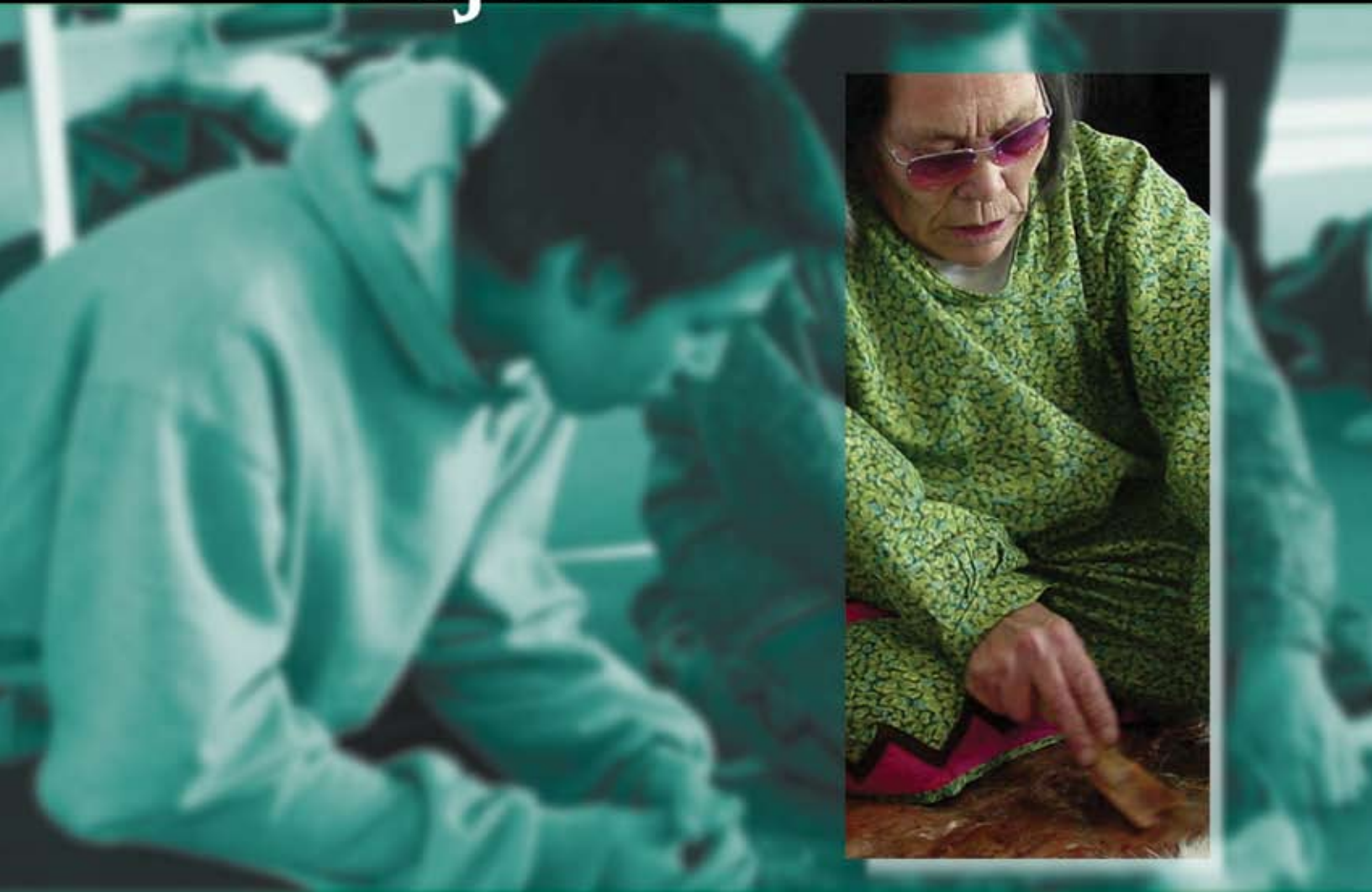


Project Ideas



*“The pupils make fair progress,
though necessarily somewhat slow because of their
total ignorance of the English language.”*

*From a 1906 report by Reverend Jabez Marsh, an Anglican missionary who opened
the first residential school in the NWT in Hay River in 1894.¹*

*“I have succeeded in teaching several of the
Eskimos to read in syllabic characters;
they are very eager to learn.”*

Edmund Peck, written in 1877

*“The culture, customs, traditions, skills
and way of life of the Indian and Eskimo must be
given their rightful place in the schools and in the
course of study there are many things
non-professionals can teach better than you
(teachers) can, and we must avail ourselves of all the
resources of the community.”*

Norm Mcpherson at Teacher Orientation in 1972

¹ These three quotes are from *Dreams & Visions Education in the Northwest Territories from Early Days to 1984* by Norman Mcpherson, published by GNWT Department of Education, 1991

Introduction

In the *Project Ideas* section we offer some suggestions for sharing your oral history research with your community. During the research and interviewing phases of an oral history project, group members have had a chance to use Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun language to interact with fluent speakers in meaningful ways. When the literacy group follows their research with a community presentation, they extend and strengthen language, literacy and critical thinking skills. They also offer valuable language and cultural activities to others in the community.

The projects in this section are just a few of the possible ideas for sharing your research with the community. Your group will have many other ideas of your own. The guidance we provide – the steps for carrying out your project – are just general suggestions. We know that many of you have your own ways of doing things that work well for your groups. In some cases you may need more guidance than we have provided; so we have included a list of resources that you may find helpful. You can adapt or expand on project ideas. This is your manual to use in whatever way works best for your group.

The project ideas in this section have been divided into four categories:

- Active Projects
- Oral Projects
- Visual Projects
- Writing Projects

Although these projects have a main focus, the four language and literacy skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening – should be integrated into each project. In *How Can Oral History Projects Help Develop Language and Literacy Skills*, the next section, we have provided suggestions for building the four language skills, as well as numeracy skills, into each project idea. We also give suggestions for making this an intergenerational project – for involving the family. We encourage you to think holistically about the development of mind, body, heart and spirit in the individual, the family and the community as the literacy group works through the project.

There are at least two ways of approaching community projects:

1. *Research Focused*

Your group's main focus may be collecting information for an oral history theme. But when the research is finished, you may then decide that you would like to share your information with the community. You can discuss, as a group, what would be the best way to present the knowledge to others. You might choose one or more of the project ideas presented here or make up your own ideas for a project, depending on the interests of the group. This approach might be appropriate for a long-term project, perhaps one that lasts through the entire course of a full-time literacy program – three to six months or more.

or...

2. *Project Focused*

You may want to do a shorter-term project. In that case, your group could decide on one or more projects that interest you and listen to an existing oral history recording or read a story that will be the basis and inspiration of the project. You will still integrate the four language skills into your project – reading, writing, listening and speaking, as well as numeracy. But your project won't involve as much time for research and interviewing.

Literacy group members will build their Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun language skills almost without realizing it – because they will be focused on the research and the project, not on literacy and language skills. This is real-life meaningful learning that enhances a whole person naturally through the working to complete the project:

- Builds self-esteem and personal identity – heart and spirit.
- Builds literacy and critical thinking skills – mind.
- Builds practical and physical skills – body.

This information will help others who would like to try similar projects. If you would like to send us a contact name and number, other groups will be able to contact your group for advice and guidance.

Please contact the Rankin Inlet office or the Cambridge Bay office of the Nunavut Literacy Council if you would like to share your oral history projects.

Rankin Inlet

Telephone: 867-645-4810 or 5506

Fax: 867-645-3566

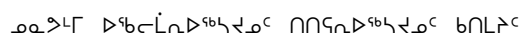
E-mail: literacy@arctic.ca

Cambridge Bay

Telephone: 867-983-2678

Fax: 867-983-2614

E-mail:kimcr@polarnet.ca



Language and Literacy Skills

How Can Oral History Projects Help Develop Language and Literacy Skills?

Inuit culture is rich in oral history. These stories, whether told aloud, recorded or written down, are a valuable resource for language learning and the development of literacy skills.

The development of language and literacy skills is a complex process that takes place over time. Building these skills is most effective when both the content and the experience of learning is made meaningful for learners. Language learning is made meaningful when the content is connected to the cultural, social, and political context of the learner's life. However, it is equally important that learners have opportunities to practice using language in different ways for different purposes and in different contexts.

Below we have summarized how oral history projects can support the development of language and literacy skills through the practical use of language.

Developing Speaking Skills

- Learning and using new vocabulary – traditional Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun words that are not used by younger Inuit now and vocabulary related to technical skills.
- Developing speaking skills with a variety of audiences in different contexts – one-on-one, with small groups, with Elders, groups of mixed ages, community groups, partner organizations, professional organizations, on radio and over the telephone.
- Developing speaking skills for different purposes – to organize, negotiate, discuss, debate, invite, present, inform, announce, instruct, entertain, plan and host an event.

Developing Listening Skills

- Listening in different contexts and with different audiences – during group discussions, brainstorming and feedback sessions, in a large audience, with peers, with Elders, with community members.
- Listening for different purposes – in order to transcribe stories and songs, to respond, to take notes, to get specific information, to remember important details, to learn new vocabulary.

Developing Reading Skills

- Reading different kinds of text – brainstormed lists, script outlines, articles, books, instructions, transcribed stories, e-mails, advertising, commentaries, web sites and maps.
- Developing different kinds of reading skills – skimming, scanning, comprehension, predicting, decoding strategies, using personal experiences and context clues to get meaning from text, etc.
- Reading for different purposes – to find specific information, to develop knowledge of a topic, for pleasure, to learn a skill, to edit.

Developing Writing Skills

- Writing in different ways or forms – making questions and lists, labeling, composing formal letters and essays, taking notes, making posters and pamphlets, creating poetry, songs, dialogue, narrative and captions, scripting and journaling.
- Writing for different audiences – Elders, children, families, community members, funders, etc.
- Writing for different purposes – to entertain, inform, present, persuade, self-reflect, request, make plans, instruct, explain, summarize, announce, invite, to give an opinion.

Developing Numeracy Skills

Numeracy is an important part of literacy and being literate. It refers to a person's ability to effectively and confidently work with numbers. It includes the ability to calculate numbers, read graphs, tables, charts and time lines, measure and estimate.

We encourage literacy instructors to integrate opportunities for learners to develop numeracy skills while working on oral history projects. The following ideas are ways groups could build numeracy skills through oral history projects:

- Creating budgets for project costs.
- Checking maps and calculating distances traveled in the stories – between camps, hunting grounds and family settlements.
- Reading maps and plotting trips.

- Comparing costs to buy items at the time of the story and now.
- Working with community statistics.
- Checking with Environment Canada to compare average temperatures and precipitation in the time periods the group is researching. Calculating the average change in temperature. Working with ratios to compare temperatures.

Intergenerational Literacy

Intergenerational literacy is the way children and other adult family members use language skills, literacy skills and cultural information to do day-to-day tasks, to keep important traditional and cultural knowledge alive¹. Literacy programs that include people of all ages help to enrich and develop the literacy skills of both adults and children at the same time. Your group may decide to invite children, Elders and other extended family members to participate in your Oral History project. Below we have made some suggestions for including family members with reference to specific kinds of projects:

- *Photo Stories and Calendars (see Visual Projects)* – Literacy group members could create a family photo story calendar. Adults and older children could write stories to go along with photographs of themselves doing something special. Younger children could orally tell the story they want to go with their photograph and someone can write it for them. Group members could include old photographs and get stories and photographs from grandparents or other relatives. An Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun calendar in people's homes will allow children to see more Inuktitut print in their environment. Families can read the stories or text on the calendar together. Children will recognize the names of the days and months in Inuktitut because they will see it every day.
- *Textile Art (see Visual Projects)* – Make this a mother-and-daughter project or a grandmother-mother-and-daughter project. Literacy group members can invite their daughters (or mothers) to be involved in the process from the very beginning. Schedule a time for the mother-and-daughter project after school two or three times a week. Mother and daughter teams can listen to a story together, and create a written story and a piece of textile art together based on the story. Hold a show or special event where people can see the work of these mother-and-daughter teams.

¹ See *Why Intergenerational Literacy?* in the *Building Language and Literacy Skills Through Oral History Projects* section for more information on intergenerational learning.

or...

- *Create a family quilt* – Literacy group members could collect pieces of fabric from clothing belonging to people in their family – special pieces of clothing that remind everyone of that person. Someone may have a piece of the parka that their child wore at age three; and a piece of material from a wedding dress; and a piece of the skin of their son's caribou parka that he wore when he first went out hunting with his dad. Collect stories of all these pieces of fabric. Create a wall hanging or quilt with these pieces of fabric; write up the stories and display them together with the textile art.
- *Books* (see *Writing Projects*) – Hold an after school program run by literacy group members. Children could research and write their own family stories. Have children read the book written by the literacy group and create visual projects, videos, demonstrations or plays based on the book.
- *Storytelling on the Radio* (see *Oral Projects*) – An excellent intergenerational literacy program. Families can listen to the stories together on the radio and follow along on a printed copy of the story together.
- *Talking Books* (see *Oral Projects*) – Families can enjoy talking books together for pleasure or for reading practice. Group members' children could come to the literacy program once a week or twice a week to read talking books with their parents. Hold sessions for younger children using the children's talking books and for older children using magazine and newspaper articles or Elders' stories.
- *Family Trees* (see *Visual Projects*) – Families could work together to create a family history and a family tree. Provide time after school two or three times a week for children to come to the literacy program to work on the project with their parents. Invite group members' parents and other Elders to the literacy program. Hold family potluck dinners or other events during which family groups can work together on their projects. If the projects are displayed in a public place, it will add to the amount of Inuktitut or Inuinnaqtun in the environment. This reinforces for children the value of their language and allows them to absorb interesting and personally relevant information in their language.



*“One who has only an oral tradition
thinks of language in this way;
my words exist at the level of my voice.
If I do not speak with care,
my words are wasted.
If I do not listen with care, words are lost.
If I do not remember carefully,
the very purpose of words is frustrated.
This respect for words suggests
an inherent morality in man’s
understanding and use of language.”*

N. Scott Momaday, Kiowa Native American author

From *Spoken Here* by Mark Abley, published by Random House Canada, 2003