





Literacy Victoria
EMPOWERING ADULT LEARNERS

Creating a personal learning path: A benchmark framework for Aboriginal literacy and essential skills



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learning path: A
benchmark framework
for Aboriginal literacy
and essential skills**



April 2013



E m p o w e r i n g A d u l t L e a r n e r s



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the Aboriginal Literacy and Essential Skills (ALES) Pilot Project, a series of culturally relevant First Nations adult literacy benchmarks was needed to inform curriculum, assessment, learning plans, learning programs and services.

Educational benchmarks provide points of reference for evaluation and/or comparison on a broad range of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Ideally, benchmarks serve as a tool to create shared understanding between learners, facilitators and strategic partners regarding learners' current and future development.

Traditional (mainstream or Western) benchmark frameworks, by virtue of their focus on measurement and progress, tend to draw on a behaviourist theoretical frame. In these frameworks, the emphasis is less on the individual than on discrete and observable behaviours that are measured over time (Gadsby, Middleton & Whitaker, 2007).

Thus, while some Western benchmarks are useful, the ALES Pilot Project team were particularly interested in identifying how to adapt and integrate Aboriginal worldviews. This meant recognizing mainstream (Western) adult literacy benchmarks while honouring Aboriginal ways of knowing for the collective purpose of mapping literacy and essential skills development in a meaningful way for First Nations learners.

After reviewing various culturally relevant adult literacy benchmarks and related source materials, benchmarks were adapted primarily from the *Circle of learning, Saskatchewan adult literacy benchmarks, levels 1 and 2* (Saskatchewan Literacy Network and Saskatchewan Advanced Education and Employment, 2006). Other key points of reference included

- *Aboriginal adult literacy assessment tool* (Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Network Inc., 2011);
- *Alberta reading benchmarks* (Crosby, 2011);
- *An Aboriginal essential skills journey: Planting the seeds for growth* (Douglas College, 2010); and
- *First Nations holistic lifelong learning model* (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).

All the works referenced above draw on a learner-centered approach, which recognizes that meaningful individual learning is grounded in experiences that embrace both Indigenous and Western knowledge traditions (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007). Furthermore, these sources aligned with the ALES Pilot Project and its interest in (i) contextualized

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literacy and essential skills learning, (ii) building learning pathways, and (iii) focusing on essential skills.

The adapted culturally relevant benchmarks focused on

- ✓ learners applying their knowledge in their respective cultural context, whether in the workplace, family (household) or community on southern Vancouver Island;
- ✓ assets of learners rather than learners' test results and/or qualifications;
- ✓ self-awareness and self-monitoring of the learning that is taking place (in the mind, body and spirit of learners);
- ✓ creation of dialogue sessions between learners and tutors about literacy and essential skills development;
- ✓ application of essential skills and knowledge; and
- ✓ a lifelong learning approach rather than a deficit model—what learners have and will achieve in their learning pathway as opposed to what they have not achieved.

The adapted benchmarks were peer reviewed by an instructor at the Saanich Adult Education Centre who assisted in providing valuable feedback in making these benchmarks meaningful, relevant and responsive to the First Nations literacy and essential skills development programming on southern Vancouver Island. The adapted benchmarks are intended to assist

- **First Nations adult learners** in understanding their own learning and skills development (from a family/household, community and work perspective), and providing guidance in literacy levels so that their skills can be recognized by others;
- **practitioners** in guiding learners in a manner that is culturally relevant as it relates to learning assessments, training and resources; and
- **strategic partners** in informing and influencing policy and planning on literacy, learning and essential skills development at the local, regional, provincial/territorial and national levels.

An accompanying tutor guide related to First Nations adult literacy benchmarking was prepared and is intended to assist tutors in recording, tracking and maintaining literacy, learning and essential skills results of learners. As part of the tutor guide, case studies were included to illustrate how the First Nations adult literacy benchmarks can be utilized to assess current skill levels and to develop personal learning plans.

It is anticipated that the resulting ALES Pilot Project benchmark framework will be primarily utilized as a starting point for tutors and learners in having a wide-reaching conversation about skills development—taking into account learners’ past experience; their role(s) in family, household and community; their spiritual understandings; and personal challenges, aspirations and ambitions. Ideally, at a point that is right for learners, this conversation is translated into a personal learning pathway that is described and recorded in a form decided by learners: Words, art and/or music.

The personal learning pathway is intended to identify specific skill areas that learners indicate are worthwhile to pursue. For example, learners might decide they need to improve their numeracy skills so they can apply for a carpentry apprenticeship program. The initial assessment is that they are working at Level 1 and their goal is to achieve Level 2 and subsequently Level 3. Recognizing that the given learners are interested in carpentry, it makes sense to create numeracy activities and evaluations that directly draw on this specific area of expertise—such as verifying bills when purchasing tools, converting metric to imperial measurement systems (and vice versa), estimating the volume of concrete required for footings, and taking precise measurements using survey instruments. In this example, the general skills described in Level 2 of numeracy skills (e.g., demonstrates complex numeracy skills, and solves complex numeracy problems in daily life) are made relevant by using carpentry examples. In turn, development of these numeracy skills provides a foundation for learners to pursue apprenticeship training—a stepping stone to employment.

PURPOSE

The key purposes of the benchmarks are as follows:

For learners

- Assist in understanding their own learning and skills;
- Provide ways to document and recognize learner accomplishments and achievements;
- Help learners identify a path between and among literacy programs; and
- Provide a system of guidelines for identifying skill levels so that their skills can be recognized by others.

For practitioners

- Provide a way of knowing as to where a learner sits on a continuum of skills;
- Guide course, curriculum and program development; and
- Inform the use of resources, practitioner training and learner assessment.

For strategic partners

- Provide information for policy development; and
- Provide information and ways of reporting about literacy activity and needs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR BENCHMARK DEVELOPMENT

- ***Accessible***—benchmarks are written to be easily read, understood and applied;
- ***Acknowledge prior learning***—formal recognition of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that an individual has informally acquired as part of their life experience;
- ***Affirm***—benchmarks designed to affirm the knowledge, skills and attitudes that a learner brings to the learning process;
- ***Equitable***—acknowledgement that everyone has the right to define and pursue personal learning goals and happiness;
- ***Holistic***—respect for the interrelationship of individuals, families, communities, and cultures and including all aspects of a person’s life: Mind, body, heart and spirit;
- ***Learner-centered***—a learning model that places the student (or learner) at the centre of the learning process;
- ***Respectful of Aboriginal cultures***—acknowledgement and value of the knowledge and wisdom of Aboriginal cultures;
- ***Respecting all types of knowledge and learning***—acknowledgement and recognition that there are many different ways of knowing and being in the world, and that all of them hold their own particular truth and validity; and
- ***Valuing the art of walking between two worlds (biculturalism)***—a process wherein individuals learn to function in two distinct socio-cultural environments (Darder, 1991).

THE CIRCLE OF LEARNING MODEL

Adapted from the “Circle of learning, Saskatchewan adult literacy benchmarks, levels 1 and 2” (Saskatchewan Literacy Network and Saskatchewan Advanced Education and Employment, 2006).

Domain	Benchmarks
A. Communications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Observe and view activity for a purpose 2. Listen actively and respectfully 3. Speak so others can understand 4. Read with understanding 5. Write so others can understand
B. Numeracy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use numeracy skills to solve simple and complex problems
C. Lifelong learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create, monitor and adjust a Personal Learning Path for oneself 2. Create, monitor and adjust a Learning Path for the family or for the community
D. Interpersonal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish boundaries for oneself, one’s family, and for one’s community 2. Create positive relationships with others 3. Learn how to walk between two worlds (biculturalism)

A. COMMUNICATIONS

A.1. Observe and view actively for a purpose

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Observe and view actively</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Observe and view critically</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Observing and viewing are actively and critically used by learners as a strategy to learn other skills like reading, speaking, writing, numeracy</p>
<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners will view for practical purposes and social skills development</p> <p>Learners will observe for practical purposes and social skills development</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners will demonstrate critical observing and viewing behaviours to gain knowledge and for personal enjoyment</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Observing and viewing activities are integrated with the learning outcomes for reading, writing, speaking and listening</p>
<p>Examples</p> <p>View a documentary on a familiar topic</p> <p>Visit an art exhibit of a local artist</p> <p>View a child's school performance</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>View a safety demonstration at work</p> <p>Tour a reserve or rural area with a community Elder</p> <p>Observe the differences that the Elder describes as having occurred in his or her lifetime</p> <p>Picture in your mind the changes that you think may occur in your lifetime</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>A first aid procedure is viewed before the learner describes and then tries it</p>

A.2. Listen actively and respectfully

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Listen to short messages actively and respectfully</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Listen to long messages actively and respectfully</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Listening actively and respectfully is used by learners as a strategy to learn other skills like reading, speaking, writing, numeracy</p>
<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners will listen with understanding to a short message for personal enrichment and/or practical purposes</p> <p>Learners will demonstrate active listening behaviours</p> <p>Learners will minimize barriers to listening in order to improve daily interactions</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners will listen with understanding to long messages for personal enrichment and practical purposes</p> <p>Learners will listen with understanding to long messages for social skills development</p> <p>Learners will demonstrate that listening is an active process of constructing meaning</p> <p>Learners will listen with empathy in order to improve daily interactions</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners will identify a variety of purposes for listening</p> <p>Learners will recognize that listening is an active process that helps to make meaning of a situation</p> <p>Learners will practice appropriate behaviours of effective listening while completing a variety of listening activities</p>
<p>Examples</p> <p>Nod your head to show you are listening</p> <p>Turn off the television when you are talking to your children</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>Listen to a friend tell you how s/he is feeling</p> <p>Listen to a storyteller at your child’s school</p> <p>Listen to an Elder share a cultural teaching—then describe this teaching to a classmate, friend or family member</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>When you are talking on the telephone, say things like “ok”, “yes” and “I understand” so the person you are talking to knows that you have heard and understood him or her</p>

A.3. Speak so others can understand

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Speak in a familiar situation so others can understand</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Speak in a new situation so others can understand</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Prepare and practice giving a short statement or speech in front of an audience</p>
<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners will demonstrate knowledge of the foundations of speaking</p> <p>Learners will speak in conversation, a discussion or small groups in familiar situations for practical purposes</p> <p>Learners will share or present information in familiar situations in order to practice for public discussion</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners will improve the foundation of speaking for social skills development</p> <p>Learners will speak in conversation, a discussion or small groups in new situations for enjoyment and practical purposes</p> <p>Learners will share or present information in new situations in order to encourage public discussions</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners will speak for a variety of purposes and audiences</p> <p>Learners will recognize that speaking is a process as well as a tool for communicating, thinking and learning</p> <p>Learners will practice the appropriate behaviours of effective public speaking and complete a variety of public speaking activities</p>
<p>Examples</p> <p>Ask for and share information about plans for a community event</p> <p>Make introductions at a social gathering</p> <p>Express your feelings when a family member says or does something that makes you feel especially happy or sad</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>Express your own opinion or point of view about something that is important to you</p> <p>Contribute positive comments in group settings</p> <p>Practice storytelling of traditional or new stories</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>Interview others</p> <p>Participate in parent/teacher interviews</p> <p>Conduct informational interviews with workplaces or other community agencies</p> <p>Paraphrase the words of others for clarity</p>

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A.4. Read with understanding

Text refers to anything that can be read. It can be a newspaper article, magazine article, workplace safety sheet, book, list, web page, text message, etc.

Decoding skills refer to the ability to sound out words and to connect the sounds of English with letters or groups of letters.

Reading refers to words in a text that readers can identify by sight or sounds and understands correctly (Crosby, 2011).

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Identify the names of the letters of the alphabet</p> <p>Identify the sounds made by some letters of the alphabet</p> <p>Identify a few simple sight words</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Create texts with simple sentences, up to several sentences long</p> <p>Complete simple forms that require personal information to be written on them</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Read a text with sentences that may contain more than one clause</p> <p>Read a text that are several short paragraphs in length</p> <p>The learner can go to several different locations in a text to find needed information</p>
<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Decode short lengths of text about something familiar that are usually a few words long and up to one short simple sentence</p> <p>Decode common formats like addresses or prices</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Search for information that asks for simple and common words</p> <p>Read a list</p> <p>Read common words; for example, parent, wash, please, tomorrow</p> <p>Read some three-syllable words: Computer, apartment, hamburger</p> <p>Able to sound out words of up to two syllables that follow the most common spelling/sound</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Can read complex and long words: Banquet, asthma, transportation, application</p> <p>Decoding skills are strong enough to sound out most words that the readers know orally</p>

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Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
	relationships	
<p>Examples</p> <p>Shopping lists with the number of items needed</p> <p>For example,</p> <p>4 apples</p> <p>1 onion</p> <p>1 bread</p> <p>Simple menu with prices</p> <p>Hamburger - \$5.00; Fries \$4.50</p> <p>Simple form like a luggage tag that requires the reader's name to be written</p> <p>Simple rental listings such as those found on a bulletin board</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>Coupons, flyer ads and rental listings (no more than half a page in length)</p> <p>Sports registration forms</p> <p>Personal information portion of a bank application form</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>Informal work memos</p> <p>Simple operating instructions</p> <p>Flyers</p> <p>Health brochures</p> <p>Classified listings on the internet or newspaper</p> <p>Magazines and books</p>

A.5. Write so others can understand

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Write the letters of the alphabet</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Write sentences and short paragraphs that others can understand</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Write long and complex sentences and paragraphs that others can understand</p>
<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Hold and use a pen or pencil comfortably</p> <p>Learners can write the alphabet in upper and lower case</p> <p>Writing is neat and readable</p> <p>Spelling strategies are used to construct words</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners can identify the elements of a sentence</p> <p>Learners will write sentences and short paragraphs for practical purposes</p> <p>Learners will write sentences and short paragraphs for self-expression</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners can identify a variety of purposes, audiences and formats for writing</p> <p>Learners adapt a writing process that is appropriate for the purpose of a particular writing task</p> <p>Learners integrate information from a variety of sources to write for inquiry or research</p> <p>Learners write for a variety of purposes and audiences</p>
<p>Examples</p> <p>Page with alphabet in upper and lower case</p> <p>Practice printing grocery list or family names</p> <p>Use spelling strategies to construct words by using a dictionary to find definitions and to confirm spelling</p> <p>Develop a personal dictionary to remember the spelling and meaning of new words</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>Well-written sentences on topics of personal interest</p> <p>Write simple business letters</p> <p>Write a basic resume and cover letter</p> <p>Write notes of explanation to teachers</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>Literary analysis</p> <p>Creative writing</p> <p>Incident report</p> <p>Letters to the editor</p> <p>Opinion pieces</p> <p>Letters of complaint</p> <p>Research papers</p> <p>Complex personal and business letters</p>

B. NUMERACY

B.1. Use numeracy skills to solve simple and complex problems

Numeracy is a life skill, not just an academic skill. Numeracy goes beyond computation skills to include problem-solving, reasoning and communication.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Demonstrate basic numeracy skills: Addition and subtraction</p> <p>Solve simple numeracy problems in daily life</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Demonstrate complex numeracy skills</p> <p>Solve complex numeracy problems in daily life</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Demonstrate basic knowledge of space, shape and measurement</p>
<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Demonstrated knowledge of numbers and number sense</p> <p>Demonstrated knowledge of basic numerical operations</p> <p>Demonstrate basic knowledge of space, shape and measurement</p> <p>Learners demonstrate critical and creative thinking to solve simple mathematical problems</p> <p>Learners understand and use numeracy for practical daily living tasks</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Demonstrated knowledge of complex numerical operations</p> <p>Demonstration of basic mathematical operations (e.g., addition, subtraction, multiplication, division)</p> <p>Demonstrated critical and creative thinking strategies to solve complex mathematical problems</p> <p>Understand and use numeracy to solve complex daily living tasks</p> <p>Use a basic calculator to add, subtract, multiply, divide and work out percentages</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Read and interpret a simple line, bar or combination graph and pie chart</p> <p>Use common geometry tools (e.g., ruler, protractor, compass, graph, paper)</p> <p>Identify, name and draw common geometric shapes (e.g., circle, square, triangle, octagon)</p> <p>Describe and demonstrate how to measure length, width, height, volume, area, diameter, radius, circumference and perimeter of common geometric shapes)</p> <p>Apply the basic systems of measurement (e.g., kilometers, meters, centimeters, feet and inches for length and height, pounds and ounces for weight)</p>

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Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<p>Examples</p> <p>“Count out” money using different denominations of bills and coins</p> <p>Read and write numbers in words and numerals (e.g., 1 is the numeral for one)</p> <p>Predict which numbers go before and after a given sequence (e.g., $_$, 10, 15, 20)</p> <p>Identify and use the basic symbols and vocabulary for mathematics (e.g., + for plus, = for equal, - for minus)</p> <p>Practice using common numeracy tools (e.g., ruler, calculator, thermometer)</p> <p>Double or triple the ingredients for a recipe when cooking for a larger crowd</p> <p>Read a gas or water meter</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>Keep track of your baby’s weight every month until the age of 12 months</p> <p>When thinking of your future career, do some research in the community to discover the hourly wage for a journey person in a trade (e.g., electrician, plumber, mechanic). Calculate how much more a journey person makes than an apprentice?</p> <p>Use a basic calculator to add, subtract, multiply and to work out percentages</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>Together with the children in your family, identify the geometric shapes used to make a quilt</p> <p>In Spring, help to measure and mark the baselines on the community baseball field</p> <p>Read a bar graph showing the monthly workplace injuries over the past year</p>

C. LIFELONG LEARNING

“Academic” skills are only part of the learning equation. Communities, employers, families and government value the contributions of people who feel secure in themselves, who can work cooperatively with others, and who can learn to make independent decisions” (Saskatchewan Literacy Network and Saskatchewan Advanced Education and Employment, 2006).

C.1. and C.2. Create, monitor and adjust a Personal Learning Path for oneself, one’s family and one’s community

Level 1	Level 2
<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Create, monitor and adjust a personal learning path (or plan)</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Participate in the creation of a learning plan for one’s family or one’s community</p>
<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners identify how they like to learn. For example, are they visual learners, auditory, tactile?</p> <p>Learners demonstrate skills in learning how to learn (e.g., organization, memory and study skills)</p> <p>Learners decide how they will record their learning (i.e., writing, painting, carving, weaving)</p> <p>Learners decide on a goal(s)</p> <p>Learners determine (with assistance from tutor, teacher, mentor) their current skill levels</p> <p>Learners determine (with assistance from tutor, teacher, mentor) what level their skills need to be in order to achieve their goals</p> <p>Learners describe how they will achieve that goal(s)—What steps will they need to take? Who will they turn to for advice and/or support? When will they achieve the goal(s)?</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>A community comes together to determine common goal(s)</p> <p>A community decides on what steps need to be taken to achieve their common goal(s)</p> <p>A community develops a timeline for when the steps will be achieved, how and by whom</p> <p>A community decides how they will record their learning plan (i.e., writing, painting, carving, weaving)</p> <p>A community celebrates when a goal is achieved</p>

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Level 1	Level 2
<p>Learners demonstrate critical and creative thinking to solve problems and make decisions</p> <p>Learners use technology (internet and electronic communication devices) to research different aspects of the personal learning path (e.g., education and career resources)</p> <p>Learners celebrate when a goal is achieved</p>	
<p>Examples</p> <p>Learners develop a personal learning plan for how they will get their driver's license</p> <p>Learners develop a personal learning plan on how to improve communications with their family</p> <p>Learners develop a personal learning plan on how they will become a red seal cook</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>A community develops a plan to have a daycare centre</p> <p>A community develops a plan to support students entering the K-12 system</p> <p>A community develops a plan to increase communication with the school system</p> <p>A community develops a plan to create more recreation opportunities for youth</p>

D. INTERPERSONAL

Personal boundaries are guidelines, protocols or limits that a person creates to define what are reasonable, safe and permissible ways for others to behave around them. In turn, they recognize and respect the boundaries of others.

D.1. Establish boundaries for oneself, one's family and one's community

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Learners understand the concept of personal boundaries and can describe their own personal boundaries in terms of physical, spiritual and psychological needs</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Learners understand they have the right to protect and assert their personal boundaries</p> <p>Similarly, they understand that others have the right to protect and assert their personal boundaries</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Learners can describe strategies and approaches they will use to protect and assert their personal boundaries in a manner that is fair, constructive and respectful</p>
<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners identify and describe the emotional, physical and spiritual needs that define their personal boundaries</p> <p>Draw a picture that illustrates the learners' personal boundaries</p> <p>Describe in writing personal boundaries</p> <p>Learners describe their personal boundaries to a trusted person</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners draw a picture to illustrate what the personal boundaries might look like between themselves and another person (a family member, a community member, someone they work with)</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners describe a time when they did not assert their personal boundaries</p> <p>They can describe how they would handle that same situation now</p>

D.2. Create positive relationships with others

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Enhance self-reflection and engage in positive relations with others</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Make a positive contribution to your family</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Make a positive contribution to your community</p>
<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners engage in an activity that enhances their sense of self-worth (spiritual, physical, psychological)</p> <p>Learners recognize and acknowledge another’s strength(s) or attribute(s)</p> <p>Learners take the time to tell a loved one what they appreciate about them</p> <p>Learners help another person without expecting thanks or gratitude</p> <p>Learners identify a person with whom they have a difficult relationship and begin to think about ways to improve that relationship</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners describe a positive contribution they can make to their family and then carries out that contribution and describes the feedback they receive from family members</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners describe a contribution that will make a difference in their community</p> <p>Learners carry out that contribution and then describe the feedback they receive from community members</p>

D.3. Walking between two worlds (Biculturalism)

Many Aboriginal adult learners adapt to mainstream society, but live within a different primary culture at home. Valuing biculturalism opens ways of learning about the second culture and shares ways of operating effectively within it—without requiring changes in learners’ cultural identity and loyalty (Saskatchewan Literacy Network and Saskatchewan Advanced Education and Employment, 2006).

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Learners can describe traditional ways of knowing and their own belief system</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Learners can describe mainstream ways of knowing and how that is both different and the same from their way of knowing</p>	<p>Benchmark</p> <p>Learners can successfully walk between two worlds</p> <p>Learners understand the values and perspectives of both worlds and understands that one can inform the other, and that each provides a particular (albeit different) way of looking at the world</p>
<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners ask a trusted mentor and/or Elder to describe their understanding of traditional ways of knowing</p> <p>Learners attend, observe and participate in cultural events and ceremonies</p> <p>Learners spend time in nature and describe how this makes them feel</p> <p>Learners listen to traditional stories, catch the stories and retell the stories</p> <p>Learners learn their family history and can describe their role</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners ask a trusted mentor or friend who operates effectively in mainstream culture to describe their understanding of mainstream ways of knowing and behaving</p> <p>Learners listen to mainstream media and culture</p> <p>Learners can describe how their family history has intersected with mainstream culture</p> <p>Learners attend mainstream cultural events</p>	<p>Learning Outcomes</p> <p>Learners talk to someone who they see as successfully walking between two worlds and asks them how they learned to do this</p> <p>Learners describe what it will look like when they can successfully walk between two worlds</p>



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Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
in that family structure Learners can identify and describe traditional ways of knowing Learners can describe their own belief system and ways of knowing		

APPENDIX A: REFERENCES

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APPENDIX B: RESOURCES

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APPENDIX C: *CIRCLE OF LEARNING*—FURTHER INFORMATION

In particular, the Aboriginal Literacy and Essential Skills (ALES) Pilot Project drew heavily on the *Circle of learning, Saskatchewan adult literacy benchmarks, levels 1 and 2* (Saskatchewan Literacy Network and Saskatchewan Advanced Education and Employment, 2006) as the benchmarks

- shared a common theoretical framework;
- had a similar focus—*The Circle of Learning* was developed to be “used in a variety of formal and non-formal learning contexts and communities...that were relevant to Aboriginal stakeholders” (p. v);
- were broadly consultative (development was guided by a 10 person Project Advisory Committee of practitioners, administrators, employers and learners);
- were well resourced (a four-person project management team, two benchmark project mentors, 22 pilot testers and eight benchmark contract workers); and
- were extensively pilot tested in 2005 and subsequently in 2006.

Background on *Circle of learning, Saskatchewan adult literacy benchmarks, levels 1 and 2 process* (K. Rosser, personal communications, March 6, 2013).

The Benchmarks Project began when the National Literacy Secretariat granted project funding to the Saskatchewan Literacy Network (SLN) in partnership with Saskatchewan Learning. The development and implementation of Saskatchewan Adult Literacy Benchmarks levels 1 and 2 was completed in a series of phases.

Phase 1: February 2003—February 2004

- Focused on a literature review, community research and the development of a framework for levels 1 and 2 literacy benchmarks; and
- Prepared a draft document for the benchmarks model called, *The circle of learning*.

Phase 2: February 2004—October 2004

- Focused on the completion of an initial draft of *The circle of learning*; and
- Developed the four quadrants of *The circle of learning*—including learning outcomes, skill sets and sample tasks.

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Phase 3: October 2004—August 2005

- Focused on an initial pilot testing of the draft; and
- Provided an orientation to practitioners across the province via Saskatchewan Communication Network educational sites (remote).

Phase 4: October 2005—August 2006

- Focused on revisions and an expanded pilot in response to requests from the field and the Project Management Team; and
- Developed a sustainability plan.

Phase 5: April 2007—April 2009 (extension granted to April 2010)

- Focused on the implementation of the benchmarks in Saskatchewan; and
- Provided professional development and support for practitioners.

Phase 6: April 2010—April 2014

- Developing sustainability for the benchmarks—including a revision of *The circle of learning*; and
- Providing professional development and support for practitioners.

The Benchmarks Project began by establishing a Project Management Team (PMT) and recruiting a 12-member Project Advisory Committee. The PMT had representation from

- Saskatchewan Literacy Network (SLN),
- Advanced Education,
- The Literacy Office, and
- The Learners' Focus Group of the SLN.

The advisory committee included adult learners and literacy practitioners who serve in public institutions and community-based organizations, and administrators and policymakers. Its members were representative of First Nations and Métis and other individuals who live and work in rural, urban and northern communities.

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The levels 1 and 2 benchmarks draw upon the visioning and curriculum work carried out by the Adult Basic Education Redesign Task Team (Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training, 2002). The project also received invaluable input from the Project Management Team, Project Advisory Committee and a special subcommittee of Life Skills content experts. With gratitude, *The circle of learning* model incorporates the wisdom and traditional teachings of the *Medicine Wheel* as shared by First Nations and Métis Elders and advisors.

Implementation Activities (K. Rosser, personal communications, March 6, 2013)

Benchmark Project activities have changed and evolved throughout the years to meet the needs of practitioners:

- Plan, conduct and report on a series of at least four focus groups across Saskatchewan;
- Plan and offer at least one professional development workshop for each of the topics: Orientation to benchmarks, portfolio development, numeracy, and intake and assessment. These will take place around the province based on demand;
- Renew practitioner and learner resources—revise benchmark materials based on feedback from survey and focus groups;
- Develop (in partnership) relevant resources for practitioners working with level 1 and 2 First Nations learners;
- Provide direct ongoing support for individual practitioners and programs that are implementing benchmarks;
- Explore opportunities to promote benchmarks as a workplace literacy tool; and
- Provide input on integrating benchmarks into literacy research-in-practice initiatives in Saskatchewan.