

# A STRATEGY FOR LITERACY IN THE N.W.T.

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This year, 1990, is International Literacy Year and the beginning of the Literacy Decade. The Northwest Territories must confront an immense challenge with the highest rate of functional illiteracy in Canada. There are approximately 35,000 people in the N.W.T. over the age of fifteen and more than 15,000, or 44 per cent, of them have a grade nine or less education.

The Government of the Northwest Territories has developed a literacy strategy that encompasses the five-year time frame from 1988-89 to 1992-93.

## Principles

- Opportunities to gain a functional level of literacy should be provided in all official languages of the Northwest Territories through the school and continuing education system, wherever possible.
- Residents of all ages should have access to programs which will enable them to achieve a functional level of literacy in their home community, wherever possible.
- Programs should be provided through community schools, community learning centres or through community-based non-government organizations, where appropriate.
- Programs providing a functional level of literacy should be learner-centered and community-based.
- The teaching methods and learning materials used should recognize and incorporate the needs, goals and culture of the learner and the community.



- Individuals should recognize they are ultimately responsible for achieving their own functional level of literacy and taking advantage of the opportunities available to them provided through the Department of Education and other agencies.
- Individuals, families and communities should recognize they have a responsibility to encourage children, youth and adults to value literacy and education.

## **Literacy Through the School System**

The in-school program is recognized as the primary and usual route to functional levels of literacy for most people. Over the long term, as the school system achieves greater success, the demand for adult literacy programs will decrease.

### **Goals**

The long-term goals of the Literacy Strategy are to:

- improve individual literacy levels; and
- increase the rate of literacy in the N.W.T.

## **The Six Strategy Initiatives**

### Three Public Program Initiatives

- Provide resources for literacy through Arctic College. The College's literacy and adult basic education programs are the foundation of the Literacy Strategy.

- Develop and implement a public awareness program. It is essential to raise the level of awareness of the literacy issue, including promotion of the importance and value of literacy and education.
- Provide for voluntary and private sector involvement. It is essential to broaden the reach of the Literacy Strategy by involving residents, business and industry in developing programs to meet the literacy needs in their own community. This includes funding support for community-based literacy projects and support for the N.W.T. Literacy Council.

### Three Planning and Support Initiatives

- Develop baseline information for program assessment. It is essential to have information and analysis of the literacy situation in the N.W.T.
- Monitor curriculum and programs and develop materials. Appropriate curriculum and quality programs and materials are necessary to an effective Literacy Strategy.
- Develop programs through innovative pilot projects. New program ideas must be tested through pilot projects in order to be cost-effective.

## **Conclusion**

The N.W.T. Literacy Strategy will have an immediate impact upon individual literacy levels and, in the long-term, a positive impact on the N.W.T. literacy rate. The three public program initiatives will make more opportunities available for Northerners to improve their literacy levels. The three departmental initiatives will strengthen and enhance the quality of program support for literacy programs.