

Gathering Report

Mamawenig
“Sharing and Celebrating our Knowledge”
First Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Gathering

May 14 - 16, 2002
Echo Valley Conference Center
Fort San, Saskatchewan



June 2003

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Letter from the President

Introduction

Nine delegates from Saskatchewan attended the First National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering in May 2000, held in Morley, Alberta, including a learner, several practitioners, an Elder, a member of the National Aboriginal Design Committee, and representatives from both the Saskatchewan Literacy Network and the Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training. There was a great deal of enthusiasm generated during the course of the Gathering and plans for a follow-up provincial Aboriginal literacy project began.

Since then, the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Network (SALN) formerly the Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Steering Committee, has been convened to carry the discussion and planning forward. The SALN consists of Nine (9) board of Directors that includes several literacy practitioners, First nation Elders, and one Learner Representative.

In addition the board has hired a Project Director in **March 2003** to undertake its directives concerning the furthering of Aboriginal literacy in Saskatchewan. The responsibilities of the Project Director is as follows:

- Developing a public awareness strategy for the promotion of Aboriginal literacy
- Organizing and facilitating regional Aboriginal literacy forums
- Providing support for new Aboriginal literacy initiatives
- Creating a website and updating a provincial directory
- Establishing an Aboriginal literacy resource center
- Beginning preparations and securing funding for the second Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Gathering
- Ensuring ongoing communication with other Aboriginal literacy initiatives across Canada.

The board has secured funding from the National Literacy Secretariat, other various organizations within Saskatchewan, and in-kind support for its work, focusing on the development of a process whereby individuals, programs and organizations can come together to:

1. Discuss Aboriginal literacy needs and issues as well as identifying strengths and gaps in current approaches;
2. Share information on current Aboriginal literacy programs and resources developed in Saskatchewan that is relevant to the diverse needs of Aboriginal peoples;
3. Build a strong base for ongoing communications;
4. Develop a mechanism to provide assistance and ongoing support to new and existing Aboriginal literacy program initiatives;
5. Identify future action required to move Aboriginal literacy forward within the province; and

6. Develop enduring partnerships with stakeholders involved in delivering and supporting Aboriginal literacy programs and services (i.e. Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Saskatchewan Learning, Metis Nation).

To carry out these goals, the Board of Directors focused on two main objectives:

- a) Development of a Directory of Aboriginal Literacy Programs in Saskatchewan, and;
- b) Organizing a Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Gathering – a forum where Aboriginal people could come together and share their ideas about Aboriginal literacy.

Gathering Objectives

- To share information on current Aboriginal literacy programs:
 - new models, programs, and resources,
 - strengths/challenges of current approaches,
 - gaps in programming and curriculum, and
 - opportunities for enduring partnerships.
- To provide opportunities for learners, Elders, practitioners, educators, community leaders, and government staff to share ideas and resources and to learn from each other.
- To develop a strategic plan for Aboriginal literacy that will be an integral part of the Literacy Strategy being developed by Saskatchewan Learning (formerly Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training).
- To identify mechanisms to assist and support the development of Aboriginal literacy programs in all areas of the province.

Planning for the Gathering

The dream of a Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Gathering began to form when several Saskatchewan delegates attended the first ever National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering in Morley, Alberta in April 2000. At the National Gathering, a number of the Saskatchewan representatives decided to continue the discussions on how to keep the momentum going in our province once we returned home. Over the months that followed, the Saskatchewan delegates, along with a few other key individuals, came together on an ad hoc basis to begin the planning for a Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Project that would include, among other things, the hosting of a Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Gathering. The event was originally scheduling for the fall of 2001. However, due to delays in project start-up, and in staffing, the Gathering was finalized for May 14th to 16th, 2002, at the Echo Valley Conference Center – a retreat center in the Qu’Appelle Valley, near Standing Buffalo First Nation, and the Metis community of LeBret.

In October 2001, the Steering Committee met at the Echo Valley Conference Center, for an extensive tour of the facility, and to do a comprehensive plan for the Gathering. (see attached “Literacy Gathering Event Planning Page”) This planning session identified the overall objectives of the event, the outcomes needed, the key tasks to be undertaken, and the overall agenda for the Gathering. It was decided to open each day with an Opening Ceremony and with an Elder’s Panel, to use the ICA strategic plan process – Vision, Obstacles, Strategic Directions – over the 3 day timeframe; to have Literacy topic workshops each day, and to have Metis and First Nation cultural activities throughout the Gathering.

From September to May, the two contract staff worked on organizing these elements of the Gathering, as well as seeking additional funding and in-kind donations, publicity, and promotion of Aboriginal literacy with key provincial government departments, and with First Nations and Metis governments. They developed and produced all necessary letters, forms, publicity and promotion materials, for approval by the Steering Committee. (see attached materials).

At key points – 12 weeks, 9 weeks and 5 weeks – more detailed action planning was carried out by staff and the Steering Committee, to ensure that all essential tasks were being covered. (see attached sample action plan).

Why a “Gathering”, Not a “Conference”?

The Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Steering Committee is working in partnership with the Saskatchewan Department of Learning to create an Aboriginal Literacy Strategy that will provide the framework to guide program and policy development for 5 to 10 years. To ensure that this new strategy reflects the needs of Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan, the Steering Committee is using participatory, inclusive approaches to gathering information from learners, Elders, practitioners and community leaders. This is a unique approach to the development of a framework for policy development, for both the government and for the Committee.

The Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Gathering is an event that provides the opportunity for Elders, learners, practitioners and government staff to participate in a strategic planning process that will provide direction and recommendations for a Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Strategy. This will become part of the Department of Learning’s Provincial Literacy Strategy that will guide policy and program development for 5 to 10 years. The Committee has worked to ensure that there are Elders, learners, practitioners, community leaders and government staff from all areas of the province, from different types of programs, and from First Nations and Metis communities, both urban and rural. This broad representation will provide the diverse input needed for the strategic plan process, and insure that the Aboriginal Literacy Strategy is truly based on the consensus of people from across the province.

The Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Gathering is also an event for people to share their work and learn from each other. The presenters are all practitioners, learners and Elders, who will share the programs and resource materials that they have developed or adapted in their communities. The focus is ‘sharing approaches that work’.

The Gathering is not a “conference” - defined as an event where people come to hear “experts” present on their work, research or new findings, and participants come to listen. In contrast, the Gathering is a very participatory event -

- presenters include learners, practitioners and Elders - sharing their knowledge and experiences with others;
- presenters are also participants;
- everyone will participate in providing ideas for the strategic plan, and in identifying the group consensus; and,
- the cultural events are also participatory learning events.

In summary - the Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Gathering is an innovative approach to bringing people together as a learning community for 3 days, with a plan for ongoing support and development of Aboriginal Literacy, based on their recommendations for the future.

Learners at the Gathering

One of the objectives of the Gathering was to involve all the stakeholders in providing input for the Strategic Plan process. To ensure a high level of learner involvement, especially from learners in the central and northern areas of the province, funding was secured from Saskatchewan Learning to cover all costs of participation for 30 learners. Application forms were sent out to all youth and adult literacy programs. Eleven learners from each of the north, central and south areas of the province were approved to attend. They were from the following organizations:

- Circle Project, Inc., Regina
- File Hills Qu'Appelle Adult Learning Center, Regina
- Dumont Technical Institute (Saskatoon, La Loche and Ile a la Crosse)
- Cypress Hills Regional College (Swift Current and Maple Creek)
- North Battleford Reading Project, North Battleford
- West View Community School, Prince Albert
- Radius Tutoring, Saskatoon
- Saskatchewan Literacy Network's Provincial Learners' Focus Group (Regina, Swift Current)
- Parkland Regional College, Fort Qu'Appelle
- SIAST Woodland Campus, Prince Albert

As well, the winner of the 2001 Saskatchewan Literacy Award of Merit - Learner Achievement Award, Clarence Pine, was invited to attend and be one of the speakers at the First Nation Banquet.

Many of the learners volunteered to help with the “behind the scenes” work that makes a Gathering run smoothly for the participants – setting up décor, making banners, registration desk, presenter helpers, etc. Sadie and Hermaline Montgrand, Clarence Pine, Nita Lakner, Ron Howarth, Tamara Murray, and Lynda Richards also participated as speakers at the Metis Supper and the First Nation Banquet, moving many participants to tears with their stories of struggle and success at overcoming learning and life challenges. Several learners participated in Learners' Panel workshops as well, sharing their stories and learning from each other. All the learners were vocal participants in the Strategic Planning workshops, contributing many important and insightful ideas to the charts. They inspired other participants with their courage and willingness to speak their minds.

Weaving Traditional Teachings and Culture into our Gathering

As the Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Steering Committee began to make plans to host a Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Gathering, we knew that we wanted the Gathering to have a major focus on literacy but we also wanted to ensure that each component of the Gathering was truly integrated with Aboriginal spiritual beliefs, values, and customs as well as the worldviews (or understandings) of Aboriginal Peoples. For example, we wanted to incorporate spiritual and cultural practices such as the sweat lodge, feast, and opening and closing prayers as threads that were woven throughout the three-day event.

Throughout the planning stages and various committee meetings, all decisions were made under the direction and guidance of the Elders who sit on the steering committee. There was not a motion passed, a plan made or a discussion held without the input and validation of our Elders whom always seemed to refer back to the importance of education and lifelong learning. They reminded us of the need to open and close each day with prayers of thanks and gratitude. Each day began with songs of celebration and remembrance as Army Veteran Elders carried in a parade of flags held high. The Veterans were then followed by a number of other Elders who would later serve on our Elders' Panel.

The Elders' Panels proved to be one of the major highlights each day. As a committee, we felt that the Elders' Panels and teachings were not only an important part of the Gathering but absolutely essential element in ensuring that the Gathering was a success. The need for the involvement of Elders in a lead role was verified by the numerous rounds of applause and standing ovations the Elders received throughout the course of the Gathering as well as by participants' written evaluation comments. Each day, following the Elders' Panel, Elders remained around and made themselves available to any participants who may have wanted more one-on-one interaction or counseling.

Sweat lodges were held each day with one being held the day before the Gathering officially commenced. These sweat lodges, known to some as the purification lodge, were held each day for spiritual cleansing reasons. The participation in these ceremonies was strictly voluntary. Some people chose to participate because they had heard so much about the sweat lodge and simply wanted to experience it for the first time. Others hoped to gain a better insight into Aboriginal practices and beliefs by being an actual participant and not just an observer. Following every sweat lodge there is a feast. The types of foods served were tradition in nature including soup and bannock, fruit, berries, cake and candy.

Upon completion of the first day of workshops and numerous other activities came the evening entertainment. The first evening was set aside to honour and celebrate Metis heritage and culture. This was a night to entertain and excite the audience with a vast array of fiddle and toe tapping music. Participants certainly weren't disappointed. The Riel Reelers, a square dance group from Regina, had the group clapping and up on the floor dancing along with them.

The second day of the Gathering was very much like the first. The day began with the carrying in of the flags by the Veterans, followed by an Elders' Panel before moving on to workshops that were presented and facilitated primarily by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people.

As the Gathering moved forward hour-by-hour and day-by-day, it seem to pick up more and more momentum and energy. One participant commented on the importance of having Aboriginal culture as part of this Gathering. Without this strong cultural component in all aspects of the Gathering, it would have been impossible to proceed in a good way. The analogy that this participant used was that to proceed without a strong cultural element would be like trying to separate the dancer from the dance. This you cannot do. The same applied to the Gathering. If it was truly to be an Aboriginal Literacy Gathering, the cultural components, as the Elders stated, had to be there and be there as a major component integrated with literacy.

The evening function on the second day included an overflowing and well-attended banquet with many special guests arriving and literacy learners from all regions of the province sharing their stories and personal testimonies. During this part of the evening, many members at the banquet had tears in their eyes from the moving testimonies in which learners spoke of the adversities they had had to overcome or are now currently overcoming. Most learners, approximately eight in all, spoke of how delighted they were to be a part of this Gathering and repeatedly reminded the committee and others in attendance that more of this type of Gathering is needed to further promote Aboriginal literacy. The strong cultural threads which were woven throughout every aspect of the Gathering, without a doubt, made learners proud to be active participants of the Gathering.

Finally, after the banquet and all the acknowledgements, participants moved back to general assembly at the mass hall for another evening of entertainment. This night was designed to highlight, honour and celebrate First Nations traditions and culture. The night of entertainment began with a mini pow-wow along with pow-wow demonstrations and interpretations. Like the night previous, the crowd went ecstatic during the various dances - from the hoop dancer to the inter-tribal dances. Furthermore, round or friendly dances also took place with everyone from Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal people up on the dance floor participating. For many participants, it was the first time in their lives dancing pow-wow, but they loved it all the same. As committee members, we remarked repeatedly on how this Aboriginal Literacy Gathering enabled an incredible exchange of cultural tradition and knowledge. In addition to these dances, awards (such as a star quilt) and deserving recognitions were a part of the evening. As well, to further add to an already entertaining evening, literacy participants from Ontario provided a demonstration of dances that are part of their cultural tradition. Soon enough, they had the crowd up on the dance floor doing dances from their part of the country. By the time all these festivities had taken place it was well after midnight and time to call it another successful day. Thanks to Aboriginal literacy for making this all possible, as one participant put it.

Then came the third and last day. An air of sadness tempered enthusiasm and energy levels that had been so incredibly high and positive throughout the Gathering, as participants realized that the Gathering was coming to a close. Through their comments on the evaluation forms, many participants expressed sadness that the gathering was coming to an end. As on other days, the final day of the Gathering included opening ceremonies, prayers, and an Elders' Panel followed by workshops and a final plenary out of which the *Aboriginal Literacy Strategic Plan Report* was formed.

The committee wanted to close the Gathering in a good way so a traditional feast and round dance with giveaways was organized as the final ceremony. This ceremony was a way to honour First Nations culture and send people home with good feelings and prayers. It was also a way to ask the Creator to bless the work that the committee had collectively undertaken to this point, and to open the way to carry the work forward. The prayers offered to the Creator during the round dance were also to ensure that everyone who was at the Gathering had a safe and happy journey home.

Gifts were offered to four prayer men who prayed and spoke on behalf of the committee and the work that we are trying to accomplish. Following that, giveaways were offered to the people who attended. This practice of giving thanks and offerings are the traditional ways and methods practiced by First Nations people in the area. According to most attendees, this was one of the most wonderful celebrations experienced over the course of the past three days. It was a beautiful way to say "see you again" to those you had participated, and a sacred way to carry the work and the energy forward on the path that we had collectively created during the Gathering.

It was through the Aboriginal Literacy Gathering that we were able to demonstrate that there is power in integrating literacy, culture and learning - by creating a holistic experience with a wide array of intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical workshops and support services – and offering them in a way that Aboriginal people have been practicing since time immemorial.

During the Gathering, we were able to pave the way for good things to follow. It is now up to each participant who attended the Gathering to continue to take the work forward and expand on it in some way. For many of us, this has been a long time coming. What we have come to see is that Aboriginal literacy must be carried forward, as it has been demonstrated here, and that this can be achieved with dedicated, knowledgeable individuals, but most of all with the teachings, permission, and guidance of the Elders. By proceeding in this way, tradition, culture and heritage will not only be maintained and honoured, but also integrated into the learning process.

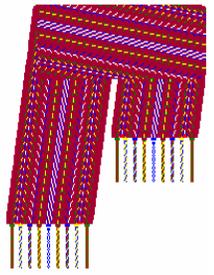
In summary, one participant made the comment that this Gathering was one of the few occasions during which First Nations and Metis peoples were able to celebrate and facilitate something together very successfully with all participants coming out a winner. This was brought about by Aboriginal literacy. In other words, literacy was there without compromising culture. Culture was a big part of the Gathering without compromising literacy. The two walk side by side.

Basic Facts and Statistics from the Gathering

- Over 250 participants from all areas of Saskatchewan, and from British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and the Yukon; as well as from Connecticut, U.S.A
- Participants included 34 learners from all areas of the province
- Members of the National Aboriginal Design Committee, who held their spring meeting at the Echo Valley Conference Center just prior to the Gathering, stayed to present and participate in Mamawenig
- Over 30 volunteers, including 14 facilitators and documenters for the Strategic Planning process, assisted with décor, registration, transportation, childcare, presenter introductions, and cultural activities
- 12 First Nation and Metis Elders and Veterans attended the Gathering
- 12 organizations provided financial support for the Gathering expenses
- Over 40 organizations, businesses and individuals made in-kind contributions of goods and services to support the Gathering
- Nine organizations and businesses provided trade show displays for the participants



Gathering Agenda 3 Day Overview



TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
8:00		Breakfast Registration	Breakfast	Breakfast
8:30		Opening Ceremonies	Opening Ceremonies	Opening Ceremonies
9:00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome from Aboriginal Literacy Steering Committee • Learner Representative • Federal Representative • Provincial Representative • Metis Nation of Saskatchewan • Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations • Conference Objectives 	Review Day One Elder's Panel	Review Day Two Elder's Panel
10:00		Health Break	Health Break	Health Break
10:15		Keynote Speaker Priscilla George "What is Aboriginal Literacy"	Obstacles Workshop (Assigned Groups)	Strategies Workshop (Assigned Groups)
11:00		Elder's Panel		
12:00		Lunch Silent Auction Opening	Lunch	Lunch
1:00	Registration Desk Opens	Vision Workshop (Assigned Groups)	12 Literacy Workshops	12 Literacy Workshops
2:45		Health Break	Health Break	Health Break
3:00		11 Literacy Workshops	12 Literacy Workshops	Recommendations Plenary Closing Ceremonies
4:30		Day 1 Wrap-up	Day 2 Wrap-up	Feast and Round Dance
6:00		Supper	Banquet	
7:00	Social Evening "Songs around the Campfire"	Metis Celebration • Learner's Successful Journeys' Riel Reelers and Fiddle Dance	First Nation Celebration • Learner's Successful Journey's • Recognition for Work in Aboriginal Literacy • Silent Auction	

Gathering Keynote Speaker

Mamawenig was fortunate enough to enlist the help of Priscilla George as the keynote speaker for the Gathering. Priscilla's keynote address, *What is Aboriginal Literacy?* inspired participants and set the stage for the three days of learning and sharing that followed.

About Priscilla George

Priscilla George is a Deer Clan Anishnawbe from the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation. Her Spirit Name is Ningwakwe, which means Rainbow Woman.

Ningwakwe has been involved in education since 1965, when she graduated from Stratford Teachers College, and started teaching with the Toronto Board of Education. Ningwakwe was the Native Literacy Coordinator with the Ontario Ministry of Education from 1988 to 1994. She has authored books and articles on Native literacy. Ningwakwe was a trainer/consultant for four years with the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition. She coordinated the first ever in Canada National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering (NALG), and is working on the Follow-up Strategy, which includes establishing a national Aboriginal literacy organization.

Ningwakwe was asked to develop the Rainbow Approach to Aboriginal Literacy for the Parkland Regional College national project. The National Aboriginal Design Committee (NADC) then adapted this approach. Ningwakwe has a thesis-in-progress on the Rainbow Approach.

Ningwakwe has two children. Denise, her 35-year-old daughter, is married, is a professional clown and an actress. Dennis, her 30-year-old son, is a dentist at the Sioux Lookout Zone Hospital, and travels to various First Nations communities in the area to provide mobile dental services.

Ningwakwe firmly believes in the holistic approach to literacy and to life; i.e., working towards balance of our Spirit, Heart, Mind and Body.

The following keynote address given by Ningwakwe at Mamawenig is reprinted here with permission.

The Rainbow/Holistic Approach to Aboriginal Literacy

Keynote Address by Ningwakwe (Priscilla George), May 14, 2002

“Mamawenig – Sharing and Celebrating Our Knowledge”

Echo Valley Conference Centre, Fort Qu’Appelle, Saskatchewan

Acknowledgements

Ahneen! Tansi! Sagoli! I am pleased to be invited into the traditional territory of the Dakota. It is indeed an honour to have been asked to do the Opening Keynote Address at this historical event. This is the first time in the evolution of Aboriginal literacy programming in Canada that Saskatchewan has hosted an Aboriginal literacy conference. I fully support the goals of this gathering. I am most touched by the one that reads,

“To establish effective connections with Aboriginal literacy initiatives and projects at the national level to ensure a continual and circular flow of information.”

This “circular” flow is so in tune with our Aboriginal teachings. In fact, we understand everything to be “energy”, so, in effect, you are ensuring “*a continual and circular flow of energy*”.

I understand, as well, that there are two overarching intents. Saskatchewan has a provincial literacy strategy, of which the recommendations of this event will become a part. Secondly, a provincial Aboriginal literacy network will begin.

I congratulate the forward-thinking planners of this event who chose the theme of this gathering – Mamawenig, “Sharing and Celebrating Our Knowledge.” With such a theme, this gathering is in alignment with the Call to Action section of Knowledge Matters – a discussion paper on skills and learning that could re-shape the way the federal government works independently, and with the provinces and territories, to define, fund, and set policy for literacy in Canada. Specifically, Knowledge Matters says in Section 1 - Introduction, that,

“Canada...Our success is founded on strong values of sharing – the theme of this conference -equality, openness and inclusion.”

Section 2 – Building a Foundation for Lifelong Learning for Children and Youth goes on to detail how Aboriginal children are the most disadvantaged segment of the Canadian school population. Their concluding sentence is that,

*“Clearly **concerted** (highlights mine) efforts are required to help improve the overall levels of educational attainment of Aboriginal people.”*

I know that Saskatchewan has done a number of innovative things in the area of family literacy as a way of helping parents and children. Debbie Purton wrote the chapter on “Best Practices” in the Foundational Training for Family Literacy Manual, as well as delivering a workshop at the training event of the same name in Pictou, Nova Scotia, October 2001. The Saskatchewan Literacy Network has produced a number of innovative materials – The Family Literacy Resource Guide, Come Read With Me and Drawing the Line, Dealing with Affective Issues in Literacy. Lynne

Mourot and Leanne McLeod have worked on other family literacy initiatives, including “Keys to Family Literacy”.

The General Assembly of UNESCO, in its fifty-fourth session, January 2000, adopted a resolution to begin discussion around a United Nations Literacy Decade. Their Discussion Paper suggests, amongst other strategies, Teacher education as adult education. I take the word “teacher” to include “literacy practitioners”. In fact, learners, you, too, are teachers. You are teaching the practitioners about courage and perseverance, you are being an important role model to your family and friends, you are teaching them about love – loving yourself enough to make changes in your life, and loving them enough to invite them to be a part of your journey. The Discussion Paper says:

“Teacher education could benefit enormously from valuable knowledge and practical experience accumulated within the adult education field.”

In the suggested strategy, Teachers sharing with other teachers, it also suggests that,

“Teachers learn when they meet other teachers to exchange and discuss common issues of their profession.”

This Discussion Paper recognizes that a holistic, life-long **and life-wide** approach (highlights mine) to literacy is needed.

I extend kudos to the planning team as well for having the Elders involved in the meaningful way of having a daily panel. I’m aware that the Saskatchewan Literacy Network has an Elders’ Advisory Committee – and has had one for years. In fact, when we were setting up the National Aboriginal Design Committee (NADC), Debbie Purton was one of the first people that I called. She recommended Don Pinay from the Yorkton Tribal Council, citing that he works closely with the Elders. When it came time to expand the NADC so as to include Elders and Learners, Irene Jacques, Dakota Elder from the nearby Standing Buffalo First Nation, was a natural choice.

I see a good mixture of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples on the agenda presenting on a variety of topics all related to literacy. Thank you, conference organizers, for this celebration of the contributions and “gifts” of literacy practitioners.

I thank the Saskatchewan Literacy Network for inviting me to be the opening keynote speaker. In some ways, I feel that the core of the work that I am about to present originated here in Saskatchewan, actually in Saskatoon some 350 kilometres northwest of here. As I understand it, the project was originated by Parkland Regional College when Debbie Purton was there. Debbie, it is an honour, to know you and to work with you. Your hard work and loving Spirit has helped some really good things to happen for Aboriginal literacy.

Introduction/Background

I have been so truly blessed in the past fifteen years that I’ve worked with Aboriginal literacy practitioners and learners. It is through their sharing from their Hearts and Spirits with me that I

have been able to make a few observations as to best practices. It is my sincere desire that I do their words justice in what I am about to share.

I have come to understand literacy as being more than the written word in the two official languages of this country – English and French. I have been encouraged in this understanding through my frequent interaction with Elders, practitioners and Learners.

The framework that I am about to present to you is really a story of a number of different literacies coming together

In 1996, I was asked by MTCU to write a second book on Aboriginal literacy. My first one, Empowering the Spirit, written in 1991, described what programs in Ontario were doing. MTCU suggested that it was time for an update, and that this second booklet look at programming outside of Ontario.

I found out that Parkland Regional College, Yorkton, Saskatchewan, had put together an advisory committee of Native literacy practitioners from across Canada that was overseeing the development of a multi-media kit for Aboriginal literacy. I realized that they were just about to have a meeting in Saskatoon. I invited myself to their meeting, because I felt these people could give me some good insights as to which programs to visit for inclusion in the booklet.

Through a “synchronicity”, I went into that meeting with one contract, and came out with two. The group was looking for an author to do the written portion of this multi-media kit. They needed somebody Aboriginal, and somebody who knew literacy. The facilitator asked if I could step out of the room for just a few minutes. I did. When they called me back into the room, they offered me the contract. Things like this have been happening to me since I have consciously involved Creator in my work.

The best is yet to come. Not only did they offer me the contract, but they wanted me to approach the work in a specific way. This committee had been meeting for a few months, and had agreed that, for Native Peoples, there were many types of literacy – not just the written word. They asked that I use the rainbow as a symbol, that I research each colour of the rainbow, and assign a type of literacy for each colour. They had absolutely no way of knowing that my Anishnawbe Spirit Name translated into English is Rainbow Woman. Synchronicity! This was my sign that I was meant to be there, that I was meant to do this work.

Two years later, I was offered yet another contract. Beverly Sabourin and Associates asked me to help them compile a directory of Aboriginal literacy programs across Canada. These programs had to be Aboriginal-controlled, so they do not include programs that run out of community colleges or school boards. A team of us interviewed practitioners, mostly on-site. A common denominator in our interviews was that practitioners felt isolated, and that they would like to have a national conference so as to meet and discuss with others of like mind.

In order to organize that conference, we put together a national committee. We started out with a core group of seven. We identified people who demonstrated their Hearts and Spirits in their work. We called ourselves the National Aboriginal Design Committee (NADC)

At our second meeting in December, 1998, I showed this second national committee the work I had done for Parkland Regional College, which I had now come to call The Rainbow/Holistic Approach to Aboriginal Literacy.

Another synchronicity happened. Derek Payne, NADC Treasurer, and from the Sto:lo Nation in British Columbia gasped. He shared that, on his way to the meeting, he had a window seat over the wing of the airplane. He said that, for about half an hour, he saw a circular rainbow on the wing of the airplane. The committee and I discussed the Rainbow Approach, and they endorsed it.

That night, I had a dream about an owl. I shared this dream with the committee the next day. As we were from several Aboriginal cultures - Mi'kmaq, Anishnawbe, Sto:lo, Cree - we discussed our various understandings of the owl. Our common understanding was that the owl signified wisdom, which is what the various types of literacy meant to us – the acquisition of wisdom, rather than being limited to cognitive outcomes. Thus was born the logo of the NADC – an owl inside a circular rainbow.

Also in 1996, I was contracted to do some work with the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities had just come out with a document entitled Program Reform. This document basically defined literacy, who was eligible and who was not, what activities were eligible, and what the measurable performance indicators would be. Aboriginal language literacy had a narrow and restrictive definition. In fact, the definition of literacy itself needed expanding. It considered only cognitive outcomes that would result in learners going on to further education or training, getting a (better) job, or to independence. So, it was really refreshing to see that a national committee of Aboriginal literacy practitioners had said that, for us, there are actually many types of literacies.

In the meantime, as a result of the National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering, we had expanded the NADC to eighteen people – including Elders and Learners. When I presented the “*blended*” Rainbow Approach/Medicine Wheel to this committee last year, they felt it had merit. In response to the presentation, Edwina Wetzel, Conne River First Nation, sent me a 3-page letter outlining how their community is committed to nurturing Spirit first in their educational programming. I’ll read a part of her letter to me:

“In a community of 700 people...There is 100% employment, either full-time or seasonal. Few people leave the reserve. All our directors are Band members...We have four nurses, three lawyers, 20 educators...You name it, we have it. We own hunting lodges, a garage, hardware store, grocery stores, construction co., etc.

We have done all this in 20 years...I still believe we must head the Spirit first. If your Spirit is dead, how can you get on with life or care”

Heal Spirit first – Build self-confidence, self-esteem.

People’s mind can dwell on knowledge and skills once Soul is quiet and they can see connection of education with everything else, especially benefits

Once they have calm and sense of identity, direction, they have tools to live in modern world & take advantage of what it has to offer.

With education skills and learning they can improve their health and physical world.

To date, I have done 22 presentations on parts or all of the Rainbow/Holistic Approach – to approximately 750 Learners, Elders and practitioners, in most provinces and territories, as well as in Atlanta, Georgia and Australia. Today’s presentation makes it 23. Nineteen of those have been by invitation because people have heard about the work. Another eight speaking engagements are lined up – one with Learners at this gathering, and another with practitioners, as well as in the Yukon, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Paris (France) and Sao Paolo, Brazil. All of these are by invitation.

Debbie Purton, do you see the impact of a project that you were a part of initiating a few years ago? I want to acknowledge your contributions in helping this to happen.

The Medicine Wheel

In compiling the research for the work that I did with the ONLC, I came up with a possible solution to the restrictive definition that the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities had for literacy. A long-time friend, Diane Hill, Mohawk, Six Nations of the Grand River Territory had been part of a teaching team with the First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI). This teaching team had been using the Medicine Wheel as a model for education. Through this work, I developed an appreciation for some further work that the FNTI teaching team had done - learning outcomes for each of:

- Spirit – an attitude or insight;
- Heart – a feeling about oneself or others;
- Mind – knowledge; and,
- Body – a skill.

I have since then felt inspired to suggest a learning outcome for Spirit, Heart, Mind and Body for each of the types of literacy. That work evolves as I hear from Learners and practitioners across the country.

I knew that if funders were to consider the Medicine Wheel model of learning, I would have to educate those with access to authority and decision-making in government (I had worked in the Ontario provincial government for 7 years). This meant that I would have to find scientific and educational research that corroborated this Medicine Wheel Approach.

Our traditional teachings tell us that we are Spirit, Heart, Mind and Body¹. To have a life of balance, we must recognize and nurture all four parts of ourselves. That is, I suggest that Aboriginal literacy is about recognizing the symbols that come to us through Spirit, Heart, Mind and Body, interpreting them and acting upon them for the improvement of the quality of our lives.

Institutional educational systems have tended to focus on Mind – through cognitive outcomes, and possibly Body – through physical education, and subjects that teach a physical skill, such as woodworking. That is, 50% of us is not being recognized and nurtured in that system.

¹ Hill, Diane. Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education: Prior Learning Assessment and Its Use Within Aboriginal Programs of Learning. First Nations Technology Institute, Deseronto, Ontario, 1995.

I believe that a lot of this reductionistic, compartmentalized approach stems from the seventeenth century. Rene Descartes, the philosopher sometimes referred to as the founding father of modern medicine made a turf deal with the Pope. He needed human bodies for dissection, and promised that he wouldn't have anything to do with the soul, the mind, or the emotions. These became the purview of the church. This deal heralded the Cartesian era, or Cartesian thought, which is dominated by reductionistic methodology, which attempts to understand life by examining the tiniest pieces of it, and then extrapolating from these pieces to overarching surmises about the whole.² Native Peoples on this continent did not know about Cartesian thought and still saw the four parts as an inseparable whole.

In my quest to find educational and scientific research that corroborated the Medicine Wheel, I found the work of The HeartMath Institute, which asserts that the electromagnetic frequencies of the heart are 5,000 times greater than that of the brain.³ That is, it's the heart that entrains the brain, not the other way around as we've been socialized to believe.

My next question was, "*So what entrains or motivates the heart?*" Native Peoples believe that it is the Spirit. In Spiritual Intelligence, The Ultimate Intelligence, Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall postulate SQ, asserting that it has a neurological basis and that it *integrates* all our intelligences. That is, science is just now discovering what Native Peoples have said all along about the holistic approach, or the teachings of the Medicine Wheel. I'm pleased to see that Mary LeRoy will be doing a workshop on Youth Literacy "Touches the Spirit".

On a similar note, Howard Gardner of Harvard University has put forward a theory on Multiple Intelligences, or different ways of exploring a subject. Gardner says that human intelligence consists of three components:

- a. a set of skills that enables an individual to resolve genuine problems encountered in one's life.
- b. the ability to create an effective product or offer a service that is of value in one's culture
- c. the potential for finding or creating problems – thereby laying the groundwork for the acquisition of new knowledge.

Gardner suggests eight intelligences, which must meet stringent criteria to be admitted to the list:

1. potential isolation by brain damage
2. existence of idiots savants, prodigies, and other exceptional individuals
3. an identifiable core operation or set of operations
4. a distinctive developmental history, along with a definable set of expert "end-state" performances
5. an evolutionary history and evolutionary plausibility
6. support from experimental psychological tasks
7. support from psychometric findings

² Pert, Candace B. Ph. D. Molecules of Emotion. Scribner, New York, 1997.

³ Childre, Doc and Martin, Howard, with Beech, Donna. The HeartMath Solution. HarperSanFrancisco, 1999.

8. Susceptibility to encoding in a symbol system.⁴

The intelligences are:

- i) Linguistic – the ability to read, write, communicate with words
- ii) Logical-mathematical – the ability to reason and calculate, to think things through in a logical, systematic manner
- iii) Visual-spatial – the ability to think in pictures, visualize a final result – recognizes our creative people, such as artists, as well as our visions
- iv) Musical – the ability to make or compose music, to sing well, or understand and appreciate music – recognizes our traditional singers
- v) Bodily-kinesthetic – the ability to use your body skillfully to solve problems, create products, or present ideas and emotions – recognizes our traditional dancers
- vi) Interpersonal – the ability to work effectively with others, to relate to other people and display empathy and understanding, to notice their motivations and goals – I believe this intelligence comes the closest to recognizing Heart
- vii) Intrapersonal – the ability for self-analysis and reflection – to be able to quietly contemplate and assess one’s accomplishments, to review one’s behaviour and innermost feelings, to make plans and set goals, to know oneself – I believe this one comes the closest to recognizing both Heart and Spirit
- viii) naturalist – the ability to recognize flora and fauna, to make other consequential distinctions in the natural world and to use this ability productively.⁵ – recognizes our Medicine People. To quote one of the Elders on the NADC, Denys Auger, from the Bigstone Cree Education Authority,

“In our traditional culture, we “read” nature (the environment). We must read and interpret the information we find there, so that we can survive. We use our eyes and brains just like you. We also use our other senses – smell, hearing, taste and touch – to read the coming weather, the presence of danger, and the health of the land, waters and air. When we don’t hear the frog’s song, we know the land and waters are polluted and cannot support life.”⁶

Gardner’s work goes beyond cognitive skills and outcomes only. In fact, only two of the intelligences – linguistic and logical-mathematical - can be considered to be cognitive in nature. I find his work an affirmation of the Anishnawbe Life Road Teachings that we all have “gifts” that we need to recognize and nurture.

I admire the work of Daniel Goleman who postulates that a person’s academic and technical skills only provide them with a foot in the door – at school and at work.. What makes the difference

⁴ McArthur, Claudia. Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Handout, DISCOVER Institute on Multiple Intelligences, University of Arizona, July 1998.

⁵ Rose, Colin and Nicholl, Malcolm J. Accelerated Learning for the 21st Century: The Six-Step Plan to Unlock Your Master Mind. Dell Publishing, New York, 1997.

⁶ Auger, Denys, Elder, Bigstone Cree First Nation, Wabasca-Demerais, Alberta. Written Communication to Ningwakwe, NADC Meeting, June 2002, Toronto, Ontario.

once they are in is their “*emotional intelligence*” – which includes factors such as self-awareness, self-discipline and empathy.

In fact, Knowledge Matters suggests in Section 3 – Strengthening Accessibility and Excellence in Post-Secondary Education that,

“Teamwork is an essential part of the production process, and interpersonal skills are becoming key determinants of business success.”

In other words, many people are saying what we’ve been saying for a long time as Native Peoples. There is more to life than the acquisition of cognitive outcomes.

The Rainbow

Red – the first colour of the rainbow, and the colour understood by some Aboriginal cultures to mean confidence, which has within it the knowing, the ability to plan, to start a process. Red represents **the language of origin of First Nations individuals and/or communities**.

Since time immemorial, Aboriginal Peoples have lived on this land. We believe that the Creator put us here. Our ancestors did NOT cross the Bering Strait. We had our own Aboriginal languages. A December 14, 1998, press release from Statistics Canada entitled, The Daily says that, as of 1996, Canada has 50 Aboriginal languages, belonging to 11 major language families. In the past 100 years or more, nearly ten once flourishing languages have become extinct. At least a dozen are on the brink of extinction.

There are special initiatives in the Aboriginal community to keep our languages alive. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommends granting special status to Aboriginal languages, providing formal education in the language, and conducting research.⁷ The First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centres (FNCECC) is in the initial stages of developing protective legislation for the preservation, maintenance, promotion and use of Aboriginal languages in Canada.⁸ We need to pool our energies to help each other save our languages.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) did a study a few years ago, and grouped our languages into each of:

- Flourishing;
- Enduring;
- Declining;
- Endangered; and,
- Extinct.

In 1992, they summarized the importance of Aboriginal languages as follows:

⁷ Norris, Mary Jane. Canada’s Aboriginal Languages – Canadian Social Trends. Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 11-008. Winter 1998.

⁸ Protective Legislation for Aboriginal Languages in Canada, First Nations Education Cultural Centres

The Aboriginal Languages were given by the Creator as an integral part of life. Embodied in Aboriginal languages is our unique relationship to the Creator, our attitudes, beliefs, values, and the fundamental notion of what is truth. Aboriginal language is an asset to one's own education, formal and informal. Aboriginal language contributes to greater pride in the history and culture of the community; greater involvement and interest of parents in the education of their children, and greater respect for Elders. Language is the principal means by which culture is accumulated, shared and transmitted from generation to generation. The key to identity and retention of culture is one's ancestral language.⁹

Saskatchewan has two of the flourishing languages – Cree and Ojibway. I'm heartened to see that Lavonne Dubois is doing a workshop on Cree/English Adult Literacy. The 1996 Census which listed Aboriginal Population by Mother Tongue cites that, Saskatchewan, Cree, Ojibway, Dakota/Sioux, Blackfoot and (Siksika) are spoken. Of the 111,245 Aboriginal Peoples in Saskatchewan, 6,340 were lumped in the category as "*Other Aboriginal Languages*" – that probably includes Dakota, Nakota, Assiniboine, Saulteaux, Chipewyan and Dene. I'm aware that the prairie provinces have a larger proportion of Metis, if you use the definition that Metis are descendants of those who lived in the Red River Settlement. I wonder if the Metis language, Michif, is one of those "*Other Aboriginal Languages*".

Only two languages have the status of being official in Canada, and in Saskatchewan. They are NOT the languages of the first peoples of this land. A policy or structure that does not recognize and affirm our language serves only to erode our culture, our worldview of interconnectedness.

Orange – the second colour of the rainbow, and the colour understood by some Aboriginal cultures to mean balance, the place of choice where we are taught to exercise self-confidence, self-assuredness, self-control and self-esteem, in order to keep emotions, such as fear, in balance. Orange is often used to denote fire. The first source of fire is the Sun, which is the centre of the universe. People are like the universe in that they also have a centre, a fire within. For Aboriginal Peoples, that centre is the teachings. Aboriginal teachings have been passed from generation to generation orally. Orange symbolizes **the skills required for oral literacy (speaking, listening...)**

Since time immemorial, our culture has been an oral one. Many of our people have been known for their oratory skills – in their own language of origin AND in English. Many of our teachings have been passed down orally – either in ceremony, through songs, or through story-telling. I am very pleased to see Don Freed on the agenda to speak about songs.

As I understand it, many skills are required for oral literacy – outstanding listening skills, sometimes referred to as "*wholly*" listening, critical and reflective thinking, excellent memory and the ability to get one's point across in a way that can be understood. In Talking Circle as Pedagogy, Fyre Jean Graveline describes this as a commitment

⁹ Ignace, Marianne B. Handbook for Aboriginal Language Programming, A Report Prepared for the First Nations Education Steering Committee, Aboriginal Languages Sub-Committee. North Vancouver, B.C., April, 1998.

“...to sit and attentively listen, allowing the wisdom of the teacher/speaker to really be heard.”

She says that

“Through respectful listening we are better able to enter into another’s experience through their words.”¹⁰

In a sense, our stories and our teachings are like learning spirals – we can hear the same story or teaching a number of times, but get a different “*lesson*” out of it, depending on where we are on our own “*journeys*”.

Literacy programs are inviting Elders in to share the teachings, and to conduct Talking Circles, either on specific topics, or on something that is important to the Learner that day. In this way, the Learners can use Circle, as Graveline says, as “*the building block of community.*” Certainly, I know that Leanne McLeod found that these sessions with the Elders gave the Learners a solid foundation for sharing with others in the Circle, and for writing their stories. To further quote Graveline, such a process provides a space so that

“Those previously silenced are encouraged to find their voice and speak up.”¹¹

It warms my heart to see that Joseph Naytowhow will present on Working with Elders..

Yellow – the third colour of the rainbow, and the colour often used in reference to the moon, and the gathering of food. In Aboriginal tradition, crops are planted and harvested according to the phases of the moon. Some Aboriginal cultures understand yellow to mean creativity. Yellow refers to the **creative means by which Aboriginal Peoples had to learn to communicate with others who spoke another language or through other than the written word, by using symbols (pictographs, and in contemporary times, artwork, music) and/or sign language.**

Since time immemorial, because of our different languages and linguistic groups, Native Peoples have had to be creative in the ways in which we communicated – about how to interact/trade with each other, about events that have transpired, and about prophecies. We developed a kind of sign language. We used various art forms for our clothing, lodgings and surroundings. Pictures or images and colours convey ideas or meaning without the use of words or sounds, but in a much more powerful way. In fact, today we can often tell from a person’s regalia what nation they’re from. The moccasins I got from Irene Jacques are quite different from what we have in Ontario.

One of our longest standing and best known art forms is the petroglyphs, which date back thousands of years. Petroglyphs record events, visions and storytelling. Saskatchewan has “glyphs” at St. Victor. Saskatoon archaeologist Tim Jones, can't offer a good guess as to how old they are, either, except to note that the subjects carved show no evidence of being created in any other than prehistoric times.

¹⁰ Graveline, Fyre Jean. Circle Works: Transforming Eurocentric Consciousness. Fernwood Publishing, Halifax. 1998

¹¹ *ibid*

Literacy programs are using crafts as a way of helping Learners to get in touch with their creativity. Helen McPhaden of the Stardale Women’s Association is getting the Learners to do weaving. Previous projects include pottery and quilts. One of the Elders with whom Helen consulted on this project said that crafts are away of helping Learners to tap into ancestral memories, our “Spirit”.

The first weekend in April, I participated in an invitational conference in Montreal entitled, Literacy, Museums and the Arts. This was held on conjunction with the Blue Metropolis Literary Festival. Other participants included artists, authors, a singer, and a dancer. It was an affirming experience to hear people talking about the different ways in which we communicate ideas other than the written word.

In fact, I will share a personal experience. The dancer, Lynn Snelling from Montreal, did an interpretive dance for us. We were invited to speak into the microphones and share what words came to us, in whatever language they came. I could not find words to describe the welling up of emotion inside me as I picked up on the energy that she conveyed with her hands, eyes and body movements. There are times when words are inadequate. Karla McLaren, an empathy and healer who specializes in the field of physical and emotional trauma refers to this as the “*straightjacket of language*”.¹² Lynn shared later that she believes that the body has a literacy all its own. If we pay attention, it will let us know what feelings are being blocked and need to be moved.

Green – the fourth colour of the rainbow, is often interpreted to mean growth, going beyond what is familiar, yet remaining true to the teachings. This allows us to live with respect and humbleness. It is used to represent grass and growing things on Mother Earth. Treaties and understandings with the newcomers often included the phrase, “*as long as the grasses grow and the rivers flow*”. Green refers to **literacy in the languages of the European newcomers to this land a little over five hundred years ago, English and/or French, and which have also been given the status of official languages.**

The English and French languages came to this continent only a little over 500 hundred years ago. Yet today, they enjoy the status of official languages. This status means that they are considered to be the language of instruction, except in the territories where some of the Aboriginal languages are considered official in that particular territory.

Literacy practitioners are using literacy in the official languages as a way of reclaiming voice. Larry Loyie and Constance Brissenden have done workshops across Canada to accomplish this. Larry, a former Learner with the Carnegie Centre in Vancouver, noticed that non-Aboriginal Peoples wrote a lot of books on Aboriginal Peoples. He then vowed to be a vehicle for getting Aboriginal Learners to write their own stories. I have here a book entitled Acimowina that is an anthology of the writings of Learners in a workshop that Larry and Constance did in Wabasca-Desmerais, Alberta.

Larry has also written a play, Ora Nobis, about his experiences in residential school. This play was featured in some First Nations communities and organizations across Canada. As well, Larry

¹² McLaren, Karla. Emotional Genius: How Your Emotions Can Save Your Life. Audiotape Set, Sounds True, Boulder, Colorado, 2000.

and Constance are doing two workshops here, Self to Story – Creative Writing and Bring Stories to Life.

Blue – the fifth colour of the rainbow, which some Aboriginal cultures understand to mean truth. Knowing the truth means staying true to your vision, where commitment is most important. Blue is also used to symbolize the colour of the sky. With the coming of the Europeans, the skyline changed, and now contains the tools of technology, such as towers and satellite dishes, that send and receive signals. Blue refers to **the skills required to communicate using technology**.

For the purposes of literacy programming, I will keep this discussion to computers and on-line learning. I recognize that there are many other types of technology. I recall the advent of computers in the classroom when I was teaching at Wanepuhnud in 1985-86. I left anything to do with computers to the computer instructor. However, in 1988, when I got the job as Native Literacy Coordinator with the then Ontario Ministry of Education, we HAD to use computers. It was sink or swim for me. Now, many isolated communities keep in touch with the rest of the world through technology. Sometimes this is a good thing; sometimes it is not.

MYKNET.ORG is a means by which many First Nations People have their own web pages. A brief surf of this site shows a wide variety of symbols that people select to depict their culture. These people are using what the Queensland School Curriculum Council has said in Literacy: A Position Paper, which summarizes literacy practices in technology. They include:

- Decoding and encoding codes and symbols of written, spoken and visual texts
- Comprehending and composing written, spoken and visual texts
- Understanding the purposes of different written, spoken and visual texts, and using texts in different ways for different cultural and social functions (e.g., using diagrams, sketches and drawings for making models and products)

I shared with Charles Ramsey, Executive Director, National Adult Literacy Database (NALD), that I had been invited to speak at a First Nations forum in Paris in October on Maintaining a Cultural Identity in a Digital Era. The program will focus on “*Aboriginal New Identity*”, for which forum organizer, Fulvio Caccia, says “*Literacy is a key*”. I needed a sounding board for how to shape my participation in this event that I see as an opportunity for getting Aboriginal literacy international recognition. Charles shared with me an incident in he had a request from Pat Paul, Maliseet from the Tobique First Nation, New Brunswick. Pat asked Charles to write to some of the Aboriginal listservs to ask for the mailing addresses of publishers who might publish Aboriginal stories. Among the many responses was one from a woman in Australia who said that she had a web-site, and wondered if Pat would be interested in positing one of his stories. Charles and Pat sent, Geow-lud-mo-sis-eg: Little People. That posting resulted in a flood of events that fall into several categories:

1. People writing to say that they wanted to Pat’s story on their web-sites as well – Minnessota, Hawaii;
2. People who are teachers in elementary schools who have an Aboriginal piece in their curriculum;
3. People who had heard other “little people” or “creation” stories and wanted to share them – Maine, New Mexico;

4. People who were doing geneology research and wanted Pat to help them make links to their ancestors;
5. Europeans who are deeply interested in the North American Native cultures;
6. People who were either from Tobique, or their families were from Tobique, wanting to say hello to Pat and some of their relatives;
7. Student's wanting Pat's help with their research;
8. Three different people who shared the same story of having been through a very serious illness and who, during the initial recovery period, were visited by the Little People. These Little People were instrumental in helping them through a successful and speedy recovery;
9. Interpretation of Native stories;
10. Aboriginal People in other countries wanting to communicate with Aboriginal People in Canada;
11. Requests for permission to translate the story into a foreign language and add it to the public school curriculum of that country.

To date, Pat Paul's story is shown on 30 web-sites. What a celebration and cross-fertilization of culture. Thanks, Charles, for your enthusiastic support of Aboriginal literacy. In fact, Charles is doing three workshops – one on Technologies and Literacy, another on Tools for Learners and another on Tools for Practitioners. It's all about that “*continual and circular flow of energy*.”

In terms of energy, I would like to quote Gregg Braden, who has professional careers in earth sciences, aerospace, and a senior computer systems,

*The path of internal technology remembers that each cell of our bodies is approximately 1.17 volts of electrical potential. Statistics indicate that the average body is composed of approximately 1 quadrillion cells. One quadrillion cells times 1.17 volts of potential for each cell equals approximately 1.17 quadrillion volts of electrical potential per person.*¹³

1.17 quadrillion volts is a lot of energy. I don't know about you, but if I know that I'm capable of that much energy, then I want to make sure that whatever I put out there in the universe is positive. Our way of saying it would be, “*What goes around comes around*.”

Indigo – the sixth colour of the rainbow, is often referred to as the colour of the night-time sky, the dream time, when Aboriginal Peoples are more open to receiving messages from the Spirit World. This colour also refers to the “*third eye chakra*”, which means “*spiritual seeing*”. Indigo refers to **the skills required for spiritual or cultural literacy – the ability to interpret dreams, visions or natural events, which are seen to be messages from the Spirit World – the sighting of an animal, the shape of a cloud, seeing a certain person at a particular point in time, etc.**

Since time immemorial, Native Peoples have believed in a Spirit World, what we refer to as our “*unseen helpers*” – unseen with the naked eye that is, but most certainly seen with the Spirit Eye.

¹³ Braden, Gregg. Walking Between the Worlds, The Science of Compassion. Radio Bookstore Press, Bellevue, Washington, 1997.

We believe that Spirit speaks to us in imagery, thoughts, sounds and feelings. Some cultures call this clairvoyance, claircognizance, clairaudience, and clairsentience. The effects of the Cartesian Era and a system that focuses only on that which can be validated by science has socialized this way of knowing out of a lot of people, not just Native Peoples.

I wish to share with you a story which will bring together some of the various types of literacies. A little over a month ago, a friend invited me to go to the McMichael Art Gallery to see an exhibit entitled, Qu'Appelle. Since I already knew I was coming here, I thought the synchronicity of the invitation to McMichael was beautiful – indigo literacy. As I walked around the Qu'Appelle exhibit – paintings, sculptures by Edward Poitras, Metis, born in Regina, photographs – yellow literacy, I learned a bit of history about this beautiful place. I learned about the legend – orange literacy – of a Native brave hearing a woman call out his mane. It seemed to be his bride-to-be. Uncertain, he shouted, “*Who calls?*” He hurried homeward, only to find that his true love had died. Pauline Johnson, Mohawk, had written a poem entitled “Qu'Appelle” – green literacy.

I'll read some of that poem,

I AM the one who loved her as my life
Had watched her grow to sweet young womanhood
Won the dear privilege to call her wife,
And found the world. Because of her, was good.
I am the one who heard the spirit voice
Of which the paleface settlers love to tell;
From whose strange story they have made their choice
Of naming this fair valley the “Qu'Appelle.”

She had said fondly in my eager ear –
“When Indian Summer smiles with dusky lip,
Come to the lakes, I will be first to hear
The welcome music of thy paddle dip.
I will be first to lay in thine my hand
To whisper words of greeting on the shore;
And when thou would'st return to thine own land,
I'll go with thee, thy wife for evermore.”

Not yet a leaf had fallen, not a tone
Of frost upon the plain ere I set forth,
Impatient to possess her as my own –
This queen of all the women of the North.

I rested not at even or at dawn,
But journeyed all the dark and daylight through—
Until I reached the Lakes, and, hurrying on,
I launched upon their bosom my canoe.

Of sleep or hunger then I took no heed,

But hastened o'er their leagues of waterways;
But my hot heart outstripped my paddle's speed
And waited not for distance or for days,
But flew before me swifter than the blade
Of magic paddle ever cleaved the Lake,
Eager to lay its love before the maid,
And watch the lovelight in her eyes awake.
So the long days went slowly drifting past;
It seemed that half my life must intervene
Before the morrow, when I said at last –
One more day's journey and I win my queen!"
I rested then, and, drifting, dreamed the more
Of all the happiness I was to claim,--
When suddenly from out the shadowed shore,
I heard a voice speak tenderly my name.

"Who calls?" I answered; no reply; and long
I stilled my paddle blade and listened. Then
Above the night's wind melancholy song
I heard distinctly that strange voice again—
A woman's voice, that through the twilight came
Like to soul unborn—a song unsung.

I leaned and listened –yes, she spoke my name,
And then I answered in the quaint French tongue,
"Qu'Appelle? Qu'Appelle?" No answer, and the night
Seemed stiller for the sound; rill round me fell
The far-off echoes from the far-off height –
"Qu'Appelle?" my voice came back, "Qu'Appelle? Qu'Appelle?"
This – and no more; I called aloud until
I shuddered as the gloom of night increased,
And, like a pallid spectre wan and chill,
The moon arose in silence in the east.

I dare not linger on the moment when
My boat I beached beside her tepee door;
I heard the wail of women and of men, --
I saw the death-fires lighted on the shore
No language tells the torture or the pain,
The bitterness that flooded all my life, --
When I was led to look on her again,
That queen of women pledged to be my wife.
To look upon the beauty of her face
The still closed eyes, the lips that knew no breath;
To look, to learn, -- to realize my place
Had been usurped by my one rival – Death.

A storm of wrecking sorrow beat and broke
About my heart, and life shut out its light
Till through my anguish some one gently spoke,
And said, "Twice did she call for thee last night."

I started up – and bending o'er my dead,
Asked when did her sweet lips in silence close.
"She called thy name – then passed away; they said,
"Just on the hour whereat the moon arose."

Among the lonely lakes I go no more,
For she who made their beauty is not there;
The paleface rears his tepee on the shore
And says the vale is fairest of the fair.
Full many years have vanished since, but still
The voyageurs beside the campfire tell
How, when the moonrise tips the distant hill,
They hear strange voices through the silence swell.
The paleface loves the haunted lakes they say,
And journeys far to watch their beauty spread
Before his vision; but to me the day,
The night, the hour, the seasons are all dead.
I listen heartsick, while the hunters tell
Why white men named the valley The Qu'Appelle.¹⁴

Violet – the seventh colour of the rainbow, is often thought to be a healing colour. Some Aboriginal cultures understand violet to mean wisdom, the ability to understand things, to have true power (inner and spiritual), to respect, and to know in a holistic way. Violet refers **to the holistic base to Aboriginal literacy, the way in which integrate all of the above – facilitating spiritual, emotional, mental and physical learning outcomes – striving for balance.**

Since time immemorial, Native Peoples have recognized the importance of nurturing Spirit, Heart, Mind and Body. We have long looked to the teachings of the Universe to help us. In fact, in my Anishnawbe language, the word for teach "*ahkinomagai*" means "*The earth is our teacher*". Through its cyclical changes, through the animals, through every aspect of Mother Earth, we learn about embodying caring, sharing, respect, honesty.

Literacy practitioners are teaching Learners to take care of themselves spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically. When life is out of balance, the most important thing is to ask yourself, "*In what ways am I nurturing myself in each of those areas?*"

There are many ways in which practitioners do that in literacy programs – from the way we treat Learners when they first walk in our doors, to the way we listen to what is affecting them, to the way we facilitate their becoming a part of the group, such that they sometimes call it their family.

¹⁴ Johnston, Pauline. *The Legend of the Qu'Appelle Valley*. Selected Poems, <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/rp/authors/tekahi.html>

We treat them like a whole person. Often it's the first time that somebody has treated them like that. They're so used to getting shuffled from one program to another, each with its stringent criteria that often serves as a barrier. In the words of Rita Buffalo, a Learner from Thunder Bay on the NADC,

"It was important for me to know that I was always welcome in the program. There was no such thing as failure. When I did badly in some of the work, I was sat down and patiently taught the right way to do the work. I was encouraged and praised to go on, and not forced to complete in a certain amount of time what needed to be done."

Research shows that students rate the quality of their relationship with their instructor as the number one factor in whether or not they enjoy learning.¹⁵ I'm so pleased to see that space for a Learners' Panel. Learners, your voice is THE most important in literacy programs. Without you, these programs would not exist. There will also be a Recognition of Work Done in Aboriginal Literacy at the Banquet tomorrow evening, entitled Learners – Successful Journey. Practitioners have taken the time to set up those reciprocal ways of fully involving learners. I'm pleased to see that Lisa Campbell and Cayla Chenier will share their experiences in the Northwest Territory and Nunavut in a workshop entitled, Tools for Community Building.

Conclusion

My Heart and Spirit go out to you as literacy practitioners. You see beyond cognitive outcomes. You help Learners to recognize their "gifts", only one of which is the ability to read and write in English. You go that extra mile to provide an atmosphere that makes space for the Learners to grow as a whole person. Each and every day, you make a difference in someone's life.

Learners, you are teachers as well. You are role models. You inspire others to take the same steps that you have taken. The importance of what you are doing can never be underestimated.

In closing, I have a request. I am working on a follow-up strategy to the National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering. The NADC and I are in the initial stages of setting up a National Aboriginal Literacy Office. We have been asked by Senator Thelma Chalifoux, Chair, Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples (SSCAP) to prepare a Position Paper on Aboriginal Literacy for presentation to the full committee. We have an appointment to do just that on the morning of October 24, 2002. I am viewing all of my interactions with literacy types through the lens of what to include in this document. This is your opportunity to have a say in how the national group will best serve you. Please feel free to chat with me and to share your views on this work.

I started out my talk acknowledging many people. I would now like to acknowledge the Spirit World. Life has taken on a different tone for me when I learned to put my trust in Creator to guide and direct my work, my life. It's a privilege to walk with Creator and with all of you on this sacred journey.

Gichi Miigwech!

¹⁵ Rose, Colin & Nicholl, Malcolm J. Accelerated Learning for the 21st Century. Dell Publishing, New York, 1997.

Strategic Planning Methods

The Steering Committee chose to use a participatory planning method developed over the past 40 years in communities around the world by the Institute of Cultural Affairs. It is a natural thinking process that focuses toward deeply considered decisions and the desire to act on them. It is open and creative, honors the perspective of all participants, brings out differences and resolves them while maintaining focus, balance and purpose.

This process is based in the belief that most of the solutions to problems, and most of the answers to questions can be found within an organization or community. In these planning workshops, all participants are the experts, and the process helps to draw out their ideas, form consensus, and build ownership of the plans that are developed.

There are four parts to this planning process:

Practical Vision:

We began by looking at the desired future – the situation we want to create and develop. It is what we hope and dream and pray for, on behalf of the next generations. A good vision contains both practical, specific things you can see, and wild imaginings!

The focus question was: “What do we want to see going on to support literacy needs of Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan in 2007?”

Underlying Obstacles or Contradictions:

Next, we looked at what is blocking us from achieving our vision – the situations that are “logjams” in our lives, preventing progress. This can be a difficult, painful process – as we are bringing into the light, those things we don’t know how to deal with yet. It is also the key to creative change – it releases our energy and opens the doorway to the future.

The focus question was: “What is blocking us from achieving our vision of aboriginal literacy?”

Strategic Directions:

Then, we “looked through” the obstacles and created strategies that will begin to move the whole situation into the future. They are broad directions or proposals that are pathways to towards breaking through the “logjams”. They are models for new directions.

The focus question was: “What can we do to deal with the obstacles and realize our vision?”

Action Plans:

The process is concluded by developing clear, step by step plans for each strategic direction, creating a coordinated action plan, based on three to six month measurable accomplishments.

There was insufficient time to do any work on this part during the Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Gathering. The Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Steering Committee, in partnership with Saskatchewan Learning and other key organizations, will undertake the development of an Action Plan for Aboriginal Literacy.

Strategic Planning Process at the Gathering

In order to provide the approximately 250 Gathering participants with the maximum opportunity to be involved in the planning process, a team of 12 facilitators and documenters was

brought together. Twelve Aboriginal people who had taken ICA's Facilitation Methods training in the past 10 years, were trained in ICA's two day Strategic Planning methods, in exchange for facilitating or documenting at the Gathering. Eight of them, and four other experienced facilitators formed the Facilitation Team that worked with seven small groups of participants.

At the Gathering, participants were assigned to small groups, each a microcosm of the whole group – learners, Elders, Veterans, practitioners, community leaders, Steering Committee members, National Design Committee members, etc, in each group. They met three times as follows:

- Tuesday afternoon for the Vision workshop,
- Wednesday morning for the Obstacles workshop,
- Thursday morning and afternoon for the Strategies workshop.

(Note: The Opening session on Thursday morning ran very late, so only three groups actually met and worked on Strategies. Later in the afternoon, a whole group brainstorming session was held to get further data from those who had stayed at the Opening session.)

Workshop Process:

Each of the three workshops followed the same format:

- introduction of the topic – vision, obstacles or strategic directions
- brainstorm ideas – by yourself first, then in teams of three
- write your best ideas on cards
- all cards are put up on the wall in four rounds and clustered
- each cluster is named to identify the consensus
- a conversation to review the work together.

Plenary Process:

After the Vision and Obstacles workshops, a “Plenary Session” was held, attended by the Steering Committee members and most of the facilitators/documenters. They brought a duplicate set of the “cluster name” cards, and participated in the same process, using only those cards, and naming the clusters they created. That created a chart showing the consensus of the whole Gathering. (This is unclear. Can it be rephrased?)

Documentation Process:

At the end of Tuesday and Thursday, all the hand written documents from all the small group sessions and the Plenary session, were taken to a local printer for photocopying. The copies were distributed to all participants at the next morning's Opening Session for use during the next part of the planning process, and to take home with them at the end of the Gathering.

Completion of the Strategic Planning Process

All of the original data from the Gathering (both small group sessions and the two Plenary sessions), and the original data from the Facilitator's training session were typed up as charts and provided to the Steering Committee for their review in June.

The Steering Committee met for a full day on July 9th to review and complete the Plenary session work on all three sections – vision, obstacles and strategic directions. They focused on writing vision statements, and completing the strategic directions grouping and naming. A second meeting day, July 23rd, focused on working with all the completed data, to create goals, objectives and actions, based on the information provided by over 200 people.

Literacy Workshops

Literacy workshops were offered over three days of the Gathering. A total of 37 workshop offerings were available over the three days. Many Gathering participants were dismayed only by the fact that they had to make the difficult decision about which workshops to attend when there were so many good offerings. The following is a listing of the workshop titles and presenters.

Collaborative Songwriting - Don Freed
E-Mail for Elders – Bebe Ivanachko & Harriet Roy
Essential Workplace Skills/PLAR – Lisa Cadieux
Seeking a Glimpse of Who We Are – Barbra Agrella & Phyllis Steeves
Youth Literacy “Touches the Spirit” – Mary LeRoy
Self to Story “Creative Writing” – Larry Loyie & Constance Brissenden
Ontario Native Literacy Coalition – Dawn Antoine
Little Books/ Big Books for Little/Big People – Judy Bear
St Mary Community School – Dawn Gibbons
Resources for Teachers/Tutors and Learners – Charles Ransey
The Medicine Wheel Approach to Learning/Life – Priscilla George
Celebrating and Encouraging Learner Writing – Charles Ramsey
Story Sacks – Lynn Mourot
FAS/E – Heather Sinclair
Cree/English Adult Literacy – Yvonne Dubois
Libraries and Aboriginal People – Harriet Roy
Prior Learning Assessment – Janice Brant
Tools for Community Building – Lisa Campbell & Lisa Chenier
AlphaRoute – Nancy Cooper
Northern Libraries and Literacy - Bebe Ivanachko & Harriet Roy
Cross Cultural Study of Memories – Angeline Weenie, Dr. O’Reilly & Dr. Watson
Ontario Aboriginal Literacy – Best Practices
Work Place Literacy – Ann Curry
The Gift of Reading – Jacqueline Guest
Metis Curriculum – Calvin Racette
Mind, Body, and Spirit – Priscilla George
Proposal Writing and Funding – Terri Peters
Report on Schooling, Workforce and Income – John Dorion & Danette Star
Rising to the Challenge – Sheila Musqua-Keewatin
Learners Panel – Nita Lakner,

Gathering Highlights

- Over 200 participants attended the Gathering including Elders, learners, practitioners, government staff and community leaders from Saskatchewan and across Canada
- A participatory planning process that involved participants in the development of an Aboriginal Literacy Strategy for inclusion in Saskatchewan Learning's Provincial Literacy Strategy;
- The Keynote Address on "What is Aboriginal Literacy?" by Priscilla George, Coordinator of the National Aboriginal Design Committee;
- Over 30 workshops, facilitated by Elders, practitioners and learners who shared the programs and resource materials that they have developed or adapted in their communities;
- Metis and First Nations cultural celebrations that were woven through the whole Gathering - involving Elders and Veterans, drummers, dancers, singers and helpers; and
- Involvement of 32 learners from across the province through the sponsorship of Saskatchewan Learning.

Gathering Evaluation Comments

A summary of participant responses

1. Key happenings that stand out for you?

Participant responses have been grouped into several themes as follows:

- a. Learner Involvement: learner speakers; feedback from learners on learner panel; learner's experience
- b. Veteran and Elder Involvement: Elder's sharing; Elders' Panel; Elders meeting/sharing with others; talking with Elders; participation of the Elders; getting wisdom from Elders; the honouring of the Veterans
- c. Opportunity for Sharing: meeting inspiring people; group sharing; being given a chance to tell my own success stories; networking through literacy workshops, cultural activities and food
- d. Workshops: workshops attended were all outstanding; structure/format of the workshops
- e. Strategic Planning Process: everyone of all backgrounds participating in the strategic planning sessions; participating in planning Aboriginal literacy for 2007
- f. The people: friendliness of committee members, staff and Elders' panel; coordinators, staff and committee great
- g. Entertainment and Cultural Events: pow-wow; Wednesday evening banquet/celebration of sharing; opening/closing ceremonies; campfire; evening dancing, music and socials
- h. Facility: location great; facility great; food great

2. What were high points and low points of the Gathering?

High Points:

- Talking with the Elders
- Meeting many people interested in literacy and learning what they are doing
- Having the drum group
- Seeing so many people who have a common goal
- Time to network with people
- Relaxing, entertainment, food and scenery
- Run well, plus a great first literacy conference, never been to one
- Dancing, learning
- Awareness building/sharing with strangers, who became friends
- Evening entertainment
- Ceremonies with the Veterans, Metis night and Pow-wow
- The energy, enthusiasm, vision, taking control and moving forward
- Learners' speeches, very excellent
- Role of Elders
- Activities on time
- Elders' Panel ... it's good to listen to their stories
- Staff were wonderful and the committees – Thanks!

- Getting to know all the people from different walks of life all with a common interest and being in the presence of Elders, and hearing their stories was very moving and highly motivating for me

Low Points:

- Too many workshops at the same time; missed several I wanted to attend
- Being scared because of the location of the conference
- For me will be leaving, but I'll be leaving with memories of an amazing experience
- Organization
- Did not finish the plenary sessions
- Wandering around at midnight after a long trip, searching for an available room
- Activities not on time

3. *What would you change about the Gathering?*

- Organization – registration process, stick to schedules
- Have daycare/activities for kids 10-13 separate from kids 1-2
- Change Round Dance and Feast to night before
- Location
- Make it longer than 3 days to provide more time for speakers and workshops
- Offer sweats at different times so you can attend the workshops and sweats
- Invite more/other departments (i.e. Justice, health, social development). It was evident if we are going to tackle Aboriginal literacy we need other departments involved.
- Too many workshops to choose from; can't get to all the ones you are interested in; some of the workshops that were advertised didn't seem to happen
- Have more Elders speaking from their experience about various topics
- More Elder and Veteran panels

4. *What would you keep the same about the Gathering?*

- Elders' input and support
- Agenda, good variety of workshops
- Staff and committee
- Length and set up
- Everything – was a great experience
- The plenary sessions
- Cultural events
- Children attending
- Flexibility of the schedule
- Involvement of Elders and learners
- The food, the people – the focus, respect and leadership

5. *What are some learnings you will take back to your organization?*

- That along with learning for the mind, we must include the spirit, heart and body.
- There are various strategies and agencies out there that are looking to build up literacy.
- Never quit, reach your goals.
- Some of the stats on our people.
- A totally new aspect towards life in general.
- Deeper insight to the effect that literacy has on people and the vision for 2007.
- Tools for community building. Cultural diversity.
- New strategies for achieving literacy.
- The structure of the workshop. The importance of having all people participate in a strategic planning session.
- The importance of community within the cultures. The fact that there are so many people passionately fighting for Aboriginal people and their future.
- I'm not from Saskatchewan. I find your educational systems are highly advanced – integrating schools and communities, libraries, literacy and schools.
- That literacy is not only about reading, writing. It's everything – songs, acting, etc.
- The importance of honouring the Aboriginal culture in literacy programming.
- Some important issues about First Nations literacy.
- The information about literacy programs and the words of the Elders.
- There are too many to mention them all in this small space. But I plan to relay everything that I've learned to my fellow students at home and to my own children.

6. *What advice would you give to the Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Steering Committee if they organized another Gathering?*

General Comments:

- I thought everyone did a great job. The only thing I might change is the location so people can relax a bit more. Other than that I enjoyed myself and look forward to the next Aboriginal literacy gathering.
- Keep having more of these workshops or gatherings.
- Great to do this yearly!

Location and Facility:

- Have the rooms pre-assigned
- Great place – historic tour would have been great
- Location – check for others
- Not sure about the history of the facility – bad feelings/memories for some
- I received no information prior to the conference. I didn't even know how to get there. The facility was good but it would have been nice to know about dwellings would be like. I would have liked to have been told to bring a housecoat.

When to hold another Gathering:

- Spring is probably the best
- Later in the spring (June)
- Summertime
- In two years
- Annually
- Maybe during spring break so more people might be able to attend
- As soon as possible

Focus of second Gathering:

- What has happened since this Gathering; what works and what doesn't
- Reflect on ... to expand base
- Pick up where we left off
- What has been done so far with the plan and where do we go now
- Follow-up from strategic plan; plan for the next five years
- A review of progress and a continuation of the first Gathering
- Elders' knowledge and what they see has importance
- Curriculum
- Keep everything else the same. It went so well. A success.
- The outcome of this gathering.

Promotion and Publicity:

- Advertise about families
- More advertising to school systems
- More media coverage
- Put on radio (First Nations radio stations, i.e. Flying Dust, Onion Lake, MBC, etc)
- Newspapers, schools
- More in advance for other people to participate

Registration Process:

- Keep things simple
- Need better organizing
- Online payment/registration
- Be ready the first night for registration
- Need separate room (entrance of the Echo Valley Conference Centre was too crowded)

Trade Show:

- Good
- Perhaps expand/all in one location
- Good – continue. The only thing it was too small, i.e. where was FSIN booth?
- Native art for sale, more Metis art available

Workshop Topics and Presenters:

- ESL, funding sources for literacy, newsletters
- To focus on larger topic and give time for events that don't limit speakers
- Electronic copy or hard copy of workshops you did not attend
- These ones were good but couldn't see enough of them
- Storytellers
- Continue doing a good job with selection of resources
- Have people sign up. Was looking forward to Maria Campbell.
- Curriculum content, methodology, evaluation
- Language – history of, retention. Have Danny Musqua present a workshop on Saulteaux language history

Cultural Activities:

- Excellent
- Very good! Where were the jiggers?
- Have more information available about cultural activities and spiritual practices for people who may not know much about them.
- The ones you had were great!!!
- Drumming and dancing

Who to Involve:

- Elders' forum, need more of them
- Government
- More youth and Elders
- Everyone
- I did not get a very good overall picture of what was currently happening in literacy in Saskatchewan
- More non-Aboriginal/Aboriginal organizations that work with Aboriginal people will make more people aware of literacy and the problems
- Continue with various representation on Aboriginal literacy steering committee
- To invite some non-Aboriginal groups to "observe" or to partner in initiatives
- Anyone interested

Childcare and Other Support Services:

- Very good
- Have childcare pre-organized
- Was good – need more child decor
- Great to have kids and dogs there

Opportunities to Network with Others:

- Provide more coffee time to allow more networking time
- I had a satisfying, exercising experience here. Thank you!
- Great to make everyone feel welcome
- Need time at meals to network, instead of having some programmed events
- Great opportunity for me to network with such a diverse group
- Congratulations on a job well done
- Good, but announcing or conveying information somehow would be nice
- There were some things I did not know about
- Networking/sharing night in informal manner
- Would have liked to know who was currently running programs in Saskatchewan, put faces and names to organizations
- Should have had each literacy organization do a two minute speech on where they are located and what their program entails
- Excellent networking
- Opportunity to tell my own history – stories and advice from our Elders
- Could have focus groups on different topics

Additional Comments:

“Meegwetch. I hope to attend the next gathering within the next year (at least) and to learn about progress in our province’s Literacy programs for the Metis and First Nations people.”

Respectfully yours,
A learner

“Thank you for this wonderful opportunity and honour!”

Sincerely,
A learner

Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Steering Committee

Irene Jacques, Elder, Standing Buffalo First Nation

Senator Hector Badger, Elder, Cote First Nation

Don Pinay, Director of Education, Yorkton Tribal Council

Lisa Wilson, Program Coordinator, Dumont Technical Institute

Debbie Purton, Executive Director, Saskatchewan Literacy Network

Maynard Quewezance, Manager, Basic Education Programs, Saskatchewan Learning

Leanne McLeod, Family Literacy Practitioner, Pine Grove Correctional Institute

Jackie Belhumeur, Adult Literacy Practitioner, Circle Project, Inc.

Nicole Williams, Student, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College

Maxine Jacques, Student, Circle Project, Inc

Gathering Volunteers

Joanne Langan

David Miller

Leona Harasym

Joanne Dean

Conrad Grey, Learner, Circle Project Inc., Regina

Clare Robinson, Learner, Circle Project Inc., Regina

Jerome Ironchild

Chelsea McMillan

Donna Woloshyn, Saskatchewan Learning

Tavia Inkster, Dumont Technical Institute

Claudette Moran, Dumont Technical Institute

Yvonne Bull

Joseph Naytowhow

Maxine Jacques

Lynne Mourot, Saskatchewan Literacy Network

Lorna Wesaquate, Early Learning Centre, Regina

Nicole Amiotte, Dumont Technical Institute

File Hills/Fort Qu'Appelle Day Care Staff and Students

Facilitation Team – Provincial Aboriginal Literacy Gathering

Lead Facilitator: Sharon Miller, Turning Point Consultants

Facilitators: Celine Pewapsconais, Little Pine First Nation
Audrey Soqwapnace, Little Pine First Nation
Tanya Stone, Federation of Saskatchewan Indians
Karen Baptiste, INAC, Prince Albert Office
Arlene Goulet, INAC, Regina Office
Verna Courchene, Yellowquill First Nation
Elizabeth Verrall, Sask Culture Inc.

Documenters: Gavin Baptiste, Little Pine First Nation
Ken Gamble, Early Resolution Inc.
Terri Peters, Saskatchewan Literacy Network
Kim Blevins, Saskatchewan Literacy Network
Faye Moen, Sask Learning
Maynard Quewezance, Sask Learning
Maxine Jacques, Circle Project, Inc.

Trainers/Consultants: Jo Nelson, ICA Canada
Erwin Allerdings, PFRA Canada

Gathering Sponsors

Platinum Level:

- National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Canada

Gold Level:

- Saskatchewan Department of Learning

Silver Level:

- Saskatchewan Department of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs
- Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority
- FHQ Adult Learning Centre

Bronze Level:

- Worker's Compensation Board
- Cooperator's Insurance
- Cote First Nation
- Sask Power
- Sask Energy
- Sask Tel
- A. Pinel and Associates

Friends of the Gathering:

(Businesses and individuals who make in-kind contributions of goods or services)

Items for the Silent Auction, Raffle, Door Prizes, and special gifts:

- Direct West, Regina
- McNally Robinson Books, Saskatoon
- Chad Morin, Saskatoon
- John and Claire Miller, Saskatoon
- Irene Jacques, Standing Buffalo First Nation
- Off Broadway Restaurant, Fort Qu'Appelle
- Clarica, Saskatoon
- Broadway Florists, Fort Qu'Appelle
- Glauser's Drapery Gallery, Yorkton
- Gran's Crafters Cove, Yorkton
- The Frameworks Ltd, Yorkton
- Gabriel Dumont Institute
- Yorkton Tribal Council
- FHQ Adult Learning Centre

Items to decorate the Conference Center, and for the Childcare:

- Tastebuds on Lorne, Saskatoon
- Turning Point Consultants, Saskatoon
- Fabricland, Yorkton
- Unique Textiles, Saskatoon
- Dumont Technical Institute
- Azon Canada Ltd, Regina
- Native Reflections, Winnipeg
- Learning Works, Saskatoon
- IGA Garden Center, Saskatoon
- Health Canada, First Nations and Inuit Branch, Regina

Items for the Cultural Activities

- Federated Cooperatives Ltd, Saskatoon
- Walmart, Saskatoon

Items for the Participant Bags:

- The Fort Times, Fort Qu'Appelle
- Town of Fort Qu'Appelle

Staff Time for Facilitation, Volunteer duties:

- Saskatchewan Literacy Network
- Saskatchewan Department of Learning
- Yellowquill First Nations
- Mosquito First Nations
- Sask Culture, Regina
- Little Pine First Nations
- Indian and Northern Affairs, Regina and Prince Albert
- Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations

Trade Show Exhibitors

- Saskatchewan Literacy Network
- Gabriel Dumont Institute
- Northern Literacy Network, Northlands College
- Saskatchewan Regional Colleges
- Wanuskewin Heritage Park
- ICA Associates - Facilitating a Culture of Participation
- NAS Software, Inc.