



# Aboriginal Literacy

“Tell me

and I'll forget.

Show me

and I may not remember.

Involve me

and I'll understand.”

-Native American Proverb

Aboriginal (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) Literacy is a learner-centered approach to life-long learning. Aboriginal Literacy focuses on growth, personal empowerment, community development, and self-determination. It honours the inter-connectedness of all aspects of creation.

Aboriginal Literacy takes a holistic development approach – literacy includes first languages, elder involvement, culture, and community to unify mind, heart, body, and spirit.  
(SALN definition)

The Aboriginal population in Saskatchewan is strong and growing. It is estimated that the Aboriginal population will increase threefold over the next fifty years, and become about 1/3 of Saskatchewan's population. A large percentage of the Saskatchewan Aboriginal population is presently under the age of 25.

Aboriginal organizations and communities across the country are working harder than ever to address Aboriginal literacy issues. Aboriginal literacy includes a variety of programs such as, adult education and upgrading, employment training, and family literacy (i.e., supporting children and youth in school while involving parents).

Awareness, discussion and involvement in Aboriginal literacy is growing. People have become more aware that literacy is a life-long process. And, that engaging Aboriginal people in literacy as a positive and beneficial pursuit is key to overcoming barriers of shame, abuse, and negativity that Aboriginal people have experienced.



## What Can Be Done?

### Use a Learner-Centred Approach

- ❑ Focus on the learner, (adults, elders, youth and children), by developing skills that are important to them.
- ❑ Support and allow the learner to set their own learning goals.



### Use a Community-Based Approach

- ❑ Aboriginal people should be able to identify their own educational needs and develop solutions within their own communities. This may include drawing strength from their own traditions and people.
- ❑ Programs should include Elders, cultural advisors and other community leaders to provide traditional and historic teachings, perspectives, and understandings

## Incorporate a Holistic Approach

- ❑ The learner is respected as a whole person who is part of a family, a community, and a Nation.
- ❑ Be aware of other supports the learner might need to access, for example, life skills, counselling, housing, and other social services.

## Include a Culturally-Based Approach

- ❑ Put literacy into culture, and yet don't force culture into literacy.
- ❑ Training should also incorporate skill development in the learner's own languages and traditions.
- ❑ It is also important to consider the need for respectful and equal interaction between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal people.
- ❑ Literacy programs and teaching methods should reflect the diversity of Aboriginal Nations in Saskatchewan. Incorporating language and culture will help Aboriginal communities sustain and maintain a positive self identity and further involvement in society.



## Did you know?

There are 9 Aboriginal language groups in Saskatchewan. They are:

- Plains Cree / Paskwawiyiniw
- Swampy Cree / Maskekowiniw
- Woodland Cree / Sakawithiniw
- Nakota / Assinaboin
- Lakota
- Dakota
- Nakawē / Saulteaux / Anishinaabe
- Chipewyan / Dene
- Métis / Michif

## Advocate and Build Community Capacity

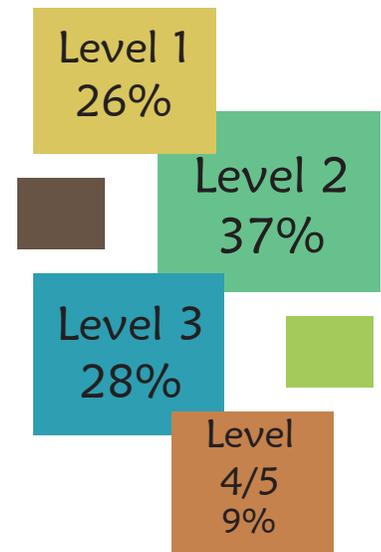
- ❑ Encourage and build media awareness of Aboriginal literacy success stories and events.
- ❑ Continue asking questions and have discussions at meetings, workshops and events about how to better address Aboriginal literacy.
- ❑ Invite speakers to talk to your organization, group, or staff about Aboriginal literacy.
- ❑ Work with Aboriginal literacy organizations, or organizations that incorporate Aboriginal literacy programs and services, to develop your own policies, programs, and services



“Don't be afraid  
to speak up and ask for what  
you rightly deserve.  
Be Courageous.  
Walk Strong.  
Walk Tall.  
Walk Proud.”  
-Senator Lillian Dyck

## IALSS Statistics for Urban Aboriginal Adults from Saskatchewan

- Aboriginal people who achieved high school or higher education had better average scores than the Canadian average score. Their scores were closer to the urban non-Aboriginal scores.
- 63% of urban Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan scored below Level 3 compared to 39% of the non-Aboriginal population.
- Of the Aboriginal peoples included in the IALSS data, 70% of First Nations and 56% of Metis people are at Level 1 & 2. (or... below Level 3).



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