Addressing Poverty in the NWT – An Appreciative Inquiry of Program Successes.

Alternatives North

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Introduction

Poverty is a complex subject. It is about inequality and exclusion related to the lack of adequate resources to meet daily needs, live with dignity, and participate in the social, economic, and political life of the community and society as a whole.

In 2010, Alternatives North and YWCA Yellowknife hosted a territory-wide workshop to discuss poverty in the NWT and find ways to move forward on anti-poverty initiatives. The *No Place for Poverty* workshop report listed four priorities – inclusive processes, housing, flexible debt elimination programs, and accessible, affordable childcare – and five recommendations for next steps for moving forward on anti-poverty initiatives. Workshop participants recommended:

1. A coalition to create an integrated, fully-resourced strategy for eliminating poverty;
2. An arm's length process to work toward an anti-poverty strategy;
3. Legislation to establish an independent commission to address poverty;
4. Political will and growing the movement against poverty; and
5. 'Whistle-blower' legislation.

Since the *No Place for Poverty* workshop in October 2010, the Government of the NWT conducted community consultations on poverty. The consultation report, *What We Heard from Northerners About Poverty*, was completed in August 2011 and tabled in the NWT Legislative Assembly in February 2012. Northerners told the government that wellness, education, housing, job creation, economic development, and transitional programs, are priorities. They also said that better communication and coordination of programs and more collaboration among agencies are needed.

In February 2012, Government of the NWT Premier Bob McLeod committed to developing an NWT anti-poverty strategy to bring to the NWT Legislative Assembly before the end of 2012. The anti-poverty strategy would be developed through collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), indigenous governments, business, and others with an interest in poverty. In its work toward an anti-poverty strategy, the GNWT has established several committees, and committed to research projects and a round table discussion.

Alternatives North continues to be involved in working toward an NWT anti-poverty strategy. To contribute to the process, Alternatives North committed to a high level appreciative inquiry of programs and practices in the NWT that work to address

inequalities and eliminate poverty. Alternatives North selected programs and practices that:

1) successfully and positively respond to the complex factors contributing to poverty, and
2) illuminate a broad range of efforts in different regions that respond to factors that contribute to poverty.

As the scope of the inquiry was limited to secondary research, only programs and practices were selected where readily accessible documentation was available.

Ten of the twelve programs profiled continue to operate. Profiles of these programs were validated by the sponsoring organization.

It is noteworthy that in a scan of programs and practices that successfully respond to the complex issues that contribute to poverty, documentation was most readily available on social and community development initiatives. Documentation was lacking for programs in the NWT that have successfully responded to food security and economic sustainability issues. In contrast, food security and economic sustainability have been main a focus of poverty-related research and endeavours in Nunavut.[1]

Ways Northerners Address Poverty

Many factors contribute to, and keep people in poverty. The following sampling of programs highlights some successful approaches and practices in the NWT for addressing poverty.

1. Creating Awareness of Social Issues

People living in poverty often lack information and access to services. Lack of information and access to services can heighten vulnerability, contribute to marginalization, and deepen feelings of shame, guilt, or anger. It can also contribute to a sense of hopelessness of becoming an active player in one's own life or in community life.

[1] http://www.naho.ca/documents/it/2012_Inuit_Food_Security_Profiles.pdf

The Community Research Action Project (CART) began as an initiative of the Tłı̨chǫ Community Services Agency (TCSA) to collect and disseminate information to improve access to helping services. CART works to overcome barriers to strong and inclusive communities through 'research to action'.[2] CART's research and information dissemination contributes to better informed and healthier Tłı̨chǫ citizens and more meaningful and relevant TCSA programming.

CART conducts community-based research and planning, develops strategies and materials to communicate information to Tłı̨chǫ communities, and transfers its skills/knowledge to others in the Tłı̨chǫ region. CART also helps community groups integrate culture and research into programs/services in ways that respond to the cultural context of Tłı̨chǫ communities and build on local strengths and assets. CART works on such issues as identity, well-being, intergenerational relationships, sexual health, addictions, diabetes, FASD, diet, and fitness.

The four-member CART is made up of younger Tłı̨chǫ citizens who bring Tłı̨chǫ and English language, cultural, and technology skills to community-based action research. The team's work is guided by the Healing Wind Grassroots Advisory Committee, a group of Tłı̨chǫ service providers who ensure relevant, ethical, and culturally appropriate CART activities. The team benefits from mentorship and training through CIETcanada (Community Information and Epidemiological Technologies).[3] CIET assistance enables CART members to develop research and communication skills and to find solutions through research-based programming and policy.

A significant CART project was the *Resilience, HIV/STI prevention and community action in the* Tłı̨chǫ *communities of Northwest Territories*.[4] The project began with a survey in the four Tłı̨chǫ communities in 2006. The survey was designed to measure knowledge levels of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV, risk behaviours, cultural strengths and resilience factors, and the status of prevention initiatives and educational

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[2] http://www.tlicho.ca/node/235
http://tlichocart.com/

[3] http://www.ciet.org/en/search-results/?cx=014305467783229977317%3Amosg4zdqt5o&cof=FORID%3A10&ie=UTF-8&q=Tlicho+Region&sa=&siteurl=www.ciet.org%2Fen%2Ftheme%2Fsocial-audits%2F&ref=www.ciet.org%2Fen%2Fmethod%2Fcommunity-intervention-trials%2F
CIETcanada is incorporated under section 133 of the Canada Corporations Act as Community Information and Epidemiological Technologies Canada.

[4] http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/43766.html

materials. CART communicated the 2006 survey results, conducted further research regarding TCSA programming, and undertook a follow-up survey in 2010.[5]

Using research results, CART also worked on the following projects:[6]

- **Heat (Health Education Action Tips)**[7]
  A kit was developed that consisted of sexual health education materials (information booklet, condoms, a pair of sunglasses) to promote awareness of the high rates of sexually transmitted infections. The kit was part of a mobile education program to increase awareness of community health issues related to sexual health.
- **Condom Distribution Program**
  Condom baskets were put in all public restrooms in the Tłı̨chǫ region to provide accessible and free condoms to decrease the fear or embarrassment of accessing condoms at the local health centres. This was an initiative driven by youth. It was identified in focus group discussions about supporting a healthier lifestyle and dealing with the fear of HIV/AIDs entering into the communities.
- **Lateral violence (gossiping/bullying)**
  A powerful video, *Gossip Hurts,* was produced to acknowledge the impacts of gossip and bullying and how positive change and response can make a difference.

CART Members George Bailey, Leona Lafferty, Anita Daniels and Mason Mantla
(http://vimeo.com/tlichocart/videos/rss)

A main target of CART is younger Tłı̨chǫ citizens. CART has found that youth respond well to information sharing techniques that use oral and visual media.[8] As such, CART uses local radio, locally produced DVDs, Facebook, and YouTube. CART has produced

[5] http://www.pimatisiwin.com/uploads/763746566.pdf
[6] http://www.ciet.org/_documents/200811974337.pdf
[7] http://ngprc.circumpolarhealth.org/files/presentation-cart.pdf
[8] http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/43766.html

nine videos to create awareness and stimulate action on important social issues.[9] Most recently, the team documented the story of holocaust survivor Ben Lesser.[10]

CART education and awareness materials are used by local and territorial service providers and other stakeholders to address specific needs in local communities. While TCSA programs/services are the direct beneficiaries of CART's work, Tłı̨chǫ families and communities are the ultimate winners.

CART was recently transferred from the TCSA to the Tłı̨chǫ Government. It continues to be supported by Tłı̨chǫ Government social program funding and project-specific funds. Project-specific funding is garnered from a variety of granting programs through other orders of government, for example the Public Health Agency, or through NGOs working on similar activities, for instance the Canadian Aboriginal Aids Network.

The work of the CART team is applauded in Tłı̨chǫ communities and elsewhere. In 2008, the CART, TCSA, and CIET partnership was recognized with a Northwest Territories Premier's Award for Collaboration.

CART and its sponsoring agency, the Tłı̨chǫ Government, monitor and evaluate their work using statistical data and community opinion/attitudinal research. CART holds focus groups, does surveys, journaling, and observes changes in regional communities.[11] Through follow-up surveys and focus groups, CART is able to "measure changes in knowledge, attitudes, intention to change, sense of agency to implement change, and ability to talk about issues as precursors to behavioural change."[12] One clear result of CART's work on sexual health is a steady decline in sexually transmitted infections within the Tłı̨chǫ region.

CART's direct impact on poverty is not documented but it is clear that meaningful 'research to action' initiatives diminish exclusion, engage individuals and families, and promote well being and healthier behaviours.

Lesson for Addressing Poverty: Local research and information dissemination contribute to better informed and healthier citizens, and more meaningful and relevant programs/services.

[9] http://vimeo.com/tlichocart/videos/rss
[10] http://tlichocart.com
[11] http://ngprc.circumpolarhealth.org/files/presentation-cart.pdf
[12] http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/43766.html

2. Finding Identity, Self-Esteem and Place

The Ulukhaktok Literacies Research Project began in 2002 as an exploration of what literacy meant traditionally to the people of Ulukhaktok and what it means today. Through an amalgam of academic and traditional knowledge study, the Project has explored knowledge domains that contain important forms of traditional Inuinnait literacy. It has also examined the role of traditional literacies in identity, self-esteem, and sense of place in traditional and modern worlds.

The Ulukhaktok Literacies Research Project is a collaboration among the NWT Literacy Council, the community of Ulukhaktok, the Inuvialuit Cultural Resource Centre, and Dr. Cynthia Chambers of the University of Lethbridge.[13] The Project receives broad based support from a variety of organizations including its collaborating partners as well as the Government of the NWT, Aurora Research Institute, the former National Literacy Secretariat, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). Funding has mainly been through SSHRC although the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) funded the Project's early years.

The Ulukhaktok Project is a decolonizing project for its collaborative and co-operative approach to generating and circulating knowledge, and culture-based protocols for inquiry and reporting. The Project engages elders in meaningful ways that break down the barriers that exclude traditional knowledge holders. It celebrates traditional literacies in ways that recognize their complexity and their role in creating identity, self-esteem, and a sense of place.

The Ulukhaktok Literacies Project challenges the dominant and arguably narrow view of literacy as the ability to decode/read and create/write print and numbers. The Project has identified "two interdependent components in Ulukhaktok literacies: (1) the **content** (the knowledge domains in which the literacies are embedded as well as the media – or 'texts' – that exist (stars) or are created (clothing) and hold the knowledge), and (2) the literacy **processes** (the ways in which people codify, interpret, negotiate, learn and communicate meaning). Through the research it has become clear that the **content** of what is being interpreted or created or understood cannot be separated from the **processe**s by which these are happening. So to be literate in Ulukhaktok is to understand the content **and** to be able to engage in the processes necessary for decoding (i.e. interpreting or understanding) the meaning… the *knowledge domains* where these processes manifest themselves include Places (and travelling), Names (and naming), Clothing (and sewing), Tools (and hunting and fishing), Stories (and storytelling),

[13] http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/research_by_nwt.htm

Drumming & Songs (dancing & singing), Amulets & Dreams (and curing/healing) and Astronomy. Some media—or texts—are stories, place names, clouds, songs, dreams, clothing, and landforms."[14] The Project has determined that literacy processes are highly complex. Processes are storied, symbolic, relational, context dependent, recursive, mnemonic, experiential, multi-modal, and holistic. But in the words of one Ulukhaktok researcher: "What we value most as Kangiryuarmiut are the oral teachings of our ancestors because they tell us where we come from and who we are."[15]

Over the last decade the Ulukhaktok Literacies Research Project has produced reports, books, presentation materials, museum exhibits, videos, and photos, all of which are posted on the NWT Literacy Council website,[16] and available in the community of Ulukhaktok and through the Inuvialuit Cultural Resource Centre. An example is *Pihuaqtiuyugut: We are the long distance walkers,* a book and a museum exhibit. The Project has produced materials that are used locally in the early childhood program, school, and community. It has generated and shared knowledge that has been disseminated through the local and international communities. In the latter case, a Project team visit the British Museum in London in 2012 to gather and share information about artefacts, and in 2006, Project representatives made a presentation on Ulukhaktok literacies to the International Inuit Studies Conference in Paris.

A video and pictures of artefacts were produced as a result of the visit to the British Museum. At the British Museum, the Ulukhaktok visitors were able to hold objects produced 200 years ago and record information about the objects to share "with community members and Elders and label clothing and parts of clothing, types of material used, in the old Inuinnaqtun language."[17]

Helen Balanoff, NWT Literacy Council, researcher Emily Kudlak, and Dr. Cynthia Chambers hold a ceremonial dance hat that dates from 1855. (http://www.thisismyu.ca/stories/researcher-profile/2012/05/chambers-leads-journey-examine-ancient-inuit-items)

The Ulukhaktok Literacies Research Project has faced challenges. They include uncertain compatibility between the complexities of traditional literacies and a more simplified

[14] http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/resources/research/way/way.pdf p.8
[15] ibid p.12
[16] http://www.nwt.literacy.ca
[17] http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/story/2012/04/21/north-ulukhaktok-artifacts-museum.html

understanding of English language literacy; difficulty finding funding for community-based research; the high costs of travel to/from Ulukhaktok; and ensuring community benefits. The Ulukhaktok Literacies Research Project has done very little monitoring or evaluation although this need is recognized.

Anecdotal information illustrates the strength that understanding traditional literacies give to finding identity, self-esteem, and a sense of place in the modern world. The Project is a social inclusion endeavour in that it brings forth and gives meaning and relevance to a rich Inuinnaqtun language and culture in the modern world. Academic theory suggests that engagement in a diverse array of literacies and in literacies where learners can see and imagine themselves, strengthens the potential for positive life outcomes.[18]

Traditional literacies also provide some insights on important social issues such as poverty. "The life stories of the Elders of Ulukhaktok remind us that human weakness and folly can precipitate hardship at any time. At the heart of the Elders' wisdom is the knowledge that while smart individuals accomplish much, survival is a collective endeavour that requires collective wisdom. As animals share their corporeal and spiritual being with humans, humans are called to share what they receive from the animals with their relations and neighbours… Important as it is to be generous with food, materials and teachings, it is equally important to accept gracefully the generosity of others. Children are taught to not refuse food or drink when it is offered."[19]

Lesson for Addressing Poverty: Linking the past and present strengthens identity, self-esteem, and sense of place and is a way to encourage inclusion.

3. Supporting Youth Successes

Weak school-based literacy, lack of school success, and failure to graduate from secondary school are factors that can contribute to poverty. Individuals who do not have positive school experiences or success face a lifetime of challenges. Alternative or storefront schools are a way to break down the barriers that some older youth encounter in mainstream programs.

Storefront schools are designed to "provide students with the opportunity to attain academic success outside of a regular school setting... helping students from all ages

[18] http://iteachilearn.org/cummins/biliteratempowerment.html
http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/resources/aborig/mulit/Mulit.pdf
[19] http://www.synergiescanada.org/journals/bcn/tci/312/2040 p.22

achieve their educational goals in a manner that fits their lifestyle."[20] These schools offer flexible hours, trained staff, independent learning opportunities, and a range of courses. Some offer childcare and personal support services.

The Phoenix School in Fort Smith is likely the most well-known and successful storefront school in the NWT. It was established in 2007 as a result of community and interagency concern about the number of students 'falling through the cracks' and not achieving success in high school. The Phoenix School was established through a partnership of P.W. Kaeser High School, the Fort Smith District Education Authority, and the Town of Fort Smith. The Town provides space at no cost, and the P.W. Kaeser High School provides staff and resources.

Catherine Benwell getting help from teacher Heather Villeneuve at Phoenix. **Photo by SHAWN BELL**

The Phoenix School's primary purpose is "to assist students who have interrupted their schooling to ease back into (and) graduate from high school."[21] The School follows a progress rather than an attendance based model (e.g. there are no minimum attendance requirements). It targets students 16-21 years of age who are either in or out of school. Students are expected to enrol in a minimum of 15 credits worth of coursework to be completed over the school year.[22] The School enrols students who accept responsibility for their own learning. An individually-paced program enables students to learn with a reasonable degree of autonomy. It uses materials from the Alberta Distance Learning Centre. The Phoenix School is part of the P.W. Kaeser High School and resourced through the regular school

[20] *A Review of the Phoenix School and other South Slave Alternative Programs*. M S Naidoo Consulting Services Ltd. for GNWT Education Culture and Employment. March 2010. pp. 4-5

[21] *A Review of the Phoenix School and other South Slave Alternative Programs*. March 2010. p.31

[22] *A Review of Alternative High School Programs in the NWT*. DK Consulting for GNWT Education Culture and Employment. March 2010.

funding formula. It serves about 50 students with two staff and has a waiting list of 10-15 students.[23]

The 2010 Naidoo study found that: "over 40 percent, 95 percent of whom were Aboriginal, enrolled in the first year and 5 graduated. By the end of the second year, 18 students had completed high school graduation requirements and in 2008-2009, an enrolment of 47 resulted in 21 graduates" (p. 8). A further 12 students graduated in 2010. The number of graduates in 2011 and 2012 is unavailable.

The success of the Phoenix School is evident in the number of graduates. Success rates are attributed in large part to collaborative and non-judgemental student-teacher relationships, and the School's ability to "strip away the barriers that make it difficult for youth to learn."[24] "The Phoenix School is well supported by local youth, parents, educators, the SSDEC (South Slave Divisional Education Council), community, and the town of Fort Smith. Students have formed bonds and built a sense of community. Teachers model good behaviour, have high expectations of students, and correct inappropriate behaviours. There is no bullying. Teachers expect respect and show respect. The School offers a very welcoming, accepting environment and is consistent in its efforts to meet students' educational needs. Students who are successful attend fairly regularly and take ownership of their education."[25]

The 2010 Naidoo study suggested that a different funding model (other than funding based on attendance) is needed for storefront schools. The 2010 DK Consulting study found that the Phoenix School requires more space to accommodate the growing number of students attracted to this model of secondary school programming. At the time of writing, the future of the Phoenix School is unknown.[26]

Lesson for Addressing Poverty: One-size does not fit all. Alternative programs that are individually focused are a way to break down barriers encountered in mainstream programs.

[23] *A Review of Alternative High School Programs in the NWT*.
[24] *Youth Literacy Gap Analysis*. Lois Little, Aggie Brockman, Amanda Mallon, Denise Kurszewski, Dora Grandjambe, Helen Balanoff, and Sandy Auchterlonie. June 2010. p.128
[25] ibid p.131
[26] http://www.ssdec.nt.ca/pwk/Newspaper/MAR%202010.pdf

4. Leadership for Literacy

Literacy is defined by the GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment as "the lifelong development of a broad range of skills in one or more of the NWT official languages for the purpose of expanding an individual's potential for optimal health, personal success and positive participation in community wellness and development."[27] Helping youth achieve their fullest potential and become capable and contributing citizens has been the goal of the South Slave Divisional Education Council (SSDEC) since its creation. Guided by the motto 'Creating Futures', SSDEC made student achievement, with a focus on literacy, a priority through its signature initiative, Leadership for Literacy. This initiative changed the culture of teaching and learning within SSDEC schools and has had a profound effect on student achievement.

The Leadership for Literacy initiative is founded on the premise that student achievement is maximized by focusing on just a few key priorities (i.e. literacy, numeracy, and social responsibility), carefully chosen research-based strategies, and approaching the process with a commitment to results. As such, reading has been the primary goal of the SSDEC in recognition that student achievement in reading is a required building-block for success in school and in later life. Hallmarks of the Leadership for Literacy initiative are quality instruction, using research-based strategies, coupled with ongoing formative and summative assessment of students.

Through the Leadership for Literacy initiative, the SSDEC employs literacy coaches in each of the eight schools in the district. Coaches are master teachers who facilitate ongoing, job-embedded professional development for other teachers. They use a research-based 'teach, model, and practice' approach. They teach and model proven instructional strategies and provide feedback to teachers as they implement those strategies in their classroom.[28] In many SSDEC schools, "literacy is on the agenda at every professional development and in-service session. Within the district, it is the practice in most, if not all schools, for educators to participate in weekly training on literacy-related topics."[29] For example, staff receive training on *Reading Essentials*, the teaching of numeracy through children's literature, and with the *Middle Year Literacy Intervention*. Coaches also help coordinate student assessment, interventions, and other supports for both staff and students. Encouraged by the positive results, some schools,

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[27] *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework-2008-2018*. GNWT Education Culture and Employment. 2008. pp.5-6

[28] http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/NEW_Items/Documents/2011_ASA/Summary_Report_South_Slave.pdf

[29] Youth Literacy Gap Analysis. June 2010. p.91

such as P.W. Kaeser High School in Fort Smith, have both a numeracy coach and a literacy coach.[30]

Each SSDEC school is striving to become effective 'Professional Learning Communities' (PLCs) with teacher learning teams meeting to discuss student achievement issues, setting short and long-term goals, and implementing strategies to improve instruction and achievement. Student assessment data are collected, school-based teams analyze this information, and adjustments to instruction and programming are made accordingly in order to focus on improving student learning.

These same student achievement data are used to identify struggling readers early and to provide the supports and interventions required to help them enhance their reading development. Interventions may include targeted instruction in small groups or in one-on-one settings and program modifications. More significant interventions are also available for students at risk of not achieving expectations. SSDEC educators maximize their use of these supports to ensure that each student can achieve their fullest potential and have the best chances for academic success.

The SSDEC assesses students regularly using a blend of both formative and summative assessments. Students participate in several formal system-wide standardized assessments each year. These standardized tests include the *GRADE*® test, a Canadian-normed reading achievement test for all students, the *Alberta Achievement Test*, designed to assess reading and math achievement in grades 3, 6 and 9, and *Alberta Diploma Exams* for students in grade 12. South Slave schools also use more formative assessments, such as *Whole School Writes* and the *SmartAssessment*® several times each year. The results from these assessments as well as classroom data are tracked in *Classroom Assessment Records* (CARs), and the resulting data collection provides a valuable summary of achievement, including strengths and stretches, for each and every child in SSDEC schools. Teams of teachers review these data regularly for anomalies in student performance with the goal of maintaining growth and maximizing the chances of success for all.

The components of an effective literacy plan, some of which are provided here, are outlined in the regional *Leadership for Literacy Framework and Guidelines*. These guidelines and targets are updated annually in consultation with SSDEC regional consultants, principals, coaches, and program support teachers. Each school has a literacy plan, a literacy team/committee, and funding to support their plan.[31] Each SSDEC school

[30] Youth Literacy Gap Analysis. p.97

[31] http://www.ssdec.nt.ca/council/priority/PDF_Priorities/-Literacy.pdf

literacy plan includes long and short-term achievement goals. These goals and targets are reviewed regularly by school-based literacy teams/committees.[32]

Several SSDEC schools are on the 'cutting-edge' in terms of promoting literacy through the use of technology. All schools offer wireless Internet capability and most schools have updated, state-of-the-art computer facilities and SmartBoards in all of their classrooms. Some even offer mobile computer and iPad labs through which students are able to explore the world of literacy using the latest interactive applications available through these mobile devices.

SSDEC schools recognize that parental support and engagement are critical to student success. Schools reach out to parents by promoting home reading programs, such as making available a rich selection of levelled reading materials in each classroom that students are encouraged to bring home to read with a family member. Parent workshops aimed at providing parents with strategies to support their child's reading development, and even Baby Bags and Kindergarten Bags for parents, each filled with age-appropriate books, games and resources to engage the child and promote literacy within the home, are also provided. The Baby Bags are distributed to new moms and have a chewable book along with literacy activities for parents to do with their babies to promote literacy from birth. Kindergarten Bags are also distributed to five-year olds in the spring. They contain books, crayons, paper, and other supplies to increase the likelihood that future students are ready for school. Both parent and student engagement is further enhanced by Rufus' (Rufus the Reading Rascal) Reading Club, with incentives such as certificates, book marks, pennants and t-shirts for elementary students who read 25, 50, 75 and even 100 books.

The SSDEC is also a strong advocate for Aboriginal language literacy and views this component of programming as a critical pillar in a well-rounded education. In the past seven years, the SSDEC has published almost 200 books in Cree, Chipewyan, and South Slavey for use in Aboriginal language school programs. These books include two dictionaries, numerous children's books authored by elders, teachers, and students from within the region, as well as graphic novels. The SSDEC also helped to produce an award winning music video (2010 Canadian Aboriginal Music Video Awards – *Strong* (Music Video) performed by FEENIX (Shawn Bernard).[33] Partnerships have been established with Aboriginal language groups in the process of creating some of these resources. These books and resources celebrate Aboriginal values and traditions and

[32] http://www.ssdec.nt.ca/council/priority/PDF_Priorities/-Literacy.pdf

[33]http://www.canab.com/mainpages/events/musicawards_files/2010/winners/2010winners.php#bestraporhiphopmusicvideo

project positive representations of Aboriginal culture. SSDEC students, the majority of whom are Aboriginal, see themselves and their communities in the literature they read, boding well for their academic futures.

Student achievement continues to climb in the South Slave region. Results of the 2010 Alberta Achievement Tests confirmed that initiatives, including literacy, contributed to the majority of students meeting or exceeding Alberta and national standards in language arts and math. These results were reconfirmed in 2011, showing that students in the South Slave region scored above the NWT average.[34] Results from the Canadian-normed Grade assessment are even more impressive. Using 2007 as the baseline data, where only 65% of students were reading at or above the Canadian average, now more than 76% of South Slave region students have reached that threshold. This is only one percent shy of the Canadian average of 77% and within striking distance of the SSDEC goal of 80% of students reading at or above the Canadian average. "The upward trend in language arts and math results reinforces our regional focus on improving literacy and numeracy… the initiatives we have put in place are paying off for our students. The data also confirms that students who don't attend regularly typically fall behind, become frustrated, and are often disruptive and/or they drop out."[35]

Hay River's Harry Camsell School students [36]

[34] srj.ca/south-slave-students-score-above-nwt-average-p7063-88.htm

[35] http://www.ssdec.nt.ca/newsroom/Press_releases/AAT%20News%20Release%200111.pdf

[36] http://www.ssdec.nt.ca/hc/newsletter/11-12/Camsell%20Courier%20Jan.,%202012.pdf

The SSDEC is quick to put a human face on these successes. The results point to the fact that hundreds of South Slave students – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike - have improved significantly in their reading achievement. These students are now more capable readers and better prepared to compete within an increasingly literate and global society. These same students are also learning the knowledge, skills, and values to be capable and contributing citizens within their home communities and cultures. This bodes well for their future and forever frees them from the chains of poverty resulting from illiteracy and poor academic success.

Lesson for Addressing Poverty: A focus on literacy in schools contributes to school and life successes.

5. Local Control of Early Childhood Development

Local control is well documented as instrumental in ensuring positive responses to social issues, particularly in indigenous communities. [37] Among the benefits of local control are:

- Community traditions/practices reflected in programming,
- Attention to issues and ways to address them, and
- Inclusion and acceptance.

The benefits of local control are reflected in the Sister Celeste Child Development Centre in Tulita. The Centre evolved from local efforts to serve young children and their families. In 1993, a case study of the Sister Celeste Child Development Centre (then known as the Fort Norman Child Development Centre) identified the positive outcomes of programs/services that are controlled locally.[38] In this case study, local control was characterized by a strong sense of community ownership, strong linkages with community government, involvement of local human resources, and staff consistency.

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[37] Chandler, M. J. & Lalonde, C. E. Cultural Continuity as a Protective Factor against Suicide in First Nations Youth. in *Horizons --A Special Issue on Aboriginal Youth, Hope or Heartbreak: Aboriginal Youth and Canada's Future.* 2008. *10*(1), 68-72.
Hylton, John H. Social Policy and Aboriginal Self-Government. in *Policy Options.* 1993. 14 (3), :24-27

[38] *Community Control of Health and Social Services in Northern and Aboriginal Communities: A Literature Review and Analysis of Canadian Experiences*. Lois M. Little, Lutra Associates Ltd. and Michael J. Prince, University of Victoria. May 1993.

Sister Celeste Goulet began the Fort Norman Child Development Centre in 1981. The Centre continues today as one of a handful of early childhood programs in the NWT with a long and successful history.[39] The Centre grew out of Sister Celeste's consultations with local parents about early childhood needs. Through a discussion of the pros and cons of childcare and pre-school, she found that "the parents opted for education that would increase their children's chances of success in school." [40]

In 1980, the local housing authority provided a house for the future preschool and funds were sought from the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNDAPP).[41] The pre-school soon outgrew its space and the Dene Band paid for the renovations and moved the preschool into another facility in 1984. Since the 1980s, the Centre has moved to more appropriate space. Community partnerships and support have facilitated re-locations.

Sister Celeste Goulet with friends
http://www.catholicregister.org/home/item/5871-for-generations-sr-celeste-is-connection-to-the-church

Over its first 10 years the Centre was funded by NNDAPP due to the pervasive influence of alcohol and drugs in the lives of young children in the community. With the transfer of NNDAPP funding to the GNWT, the Centre ceased to be eligible for this funding. In the last two decades, the Centre has faced many funding challenges as the likelihood of becoming self-supporting in a small community with high levels of unemployment, is unrealistic. For instance at the time the 1993 case study was prepared, the Centre was solely supported by the community. Overall however, the Centre relies on funding from the GNWT Education, Culture and Employment supplemented with local fundraising and project specific funds.

The Sister Celeste Child Development Centre provides a half day preschool program between 12:45 and 4:00 pm. The preschool has two classes, one for three year olds, and one for four and five year olds. The philosophy of preschool is captured by the statement: "The classroom should be a place of wonderment and delight where learning materials are strategically located to be within children's reach, and children are

[39] *Toward a Response to Early Childhood Intervention*. Lutra Associates Ltd. November 1996.
[40] http://wcr.ab.ca/WCRThisWeek/Stories/tabid/61/entryid/1380/Default.aspx
[41] *Community Control of Health and Social Services in Northern and Aboriginal Communities: A Literature Review and Analysis of Canadian Experiences*. 1993.

encouraged to explore and try them out."[42] The Centre's staff encourage children daily to talk about themselves and listen to others. Each child gets a chance to give his or her own opinion and is encouraged to make positive and encouraging comments about others."[43]

The Centre "embraces the community, and its traditions and history."[44] Staff outreach to families in their homes and assist in initiatives to promote local language and traditions (e.g. through the production of English and Slavey language cultural storybooks). Local residents including Elders are involved in the Centre as staff, language and cultural teachers, and volunteers. The Centre "encourages and supports parents who wish to help their children read by showing them how to make reading time fun and by holding literacy classes when necessary."[45] The Centre is family-oriented and children and parents learn together.[46]

The successes of the Sister Celeste Child Development Centre are recognized throughout the NWT although no evaluation or longitudinal research exists documenting these successes. It is widely known that the Centre has positively touched the lives of most children, youth, and young adults in the community. Sister Celeste "believes there's been a change in the culture of child rearing. Parents know what their children are doing at the Child Development Centre and they understand that growing up isn't something that just happens. As parents, they have a role to play. At the same time, she's not blind to the troubles Tulita children face. She deals with kids who have fetal alcohol syndrome. She sees more teenagers today who are drinking."[47]

Residents of Tulita recognize the value of the Centre and the amazing commitment and consistency of Sister Celeste. This was a reason that they renamed the Centre, the Sister Celeste Child Development Centre in 1995. In 2008, Sister Celeste was awarded the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Early Childhood Education.[48] These forms of recognition underscore the central role that Sister Celeste Goulet, with a degree in early childhood education, "a conviction that what happens to children matters,"[49] and a commitment that extends 30 years have made to locally controlled early childhood

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[42] http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/pmaece-ppmepe.nsf/eng/wy00205.html
[43]ibid
[44] ibid
[45] ibid
[46] Aboriginal Student Achievement Initiative Sahtu Region – Minister's and Community Education Forums, September 29-30, 2010
http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/PDF_File/Education%20Plans/Sahtu%20Summary%20Report.pdf
[47] http://wcr.ab.ca/WCRThisWeek/Stories/tabid/61/entryid/1380/Default.aspx
[48] http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/pmaece-ppmepe.nsf/eng/wy00205.html
[49] http://wcr.ab.ca/WCRThisWeek/Stories/tabid/61/entryid/1380/Default.aspx

development. The Sister Celeste Child Development Centre was developed from identified community needs, support, and a strong sense of ownership. These characteristics persist today. What also persists today is an understanding in the community that early childhood development is critical to life successes. The challenge for the Centre and the community is to ensure that skills are in place locally to continue to provide quality early childhood development experiences that engage, and are supported and owned by the community.

Lesson for Addressing Poverty: *Local control contributes to positive responses to social issues, particularly in indigenous communities.*

6. Positive Life Outcomes Begin in Early Childhood

Experiences in early childhood last a lifetime. They shape life successes and outcomes. For more than a decade the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) through its Community Development Department has supported positive early childhood experiences in all Inuvialuit communities.

"The Inuvialuit Child Care Program works with Child Development Centres across the ISR (Inuvialuit Settlement Region), providing administration, support, and training to ensure programs comply with the NWT's *Child Care Act* and the guidelines of funding bodies." [50] Funding is received from ASETS (Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy), Aboriginal Head Start, and the territorial Healthy Children's Initiative and Early Childhood programs. To encourage daily use of Inuvialuktun, the Inuvialuit Cultural Resource Centre also funds fluent-speaker positions in each centre." In 2010, five community programs were operating in the IRS – three childcare centres and two Aboriginal Head Start programs. There were a total of 113 spaces, 79 full-time and 34 part-time.[51] The Inuvialuit Child Care Program also actively supports the Children First Society in Inuvik. The Society is a registered non-profit organization of four groups which provide early learning and care services for young children and their families in Inuvik through:

- The Inuvik Child Development Centre, a well-established childcare centre,
- The Inuvik Preschool which has operated since the 1970s,
- The Aboriginal Head Start Program which began in 2003, and

[50] http://www.irc.inuvialuit.com/community/childcare.html

[51] *Considering Inuit Early Childhood Education-Draft*. Mary Caroline Rowan, Tagataga Inc. for the National Committee on Inuit Education. April 8,2010. http://www.itk.ca/sites/

- Tot Spot, a childcare facility operating since 2007.[52]

Inuvialuit dancers

There is no publicly available evaluation of the long term results of a sustained commitment to early childhood development in the ISR. Anecdotal information suggests that while the value of early childhood programs is well understood, too many of these programs face too many challenges.[53] Challenges include stable funding, appropriate infrastructure, trained staff, and consistent parental involvement. The Inuvialuit Child Care Program continues to confront these challenges. It provides funding and engages funding partners in addressing infrastructure, programming, and training needs.

The Inuvialuit Child Care Program has established a professional development fund to encourage and support staff to pursue early childhood development education and training. In 2010, centres in the ISR had six graduates of the Aurora College early childhood training distance program. The Inuvialuit Child Care Program also advocates for efforts to overcome the protracted (4 to 5 years) period that it takes to complete part-time distance early childhood education and a "system (that) hires educators on 10 month contracts, which leads to staff turnover."[54] The Program's advocacy along with that of other regions in the NWT led to an evaluation of early childhood development training and renewed hope of addressing longstanding barriers to quality early childhood programs.[55]

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[52] http://www.childrenfirstcentre.org/

[53]http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/PDF_File/Education%20Plans/Beaufort%20Delta%20Summary%20Report%20pgs%20removed.pdf

[54] *Considering Inuit Early Childhood Education-Draft*.

[55] *Early Childhood Development Training Evaluation*. Lutra Associates Ltd. for GNWT Education, Culture and Employment. October 2011.

The Inuvialuit Child Care Program also continues to pursue innovative ways to engage parents and families. Most often these innovations are based in Inuvialuit traditions.

The Inuvialuit Child Care Program is aware that poverty is a reality in all Inuvialuit communities and issues such as food security, adequate housing, and wellness impact young children and their opportunities for life success. [56] Early childhood development initiatives in the ISR take an inclusive approach, serving families of young children living with poverty and those who are not.

Lesson for Addressing Poverty: *A sustained priority and investment in early childhood programming that reflects local traditions can produce positive outcomes.*

7. Families Learning Together

The family is the first source of teachings and caring relationships. Relationship building, learning, and human development are embedded in everyday activities that bring children, parents, and other family members together. Everyday family activities foster identity, self-esteem, a sense of place, security, and well-being. They open pathways for literacy and life successes. Stories, play, song, preparing meals, and problem solving are examples of everyday activities that bring family members together.

Family literacy is about the many ways families learn together. The NWT Literacy Council (NWTLC) is a champion of family literacy. In the last decade, the NWTLC's Family Literacy Project has focused on building capacity within NWT communities to create and sustain family literacy programs. The Project targets practitioners such as early childhood workers, family support workers, educators, and librarians. It also seeks to engage social, wellness, and mental health workers and others who are involved in supporting northern families.

Four of the main activities of the Family Literacy Project are:

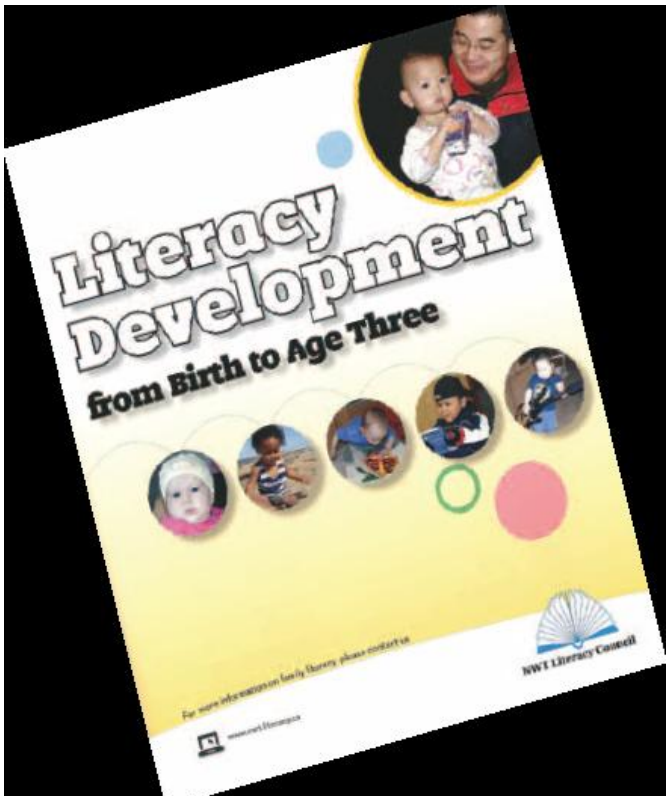
1) training,
2) the production and distribution of northern resources,
3) family literacy promotion, and
4) funding to community-based family literacy projects.

All activities are guided by the principles of accessibility, variety, and cultural relevance.

[56] http://www.aina.ucalgary.ca/scripts/minisa.dll/465/SU/Social~20conditions?KEYSEARCH

Family Literacy Project training focuses in three main areas: 1) information on family literacy research, learning models, and approaches; 2) early literacy and facilitation skills, and 3) community-based family literacy programming. Training is delivered in five-day family literacy institutes in Yellowknife or a regional centre and short duration community-based workshops and one-on-one mentoring sessions. Training is offered at beginner and advanced levels. Between 2001-2004, 189 people from all 32 NWT communities participated in seven regional training institutes. The same number participated in five institutes between 2004-2008. Also, between 2004-2008, 20-30 long-term experienced community-based family literacy practitioners were supported; 64 educators were trained in family literacy and family tutoring; and 15 communities hosted family literacy workshops or mentoring activities.[57]

Since 2008, engagement in family literacy training continues to be high. Family literacy training is described as highly accessible, relevant, stimulating, professional, and helpful for community-based practitioners. Training develops "skills, confidence and knowledge to use family literacy resources and to design and run successful community-based literacy projects."[58]



One of the many NWT Literacy Council family literacy resources.

The NWTLC has produced and distributed a wide range of family literacy resources. Resources are available in many formats and most are listed on the Council's website.[59] Resources include *Books in the Home*, a family reading program; *1-2-3 Rhyme with Me*, an oral language program; *Families First*, a parenting program; family learning and 'how to' kits; Aboriginal language resources; materials to support the use of the Nipissing District Development Screening Tool; and materials that promote understanding of brain development. NWTLC family literacy resources are highly

[57] Still on Track: Building Community Capacity for Family Literacy-Evaluation Report. Lutra Associates Ltd. 2008. pp. 35-36
[58] ibid p.40
[59] http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/famlit.htm

regarded and well-used among literacy practitioners throughout the NWT and elsewhere. They are described as of "high quality, easy to use, innovative, thoughtful, eye-catching, plain language, appropriate, and useful."[60] They help family literacy programs to grow and more appropriately respond to the needs of local families and children.[61]

The NWTLC promotes family literacy in all NWT official languages. Promotional efforts involve public service announcements, posters, newsletters, booklets, the NWTLC website, and such high profile events as the Peter Gzowski Invitation (PGI) Fundraisers for Literacy and co-sponsorship of indigenous writers and literacy advocates such as Richard Van Camp. Family literacy promotion communicates the primary role that families have in early childhood development and the tools and supports available to help them fulfill this role. Family literacy promotion increases awareness of literacy and debunks myths that literacy is only reading and writing.

The Family Literacy Project provides funding and support to community-based family literacy projects. Between 2001-2008, the Family Literacy Project provided $595,409 to 252 family literacy projects in NWT communities.[62] Community-based family literacy projects are a venue for practitioners to apply skills and knowledge and use resources to engage family members in literacy development. Between 2004-2008:

- An annual average of 33 family literacy projects operated in the NWT.
- 72% of NWT communities had at least one family literacy project in any given year.
- Almost $341,400 was invested in community-based family literacy projects.
- At least 13 different types of community organizations sponsored family literacy projects.
- As many as 3,500 adults and 6,400 children participated in community-based family literacy projects.
- About one-third of projects funded annually used an indigenous language in family literacy activities. [63]

Throughout the 1990s, the NWTLC relied on funding and support from the National Literacy Secretariat for its family literacy work. With the development of the GNWT *Early Childhood Development Framework for Action* (2001), an opportunity was created for the GNWT and the NWTLC to work together to focus on children 0-6 years of age and their families. Since 2001, the NWTLC has entered into sequential agreements with the

[60] Still on Track. p.23
[61] ibid pp. 21-22
[62] ibid p.49
[63] ibid pp. 52-53

GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment to provide family literacy resources, training, and promotion.

In the last decade, the NWTLC Family Literacy Project has been the subject of both formative and summative evaluations.[64] The Project was also part of the evaluation of the GNWT *Early Childhood Action Plan*.[65] The Project monitors performance through event and resource-specific evaluations. Evaluations have shown that not only has the work of the Family Literacy Project increased the capacity of communities to deliver local family literacy projects but there is a greater awareness of early childhood development and the role that intergenerational sharing and involvement plays in developing young children. Family members learning together produces stronger relationships and contributes to qualities that promote individual resilience and success.

Lesson for Addressing Poverty: Building local capacity requires a multi-pronged approach that includes training, materials, funding, and promotional support.

8. Keeping Elders Safe and Included

The abuse of older adults (commonly known as elder abuse) is a problem in NWT communities.[66] Isolation, vulnerability, shame, guilt, silence, and poverty are factors associated with abuse. The Inuvik Elder Day Program promotes physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health among elders by focusing on the social, rehabilitation, and activity needs of participants. The Program provides an opportunity to diminish loneliness and vulnerability, break the silence around abuse, lessen uncertainty, and engage elders in safe and inclusive ways.

The Elder Day Program began in January 2004 as a homecare inspired health and wellness initiative. By bringing elders from the community together with patients in long-term care, it was anticipated that the Program would help address boredom, isolation, and poor nutrition often experienced by elders who live independently/in

[64] Still on Track: Building Community Capacity for Family Literacy- Evaluation Report. Lutra Associates Ltd. 2008.
On the Right Track Building Community Capacity for Family Literacy: Evaluation of Family Literacy Programming in the NWT. NWT Literacy Council. 2005.
[65] Final Evaluation Report Northwest Territories Early Childhood Action Plan, July 2001 to March 2004. GNWT Education, Culture and Employment. 2004.
[66] *Making Connections Building Networks to Prevent Abuse of Older Adults – A Framework for Action.* NWT Seniors' Society. 2011.

their own homes. "It's to provide elders from the community with recreation and leisure" [67] activities.

The Elder Day Program began as a federally-funded program. It is now funded through the Beaufort-Delta Health and Social Services Authority public health and homecare budget. It operates in the Inuvik Regional Hospital (IRH). Program staff report to the Home Care Coordinator. Program participants include elders from the community, residents of the long term care and acute care units, and elders who are staying in the transient unit. Staff with the Elder Day Program work with elders/residents, family members, and other care providers to develop individual care plans and address the particular needs of participating elders.

Elder Day Program activities take place in the multipurpose room and long-term care wing of the IRH. This space "gives everyone a safe place to relax and talk." [68] The Program operates four days a week from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Elders socialize, have a hot lunch, and take part in activities that are arranged every day. They play crib, have coffee, talk, make things, play games, do puzzles, and do fitness activities. They sew, visit, sing, dance, and listen to guest speakers talk about elder-related issues. The Program also involves trips into the community to participate in activities for example, at Ingamo Hall, the Legion, or other community venues. A free handivan service picks up and drops off elders.

The Elder Day Program is popular with elders in Inuvik as well as elders from neighbouring communities. "I love it and I enjoy it, said Aklavik resident Marjorie Elanik... She said she hopes her home town will adopt a similar initiative in the near future."[69] Similar sentiments were expressed about the Program in recent research into older adult abuse. [70] The research found that elders in surrounding communities without consistent or regular local elders/seniors programming travel to Inuvik so they can

Local elder enjoying a community outing.

[67] http://www.nnsl.com/frames/newspapers/2008-11/nov6_08eldq.html
[68] ibid
[69] http://www.nnsl.com/frames/newspapers/2004-01/jan26_04el.html
[70] *Making Connections Building Networks to Prevent Abuse of Older Adults: Phase 1 Research Report.* February 2011. Lutra Associates Ltd. for the NWT Seniors' Society. February 2011.

participate in the Day Program.

While the Program is widely lauded as an initiative that keeps elders well, safe, visible, and connected in their communities, no publicly available evaluation exists of the Program. Anecdotally the successes of the Program are assessed by participation. The average daily participation is about 15 elders. [71] The Elder Day Program helps elders in Inuvik overcome loneliness and is a good way to prevent abuse. Some Inuvik long-term care staff believe "that without the Elder's Day Program there would be more demand on long-term care for respite from abuse. [72]

The Elder Day Program addresses issues of poverty among older adult in many ways but this is not a focus of the program. Still, as a public health/homecare initiative it is an intervention that front-line staff can employ when incidents of poverty or abuse are identified.

Lesson for Addressing Poverty: *Consistent, regular, and inclusive elders programming keeps older adults visible, safe, secure, and cared for.*

9. Decolonizing Healing

Poverty is about powerlessness. The roots of powerlessness are complex. In the NWT, these roots are embedded in a history of colonialism which includes the legacy of residential schools. "The impacts began to cascade through generations, as former students—damaged by emotional neglect and often by abuse in the schools—themselves became parents. Family and individual dysfunction grew, until eventually, the legacy of the schools became joblessness, poverty, family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, family breakdown, sexual abuse, prostitution, homelessness, high rates of imprisonment, and early death."[73]

The Sacred Circle Project began in Yellowknife in 2005 as a community development process to engage indigenous and non-indigenous people in healing activities, build new relationships, and enable individuals to take back power for their lives. The philosophy underlying Project activities is based on traditional indigenous teachings

[71] *Making Connections Building Networks to Prevent Abuse of Older Adults: Phase 1 Research Report.* p.29
[72] ibid p.50
[73] *Canada, Aboriginal Peoples and Residential Schools: They Came for the Children.* The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). 2012. p.87
http://www.attendancemarketing.com/~attmk/TRC_jd/ResSchoolHistory_2012_02_24_Webposting.pdf

that take a 'whole person' approach to connecting feelings, words, thoughts, and actions. Non-threatening, non-judgemental, safe, and inclusive principles guide each activity. Circle Keepers and Elders lead activities.

Between 2005 and 2012, the Sacred Circle evolved into a non-profit society with the mission to promote healing and health in heart, mind, body, and spirit through the use of traditional indigenous healing practices, teachings, and ceremony. Its activities grew to include weekly women's and men's circles, drumming and singing circles, a monthly full moon ceremony, occasional Saturday workshops, seasonal ceremonies, and special projects such as the Aboriginal Princess Pageant. Expected outcomes included more individuals, particularly indigenous people, able to take control for their own lives and positively participate in their families and communities. The Sacred Circle Project mainly tracks participation and the number of people finding circles/ceremonies/ projects relevant and helpful as indicators of its success.

A recent evaluation found that the Sacred Circle Project is a decolonizing practice because it helps people take power for their lives rather than waiting for others to help them.[74] The evaluation also found that activities encourage an addictions free lifestyle and are particularly helpful to people in recovery. Elements of the Project that are particularly effective are the inclusive nature of programming, the sense of community and interdependence generated, and spiritual and emotional guidance offered by facilitators and peers. The evaluation also found that the Sacred Circle Project provides a cost-effective alternative to mainstream healing services. In this regard, the Sacred Circle Project focuses on identity and wholeness within the individual and with his/her environment. Interconnectedness is a source of empowerment.

A weekend drum making workshop (http://sacredcircleproject.ca/)

In recent years, the Sacred Circle Project has been mainly funded through the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (NNADAP) and Yellowknife Health and Social Services' (YKHSS) Child and Family Services. Funding has been 'topped-up' with in-kind donations, sponsorships, mentoring, and promotional contributions from business and non-profit partners, as

[74] *The Scared Circle Project Evaluation Report*. Lutra Associates Ltd. 2012.

well as individual volunteers. In the spring of 2012, the Sacred Circle Project lost its funding due to federal government budget cuts. At the time of writing, efforts are being made to find funding to continue healing activities to enable more individuals to take power for their lives.

Lesson for Addressing Poverty: *Holistic, culture-based healing is a decolonizing practice that enables individuals to take power for their lives and build new and healthy relationships.*

10. Including Newcomers

Age, language, ethnicity, culture, and ability are some of the many characteristics that diversify human populations. Diverse populations enrich communities and society as a whole. But ensuring the inclusion and equality of diverse populations is challenging due to differing expectations, perceptions, experiences, and interests. Regions around the world struggle to include and ensure the equality of diverse populations. Some are successful, others are not. Exclusion and inequality contribute to poverty.

The NWT has a diverse population spread over a large geographic area. Yellowknife, with about 45% of the NWT population, has the most diverse population in the territory. Within its population of about 20,000, almost one-quarter are indigenous people. This is not a homogeneous population. Visible minorities make up another 10% of Yellowknife's population. City residents come from throughout the NWT and elsewhere in Canada and from many countries around the world. They are people who speak different languages and have different social and cultural practices. They are young and old, men and women, and people living with disability. It is noteworthy that in 2006, almost two-thirds of recent immigrants to Yellowknife were women.[75]

Championing Well-Being in Yellowknife: The City of Yellowknife Social Plan (June 2009)[76] found that "there are few ways to welcome, publicly celebrate, and serve the needs of Yellowknife's ethnically diverse population or ensure that all residents participate in, and contribute to the community." One of the few efforts to include new Canadians/ newcomers in the social life of the community and breakdown barriers to equality and inclusion was the Centre for Northern Families' Canadian and Ethnocultural Program. The Program sought to address barriers resulting from lack of official language skills,

[75] GNWT Bureau of Statistics, newstat. Visible Minorities and Ethnic Original, April 2, 2008.

[76] p.27 http://www.yellowknife.ca/Assets/Public+Safety/CityofYellowknifeSocialPlanReport.pdf

lack of recognition of skills and education, little public appreciation of cultural diversity, racism, and discrimination.[77]

Between 2005 and 2010, the Centre for Northern Families operated the Canadian and Ethnocultural Program. According to the Centre's 2005 annual report, the Program served 84 people from 19 countries. A year later, the Program served 157 people from 29 countries. At its peak, the Program offered family literacy outreach services, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, a collective kitchen, drop-in activities, yoga, and on-site access to health and social information and services. Services were available at the Centre for Northern Families and at an off-site location.[78] The Program was funded through the federal government until 2010 when funding terminated. The Program was disbanded although some informal activities continued as resources allowed.

Ana Perdomo former advocate for immigrants in Yellowknife.
http://www.nnsl.com/frames/newspapers/2009-01/jan14_09imm.html

Over the period that the Centre for Northern Families operated the Canadian and Ethnocultural Program, a gathering place was available to newcomers to Canada to gain information about human services, rights and privileges, and receive assistance navigating new systems and processes. The Program offered particular supports to immigrant women who are often isolated and vulnerable.[79] With its closure, efforts in Yellowknife to overcome exclusion and inequality that contribute to poverty among newcomers were diminished. No new initiative has been launched to address needs among ethnically diverse populations.

Lesson for Addressing Poverty: *Diverse populations require special efforts to overcome exclusion and inequality that contribute to poverty particularly among newcomers.*

[77] *Newcomers' Initiative.* Lutra Associates Ltd. for the NWT Literacy Council. 2010.
[78] http://www.nnsl.com/frames/newspapers/2006-09/sep1_06fm.html
[79] *Championing Well-Being in Yellowknife: The City of Yellowknife Social Plan.* Lois Little, Aggie Brockman, Nick Istvanffy, and Robyn Newton. June 2009.

11. Adult Learning Successes

Poverty among adults can be an outcome of unsuccessful school experiences as a child/youth. Returning to an education or training system that failed them as a child/youth is a courageous act for many adults. Some are successful, others are not. Adult successes in learning environments are measured by learners in terms of academic, personal, practical, and relationship achievements.[80] These achievements are defined by improved reading, writing, analytical and mathematical skills and in terms of confidence to get a job or a better job; greater ability to provide for children/family; greater independence; and more capacity to manage their lives.[81]

In the last few decades, there have been some adult education programs that have created the environment for adult learners to succeed academically as well as in personal and life terms. One of the most well known and well-respected programs was offered by the NWT Training Centres. The programs were inspired by the late Bertha Allen, a champion of social, political, and economic equality for northern women.

The NWT Training Centres were established in Yellowknife and Inuvik in the early 1980s through the Native Women's Association of the NWT. The community-based Centres adopted learner-centred approaches; offered a mix of integrated learning experiences and supports; and facilitated transferability of learning into further education and training and/or the work place. Supports within, or accessible through the Centres included childcare, financial assistance, personal and career counselling, and information services. These features continue to be identified in the literature as helpful to facilitating adult learning successes.[82]

The NWT Training Centre in Inuvik was lauded in a 1997 report of the GNWT Education, Culture and Employment. "This agency in Inuvik fills an important place in the continuum of programs in Inuvik as it accepts students who are not at a level where they can apply to the college ABE program. The program provides academic upgrading, work experience and life skills. It was identified by many people in the community as a program which was very successful in increasing the self-esteem of women who had not experienced success before. One community member spoke of the noticeable, positive impacts of the program on some students: 'Some women who enter

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[80] *Factors that Facilitate Adult Learner Success in the NWT*. Helen Balanoff, NWT Literacy Council with Lois Little, Lutra Associates Ltd. 2011.

[81] *Stories of Progress on a Learning Journey from Adult Learners in the Northwest Territories*.NWT Literacy Council. 2009.

[82] *Youth Literacy Gap Analysis*. June 2010.

Factors that Facilitate Adult Learner Success in the NWT. 2011.

the program have barely enough confidence to walk into the class. After six months in the program, they are holding their heads high. You can see the change in them.' One of the reasons for this success, according to many people, is the life skills portion of the program which supports the women to address barriers in their lives, prepares them for the future with goal setting, and helps them develop as learners. Some graduates go on to Adult Basic Education at Aurora Campus."[83] Elsewhere in the same report, the success of the NWT Training Centres was enumerated by the 80% of graduates finding employment or progressing to further education and training.[84]

As the NWT Training Centre in Inuvik developed, expanded programs, and sought funding, it moved away from the NWT Native Women's Association, and incorporated as a non-profit society. Due to funding challenges, the NWT Training Centre in Inuvik closed, after about 25 years.

Training Centre student field trip, November 2011
http://nativewomensnwt.com/training-centre.html

Today after almost 30 years, the NWT Training Centre in Yellowknife continues through the NWT Native Women's Association. It serves men and women who wish to improve their education and life skills. Literacy is a main focus. The Centre offers courses in mathematics, English, computer studies, physical education, career and work experience, and life skills and cultural workshops. Courses can lead to successful completion of grade 12 (GED) or ALBE course work. All courses are recognized by regional colleges. The program runs five hours per day Monday to Friday from September to June.[85] Student financial support is available through the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS), GNWT Income Security, or the Federal Employment Insurance program. Centre staff provide information and advice on such matters as accommodations and childcare.

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[83] *The Bridge to My Future A Report on Adult Basic Education in the NWT*. GNWT Education, Culture and Employment. 1997. p.vi

[84] ibid

[85] http://nativewomensnwt.com/training-centre.html

The successes of the NWT Training Centres are attributed in large part to the use of multiple strategies known to facilitate adult learning. These strategies have been documented as:

- Targeting situational challenges facing adult learners such as childcare, home/family responsibilities, housing, and financial issues.
- Assessing and recognizing prior learning.
- Taking an integrated 'whole person' approach.
- Addressing institutional and pedagogical barriers such as those embedded in policy or curriculum.
- Embedding learning in realistic and culturally relevant contexts.
- Balancing curriculum and experiences to value and achieve academic and non-academic outcomes.
- Recognizing and supporting key transitions.
- Recognizing different learning styles and pace of learning. [86]

Lesson for Addressing Poverty: *Successful adult learning environments use multiple strategies to facilitate learner's academic achievements as well as personal, practical, and relationship achievements.*

12. Home Ownership Gives Security

Shelter is a basic human need. Without adequate, appropriate, and affordable shelter, individuals lack safety and security, and the ability to fully participate in daily life. Lack of adequate and appropriate shelter is a cornerstone of poverty and its persistence.

A recent GNWT shelter review documented the range of shelter options needed to meet diverse housing needs in the NWT.[87] Options include public housing, transitional housing, and home ownership. The shelter review acknowledged the important role of home ownership in promoting self-reliance and independence. [88] As a result, strengthening home ownership support programs is a strategic priority

NWTHC Photo (Paula MacFadyen)
http://nwthc.gov.nt.ca/_live/documents/content/UORWinter2011-12.pdf

[86] *Factors that Facilitate Adult Learner Success in the NWT*. 2011
[87] http://nwthc.gov.nt.ca/_live/documents/content/Building%20for%20the%20Future_FINAL.pdf
[88] ibid

identified in the review.

Currently the NWT Housing Corporation (NWTHC) delivers the Homeownership Entry-Level Program (HELP) to first-time homeowners. HELP requires eligible applicants to pay 20% of their gross income toward the lease/rental payment and utility service costs. After two years, HELP provides an equity contribution toward the purchase of a home. High living costs particularly in smaller communities combined with unemployment, often mean that families cannot afford the costs of this home ownership option. The NWTHC also delivers the Providing Assistance to Territorial Homeowners (PATH) which provides homeownership financing up to $125,000. PATH requires an equity contribution that low income earners have difficulty accumulating.

Housing appears as an issue in community-based planning and social development work throughout the NWT. In the Dehcho Region (DCR), "home ownership is documented in community plans completed in the DCR in the last decade, as needed to provide safety and security to local residents most vulnerable to change."[89] In this region, the former NWTHC Homeownership Assistance Program (HAP) is lauded as a successful housing initiative because people became home owners. They also gained self-esteem, confidence, and socio-economic security. [90]

In 1978, the NWTHC began the first home owner assistance program, Small Settlement Home Assistance Grant (SSHAG). Through SSHAG, people built their own homes with local logs. The NWTHC provided a manufactured kit of finishings (e.g. windows, doors, roofing). In 1983, SSHAG evolved to become HAP which also included a complete package for a wood-frame house for clients without access to local materials. An evaluation of HAP in 1988 extolled the strengths of HAP.[91] It found that "HAP is the best program to come to the Northwest Territories." [92] It encourages community development and "promotes individual initiative and responsibility while reducing dependence on government for housing needs and maintenance costs."[93]

Over the years home ownership programs through the NWTHC have changed. A major change between SSHAG and HAP, and today's PATH and HELP is the requirement for 'financial' rather than 'sweat' equity. A shift away from labour to financial inputs has

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[89] *Dehcho Regional Investment Plan: Mackenzie Gas Project Impact Fund Phase 3: Final Report*. Lutra Associates Ltd. for the Dehcho Regional Investment Plan Committee. 2009. pp. 148-149

[90] ibid

[91] *Homeownership Assistance Program: An Evaluation*. 1988. Ferguson Simek Clarke. for the NWT Housing Corporation.

[92] ibid p.10

[93] ibid p.10

made home ownership unaffordable for many low income earners. This is a reason that in communities with access to building materials and labour, there is some advocacy for the return of the very successful HAP. HAP is seen as an option for those seeking the security of home ownership and a strong desire to break the cycle of poverty. Dehcho Region communities are some of those expressing a desire for a return to HAP. In 2009, a Dehcho committee planning to mitigate impacts from the proposed Mackenzie Gas (pipeline) Project recommended a 21st century HAP-like program and building capacity within local housing organizations to manage HAP.[94]

Lesson for Addressing Poverty: *Sometimes successful programs of the past are appropriate today. For example, low income earners needing the security of home ownership could benefit from a HAP-like program.*

Conclusions

Each of the 12 programs profiled in this report addresses one or more of the issues that function in society and in the lives of individuals/families to marginalize, exclude, create inequities, and contribute to poverty. The experiences of the 12 programs offer clear messages for addressing poverty.

1. CART tells us that locally collected and disseminated information is powerful. It has the power to shape behaviours and programs/services, and to engage citizens. CART also tells us that collaborations are helpful to community-based successes.
2. The Ulukhaktok Literacy Project tells us that collaborations build local capacities and confidence to explore traditions and bring them into the modern world to affirm and understand place and identity, and build self-esteem.
3. The Phoenix School tells us that mainstream programs don't work for everyone and those who are failed by them can flourish in alternative programs that are designed to meet the individual's needs.
4. The Leadership for Literacy initiative tells us that by focusing on literacy, children and youth can be successful in school. Success in school is most often a precursor for life successes.
5. The Sister Celeste Child Development Centre tells us that local control and commitment build and sustain valuable community-based programming.

[94] *Dehcho Regional Investment Plan: Mackenzie Gas Project Impact Fund Phase 3: Final Report*.

6. The Inuvialuit Child Development Program tells us that sustained commitment, commitment by an indigenous government, and awareness and support for early childhood development can have positive outcomes.
7. The NWT Literacy Council's Family Literacy Project tells us that a multi-pronged approach that includes training, materials, funding, and promotional support, is successful in building community capacity to establish and sustain local programming.
8. The Inuvik Elder Day Program tells us that consistent, regular programming is key to the participation, visibility, and safety of elders in our communities.
9. The Sacred Circle tells us that decolonizing healing processes are a way for people to take back power over their lives.
10. The Canadian and Ethnocultural Program tells us that positive responses to diversity can overcome exclusion and break down isolation that can contribute to poverty among newcomers but such efforts to recognize and embrace diversity must be sustained.
11. The NWT Training Centres tell us that adult learners achieve success when learning environments use multiple strategies to respond to academic needs as well as personal, practical, and relationship needs.
12. The Homeownership Assistance Program tells us that while housing problems have persisted for decades, efforts have from time to time been very successful. The former HAP was one of these successes, both in terms of providing the security of home ownership as well as the pride and self-esteem associated with building and owning a home.

The 12 program profiles offer a variety of lessons for addressing poverty. Lessons that are common to many of the programs relate to the:

- Value of partnerships and collaboration,
- Importance of sustained commitment,
- Success of individual/family focused responses,
- Success of integrated and multi-facetted approaches,
- Need to address funding challenges so successful programs are not terminated, and
- Need to monitor and evaluate.

This appreciative inquiry is not an exhaustive review of programming to address poverty but it does point to the wealth of experience in the NWT building social and community resilience and skills. If lack of documentation is an indicator, it is unfortunate that the NWT has little experience addressing food security and economic sustainability issues that also contribute to poverty.