

Best Practices in Action

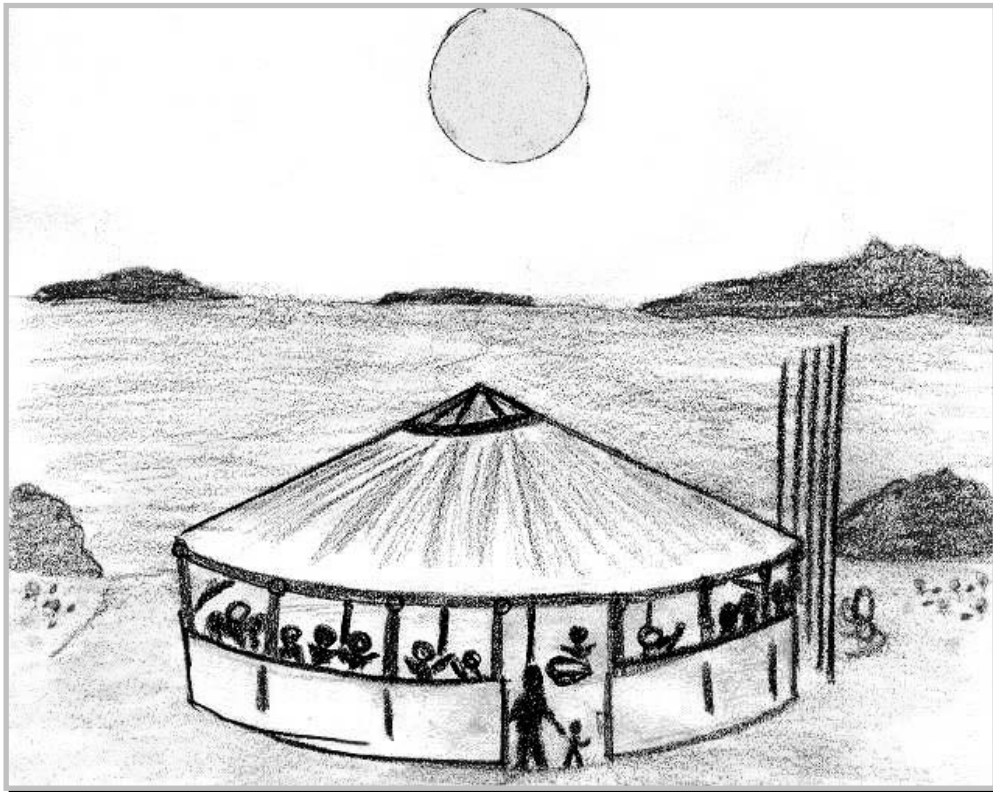


Peer Appreciation Certificate.....342
Staff Orientation.....343
SahBeau News.....346
Funding.....349
Fort Resolution Literacy Program.....351
From the Funder’s Perspective.....352
Program Administration.....355
Accountability.....357
Examples of Best Practices in Action363
Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program.....363
Native Women’s Association of the NWT Training Centre393



Examples of Best Practices in Action

Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program





The Community of Fort Resolution

Fort Resolution lies on the southeast shore of Great Slave Lake, a few kilometres west of the Slave River delta. Deninu Kue, its traditional name, means Moose Deer Island¹. It is part of the Akaitcho Territory Government, or Treaty 8 Land Claims area. Today, approximately 550 people live in the community—over 90% of them are Chipewyan.



Fort Resolution, Northwest Territories (Courtesy, RWED)

Fort Resolution is the oldest community in the Northwest Territories. In the 1820s, it had a considerably larger population than it has today, along with more commercial and social enterprises.

The Northwest Company set up a trading post on the Slave River delta in 1786. A few years later it was moved to Moose Deer Island southwest of the delta. The Hudson Bay Company also had a post there. When the two companies amalgamated in 1821, the post was called Fort Resolution. In

¹ Moose Deer Island is actually a small, uninhabited island visible from Fort Resolution.



1890, St. Joseph's Mission House also moved there and, in 1913, the RCMP set up a detachment. In 1938-39, a hospital was built to treat people with tuberculosis, but patients were eventually transferred to Edmonton and the hospital closed.

Before the Mackenzie Highway was built in the late 1940s, Fort Resolution served as a commercial, religious and transportation centre for other settlements in the Northwest Territories.

The community has had road access since the 1960s. Today, trapping, hunting and domestic fishing are the primary sources of income.

A Community-Based Approach to Literacy

The Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program operates through the community's learning centre (CLC), and is part of Aurora College's adult basic education and literacy network. By building the capacity of local people, including interested learners who are in its programs, it is able to deliver a broad range of literacy programming to people of all ages. To show how the program incorporates best practices into its work, we have separated the practices out, although in reality they interconnect to create a comprehensive program.

Best Practice #1: Philosophy

A quality adult literacy and basic education program has a clearly stated philosophy and mission that guide its work and practices.

One of the first activities the Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program undertook was the development of a mission statement. It now includes this statement in all its program reports and presentations.



Mission Statement

To improve the quality of life within our community by increasing literacy skills, providing employment opportunities and making families stronger

This mission reflects the philosophy behind Fort Resolution's literacy programming. It guides its planning, goals and objectives, activities and decisions. Thus, to achieve improved quality of life, it empowers learners to take control of their lives; it encourages them to reflect critically, to explore topics that are relevant to their lives in a group setting, and to engage in social action. It aims to meet learners where they are and address issues that are relevant to their lives. As you read through this example of Best Practices in Action, you will see how the various aspects of the program reflect its philosophy and mission.

Best Practice #2: Program Planning

A quality adult literacy and basic education program engages regularly in a program planning process.

In spring 2001, Ken Latour, the adult educator at the time, developed a proposal to address several areas of literacy programming at once. His idea was comprehensive: each part of the program would build on the other parts. But his proposal was too ambitious for the \$9,000 that he received from the GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE). Soon after, however, two timely events occurred that would support the program's development.



First, an additional staff member arrived in April, 2001 to teach an Office Administration program. Ken referred to Barb Miron's addition to the Community Learning Centre as "reaching critical mass" in terms of staffing. The two colleagues generated program ideas through ongoing and impromptu brainstorming. Then, in the fall of 2001, an ECE staff person told Ken and Barb that funding was still available for community projects, so they reworked and expanded the original proposal. With the extra funding that they received, they were able to hire three local adult literacy tutors and two family literacy workers. Thus the Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program got underway.

One of the program's objectives from the outset was to build capacity within the community so that local people would be able to deliver literacy programs. Initially, the adult educators micromanaged the process. However, as the program began to achieve its objective of building community capacity, the approach to planning changed: increasingly, the adult educators began to delegate responsibility. Finally, local literacy workers were able to take full responsibility for programs and made many of the planning decisions by themselves. It was an evolutionary process.

At the beginning though, literacy programming was new to everyone, so during the first eight months, planning meetings were frequent and lengthy, with daily operations often discussed in minute detail. Everyone was, more or less, involved in every decision and every aspect of the program. The adult educators still feel that this was necessary during the steep learning curve at the start of the program.

In 2002, when Ken left the community, Barb became the adult educator, and also the program manager. By this time, the literacy workers had grown in confidence and experience, so Barb was able to delegate more and more. Staff still met together as a group, but less frequently and for shorter periods of time. The meetings became a forum for sharing experiences and ideas rather than for reviewing operational details.



With the program now in its third year, program planning has evolved even further. The newest program, the Preschool Reading Circle, is the brainchild of Minnie Whimp, a family literacy worker.



The manager's role has been minimal: writing funding proposals and reports, and tracking the budget. Three weeks before the first session, Barb met briefly with Minnie and the two new family literacy workers to review the funding situation and the budget. Otherwise, they planned the program themselves, discussing goals and objectives, outcomes, how to promote the program, and so on. They come to Barb only with stories from the program and shopping lists. Left on their own, they have demonstrated exceptional competence, resourcefulness, creativity and skill in planning for and facilitating the program. The Fort Resolution literacy workers are now responsible for running their own programs.



Ensuring programs meet the needs of different groups in the community is a key factor in the program's planning process. For example, before beginning Elders' literacy programs, the Elders' literacy tutor conducted interviews with every community member over the age of 55 who was willing to participate, and asked what their needs were. The Elders' literacy program was based on the findings from this needs assessment.



Best Practice #3: Program Evaluation

A quality adult literacy and basic education program continually evaluates how well the program is meeting its goals and objectives and uses that information to direct future planning.

The Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program conducts ongoing evaluations throughout the program. This process not only measures whether the program is meeting its objectives, it also indicates if the objectives need to be revised and what improvements might be needed.

The literacy workers use a range of data to track the progress of the program, to measure its success, and to direct future planning. Quantitatively, they track how many learners stay in the program, how many complete their courses, how many attend regularly and what types of people participate. For example, they know from the numbers of participants that the Reading Circle is successful. Last year, 15 – 20 children attended each session, and this year 30 – 35 children. The fact that teenagers are attending this year, even though it is supposed to be for children from 5 – 12, demonstrates the need for a Teen Reading Circle, or Book Club.



The data also includes information on participant satisfaction. The program conducts exit questionnaires with the learners, the tutors and the family literacy workers. A summary of this information is included in the year-end program report. Here is a sample of the questionnaire that the Fort Resolution family literacy workers filled out in May, 2003:



Exit questionnaire for family literacy workers

1. Overall, how would you assess your learning and facilitating experiences this year?
2. Was the literacy coordinator available and helpful during the year?
3. Was there anything about your employment as a family literacy worker that you didn't like?
4. Do you think the Reading Circle sessions were effective?
5. Would you change the way they were facilitated in any way? If so, how?
6. Describe your most fulfilling experience in this year's family literacy programs.
7. Describe your worst experience in this year's family literacy programs.
8. Do you think this year's family literacy programs were a success?
9. What do you think made them a success (or failure)?
10. What do you think we should do differently next year?
11. Can you think of a better kind of program that would promote healthier families in Fort Resolution?

To ensure everyone's voice is heard, literacy workers are encouraged to speak out when they respond to the questionnaires, and not say only what they think the program manager wants to hear. As a result, responses are usually open and honest. The literacy workers then incorporate many of the suggestions from the responses into their next year's program.



The program uses anecdotal stories and individual case studies to flesh out the numerical information. These detailed narratives provide in-depth information on the progress of representative individuals. They give a rounded picture of the program and also help define the complex issues associated with program effectiveness.

Whenever it can, the program demonstrates its effectiveness by sharing copies of what it has produced. For example, one objective is to produce literacy materials. Last year, the program published four booklets and a variety of promotional posters. Stakeholders could see that this objective had been met, as well as the quality with which it was met, simply by looking at the materials.

Best Practice #4: Program Accessibility

A quality adult literacy and basic education program respects differences and is accessible to the broadest range of potential learners in the community.

Program participants cross all age groups, from infants to elders. Staff put a lot of effort into trying to attract people to the various programs. Using photographs of local people, they create colourful posters and post them on community bulletin boards. They advertise the programs regularly on the CKLB radio station in both English and Chipewyan. They also create personalized invitations which they hand deliver to the homes of the target group for each program; for example, to parents of preschool children, or Elders.

To increase access to programs, staff provide free childcare and transportation. As well, the programs are flexible in both time and location; for example, computer classes might be offered in the evening, or tutoring might be available at home. In addition, the adult educator works with



community and regional health professionals to meet the needs of learners with disabilities.

Best Practice #5: Instruction

A quality adult literacy and basic education program offers instruction that enables adult learners to progress towards their goals.

The Fort Resolution Community Family Literacy Program follows the ECE curriculum closely for its adult basic education and literacy learners. The program has successfully managed to overcome the challenge of how to promote self-directed learning, where learners are active participants in the learning process and assume responsibility for their own learning, even when following curricula with set learning objectives. To support learners, it has trained literacy tutors through its adult literacy tutoring program to assist with ALBE 110 – 130 instruction. As a result of shaping learning to the learners, at the end of the 2003 – 2004 academic year, 13 learners were still participating in the ALBE program, compared to 5 or 6 in previous years. Staff also prepare activities that draw on learners' own experiences and encourage them to construct their own meanings while interacting with learning materials.

Instructors rarely lecture. They design problems that help learners construct knowledge; they will take a back-seat and allow learners to discover on their own, yet are available for assistance. Such an approach allows learners to develop problem-





solving and critical thinking skills. For example, instructors/tutors often provide learners with questions to think about as they read a text. After reading individually, they then discuss the questions in a group, where their different perspectives are validated and respected. The end result is that learners learn how to apply information and concepts to new contexts.

The Community Learning Centre provides learners with positive reinforcement. It honours the achievements of all its learners in various ways, instead of singling out only a few learners, or focusing only on academic achievement. During the year, learners receive monthly awards for perfect attendance, for example. At the end of each academic year, at a special celebration of learning, all learners receive individualized certificates that acknowledge their unique personal strengths or assets. The program also publishes learners' writing in the community newsletter, or on the NWT Literacy Council's online literacy newspaper, *The Northern Edge*, another way of honouring learners. Student writing has also been published in *The Hub*, the Hay River local newspaper, and shared with local organizations. For example the Drug and Alcohol program has distributed copies of an ALBE learner's paper on cocaine abuse. As well, staff use good writing, with the author's permission, to instruct others, thereby honouring the author and inspiring the others.

Best Practice #6: Learning Materials

A quality adult literacy and basic education program uses a variety of appropriate learning materials.

Learners have access to a broad variety of learning materials in different formats; for example, the program uses multimedia instructional tools, such as AlphaRoute, an online learning environment, and Academy of Reading, a computer-assisted reading and assessment program. Textbooks include the *Sightlines* series, *Inside Stories*, the



Connections series, the *Mathpower* series and a variety of northern content or Aboriginal literature. Samples of learners' writing are used to instruct other learners. As well, newspaper, magazine and Internet articles with current and high-interest content have been very useful. The program also uses a variety of supplementary learning materials, such as *The Spelling Toolbox*, *LitKit*, *Lessons in Writing Sentences*, *Vocabulary Drills*, *Writing Out Loud*, *More Writing Out Loud*. Learners especially like the theme units in Aurora College's *LitKit*.

Best Practice #7: Learner Assessment

A quality adult literacy and basic education program monitors learner progress on an ongoing basis through a variety of participatory assessment procedures.

Staff use a variety of learner assessment methods. At the beginning of the academic year, learners write Aurora College Math placement tests and writing tests. Staff use these tests to place new learners. Standardized tests, such as the Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT), help give an overall picture of learners' areas of strength and weakness. Informal reading inventories, such as the Canadian Adult Reading Assessment (CARA), not only assess learners' reading levels, but also reveal learners' reading patterns. This lets tutors design strategies specific to each learner, and ties assessment closely to instruction.

Most learner assessment is ongoing throughout the year. Since many learners suffer from high levels of test anxiety, staff prefer to use alternate methods of assessment for all subjects except Math. In Math, learners write pretests that are not graded, to show which areas they need to review, and to build their confidence. Then they complete the unit tests, as required by the curriculum.



In all other subjects, learners work on projects. They receive continuous feedback from instructors. The instructor reviews a draft and makes suggestions for improvement, but does not give the paper a mark. In a one-on-one conference the learner and instructor review the strengths of the assignment and talk about ways to improve it. Learners write four or five drafts, learning more with each revision and conference. This process helps learners to internalize the concepts and skills through repeated hands-on applications, and results in most learners receiving encouraging grades.

Instructor-learner conferences also keep assessment tied to instruction. Learners see the assessment as part of instruction and learning, rather than assessment. By the time learners receive the final mark for their project, they are usually able to self-assess their work. They know they have produced a polished piece of work, and feel good about their achievements as well as their final mark.

Assignments take a variety of forms. As well as formal writing, learners use response journals. They also have the opportunity to do oral and visual presentations and group projects. Recently, learners learned how to prepare multimedia presentations. They can now present information from their research in a creative multimedia format. This not only gives learners various ways to present their assignments, but is also an opportunity for them to expand their computer skills.

Best Practice #8: Respect and Support for Learners

A quality adult literacy and basic education program respects its learners and supports them to achieve their goals.

The Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program is sensitive to the multiple roles of learners and includes their families in various aspects of the program. For example, the program includes



learners' families in special events, such as the Valentine's Day family craft night, family pizza and craft night, the annual Christmas feast, the spring barbeque and year-end celebrations. Many participants in the *Families First* parenting program were learners from the Community Learning Centre. Including their families in the program recognizes the complexity of learners' lives and offers support as they juggle the sometimes conflicting roles of learners, partners and parents.

Staff believe that one of the best ways to support and respect learners is to give them as much choice and control over their learning as possible. Instructors honour the prior knowledge and skills that learners have. They deliver the curricula in a way that respects the priorities of the educational institutions of which they are a part, and those of the learners, who have their own interests, perspectives and opinions. Learners can choose their path to reach an objective. For example, they can choose to work individually or in groups; they can select their assignment topics; and they can negotiate due dates. If no assessment method is specified in the curricula, learners can choose to write a test or do an assignment.

To maintain a safe, supportive, nurturing learning environment, the program manager tries to be both gentle and firm. The gentleness includes providing learners with encouragement, praise, kindness and understanding. As well, staff organize events, such as the Valentine's Day self-esteem envelopes and year-end recognition certificates, that help build learners' self-esteem. At the same time, they work with learners to establish expectations in terms of behaviour, for example. They ensure that everyone is aware of these expectations throughout the program, and try to enforce them consistently. This has proved to be effective. Staff and learners at the Community Learning Centre developed a Code of Conduct, with a zero tolerance policy on violence. After a disruptive incident in 2002, learners took it upon themselves to display the Code of Conduct more prominently throughout the Centre.



Staff have taken training such as Eye of the Storm, Screening for Success and Assistive Technology to enable them to provide improved support to learners with special needs. In addition, because the adult educator networks with other professionals in the community, staff can refer learners to counselling services. A counsellor from Yellowknife visits Fort Resolution every two weeks and holds regular workshops at the Community Learning Centre. As a result of the trust relationship learners have built with her, several access her services in private counselling sessions.

Best Practice #9: Transferability of Learning

A quality adult literacy and basic education program has procedures and practices in place to help learners transfer their learning to further education, training, employment or community life.

The Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program tries to ensure that learners acquire knowledge and skills in the program that they can apply in real-life settings and can connect to greater community involvement, to further training or to employment. The program itself provides work experience for learners by employing them as family literacy workers, researchers and illustrators. It empowers them to take on increasing levels of responsibility.

Many programs operate in the community rather than in the learning centre, such as the student council's 2003 Halloween extravaganza. This gives learners the opportunity for greater community involvement. They can transfer the planning, budgeting, marketing and public relations skills that they develop in organizing community events to the workplace. Other



projects, such as the newsletter, also get learners involved in the community and give them transferable skills.

The program incorporates practical skills into regular academic studies. For example, as well as word processing, learners learn other computer applications, such as Publisher, Excel and Power Point. Business communications are included as part of the ALBE English curriculum, and communication skills are taught in the College/Career courses. Staff try to keep learners aware that ALBE is a stepping stone—preparation for further training, employment or community involvement.

The program encourages learners to take advantage of workshops, conferences and training sessions, especially those connected to their career goals. For example, one learner, who is planning a career in environmental studies, attended a World Forestry Congress in Quebec. This experience increased her motivation to achieve her career goals. When she returned, she wrote an essay about the conference and related forestry issues. In addition, she spoke to high school students, thus serving as a role model for other learners.

Another learner, who plans to be an Aboriginal languages instructor, benefited from a Chipewyan language and culture workshop. Like the previous learner, she too wrote an essay about her experiences at the workshop. Another learner, who is entering the health profession, researched cocaine abuse. She shared her paper with the local drug and alcohol counsellors, who found it a very valuable resource.

When learners are more involved in the community, the community becomes an extension of the classroom. A feedback loop develops between their community experiences and their course work. Their course work, in turn, becomes more anchored to real-life experience; and the skills they develop are transferable to other areas of life.



Best Practice #10: Culture

A quality adult literacy and basic education program appreciates and respects the diverse cultures of the learners and incorporates them into the program.

At the Fort Resolution Community Learning Centre, all learners are Aboriginal: most of them are Chipewyan. The program recognizes the importance of valuing learners' culture and, most importantly, of listening to learners' own cultural knowledge and perspectives. Most reading material used in the adult literacy program is Aboriginal. Traditional knowledge is taught through the Science and Social Studies curricula. The program encourages learners to take part in local cultural events sponsored by the Chipewyan Language Working Group. Weekly Chipewyan classes have been offered in the past. Learners are free to choose their own topics for writing and research assignments, so many involve Chipewyan culture. Some learners write messages regularly on the white boards in Chipewyan. Elders' storytelling is incorporated into various literacy events, and Elders' stories were collected and published in the 2003 *Echoes* and *Whispers* booklets. The centre has northern content posters and learners' artwork on its walls.



Best Practice #11: Community

A quality adult literacy and basic education program ensures a strong community focus by being engaged in the community and actively engaging the community in the program.



One of the most important decisions that the program made was to train community people as tutors and family literacy facilitators. This expanded the network of community people informed about and involved in the program. It also built community capacity around literacy.

In September 2003, the learners at the Community Learning Centre formed a student council and made a commitment to community service. They raised funds for a Halloween extravaganza and transformed the arena into a creative and elaborate haunted house. This event was so popular that long line-ups of children and adults waited to get inside. The learners planned most of this event outside of school hours. They are now planning to sponsor additional community events and volunteer their time to other community projects.

In spring 2002, Ken and the ALBE learners produced a community newspaper, the *Deninu Digest*. It had an impressive layout, and involved creative writing and photographs. This project took the learners into the community to collect information and to distribute copies of the newspaper when it was finished. Community members responded very positively to this project, since Fort Resolution does not have a community newspaper.

The newspaper provided a forum for learners to engage actively in the community. It was also an excellent way to cover ALBE English and Computer Studies objectives. However, it was incredibly labour intensive for staff who did much of the layout. In reviewing the project, staff decided that it would be better to teach learners to do the layout work. Thus learners were





trained to use the publishing program, Microsoft Publisher, as part of their Computer Studies program. Thus learners could develop desktop publishing skills, as well as word processing skills, and many are now quite skilled in that area.

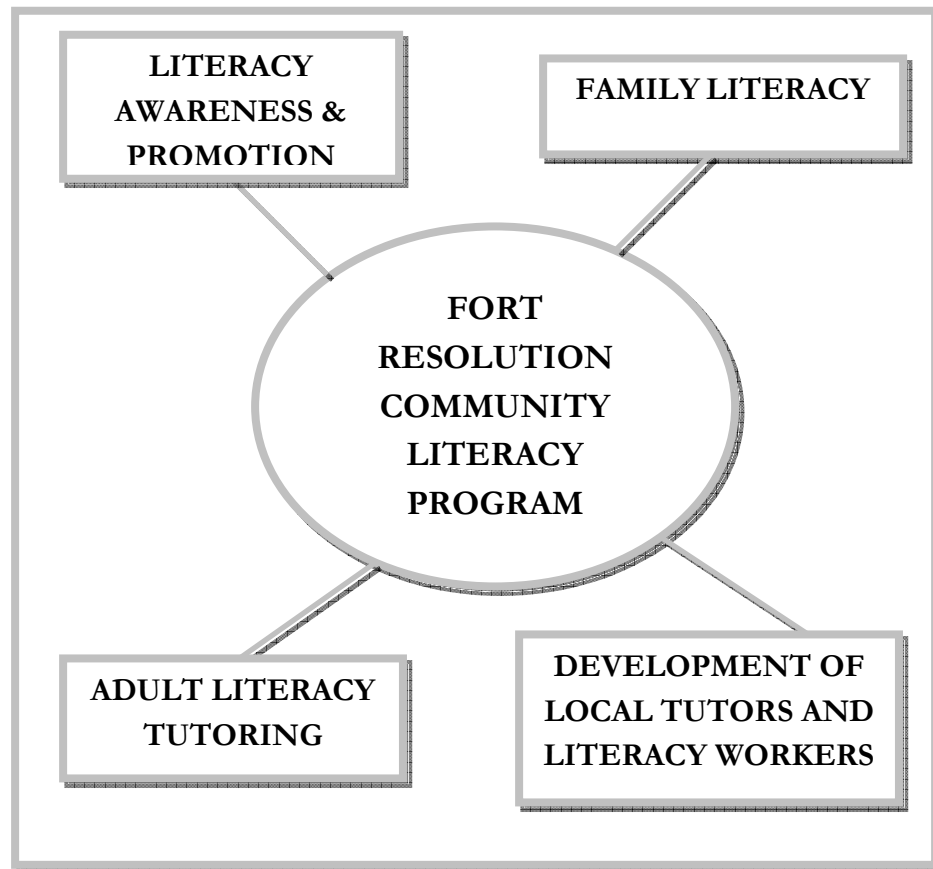
A year and a half after the *Deninu Digest*, learners are working on their own community newsletter, the *Aurora Scoop*. Some of their writing assignments take the form of reporting on community events, and the community is again an extension of their classroom. Learners are now doing the layout and graphic design work themselves. As a result of changing how the newsletter is produced, learners have developed additional computer skills, the newsletter project is less labour intensive for staff, and learners can share their learning with the community.

The program regularly sponsors community events, such as a storytelling stew and bannock luncheon, an Elders' Christmas party, a Reading Circle Christmas party, family fun nights, barbeques and pizza parties. It also includes community groups in its planning.

Best Practice #12: Outreach

A quality adult literacy and basic education program reaches out to the community to attract potential learners and gain the support of the community.

To meet the varied needs of the community, the Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program offers a broad range of programming, targeted towards different groups.



Literacy Awareness and Promotion: The program keeps people in the community informed about literacy and literacy issues, and about what the program offers. For example, staff:

- Hold information sessions at Bingos.
- Give away books at community events.
- Produce community booklets.
- Develop literacy posters with photos of children in the community.
- Sponsor special community events for children, families and Elders.



Family Literacy: Fort

Resolution has no community library, and few places to buy books. Family literacy programs are important because they fill a gap in the community: they provide children with opportunities to develop emergent literacy skills, and they



give adults opportunities to improve their literacy skill, while supporting their children's literacy development. Family literacy is an integral part of the Fort Resolution program. Family literacy facilitators have organized and run the following programs:

- Reading Circle
- Preschool Reading Circle
- *Books in the Home*
- *Families First: A Northern Parenting Program*
- Special family literacy events.

Many of the program's promotional activities help strengthen the importance of family literacy. Literacy workers put up posters with photographs of local children and parents around the community, conveying the importance of family literacy. As well, they post photo collages of family literacy activities in the learning centre and distribute them to stakeholders. Parents receive photographs of their children participating in literacy activities to reinforce the message that reading skills are important.

The Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program places a very high priority on emergent literacy skills. The school vice-principal and the adult educator are now working together to turn the school library into a public library. At the end of the 2002 – 2003 fiscal year, they used a surplus in one of the literacy program budgets, with the approval of the funder, to



purchase much-needed new books and shelving, along with the equipment to catalogue and bar code the books. The funding also enabled them to hire a person to do the cataloguing.

Adult Literacy Tutoring: One-on-one and small group tutoring helps support the ALBE instruction, and allows the learning centre to offer more comprehensive programming, as well as more individualized assistance to adult learners. Initially, the program hired a full-time literacy coordinator, who also served as a tutor, and two part-time tutors.

As the program matured, the tutors took on more responsibility. In the second year of the program, the Community Learning Centre accepted 22 ALBE students, an unprecedented number. Increased tutor support let staff move away from blanket, multi-level instruction and enabled them to follow the curricula for each ALBE level. The program could also accommodate higher-level ALBE students who wanted to remain in the community.

Now in its third year, the program is attempting to offer the same level of adult literacy services, but with significantly reduced funding and human resources. During this academic year (2003-2004), the program has 18 ALBE students, one part-time English and Computer Studies tutor and one part-time Math tutor. With some volunteer tutors and distance learning courses for ALBE 150-160 learners, the program is still able to offer separate classes for each ALBE 110-140 level and a certain amount of individual attention for learners.

Development of Local Tutors and Literacy Workers: From the outset, the program's philosophy was to involve as many local people as possible to gain further community support and to ensure that the program would not collapse when one key person left. This strategy has worked well as it allows staff to see who is effective and in what capacity. The strategy also gives the program the ability to replace staff members who were not able to



meet the standards it had set for its literacy workers and tutors, an unfortunate, but sometimes necessary, task.

Best Practice #13: Organizational Links and Partnerships

A quality adult literacy and basic education program works collaboratively with other organizations and agencies to support the program, the learners and the program staff.

Staff at the Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program believe that both formal and informal partnerships are necessary to deliver successful literacy programs in northern communities.

The program has formal contribution agreements with its numerous funders that clearly describe the services it will deliver. Its regular reports show if it has fulfilled the agreement. However, even within these formal partnerships, it has informal relationships and shares information and ideas with them.

One of the program's strongest partnerships is with the NWT Literacy Council. This connection enabled staff to access Literacy Council training on Family Literacy, Proposal Writing, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder, Screening for Success, Aboriginal Literacy, Photo-based Literacy and Assistive Technology for Learners with Disabilities. The program also accesses funding for community family literacy projects that is available through the Literacy Council and participates in jointly-sponsored events, such as NWT Literacy Week.

Staff have also formed a strong partnership with the community school. A year after the Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program began, the school formed its own literacy committee. The Adult Educator meets with that committee to share ideas and resources and to work jointly on projects,



such as community writing contests and a Reading Circle. Literacy program staff also read to children in the school and share resources with school staff. The relationship is one of helping and sharing, with suggestions from teachers incorporated into the program.

The formation of a community interagency committee, spearheaded by the school principal, has created an atmosphere of mutual cooperation that has benefited the program in many practical ways. For example, the regular Bingo session was cancelled so as not to conflict with the NWT Literacy Week Family Games Night. And a scheduling conflict that forced children to choose between badminton and the Reading Circle was resolved.

Best Practice #14: Staff Development and Support

A quality adult literacy and basic education program values its staff and places a priority on staff development.

Many of the staff at the literacy program are local people with limited experience of literacy work. Thus providing training for them has been a program priority. Over the last three years, they have had the opportunity to participate in a broad range of training, including:

- Tutor training
- STAPLE²
- Lesson Planning
- Program Planning
- Screening for Success
- Proposal Writing
- Publisher/Graphic Design



² Supplementary Training for Practitioners of Literacy Education.



- Power Point
- Academy of Reading
- Eye of the Storm: Teaching Adults with FASD
- Families First: A Northern Parenting Program
- Non-Violence Crisis Intervention
- Family Literacy Training
- Inclusive Early Childhood Education
- Assistive Technology
- Canadian Adult Reading Assessment (CARA).

Two staff members from the Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program have been honoured for their work in literacy. In recognition of the successful literacy programs, Barb Miron, the current Adult Educator, received the 2003 Canada Post Award for Community Leadership. The president and CEO of Canada Post called each winner “a role model of dedication, perseverance and understanding of the importance of literacy.”



In 2004, Minnie Whimp, a learner in the program and a literacy worker, received the Ministerial Literacy Award for Tutors from the GNWT’s Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Minnie was also seen as a role model for other young people in her community.

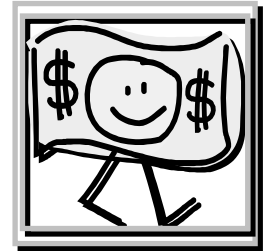




Best Practice #15: Funding

A quality adult literacy and basic education program has adequate ongoing funding to run the program.

The staff has become very creative in identifying a variety of funding sources for the range of literacy programs that they offer. Every year, they access additional funding beyond their ALBE allocation. They channel their funding through the local District Education Authority, which is the educational umbrella for the community. This provides for more community ownership and demonstrates the program's commitment to developing local partnerships. The program shares funding information with other community organizations, helps with proposal writing and provides support letters for other community projects. This cooperative attitude is a key factor in the success of this community literacy program.



Best Practice #16: Program Administration

A quality adult literacy and basic education program is well-managed and well-run through appropriate policies and procedures.

The Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program tries to keep its administration as simple as possible, so that staff can focus on areas such as instruction and program delivery. The program keeps orderly and up-to-date records of learner achievements and of its finances. Because building community capacity is a key program goal, literacy workers keep their own records as they begin to run programs, allowing them to grow in experience and confidence.



Staff enter learners' grades or financial expenditures into spreadsheets the same day, and review them regularly. Stakeholders receive semiannual financial statements and learner progress reports. Each program funder receives interim and final reports, while Aurora College receives monthly reports of program activities. In addition, the program submits reports, accounting for financial expenditures, learner achievements and program activities to the GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment three times a year. The program keeps these reports on file.

Fort Resolution Community Learning Centre follows the newest ALBE curricula closely. Staff maintain a file for each learner. These files contain registration information, placement test results, acceptance letters, transcripts, marks records, progress reports, learner contracts and records of unusual incidents. The contents of these files are kept confidential: learners sign release forms so that information on their academic progress can be shared with their sponsors.

Best Practice #17: Accountability

A quality adult literacy and basic education program is accountable to the funders, community and partners, who also share responsibility for the program's success.

The Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program maintains a high level of financial accountability. Staff enter program expenditures into spreadsheets, and keep all receipts for the purchase of materials on file. They submit interim and final reports, including detailed financial statements, to funders according to their reporting guidelines. In addition, the program channels funding through the local District Education Authority and provides that organization with copies of its receipts, adding another layer of accountability. As well as financial statements and statistical information, the program tries to share its human



side with funders, by including anecdotes of program events, photo collages and copies of posters and publications. In this way, funders are able to see what their funding has achieved and who have benefited from their contributions.

Conclusions

The Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program is successful for a number of reasons:

- The program works because of a team management approach that draws upon the strengths of team members, and integrates their suggestions into program planning.
- The program takes advantage of regional allies, such as the NWT Literacy Council, for assistance in proposal writing, training, funding, encouragement and connections to other literacy programs.
- The program invests time in training tutors and local literacy workers. To offer quality literacy programming, the program believes it is essential to recruit tutors with a minimum of Grade 12 and provide them with additional literacy-specific training. It finds STAPLE, a computer-based tutor-training course, a useful tool for training literacy workers.
- The program believes that support for tutors and literacy workers, especially at the beginning of the program is essential, as is empowering them to work on their own as soon as possible. It is also important to listen to the literacy workers and implement their suggestions.

Publications

Over the last three years, the program has published a number of different materials, which are available upon request:



- Literacy posters
- *Winter Fun* booklet
- *Animals* booklet
- *Deninu Digest* newspaper
- *Winning Stories* booklet
- *Echoes* booklet
- *Writing Well* booklet
- *Whispers* booklet
- *My Community* booklet
- *My Home Town* booklet
- *Aurora Scoop* newsletter.

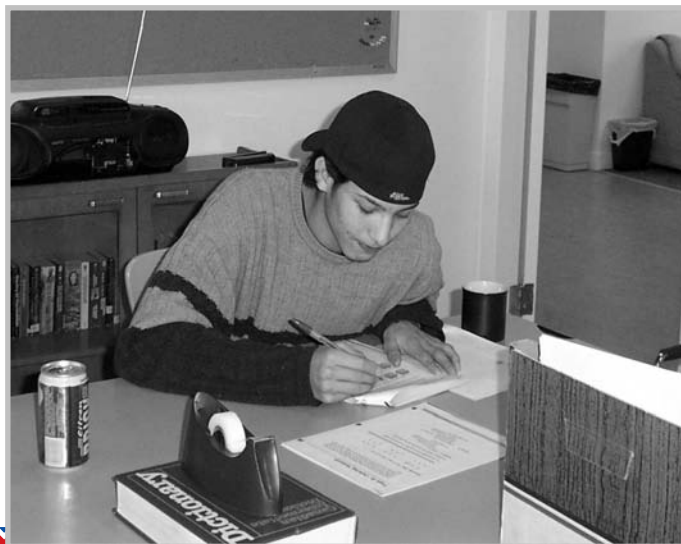
For more information on the program, contact:

Barb Miron, Community Adult Educator
Aurora College Community Learning Centre
Fort Resolution, NT X0E 0M0

Phone: (867) 394-5401

Fax: (867) 394-3181

Email: bmiron@auroracollege.nt.ca





Best Practices in Action



Native Women's Association of the NWT Training Centre





The Native Women's Association of the NWT Training Centre

The Training Centre, which is located in Yellowknife, offers training to both men and women. As its title suggests, it is run by the Native Women's Association of the NWT, a not-for-profit organization. The headquarters of the Association are in Yellowknife, but it represents the entire Northwest Territories.

For more than 25 years, the Centre has offered programs to NWT adults to help them improve their lives. In the early days, the program focused on Arts and Crafts, as well as Life Skills. Today, it focuses on career building, adult literacy and lifelong learning. To show how the program incorporates best practices in its work, we have again separated the practices out, although in reality they interconnect to create a comprehensive and holistic program. The descriptions of these best practices in action are not all inclusive, but rather are examples of the kinds of things that collectively help make the program successful.

Best Practice #1: Philosophy

A quality adult literacy and basic education program has a clearly stated philosophy and mission that guide its work and practices.

The Training Centre subscribes to the overall mission of the Native Women's Association of the NWT—to provide education and training programs that will help improve people's lives. It addresses the training needs of both males and females, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The mission statement, which appears on the front



page of a brochure about the Association, spells out clearly the Native Women's Association views about learning.



The Training Centre program clearly reflects the philosophy and mission of its parent organization. Staff believe that learning must be holistic for it to be effective. This means that the program focuses not only on teaching the curriculum, but on the social, emotional and cultural needs of learners. Its coordinator, Kimberley Moreside, also notes that the program emphasizes the importance of “growing community.”

This philosophy guides its planning, along with its goals and objectives. It helps determine what is included in the program and how the program is delivered. For example, the practice of integrating cultural and social activities and workplace education into the program reflects this holistic view of learning.

Best Practice #2: Program Planning

A quality adult literacy and basic education program engages regularly in a program planning process.

The Training Centre is involved in program planning at two levels. First, as part of the Native Women's Association of the NWT, Training Centre programs and services fit into the overall plan for the Association. Board members take a keen interest in Training Centre activities.



Best Practices in Action

Second, the Training Centre plans specifically for its own programs and services, and invites input from a variety of interested people. The Native Women's Association Board, for example, provides input into the plan for the Centre. As regional representatives, Board members know what people in the communities need in terms of training. The program also encourages learners to suggest improvements to the program, based on their experiences. Their feedback is collected through end-of-year surveys and interviews. As well as learner needs, the program tries to keep abreast of the demands of the labour market.

To meet changing needs, the program has moved away from its early focus on Arts and Crafts, and Life Skills. Today it follows the ECE's Adult Basic Education Curricula. In addition, the program includes unique Native Women's Association courses, such as health and exercise, and on-the-land activities. These additional courses support the program's goal of holistic learning, and are also fundamental to learners' goals of improving their lives. As well, work experience is an integral part of the program. In addition, the program now offers support to learners who want to refresh their English, Math and Science to write the NWT Trades Entrance Examinations to enter into an apprenticeship program.

Demand for the program has been so great that plans for this year (2003-2004) included doubling its space. The increased numbers also meant that staff had to change how they deliver the program.

The Centre believes it is important for learners to plan too. To help them do this, the Training Centre provides them with a calendar of events for the program for the whole year. This allows learners to see at a glance what they will be involved in. It also lets them plan their own appointments around program events. As well, learners receive personal organizers/calendars during orientation.



Adult Training Center

Native Womens Association
 Box 2321 Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P7
 Ph: (867) 873-5509

e-mail : kmoreside@nativewomens.nt.ca or reception@nativewomens.nt.ca

Adult Literacy and Work Experience Program Calendar 2003/2004

September	1	Labor Day
	2-5	Orientation Week activities, Potluck Lunch 4 th /Birthdays
	8 th -30 th	Computer, Math, Career/Life/Work & English classes
	17 or 24	On the land trip
	26	1/2 day (12:00 Dismissal) Professional Development
	30	Annual General Meeting: Native Womens Association; 66
October	1	Day 2 of AGM at Explorer Hotel
	2	Potluck Lunch/Birthdays
	3	Progress Reports and Awards
	6 th -31 st	Math, Science, Work Preparation, & English classes
	13	Thanksgiving Monday Holiday
	24	1/2 day (12:00 Dismissal) Professional Development
November	6	Potluck Lunch/Birthdays
	7	Progress Reports and Awards
	3-7 th	Interviews for Work Experience
	11	Remembrance Day Holiday
	10 th -22 nd	Work Experience
	27 th -28	Yellowknife Educator's Conference --no classes
December	4	Potluck Lunch/Birthdays
	5	Progress Reports and Awards
	19	1/2 day (12:00 Dismissal) last day before Christmas
January	5	First Day back to School (Exercise* additional class)
	8	Potluck Lunch
	23	1/2 day (12:00 Dismissal) Professional Development
	26	Midterm Exams: Math, Science, English
	27-29	STD's conference
	30	Progress Reports and Awards/Orientation and Placement

Best Practice #3: Program Evaluation

A quality adult literacy and basic education program continually evaluates how well the program is meeting its goals and objectives and uses that information to direct future planning.

Staff at the Training Centre are always interested in whether the program is meeting its goals and objectives. Thus evaluations of the Training Centre program are very comprehensive. Staff use a variety



Best Practices in Action

of different tools, both formal and informal, to collect qualitative and quantitative data.

An important aspect of evaluation is feedback from learners. Staff conduct end-of-year surveys to determine learner satisfaction with the program. The surveys cover a broad range of topics, including both curricular and extra-curricular activities, and learning materials. This approach provides the program with in-depth qualitative data from the learners' perspectives. Learners are often quite forthright about changes that are needed: they are always listened to. Many of the positive changes that have been made to the program, such as the development of teams, result from learners' suggestions. Partner organizations that support work experience placements provide feedback on that aspect of the program.

In terms of quantitative data, staff keep track of:

- Overall enrolments each semester
- Learner retention numbers and reasons for learners leaving
- The numbers of men and women that enroll each year
- Learner attendance
- Follow up statistics, such as the numbers of program participants who get a job following their training
- Learner progress or coursework
- Learner work experience hours completed
- Learner achievements, awards, certificates, etc.

In 2003-2004, 65 potential learners applied for the program. Forty-four eventually enrolled. Of these, 29 learners were still attending in May 2004. Those who left gave the following reasons for leaving:





- Some found employment.
- Some moved back to their communities or elsewhere.
- Some had difficulty with maintaining babysitting arrangements.
- Some had personal problems that prevented them from returning.

The program also tracks former learners informally—by word of mouth, or when they come back to visit the program. Staff are also able to track them formally through their partnership with the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement (AHRDA) office of the Native Women’s Association of the NWT.

Best Practice #4: Accessibility

A quality adult literacy and basic education program respects differences and is accessible to the broadest range of potential learners in the community.

The program fills a niche in the continuum of educational services offered within the NWT. Many of its learners do not fit in to more formal institutional-style programs, such as college or high school programs. They may have been out of school for a number of years and/or may have had personal problems that prevented them from continuing their studies. Thus making the program accessible to as many learners as possible is important to Training Centre staff.

The program has an open door policy. It is open to anyone, both male and female, over the age of 17, from anywhere in Canada, although most learners come from either the Northwest Territories or Nunavut. Over the years, learners from all regions of the NWT have enrolled in the program. Staff send out program brochures to all the AHRDA committees and to other interested organizations. In addition, the program is advertised more extensively in Yellowknife through posters and radio announcements.



Best Practices in Action

The program's downtown location, in the Native Women's Association building, is ideal for most people. Few learners have their own transportation, so this central location means that they can use the public bus system, with bus stops located near the Centre. It also allows them to attend appointments in the downtown area easily.

Potential learners fill out an application form. The coordinator of the program, Kimberley, interviews them and discusses their goals with them. Once they are accepted into the program, they write placement tests for English, Math and Information Technology. The program also organizes a one-week orientation session at the Centre before classes begin. The program often has a broad range of learners, from people who are unable to read to those who perhaps attended college but were weak in one or more subjects.

Best Practice #5: Instruction

A quality adult literacy and basic education program offers instruction that enables adult learners to progress towards their goals.

The Training Centre program runs for two semesters. Staff try to encourage learners to enroll in the full 10-month program. They believe that is how learners will derive the most benefits from the program. Because of their previous life experiences, learners in this program need a more structured program to help them get back into a learning situation and achieve their goals. Learners attend classes from 9-4 each day, and have to keep track of their class time. Each class is one hour long. Learners are expected to plan personal appointments outside classroom hours.



Learners follow the NWT Adult Basic Education Curricula. Courses offered include:

- Introductory Computers
- Career Life/Work
120/130; Career College
130/140
- English 110-150
- Mathematics 110-140
- Science 120-130.

“I was scared of computers but now I’m not. I can make cards, posters, write a letter, and email people.”

Each course includes current information, cultural relevancy, excellent work ethic, applied learning and self-directed extensions.

In addition to the standard NWT curricula courses, learners are able to take an applied advanced level of computers, as well as a compulsory health/exercise class through a partnership with a local fitness centre. They also participate in on-the-land and cultural activities and a work experience program. Learners may work in large and small groups, as well as individually.

Work experience is considered an important aspect of the program. Staff spend a significant amount of time finding suitable work experience placements, preparing learners before they go, and monitoring the placements. The experience is treated like a real job. Before learners begin their placement, they take part in an interview. They have the opportunity to meet the people they will be working with and to discuss the work they will be doing. They have to update their resumes, including a list of current references, and provide them to the work placement with a covering letter. They also undergo a Criminal Records Check and take an oath of confidentiality. Learner assessment is built into the work placement. Each week during the placement, learners sit down with their supervisor to review what they have done, go over what they have achieved and discuss any problems they might have. They are also encouraged to assess their



Best Practices in Action

own work. At the end of their placement, learners write a letter of thanks (using computers) to their supervisor.

Fostering self-direction in learners is seen as an important approach to enabling learners to take charge of their own learning. The program does this in a variety of ways. For example, each day, learners have one hour of self-study. This is



considered accountable time. During that time, learners may:

- Practice typing.
- Finish assignments.
- Conduct research on the Internet.

The program uses volunteers to supplement formal instruction. To date, the program has had tutors for both Math and English—areas where staff and learners consider tutoring is most needed. Before hiring tutors, the coordinator interviews those who are interested. They have to provide a resume and undergo a Criminal Records Check. Tutor training is available for people new to tutoring.

This year, the two instructors have had to adopt a different approach to instruction, because of the increased numbers of learners. Learners rotate through courses in small groups of 10-15. While some are receiving formal instruction, others may be on self-study.

Learners are part of the decision making processes. At the beginning of each year, in September, learners and staff develop group “norms”. Everyone agrees on these ground rules, which are then posted in every



class. Suggestions from learners are often incorporated into the program design. For example, at the suggestion of learners, and as a result of studying how teams work in the careers course, a new initiative began in 2003 that sees learners working in three teams:

- A fund raising team to raise money for special events
- A trip planning team
- A student government team to handle disputes or disruptions and to ensure good communication with the Native Women's Association of the NWT.

When conferences in Yellowknife are relevant to learners, the whole group may attend. Last year, as part of their health/exercise class for example, everyone attended a conference on Sexually Transmitted Infections. In addition, learners attended the annual general meeting of the Native Women's Association of the NWT, and the workshops associated with that meeting. These have included Healing workshops and Aboriginal Women in Business. Last year, learners made their participation part of their career course work. They made up questionnaires, interviewed delegates at the Annual General Assembly, and reported back their findings.

Best Practice #6: Learning Materials

A quality adult literacy and basic education program uses a variety of appropriate learning materials.

Learners have access to a broad variety of multi-media learning materials. As well as using materials recommended as part of the curricula, they also borrow other resources from Aurora College and from local schools. The program also uses resources that are available free from a variety of local organizations, for example the NWT Literacy Council's photography kit or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder kit. They



also make extensive use of the public library. The Internet is also a popular source of learning materials for both learners and instructors.



Aboriginal literature is popular among learners. One of the instructors has developed a series of novel studies that include studies for Aboriginal literature, such as *Two Old Women*, a favourite novel among learners. This tale of two old women abandoned by their tribe during a winter famine is based on an Athabaskan Indian legend passed along for many generations from mothers to daughters of the upper Yukon River Valley in Alaska. Learners also choose their own novels. Recently one learner wrote a book report on a local book about the bombing at the Yellowknife Giant Mine. A popular resource book in the program is *The Act of Writing*, which includes a variety of short stories.

The local newspaper donates copies of the newspaper three times a week. It is not unusual for learners to arrive at the Training Centre early and start their day by reading the newspapers.

Last year, the program partnered with the NWT Literacy Council when it launched its online newspaper *The Northern Edge*. Some learners have worked with the Literacy Council's resource coordinator to produce the newspaper by recording the voices in the stories.



Best Practice #7: Learner Assessment

A quality adult literacy and basic education program monitors learner progress on an ongoing basis through a variety of participatory assessment procedures.

Learner assessments are an integral part of the program, and instructors make sure that learners are fully aware early in the program of how assessments will take place. Staff use a variety of formal and informal learner assessment methods.

At the beginning of the academic year, instructors conduct intake interviews with learners. During the interview, learners' prior learning is documented and their instructional and support needs discussed. The instructors also ask about learners' goals. Later in the semester the instructor and the learner will review the goals together and modify them, if necessary.

Learners write placement tests for English, Math and Computers. Like the Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program, staff also use informal reading inventories, such as the Canadian Adult Reading Assessment (CARA). They like CARA because it helps them to understand how learners read, and lets them design strategies specific to each learner. The Training Centre holds exit examinations in January and June.

Learners are also assessed through project work and oral presentations. More recently, learners have developed the skills to prepare computer-generated presentations. Criteria for projects are clearly spelled out and discussed with learners before they begin. Checklists (from the curricula), observations, self-assessment and group assessments are part of the process.



In addition to academics, the program recognizes the importance of non-academic outcomes for learners, such as improved self-esteem, improved attitudes and a healthier sense of their own potential. It monitors these (usually through observation and learner interviews) as legitimate outcomes of the program.

Best Practice #8: Respect and Support for Learners

A quality adult literacy and basic education program respects its learners and supports them to achieve their goals.

As we have seen, the Training Centre fills a niche for learners throughout the NWT who may have difficulty fitting into more formal educational institutions when they first return to learning.

The program helps the target group to re-enter school and achieve their goals, whether those are to improve their lives, to enter a post-secondary institution or an apprenticeship program, or to re-enter the work force with more stability.

“I am given the time I need to learn.”

The first week of the program is spent on orientation. During that time, learners find out more about the program and its resources; they spend time doing activities together, such as going out on the land for a day or touring local facilities, such as the public library or the Legislative Assembly. They may have guest inspirational speakers from local organizations, including Aboriginal businesses. The program also provides information on available support services. As well, placement testing takes place during this time. This orientation week helps learners understand what they will be doing for the next 10 months and what supports they might be able to access. It also lets them get to know each other, and begin to feel comfortable together.



Staff believe that the program’s supportive environment is a key factor in learner success. They believe that it is important to “grow community”—and that it is through that sense of community that a supportive and collegial learning environment is fostered and trusting relationships develop. If learners are having a hard time, staff often help them by advocating for them, accompanying them to places like the hospital or the Victim Assistance program. They will also help them fill out forms for services. In the words of the coordinator, “If needed, staff go the extra mile for people.” Given the literacy levels of some learners in the program, they are likely to end up dropping out of classes if they need services but become frustrated trying to access them. Fortunately, the program has had many learners who are very determined to succeed as well.

“The program has opened all the wonder and opportunity to move forward and continue with my education 10 times stronger.”

The program recognizes learner contributions to the program, such as making coffee, donating time for special events and so on. It celebrates learner success. Once a month, learners receive awards, often donated by a local organization; for best attendance, or for the most improved in Math, English, and other subjects, for example. Recently, the program celebrated the achievement of one learner who





passed the examination of the highest level in the NWT Trades access for the Apprentice Electrician.

As well, the birthdays of learners are celebrated. Food, such as bread for toast, canned items and tea and coffee, is often available in the kitchen for those who may not have had breakfast. Once a month, learners participate in bringing country foods or cooking their specialties for a pot luck lunch.

Best Practice #9: Transferability of Learning

A quality adult literacy and basic education program has procedures and practices in place to help learners transfer their learning to further education, training, employment or community life.

The program's work experience component strongly promotes the transferability of learning. This integral part of the program has two purposes. It lets learners develop "real" transferable skills and, at the same time, explore particular careers of their choosing.

For two weeks in the Fall and Spring, learners are placed in local offices and businesses in a work experience situation that matches their strengths, interests and goals. They observe professionals and apply skills that they already have, and learn additional job-related skills in a work setting. Learners have worked in a variety of organizations from stores, to offices, to schools, to construction. Some employers have offered





learners full-time employment in that particular organization following their work experience placement. Some learners go on to take training in a specific field as a result of their experience. For example, two learners who had work placements in schools have both enrolled in the NWT Teacher Education Program at Aurora College. Following the two weeks of work experience, learners gather to share their stories of work experience and pictures in a Power Point presentation.

Learners develop an employment portfolio that they can take with them to job interviews. The portfolios contain items such as:

“I was able to work as a summer student after my work experience.”

- Certificates they have earned, such as First Aid or CPR
- Their resume, samples of cover letters, their list of reference people, or reference letters
- Documents from their work experience/practicum session
- Progress reports or evaluations.

They are also asked to identify their career partners—those people who have helped them on their career journey. This might include members of their families, work experience supervisors, teachers or career officers.

As a result of a suggestion that came out of the Career course, learners developed a collage of the employment opportunities in the Yellowknife area. This involved classifying the different types of jobs into primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary industries.

In May 2004, 10 learners, along with their instructors, travelled by bus to visit a number of post-secondary institutions in Alberta. They toured the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT), Fairview College, Grand Prairie College, Grant McEwan College, and the University of Alberta. Their tour was sponsored by a number of local businesses and organizations. Learners kept a budget for the trip. This event helped



learners understand what options for further education might be open to them and their families.

Best Practice #10: Culture

A quality adult literacy and basic education program appreciates and respects the diverse cultures of the learners and incorporates them into the program.

Many learners in the program are Aboriginal. The program recognizes the importance of valuing learners' cultures and of giving voice to learners' own cultural knowledge and perspectives.

Integrating on-the-land activities into the program reflects the commitment to incorporating learners' cultures. During on-the-land trips, learners take part in traditional activities such as the feeding the fire ceremony and sharing their stories.



Learners are encouraged to use their own language in class with their classmates—to clarify instructions for example. They are also encouraged to share their cultural knowledge with each other. Some learners bring crafts to class, such as sewing, to do during their lunch hour. Cultural events are held, where learners teach each other traditional skills, such as beading or games.



The program has also accessed funding from Heritage Canada to allow learners to participate in events on National Aboriginal Day on June 21st. This year, they displayed old photographs from Native Women's Association events and asked people to identify who was in them. They offered bannock, tea and coffee to all their visitors. Crafts were sold and other information was available. Learners participated in every aspect of the event.

Best Practice #11: Community

A quality adult literacy and basic education program ensures a strong community focus by being engaged in the community and actively engaging the community in the program.

Although the program is in Yellowknife, it attempts to meet the needs of people in communities beyond Yellowknife as well. It does this by consulting with different community groups and organizations. For example, the board of the Native Women's Association of the NWT is made up of regional representatives who bring the needs and concerns of the constituents in their communities to the planning process.

The program works closely with community individuals and organizations. Organizations that provide expertise to the program include health and social service professionals, career development officers, RWED, and representatives of the various trades. Board members from different communities will sometimes visit and encourage the learners. Topics range from inspirational stories to information on what is happening in their community.

Through its work experience program, the program works closely with a variety of community organizations to accommodate all its learners.



Best Practices in Action

As well as receiving from the community, the program attempts to give back to the community. The Centre participates in joint initiatives, such as NWT Literacy Week and Adult Learners' Week.

Last year, for NWT Literacy Week, staff organized a games afternoon for all adult learners; the previous year they organized an Elders' discussion inviting others to join in. Sometimes the learners attend adult literacy functions with other organizations. In 2003, the learners participated in the city's annual winter carnival, Caribou Carnival, working jointly with another organization to make caribou stew and bannock.

Last year, learners fund-raised for money for a Christmas party. However, as it came closer to Christmas, they suggested that they forego their party and go out on the land instead. They then used the money they had raised (approximately \$300) to provide a Christmas hamper for a needy family in the community through the Salvation Army's Adopt-a-Family program. This action is all the more remarkable when you consider that a number of the learners' families themselves would receive a hamper due to their own situations.



Courtesy Northern News Services Ltd.

The program celebrates learner success at the end of the year with a public graduation ceremony in various locations. Previously the ceremony was held in the Great Hall of the Legislative Assembly. Another year, it was at



the Native Women's Training Centre, and in 2003, it was held outdoors at the Fred Henne Park.



Best Practice #12: Outreach

A quality adult literacy and basic education program reaches out to the community to attract potential learners and gain the support of the community.

The program is very clear about its target group. It appeals to learners who, at least initially, do not fit into standard educational institutions.



The program advertises through AHRDA offices, public announcements on the radio and posters. It also produces a simple, clear and attractive leaflet. However, perhaps its former learners are its best promoters: they tell their families and friends about its benefits.

“I really enjoyed my year with classmates, my new friends. We laughed, talked, shared and learned together.”

The program tries to raise awareness of its successes by making the media aware of special events. For example, the *Yellowknife*, the local newspaper, carried the photo and story of the learners packing the Christmas hamper (see P. 388). The program also uses photos to attract potential learners. These photos include special events, such as on the land trips, celebrations of successful learners, work experience activities or out-of-town tours.



Best Practice # 13: Organizational Links and Partnerships

A quality adult literacy and basic education program works collaboratively with other organizations and agencies to support the program, the learners and the program staff.

Situated in the capital of the Northwest Territories, Yellowknife has an extensive range of resources. This enables the Centre to develop a broad range of partnerships, formal and informal, with a variety of organizations. Like the Fort Resolution Community Literacy Program, it,



too, has formal contribution agreements with its numerous funders and reports regularly on its activities as required. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment, as well as the AHRDA offices, are important funding partners.

Some of its strongest partners are those organizations that support the program's work experience component. These include:

- Small business
- The Government of the Northwest Territories
- Hotels
- The construction industry
- Retail stores
- Offices
- Schools
- The public library
- Aboriginal organizations, such as the Dene Nation and the Treaty 11 office, bands and AHRDAs.



The program has also formed a strong partnership with the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development (RWED) for its on-the-land program. Wildlife officers from the department take staff and learners out on day trips during the program. Spending time on the land is such an important facet of the program that last year learners opted for another on-the-land trip with RWED staff instead of holding a Christmas party for themselves.



Best Practice #14: Staff Development and Support

A quality adult literacy and basic education program values its staff and places a priority on staff development.

The program recognizes the importance of professional development (PD) for its staff. Learners have half a day off each month to allow staff to do PD regularly. As well, staff try to participate in the Yellowknife Educators' Conference, held each year in November. They also try to take advantage of other PD opportunities, offered by local organizations such as the NWT Literacy Council and Human Resources Social Development. Staff have participated in training such as:

- Screening for Success
- Reading and Writing for Adults, and CARA assessment
- Computer-related courses
- Train the Trainer.

Staff are also included in the Adult Literacy Training event organized by Aurora College that usually takes place every two years, and in the Annual General Assembly workshops organized by the Native Women's Association.

Best Practice #15: Funding

A quality adult literacy and basic education program has adequate ongoing funding to run the program.

As a non-government, not-for-profit organization, accessing adequate funding for the Training Centre is never easy. Most of the funding for the program from August to March comes from the Government of the Northwest Territories—from programs such as the



Community Literacy fund and the Community Skills for Work fund. The program applies for this money every year. In addition, the program charges tuition fees for each semester. This helps covers costs from April to July. Recently when its government funding was reduced, the program was still able to cover its costs from its tuition fees and AHRDA partners. Learners can apply to AHRDA for tuition and living allowances.

In addition, learners have a fund-raising committee that raises money for specific activities, such as educational events. One of the ways that they raise money is by holding caribou stew and bannock lunches. Staff and learners also contribute personal time and resources to making the program work.

Best Practice #16: Program Administration

A quality adult literacy and basic education program is well-managed and well-run through appropriate policies and procedures.

The Training Centre maintains up-to-date records on the program, which are kept in the coordinator's office. Learner and staff information is confidential. It is locked in a secure location: the program requires a signed release form before it will share information with anyone. Instructors conduct learner conferences in private and learners may ask for private meetings with instructors.

The program has a formal hiring process. It also follows strict procedures when it has to call for proposals for goods or services.



Best Practice #17: Accountability

A quality adult literacy and basic education program is accountable to the funders, community and partners, who also share responsibility for the program's success.

The Training Centre maintains a high level of accountability on a number of fronts. Staff provide regular reports to the board of the Native Women's Association of the NWT on training activities.

They also report as required to their funders. This includes financial statements. At the same time, they send progress reports to the AHRDA committees that provide financial support to learners. They follow the Adult Basic Education curriculum developed by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

Through their efforts to build community, instructors become an integral part of that community. They trust and are trusted by the learners. This means they are very highly committed to the program. They deliver a quality professional program with limited funding.

Conclusions

The Native Women's Association of the NWT Training Centre program is successful for a number of reasons:

- The non-threatening and supportive environment that instructors are able to create meets the needs of the learners in this particular program and is conducive to effective learning.



- The holistic approach to learning ensures that not only academic needs of learners are met, but that learners have the opportunity to develop mentally, socially, physically and spiritually.
- The work experience component is highly effective in developing skills that are transferable to the real world.
- The program demonstrates its commitment to valuing the cultures and languages of learners.

For more information on the program, contact:

Kimberley Moreside
Coordinator, Training Centre
Native Women's Association of the NWT
Box 2321
Tapwe Building, 5017 49th St.
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P7

Phone: (867) 873-5509

Fax: (867) 873-3152

Email: reception@nativewomens.nt.ca