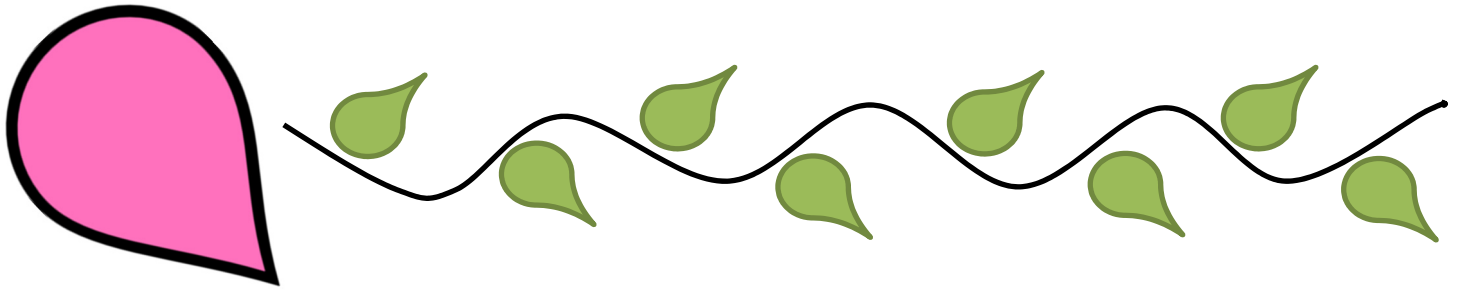
It is a time of hope for strengthening Indigenous language instruction in all Northern classrooms. There is also good reason for this hope in that, the most recent Canadian census data (2016) reported that the number of people who can speak an Indigenous language in Canada has been on a steady increase since 2006. It seems that more and more Indigenous people are learning their languages than in any other time in the recent past. Much of this learning is taking place in schools across the nation where more than seventy different Indigenous languages are being taught as second languages.

Overall, it is the youth of today who will become the standard bearers of Indigenous languages revitalization and they are tasked with carrying it forward into the future. Today’s youth must be prepared to settle for nothing less than restoring their Indigenous languages to the prominence they once held to celebrate the vision of an NWT where Indigenous languages are supported, respected and thriving as languages of community by all people (NWT Indigenous Languages Framework, 2017).

This section of the Handbook details the last three Action Areas that help educators in **Strengthening Indigenous Language Instruction:**

- 7. Strengthening Core Indigenous Language Programs;**
- 8. Expanding Immersion Indigenous Language Programs; and**
- 9. Engaging Community in Indigenous Language Programs.**

Each of the three Action Areas above are further explored and elaborated in the next section.



7) Strengthening Core Indigenous Language Programs

“One thing that one of my teachers used to do that was so helpful was using what little Indigenous language she knew whenever she could in class. One day, she might count us into groups using Gwich’in, the next day she might do the same in Inuvialuktun. She even had signs in her class and labels written in our languages. It helped us to hear it over and over, it made us feel welcome and also showed that she valued the language.”

- Rebecca Baxter, Student, Inuvik

Strengthening Core Indigenous Language Programs is the responsibility of every educator in the NWT, whether a classroom teacher or Indigenous language instructor, or an ally in Indigenous language revitalization. All nine official Indigenous languages are taught in schools across the NWT. In most of these schools, Indigenous Language programming is offered as a core, second language program with instructional time averaging 90 hours a year. As limited as this might seem, core language programming continues in the face of a wide variety of challenges.

A vibrant Indigenous Language program not only benefits students but also serves as a gateway to a brighter future for an entire community. This highlights the critical need for effective and successful school programming where community members are intent on reclaiming their ancestral languages. New, research-based strategies are being used to enrich language programs and instructional strategies, particularly in the new *Our Languages* curriculum.

Learning any language can be a challenge and it is hard work. Not only does instructional time play a critical role in a program’s success, so too does the number of years a student is enrolled in second language classes. For many young students, the school is often their first introduction to their Indigenous Language. It is well-documented that the earlier children are exposed to Indigenous languages, the easier it is for them to speak it later in life. As such, it is important that the very youngest of children, kindergarten and junior kindergarten students, gain exposure to the language and that they continue to learn in a stimulating and supportive environment through to high school graduation. These are the students who have the best chance of becoming capable speakers and the new champions for their language within the community.

Considering the Benefits of Strengthening Core Indigenous Language Programs



Learning Indigenous Languages Has Many Great Benefits

“Students who receive quality second language instruction tend to show greater mental flexibility, enhanced abstract thinking skills, the ability to think independently of words, and superiority in concept formation. Bilingual children also show enhanced problem-solving skills and better developed creative processes compared to their monolingual counterparts,” (Fontaine, 2012, p. 3).



Bilingual Programs Produce Better Results in All Subjects

“The appropriate use of languages in literacy provision and education has a beneficial effect on access to learning, inclusion in schools, and learning outcomes. The use of mother-tongues in education impacts positively on children’s attendance and performance in school” (Fontaine, 2012, p. 6).



Engage the Senses

The heart of language acquisition is the flooding of the senses with language input and forcing the brain to think and respond in that language. The powerful benefits can only be realized through a firm commitment on the part of the language instructor to stay in the language throughout the class.



Using Immersion Methods Can Benefit Core Programs

“If the administrators are committed to the time allocation and scheduling needed and teachers are committed to staying in the language and have high expectations that the students will do the same. This means that there should be no translation happening within the language classroom. It also means that throughout the school, staff and students use the language in daily routines and that all the senses are engaged. Teachers of other subjects such as physical education, science and social studies or even school activities like cooking are also encouraged to incorporate as much language as possible,” (GNWT, 2018, p. 5-8).



Indigenous Language Bilingualism Enriches One’s Sense of Self

“... Immersion programs are very successful in terms of: The promotion of the students’ self-esteem, confidence, and cultural identity...”(Fontaine, 2012).



Using Indigenous Language Commands as an English- or French Teacher Improves Classroom Management

Another way to walk the talk of decolonization is to build a basic vocabulary of words and sayings in the Indigenous language and to practice with the students. Learning even a handful of words for yes and no, thank you and you’re welcome, good morning, come in, pay attention, and good job can go a long way. In Marie Battiste’s study of successful Mi’kmaw learning environments in Eastern Canada, “many participants shared stories of how they could ‘say one word in Mi’kmaw and translate an entire concept for a student,” (2013, p. 273).

Thinking Differently in **Strengthening Core Indigenous Language Programs**

The success of language revitalization hinges on the enthusiasm, commitment and drive of its many supporters – those people intent on having their language heard and spoken throughout the community,	therefore...	Elders, community leaders, parents, school staff, youth and other community members must come together in order to bring life and vitality to the plans for revitalization.
The degradation of Indigenous languages has affected communities in different ways and, in some communities, it is difficult to find capable teachers who are fluent in their language,	therefore...	in these circumstances, schools must be creative in order to maintain a vibrant Indigenous Language program.
Indigenous language instructors are viewed as language champions and others (educators, students, and community members) will look to them for guidance and leadership,	therefore...	The Indigenous language instructor must be a champion for their language continually staying in the language and speaking to all – students, parents, school staff, youth and other community members.
Elders fluent in their language are the language keepers of the community and hold a wealth of vocabulary that may not often be used,	therefore...	Indigenous language instructors must be diligent in continually seeking to understand or discover new words and phrases from the Elders (sleeping words). Indigenous language instructors are also the resource people for all non-speaking teachers, and strong principals must ensure that these individuals are recognized for their important role within the school.
All language learners need time to develop competency in the second language,	therefore...	instructional time and careful lesson planning plays a major role in determining success.
In the NWT, Indigenous language programs are granted a minimum of 90 annual hours of instructional time,	therefore...	innovative schools have found ways to increase this time by adding language-rich, authentic cultural experiences to the school program, as well as encouraging all staff members to embed language into their classroom teaching. Ensuring that the language is heard and spoken throughout the whole school adds strength and value to Indigenous language programs.

***Our Languages* curriculum (OLC) has been newly developed for NWT Indigenous Languages and has drawn from best practices. It presents sequenced learning outcomes which guide a student from the emergent level of fluency to becoming a capable speaker,**

therefore...

to learn about current best practices in the field of Indigenous language instruction, proven second language teaching strategies, fully developed units and lesson plan, and an array of games, activities and resources to accompany them, Indigenous language instructors must study the OLC.

Taking Action for Strengthening Core Indigenous Language Programs

- ☑ Demonstrate enthusiasm for Indigenous languages, and structure lessons and activities that engage and excite the students through active, fun and authentic activities. Those educators who project a deep love for language grow the same sense of excitement and passion in others.
- ☑ End each unit of the *Our Languages* curriculum with a project that allows the students to showcase their newly acquired language skills, working up to a public setting.
- ☑ Encourage students to create their own Indigenous language resources to be used in classrooms, throughout the school and the community. Encourage the sharing of resources with other schools that speak the same language. In English or French classes, encourage students to include translations in their Indigenous languages on posters and presentations. Creating is the highest order of learning.
- ☑ Maintain an open line of communication between homeroom classroom teachers and Indigenous Language Instructors so that connections can be made across the disciplines. For example, if students are studying the seasons in their homeroom class, their Indigenous language teacher/instructor can focus on supplemental vocabulary.
- ☑ Borrow games and learning activities from the Indigenous language classroom for free time or when students have completed their work. Repetition is an important part of spiral learning and making learning fun or using it as a reward will motivate students to practice their language.
- ☑ Schedule core language classes to be longer, even if this means every other day instead of daily. When classes are too short students do not have the opportunity to engage with the language in a more in-depth way.
- ☑ Use the local Indigenous language(s) whenever possible. For example, in the hallways or when naming groups or counting off numbers and decorate the classroom with Indigenous language signage. If teachers are not language speakers these approaches present an additional opportunity for the teacher to learn new vocabulary and to draw from the students' knowledge to encourage them to be the teacher of language.

Promising Practices in Strengthening Core Indigenous Language Programs

Photo forthcoming

Active Learning

It is important to ensure that the language program is dynamic and engaging and that students play an active role in classroom instruction. Learning traditional tasks in the language can help students use the language in everyday life.

Language Play

An element of fun and novelty is part of the language learning experience as students learn to play in and with their language. Learning to play in the language helps students relate and use the Indigenous language more freely and creatively. It also provides them with the language tools that they can readily use outside of school.

Photo forthcoming

Photo forthcoming

Connecting with Elders

Creating opportunities for students to interact with Elders will allow them to share their growing language skills. By including Elders, educators also have a learning opportunity to further understand the traditional ways and the stories along with their students. Connecting School community with the elders can educate the students and staff and lower the risk for social isolation that many Elders experience.

In the Community

Students are encouraged to use their language on the playground, at home, and in the community. Holding community events or supplying games or story books for children to bring home helps students educate bring the language learning into their homes.

Photo forthcoming

Reflecting on Strengthening Core Indigenous Language Programs

Who are your school's Indigenous language speakers in addition to the Aboriginal language instructor? These individuals can also be language resources and champions.

What does your school's current Core Indigenous Language Program look like? How does it function?

How do Indigenous Language Teachers and Instructors, and teachers of other subject matter, partner to enrich the education provided in all classrooms? How do you take-action to help in the Indigenous language revitalization?

What is the Indigenous language fluency rate in your community? Who are the language keepers and fluent speakers who can provide support to the school? How can you develop language learning relationships with them?

When, where, and how often do your students use their Indigenous languages?

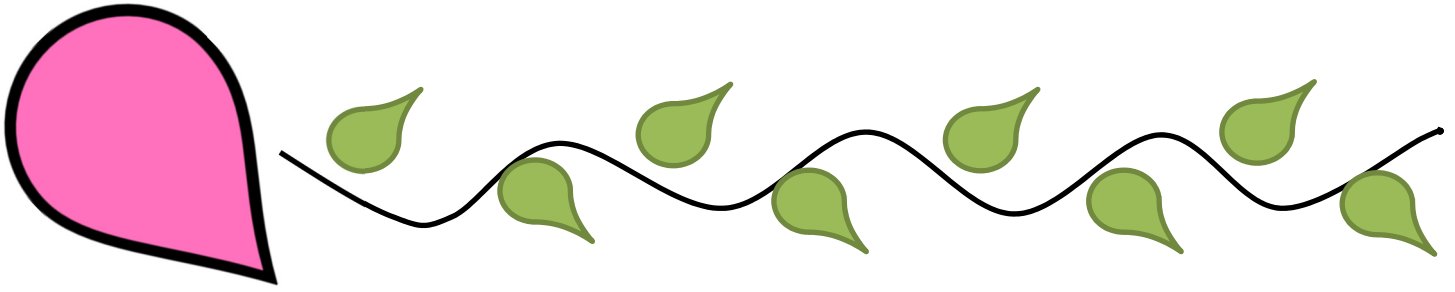
Where does your school use Indigenous language signage? Where in your own classroom or office could you make use of Indigenous language signage?

What games and extension activities are available for students that could be used across the school? For example, when students have finished their assignments in English class, what games are available to borrow from the language classroom so that Indigenous language learning is supported school-wide? (It is recommended that teachers collaborate to find out about the *Our Languages* curriculum, which provides a variety of games, activities and learning resources that could be used).

Extension: Translate the following communication phrases with your colleagues and share the answers together. Use this vocabulary as applicable, when counting out loud, naming groups, etc. Note that often there are no direct translations for English commands and questions, but a cultural equivalent will exist.

Welcome/Come in	
What/How are you doing?	
What?/Pardon me?	
Good job	
Sit, Stand	
Gather/Get into groups/Work together	
Attention please	
Quiet please	
Come here	

Notes



8) Expanding Immersion Indigenous Language Programs

“When I was speaking with an Elder, Charles Tizya, he said to me, “Our language is not dying... where do you think it came from in the first place?” He then pointed to the sky. This gives me hope.”

- Anna Pingo, Inuvik (GNWT, 2018, p. 28)

Expanding Indigenous Language Immersion Programs is in the very best interest of all Northern students. Studies show that the human brain, particularly in the early years, has enormous aptitude for receiving, understanding and responding to multiple languages when immersed in these languages. By age three, a child can easily switch between languages, speak as a native speaker in all, and recognize each as a distinct language with different vocabulary and grammatical rules. These same principles have been adapted by schools as they seek to replicate the natural language-learning abilities of the young brain through immersion in a second language.

The cognitive and social benefits of learning a second language are well documented and there are many shining examples of successful Indigenous language immersion schools and programs around the world. One often cited example is immersion schools that teach the Hawaiian language. These schools have reported remarkable success in revitalizing the Hawaiian language noting that, in the 1980’s, when the immersion was first introduced, fewer than 50 children spoke the Hawaiian language and now, thirty years later, more than 4,000 children have been assessed as fluent in their language. These results come with impressive academic gains as well, with these Hawaiian Immersion schools boasting 100 per cent high school graduation and 80 percent college attendance rates in 2012 (McCarty, 2014).

Immersing students in language-rich experiences that connect to strong cultural values and traditions offer other research-proven benefits. Many studies link learning an Indigenous language to key social and cultural benefits such as a heightened sense of self-worth and a stronger cultural identity and pride. Other research has identified other benefits realized through Indigenous language immersion, including “enhanced test performance, increased school retention and graduation rates, college entry, and more diverse but important outcomes such as parent involvement and cultural pride” (McCarty, 2014). These are outcomes that help define success in Indigenous education throughout Canada and many schools, including several in the NWT, are seeking to replicate these results through immersion in the Indigenous languages.

With our Northern Indigenous languages, endangered as they are, immersion programming depends on the strong combined support of parents, Elders, teachers and community leaders. Immersion students need encouragement and support as they embark on their learning journey so that they experience the joy in learning and speaking their ancestral language.

Considering the Benefits of Expanding Immersion Indigenous Language Programs



Ideal Immersion Means All Activities and Learning is done in the Language

“One of the main principles of a concentrated approach to language instruction is the expectation that the Indigenous Language Instructor and the students will stay in the language in all classroom interactions. This requires great discipline on the part of both instructors and students and high expectations for all will result in greater language learning. Instructions, explanations, commands, directions, praise, questions and responses must all be spoken in the language with techniques such as Total Physical Response (TPR). TPR is an evidence-based language teaching approach that focuses on developing comprehension skills using actions, pictures and illustrations.

There Will Be a Period of Frustration for New Learners

“Working in a concentrated language environment places great demands on the students and may at first generate a lot of confusion as they struggle to understand the new phrases and to respond appropriately. This is an intended outcome and an important part of the learning process. The confusion forces the brain to work harder to seek meaning and by working harder, new neural pathways are formed just as in a baby’s brain,” (GNWT, 2018, p. 7).



Immersion Programs Increase Self-Confidence

Immersion is a strategy that can effectively teach languages when transmission across generations is threatened, or no longer occurs. Furthermore, the evidence shows that mother-tongue maintenance programs have long-term benefits for language-minority students, including increased pride in their cultures and traditions. (McCarty, 2014)

Thinking Differently in Expanding Immersion Indigenous Language Programs

In the NWT Indigenous languages are taught both in language immersion and in core language programming,

therefore...

schools dedicated to the revitalization of Indigenous languages should offer whichever type of instruction they have the capacity for with immersion being the ultimate goal.

Immersion is designed to flood the senses of the student with the Indigenous language used for instruction and interaction in all subjects throughout the entire day,

therefore...

it is important that the language instructor “stay in the language” for the entire day and interact with the students only in the target language.

Most immersion programming is offered in the early grades when the young brain is most receptive to language acquisition with English language instruction starting in grades four, five or six,

therefore...

students’ fluency is cemented at an early stage of brain development.

The success of an intensive or immersion program hinges on the capacity and strong commitment of the Indigenous Language Instructor,

therefore...

it is essential for Indigenous Language Instructors be master teachers, fluent in their language and culture. Their role is not only to teach the language, but also to weave key cultural experiences, traditional knowledge and other academic content into instruction.

The goal of any immersion programming is not only to develop fluent speakers, but to also strengthen cultural identity and prepare the students to become capable and competent individuals able to “live, learn, work and contribute at school, in their community, at home and on the land” (NWT Key Competencies),

therefore...

the larger community should be involved as much as possible and instructors should do their best to design programming that reaches beyond the confines of the classroom and involves and benefits the community at large.

Language learning must also be fun and interactive with the emphasis on building literacy and communication skills which enable the student to explore, discover and interact with the world around them,

therefore...

Music, dance, games, food and film should be part of any language class as they entice the senses to interact with and in their language through different modalities.

The new *Our Languages* curriculum (GNWT, 2018) encourages students to interact with others in a balanced approach – through listening, speaking, reading and writing,

therefore...

students are given the opportunity to become fully fluent and forge relationships through the use of their Indigenous language.

Taking Action for Expanding Immersion Indigenous Language Programs

- ☑ Create an “Indigenous-Languages Only” zone within the language classroom or school. While challenging, exclusively speaking the Indigenous language will help learners (even other educators) who enter the classroom to develop their language skills.
- ☑ Combine authentic cultural experiences with language learning. Land-based experiences and hands-on learning in the classroom should be led exclusively in the Indigenous language.
- ☑ Advocate for the employment of community members and Elders who are fluent, even (or especially) those whose second language is English or who do not speak English at all. The opportunity and privilege to communicate with such valuable knowledge keepers and language role models will motivate learning.
- ☑ Participate with students in immersion activities. Getting involved shows connection to community, students, and teachers, respect for and importance of language learning and also builds teachers’ capacity to support language development throughout the school.
- ☑ Communicate with Indigenous governments to coordinate resources and supports for immersion programming, including long-term, on-the-land immersion camps.
- ☑ Encourage Educational Assistants who speak the local Indigenous language to use the language when appropriate.
- ☑ Give students a chance to teach each other, educators and staff, and community members. Hosting immersion fairs where students present projects in the language and assemblies in Indigenous languages are just two examples.
- ☑ Educators who do not speak the language should participate in immersion activities with students in the community and in school, even if they do not understand, to model openness to learning and valuing the language.
- ☑ Foster strong relationships with students, and between students and cultural resource people and language speakers. Language learning and relationship building go hand-in-hand in Indigenous immersion programming.
- ☑ Reflect frequently on teaching and learning activities and lessons to see what works and does not work.
- ☑ Remain open to change and feedback as Indigenous language revitalization becomes more effective and well-researched.

Promising Practices in Strengthening Immersion Indigenous Language Programs



Cultural Experiences

Embedding key cultural experiences in Indigenous language programming can captivate young learners and strengthen their language skills. Such experiences also validate their own knowledge and experiences and tune their minds to view the world from a cultural perspective.

Playing in the Language

Learning to play in the language is important from the perspective that students will naturally gravitate to the language that is most comfortable to them while engaged in unsupervised play. If, as part of classroom learning, they are taught the vocabulary associated with game-play in their language and play these games in class, they are more likely to use this language as they play at home or on the playground in the evenings or weekend. When students transfer their language skills from the classroom to other environments, it is a sign that the students' mind is functioning in two worlds and that the Indigenous language has found a home.



Heritage Fairs

Many Northern schools are careful to offer cultural experiences that align with the seasons and the traditional activities of the community, perhaps harvesting foods and hunting in the fall, pulling fish nets and storytelling in the winter and tapping birch trees and preparing hides in the spring. Each experience provides an opportunity to immerse the students in contextual language and also offer a wealth of skills, experiences and knowledge that provides a foundation upon which all other classroom learning can grow.

Reflecting on Expanding Immersion Indigenous Language Programs

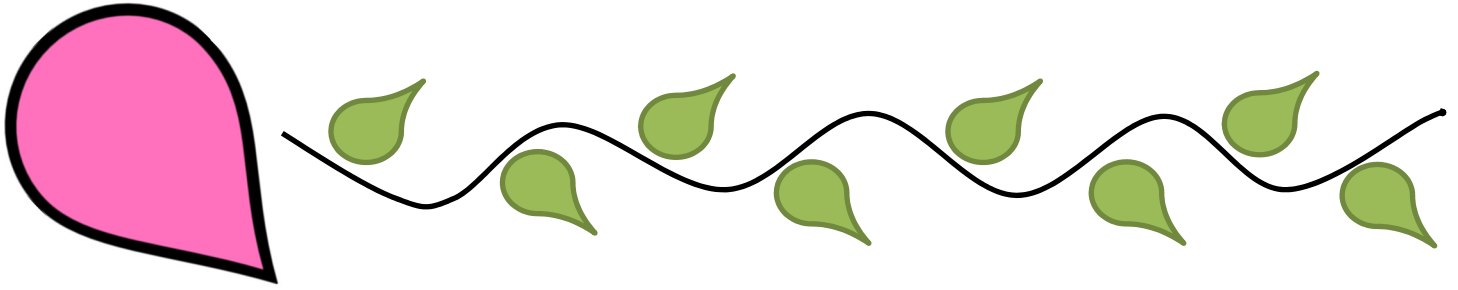
Have you ever been in a situation where you did not speak the dominant language? Describe the situation, how you felt and what you did.

How has the decrease in Indigenous language use affected your community? If unsure, seek out a friend from your community and learn about this decline in usage.

If your school currently offers Indigenous Immersion language programming, describe it. If not, does your school have plans to create such a program? If so, what are your plans to demonstrate support for the program and if not, what are the challenges preventing the creation of an Immersion program?

If you are a non-speaker or emergent speaker of your local Indigenous language(s), how might you strengthen your own skills to support students learning the Indigenous language?

Notes



9) Engaging Community in Indigenous Language Programming

"I had contacted some community members and guests before they came to visit my class. I had wanted them to be aware of my students' language skills and areas of interest. I had shared with them all of the sentences my students learned for the unit. That way I hoped they would speak with my students within the range of language they could understand. I wanted my students to experience success."

- Sharon Allen, Dene Zhatié Teacher, Fort Simpson, Our Languages Curriculum, p. 25

Engaging Community in Indigenous Language Programming is emphasized in the Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit curriculum documents, which remind educators that community involvement, can take many forms. Resource people from the community can come into the school or the students can go out into the community. Students can be offered many different kinds of cultural experiences such as camping, attending a local government meeting, working with a health care nurse attending to Elders, or talking in the Dene language while working at a store for a short period.

Just as it takes a whole village to raise a child, so too does it take an entire community to revitalize a language. Time and circumstance have not been kind to our Indigenous languages and in many Northern communities, only Elders – grandparents and great grandparents – speak the language of their ancestors. Few people among the younger generation have developed the fluency and understandings once enjoyed by all.

There is strength in numbers and it will take entire communities to make these languages strong and vital once again. If the Indigenous language is spoken only in the home and is not supported elsewhere in the community, the language will not grow. Likewise, if the language is taught in the schools but is not spoken elsewhere, few will see the relevancy of their language or commit to the hard work of learning it. Commitment, hard work and perseverance must be the guiding lights for all if Indigenous languages are to survive and thrive in our schools and communities.

Revitalization efforts work best when all members of the community come together and, with a single voice, declare their language a priority and commit to long-term action, both as individuals and collectively. This

acknowledgement of effort and energy will restore the language to a place of prominence in the home, the school and throughout the community.

Considering the Benefits of Engaging Community In Indigenous Language Programming



Partnering With Members of the Broader Community is an Act of Reconciliation

While mindful of generational trauma and the stages of healing, schools can work with Elders, parents, caregivers, and local language workers to support the specific learning outcomes of Indigenous language classes and broader school-wide activities (TRCC, 2015).



The Language Itself Can Serve as the Bridge Between Home and School

If students are taught conversational dialogue that can be used in a home and community setting, they will be excited about sharing their language learning with others. Taking the language home and into the community should be the expectation of students in all language classes, (OLC, 2018, p. 21).



The Preservation, Revitalization and Strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people

Schools play a critical role supporting the goals of local and regional strategic plans for language revitalization. The goals ensure that the whole-school language experiences are closely connected to community situations and have life and vibrancy beyond the classroom door. (Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 3 & 22).



Communities and Schools Are in a Reciprocal Relationship in Terms of Language Revitalization

Krashen (2013) has studied the reciprocal relationship between school and community in terms of language acquisition and language learning. He points out that the language is acquired naturally through authentic, real-world experiences, but only if learners understand the context and have some language knowledge to refer to; schools must prepare students to be active participants. Classroom instruction is valuable because it presents language material in a comprehensible form. This is not usually the case with conversations between two fluent speakers which may be almost incomprehensible to a new learner," (GNWT, 2018, p.23).



Elders Play a Vital Role

Zeldin et al (2000) indicates that "Strengthening relationships between Elders and youth can change perception and commitment towards shared language revitalization goals. Prolonged, repeated, and goal-orientated interaction between Elders and youth, such as collaborative learning about language loss, or situationally authentic language practice changes attitudes and builds momentum to revive languages," (OLC, 2018, p.29).

Thinking Differently in Engaging Community in Indigenous Language Programming

Elders and other fluent speakers play an important role in all successful community language revitalization plans as the language moves from the home and school and out into the community. As keepers of the language, the Elders can help support plans to move the language from the home and school and out into the community.

therefore...

principals demonstrate their commitment by ensuring that their Indigenous Language Instructors have the resources, the instructional and planning time required to deliver quality programming in their classrooms and to extend the language learning goals of the school into the community.

The ultimate goal is to have the Indigenous language heard and commonly spoken in the home, the workplace and through government offices and services,

therefore...

inviting speakers from all of these organizations into the classroom is recommended in order to demonstrate the relevance and power of Indigenous language use throughout the community. This also helps to forecast a future where Indigenous languages will be spoken in workplaces throughout the community.

Teachers and students can and do play an influential role in moving the Indigenous language out of the school and into the home,

therefore...

both Indigenous language instructors and students should be encouraged and empowered to use the language outside of the school and throughout the community.

It will take the inspired leadership of business, community and government leaders to make the workplace a welcoming and inviting place for NWT Indigenous languages,

therefore...

Indigenous language instructors and schools can act as role models for Indigenous language revitalization for the rest of the community.

Taking Action for Engaging Community in Indigenous Language Programming

- ☑ Traditional activities and cultural experiences, matched to Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit themes, are a rich source of content and traditional knowledge that students can document and preserve using it as part of their own education objectives for filmmaking or other courses.
- ☑ Use social media platforms to share Indigenous language learning by filming in Indigenous languages. This process can be a very powerful motivator and important learning tool. Through documenting and filming, students can actively engage in creating content which, if responsibly shared through social media channels, can dramatically raise the profile of the language and help build momentum towards greater language usage throughout the community.
- ☑ Communicate with parents and community. Collaboration is key in a student's success. Expanding the school vision to include the community and future benefits for the collective. By creating a community resource map, students and teachers can develop a visual representation of the community and skills people have and are willing to offer.
- ☑ Set community-wide language challenges that encourage everyone to learn Indigenous language vocabulary. When the community and school works together students see the relevance and generative power of Indigenous languages.
- ☑ Make Indigenous language challenges and games a part of community events and feasts at the school. For example, ask each member of the school staff to learn one sentence during the meal and have volunteers present their new phrase to the crowd.
- ☑ Create Elder-youth connections by offering companionship in long-term care/Nursing homes/Elders' homes (whichever appropriate) to connect students with the Elders in mutual learning. The students practice and learn the language and keep company with the Elders, showing respect for the wisdom they have to offer.

Promising Practices in Engaging Community in Indigenous Language Programming



Participating in Community Radio

Community radio stations provide a valuable opportunity for authentic classroom learning. Not only do the students listen to segments of these radio programs and discuss their content but, in some schools, the students are invited to be active participants by preparing segments to be broadcast on the station for all to hear.

Playing in the Language

Learning to play in the language is important because students will naturally gravitate to the language that is most comfortable to them while engaged in unsupervised play. If, as part of classroom learning, they are taught the vocabulary associated with game-play in the target language and they have played these games in class, they are more likely to use this language as they play at home or on the playground in the evenings or weekend. When they do, it is a sign that the students' mind is functioning in two worlds and that the Indigenous language has found a home.



Elders Mentoring

One creative region capitalized on the knowledge of the Elders and cast them in a mentorship role helping them support the language growth of intermediate language learners. This region surveyed the fluency rates of all its community members and gave each a coloured lapel button signifying their level of fluency – from novice and beginner to intermediate, advanced and fluent speaker.

Reflecting on Engaging Community in Indigenous Language Programming

Who are the fluent Indigenous language speakers in your community? Can you begin to put names to faces, as the beginning steps to relationship building?

How can you develop a strong and healthy relationship with Indigenous language speakers in your community and how can you draw upon these friends to support your students' language learning?

How can students incorporate their Indigenous languages into the content of your classroom?

What kind of community resources can your students create as a part of their class work that could benefit the community/region/territory and incorporate Indigenous languages?

Notes

Terminology and Definitions

Term	Definition
Culture	The living expression of ideas, behavioural norms, world views, and traditional knowledge of a group of individuals who have a historical, geographic, religious, spiritual, racial, linguistic, ethnic or social context, and who transmit, reinforce and modify those from one generation to another. Culture includes heritage; things we inherit from the past and bring forward to the future.
Decolonization	A process of (re)claiming Indigenous identities in former colonial states, of asserting the validity and status of cultural practices, knowledge and experiences that have been discounted due to Eurocentric systemic imposition, and of dismantling racism and privilege by challenging colonial practices within political, social, economic, judicial, administrative and educational structures.
Dene Kede	A foundational curriculum that encompasses the language, culture and the way in which five Dene nations view the world: Gwich'in, Sahtú, Dehcho, Tłı̨chǫ, and Akaitcho.
Education body	A District Education Authority (DEA), a Divisional Education Council (DEC), commission scolaire francophone (CSF), Tłı̨chǫ Community Services Agency (TCSA) or all of them as the case may be.
Educational Programming	A program of education from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 based on the curricula established or approved by the minister.
Elders	Elders are individuals identified and recognized by the community as leaders, traditional knowledge holders, and/or language speakers, who have strong traditional and cultural skills.
Elders in Schools	Elders in Schools is required program that operates in all NWT schools to connect youth with Elders.
Experiential	Experiential teaching and learning practices purposefully engage learners in direct experiences, hands on activities and focused reflections in order to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking.
Holistic	Holistic teaching and learning practices focus on the development of respectful relationships with the self, others, the land, and spiritual world.

Indigenizing education	A pedagogical shift within schools and classrooms that centres Indigenous content and cultures, where every subject at every level is examined to consider how and to what extent current content and pedagogy reflect Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledge. This is strengthened through teaching and learning practices that are holistic, spiral, experiential, and relational.
Indigenous Languages	The NWT <i>Official Languages Act</i> gives legal recognition and protection to nine Indigenous languages: Chipewyan, Cree, Gwich'in, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey, South Slavey and Tłıchǵ.
Inuuqatigiit	A foundational curriculum document developed by Inuit and Inuvialuit educators and Elders from the eastern and western Canadian Arctic, and grounded in the belief of the Elders that education must be community-based.
Key Cultural Experiences	Authentic and relevant activities and learning experiences that reflect, validate, and promote the worldviews, cultures, and languages of the Indigenous peoples of the NWT. The significance of each activity is strengthened by accompanying storytelling and traditional teachings, being on-the-land, and active use of Indigenous languages.
Learning Environment	The diverse physical locations, contexts and cultures in which students learn, including schools, classrooms and on-the-land. This also includes the worldviews, cultures and languages reflected within the school climate, classrooms and school-community relationship.
Reconciliation	The ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful nation-to-nation relationships with Indigenous peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership. Reconciliation requires constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Indigenous peoples' education, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, the administration of justice, and economic opportunities and prosperity.
Relational	Relational teaching and learning practices nurture relationships with self, family, the community, the land and the spiritual world.
Spiral	Spiral teaching and learning practices see curriculum and material revisited repeatedly over months and across grades, gradually getting into deeper layers of complexity.
Teaching and Learning practices	Methods of instruction, learning activities, and pedagogies used to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. Indigenizing education fosters teaching and learning practices that are holistic, spiral, experiential, and relational.

Worldview

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

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