

MADE IN THE NORTH FORUM

Final Report: What We Learned Together

Executive Summary

Made in the North: Policy & Practices Exchange on Skills Development was a forum for some 140 adult educators, employers, policy makers, language experts, literacy practitioners, aboriginal and community leaders, and others working in the area of literacy and essential skills development in the three territories and Labrador. The Yukon Literacy Coalition, NWT Literacy Council, and Ilitaqsiniq-the Nunavut Literacy Council jointly organized the event, which was held in Yellowknife, NWT, from October 23 to 25, 2012.

The purpose of the gathering was to support made-in-the-north approaches to adult learning, including literacy and essential skills; the sharing of ideas and resources; and the creation of a northern action network. The event was funded by the Government of Canada's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills; Government of the Northwest Territories' Department of Education, Culture and Employment; Government of Nunavut's Department of Education; and Yukon Territorial Government's Labour Market Programs and Services, Advanced Education.

The program offered keynote presentations by leading thinkers and dynamic workshops on current policies, practices, and innovations in literacy, adult learning, and essential skills development in northern Canada. The program culminated in large-group dialogue sessions, designed to build on the wealth of perspectives of the many stakeholders in the room and led by professional facilitators with a strong foundation in the North. Each workshop, presentation, and plenary session offered a balance of theory, policy discussion, and grounded practice.

The following themes dominated the sessions:

- Workplace-based learning as a model for building basic skills
- Tapping grassroots innovation through non-formal community-based programs
- Innovative approaches developed by northern colleges

- Navigating multi-cultural and multi-lingual worlds and understanding multiple literacies

Delegates enthusiastically endorsed the idea of a pan-northern network to continue the work started at the Forum and to learn more about successful initiatives. They recognized the important role non-formal learning plays in adult learning, and the need to have the flexibility and the funding to deliver on this promise. Most of all, there was a sense of pride in how people in Yukon, NWT, Nunavut, and Labrador were developing innovative programs that responded to northern needs.

The Forum offered government representatives a better understanding of the differences among the territories and the unique issues related to learning in the North. As one government representative noted, “We overestimated the commonalities and underestimated the differences.”

Building on the energy and fresh ideas coming out of Made in the North, efforts are underway to develop a multi-sectoral, collaborative partnership network. This network would continue to build the capacity of stakeholders to address issues of unemployment, poverty, and socioeconomic disadvantage in Northern communities. It will investigate gaps, barriers, and innovative solutions to address youth and adults’ participation in post-secondary education and training and labour market engagement.

Why “Made in the North”? Why Now?

THE BUZZ BEGAN BUILDING THE EVENING BEFORE THE OFFICIAL OPENING. They may have been weary as a result of traveling from communities in Labrador, Nunavut, Northwest Territories, and Yukon, but soon after the 140 delegates filtered into the hotel ballroom in Yellowknife, it was clear that the Made in the North gathering would not be a run-of-the-mill conference.

Participants were warmly welcomed by Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, George Tuccaro, a longtime supporter of literacy. Premier Bob McLeod and Jackson Lafferty, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, spoke about the importance of literacy and essential skills in today’s northern economies. Then it was time for well-known fiddler Lee Mandeville and his band and Metis recording artist John Tees to get delegates into the groove and tapping their feet. It was a great welcome to the Yellowknives’ Dene land.



This open and inclusive spirit would carry through the three-day event, just as the organizers had hoped. The result of three years of planning by the Yukon Literacy Coalition, NWT Literacy Council, and Iilitaqsinik-the Nunavut Literacy Council, Made in the North was designed to be a unique conversational and learning space.

The Forum was convened, in late October 2012, to share innovations in adult learning practices, programs, and policies. Indeed, four keynote speakers and 40 presenters at 23 break-out sessions certainly had plenty to share, particularly around four themes: workplace education, non-formal community-based programs, language revitalization, and innovations in formal programs. Together, they presented an inspiring and surprising view of what lifelong learning looks like in northern Canada.

Even more than that, Made in the North was intended to support the building of partnerships for action among individuals, organizations, communities, and territories. The delegates were adult educators, employers, policy makers, language experts, literacy practitioners, community leaders, and others working in the area of literacy and essential skills development. They took full advantage of the small-table talks and one-on-one

exchanges between sessions. Particularly striking was the strong aboriginal presence and involvement of youth.

Why “Made in the North”? Why now? It has been shown that the most effective, affordable, and sustainable approaches to adult learning are often those informed by local conditions, interests, and needs and aimed at meeting goals that are locally-determined. In fact, there are many innovative, local approaches to adult learning blossoming across northern Canada today — in community centres, remote college classrooms, and cutting-edge workplaces.

Such innovation, now more than ever, is absolutely vital. As Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Labrador experience rapid social and economic changes, driven by increased resource extraction and globalized economies, northerners are seeking the skills to take advantage of new opportunities and support thriving communities.

“A strong future in which Northerners can make decisions for themselves really depends on having engaged community capacity where literacy skills are embedded in cultural identity and common experience.”

— Helen Balanoff, NWT Literacy Council

As the Forum progressed, a set of broadly-supported ideas emerged. The need for non-traditional, community-based programs certainly struck a chord. The need for community development: scaling across rather than scaling up. The fact that there is no one “North”: that situations and challenges differ among, and within, the territories. And the fact that there is no one “literacy” or set of “essential skills”; that there are different ways of knowing. What are the broader range of core skills that northerners believe are required to build sustainable and thriving communities? And what is to be done when these core skills are not the same as those defined by major funding bodies in the country?

Delegates may not have arrived at answers to these questions, but they surfaced many key insights that came from a meeting of many hearts and minds. Participants were drawn from all provinces and territories except for Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick: some 30 percent were from NWT, 25 percent from Yukon, and 20 percent from Nunavut.

There was diversity in the roster of presenters as well. There were northern business voices, such as Darrell Beaulieu, CEO of Denendeh Development Corporation; artistic voices such as Peter Johnston, former Chief of the Teslin Tlingit Council; policy voices such as Jeannie Arreak-Kullualik of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated; and academic voices such

as Nancy Jackson of University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). The political presence was strong: Irene Tanuyak, Assistant Deputy Minister, Adult Learning and Field Operations, Department of Education, Government of Nunavut; Shawn Kitchen, Assistant Deputy Minister, Department of Education, Yukon Government; and Silvano Tocchi, Director General, Workplace Partnerships Directorate, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Put all these presenters and engaged adult educators and thinkers together in an environment that encourages shared learning, and magic happens. As one delegate said on the final day, "The literacy movement [in the North] has matured. The quality of this gathering is very different from 10 years ago — the quality of ideas has broadened. It's the most exciting conference I've been to."

Workplace Learning: A Model for Building Basic Skills

“PUT UP YOUR HAND IF YOU’RE CONFUSED about what embedded literacy really means.”

Claire Hall, a workplace learning consultant who works with Ilitaqsiniq-the NLC, probably knew the answer to the question even before she asked it of the delegates gathered to learn about workplace education. Hall has seen great confusion around the issue; sure enough, hands shot up around the room.

Embedded learning involves integrating literacy and essential skills development into other learning and training activities, especially training *for* work and training *at* work. An example would be learning how to fill out an incident report to comply with health and safety regulations. The thinking is that people are motivated and learn better when they develop literacy and essential skills in situations that are important for them and on tasks that are meaningful. At its best, when it is well tailored to the individual workplace, it provides learners with confidence, competence, and motivation to develop technical skills and offers organizations the chance to develop a more adaptable workforce, one with a strong foundation in basic skills.

Workplace education, encompassing literacy and essential skills development, is well established in many parts of southern Canada, but has yet to be embraced widely in the territories and Labrador. During Made in the North, delegates learned about current research, programs and pilot projects and were given an overview of the state of workplace and workforce development across Canada.



They learned that workplace education is a collaborative process involving employers, workers, and, where appropriate, unions. It involves customized skills development that is determined by the goals of both the employer and the worker and is based on actual workplace tasks and materials. Effective workplace education programs feature an initial needs assessment, and an advisory committee guided

equally by managers and workers.

“It’s not just, If you build it, they will come,” said Sylvia Sioufi of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and one of the speakers. “It’s how you build it. You’re never going to know all the parameters from the start [such as instructors and funding]. Just start! Where you are now, and what you know about your workplace. Pull partners together, try to understand the context. What are you hoping will happen?”

There is no cookie cutter approach: based on what is gleaned from the needs assessment, programs are shaped around the needs of the group and organization. It may be the requirement to know how to read a flow chart or operate a computer software program. “When we do evaluations, people say they felt they were the only ones who had problems,” said Sioufi. “It creates a fantastic dynamic for learning, when people know they are supported.”

Shelby Desjarlais, a teacher and curriculum developer from the Métis Nation of British Columbia (MNBC), spoke about his experiences of embedding skills development into MNBC’s highly successful Culinary Arts Institute, a 16-week trades access program for Métis, First Nations, and Inuit adult learners. Given the wide range of people in the program, students receive a customized learning path specifically for developing essential skills. But the learning goes both ways.

“Essential skills programs give people the learn-to-learn and learn-to-think skills, and they become self-motivated. If you don’t know how to learn, you’ll be lost. We are in a new age of learning.”

— Patricia Salt, Learning Support Strategist

“Students help us develop our curriculum and make it better as we go,” said Desjarlais at a Made in the North workshop. “We work with the students one on one or with the culinary arts modules we developed.” Students complete the TOWES (Test of Workplace Essential Skills) assessment tool before and after the program to measure their progress. “We’re not just instructors,” he said. “We’re counsellors, helpers, friends. Some of our clients needed more support – single families, low income families.” Essential skills development, he said, is more than about getting a job. “It’s a way to build your work life but also for your community.”

A picture is starting to emerge of what workplace education could look like in the North. In Nunavut, Ilitaqsiniq-the NLC is wrapping up a series of workplace education pilot projects with a number of employers, including two in Rankin Inlet. As well,

workshops and a made-in-Nunavut training manual will help embed essential skills in existing workplace programs, mentorships, and materials.

The Nunavut approach is based on the findings of a research report commissioned by Iilitaqsinig-the NLC and NWT Literacy Council, titled *Issues in Workforce/Workplace Literacy in NWT and Nunavut*. The report recommended:

- developing and offering programs and services in a culturally appropriate manner;
- promoting the use of clear language in policy manuals, personnel policies, and other materials;
- raising awareness about the need for and the benefits of workplace essential skills programs and services; and
- addressing the challenges of a dispersed workforce by embedding essential skills in everyday work practices.



In NWT, the Forum delegates were told, there have been a number of workplace education success stories, notably with resource company BHP Billiton, Northern Transportation Company Limited, Tlicho Government, Inuvialuit

Regional Corporation, and several small businesses. Some of the challenges include an insufficient number of trained workplace educators, lack of funding, getting buy-in from employers, accessing remote communities, new technologies requiring new skills, and the reality of 11 official languages. A recurring issue has been the need to arrange for release time for education, job mentoring programs, and one-on-one programs to support workers.

Meanwhile in Yukon, two researchers with the Yukon Literacy Coalition in 2012 visited eight mostly small First Nations communities. Andre Gagne and Jeanine O’Connell found that there is no such thing as “Yukon community needs or interests” related to workplace literacy and essential skills. Each community has its own set of labour market needs, and its own ideas about how to reach people who need support.

In their presentation, the researchers said they learned that literacy and essential skills programs have great potential within First Nations governments, which are often the most stable employers in Yukon communities. Such programs would best be served by the hiring of a part-time in-house educator. Tailored workplace LES programs could help build capacity internally, and train people to take advantage of mining and tourism opportunities when they come along.

Through their consultation process, the Yukon researchers heard that some workers were now having difficulty getting seasonal jobs that, in the past, had lower essential skills requirements. This is particularly true of two employment areas associated with good summer wages: emergency wildland fire fighting and mining exploration jobs. Many working as seasonal emergency fire fighters, for example, are now expected to spend more time at a computer and less time on the land base. And soil-sampling exploration work, for instance, now requires that field workers have high essential skills competencies.

Regardless of location, however, those involved in workplace literacy and essential skills in the North would do well to learn a key lesson from southern Canada: that a culture of learning must be the foundation of effective workplace education. Every year, millions of dollars are spent on workplace training programs focused on specific performance outcomes, various speakers pointed out, yet most of the programs skip the critical step of building a workplace culture that supports and sustains individual and collective learning. As a result, little changes. It has been an expensive lesson to learn.

Non-formal Community-based Programs: Tapping Grassroots Innovation

SOME OF THE MOST ANIMATED MOMENTS OF MADE IN THE NORTH occurred during presentations on non-formal community-based programs. These adult learning practices and programs take place outside of formal learning institutions, and many are culturally-rooted and involve “embedded” skills development, language revitalization, and personal development along with literacy and other skills.

Inspired projects are popping up throughout the North. A great example is the Miqqut project, developed by Iilitaqsinig-the NLC and piloted in Rankin Inlet. This initiative embedded literacy and language skill development in traditional sewing skills sessions, in which participants made fur clothing. During Made in the North, 20 delegates had the opportunity to participate in Pijunnaqsilauqta (“developing skills and becoming capable”), a hands-on mini-Miqqut session. Literacy and sewing instructors Gloria Uluqsi, Adriana Kusugak, and Quluaq Pilakapsi showed them how to create a beautiful sealskin



flower brooch. Along the way, they learned the basic Inuktitut terms associated with sewing and practised writing these words in Inuktitut.

Meanwhile, in Rigolet, an Inuit community of 300 people on the northeast coast of Labrador, residents have been using digital storytelling to preserve the stories of the community and record how climate change is touching their lives. Rigolet community members Marilyn Baikie and Inez Shiwak talked about how the initiative, which started in 2009, allowed residents to share stories about how changes in the land, sea, ice, and snow were affecting livelihoods, health, and well-being. It has grown into a storytelling camp —

where youth and elders collaborate in creating digitally-based stories — as well as digital storytelling workshops. These stories have also been posted to the Rigolet community website, a YouTube channel, and a Facebook page. The Rigolet Inuit Community Government established the Storytelling and Digital Media Lab, the first northern Canadian centre for digital media and community-engaged research and capacity development.

In NWT, the community of Behchoko, some 100 kilometres from Yellowknife, has come up with a non-formal community-based program of its own. Paul Cressman explained that the Tlicho Imbe summer program offers secondary and post-secondary students traditional skills development, certified safety training, and employment skills. True to the community's values and culture, it combines traditional activities, such as sewing, beading, hunting, and fishing, with workshops on first aid and GPS mapping that prepare participants for the working world.

And in Yukon, the Yukon Literacy Coalition in late 2011 piloted learning circles in a unique “community”: the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. As Evelyn Thorogood of Yukon Literacy Coalition and Kluane Adamek of the Council of Yukon First Nations told *Made in the North*, the Linking Essential Skills to Life project involved student-centred learning circles without a formal hierarchy. Learners decided on which of nine essential skills they wanted to develop and chose a project with that skill in mind. Built into the program was peer-to-peer learning. By all accounts, the project was a great success.

The College Connection: New Funding Supports New Approaches

IN MADE IN THE NORTH MEETING ROOMS, one of the largest contingents came from the three territorial colleges: Aurora College, Yukon College, and Nunavut Arctic College. Aurora College alone sent 17 spirited delegates, coming from all five regions of NWT. The strong representation from the colleges reflected both a clear hunger to learn more about trends in adult education in the North and the central role colleges play in adult learning, literacy, and skills development.

In well-attended sessions and one-on-one discussions over meals, college leaders talked about current challenges and innovations.

Aurora College, for example, has 23 community learning centres scattered across the territory, all with adult basic education (ABE) and literacy programming. “At Aurora, about 40 to 50 percent of what we do is essential skills, ABE kind of training,” said Heather McCagg-Nystrom, vice-president, Community and Extensions.



These efforts have been boosted by the Northern Adult Basic Education Program

(NABEP), announced in the federal government’s 2011 budget. NABEP was set up to prepare working age adults to either enter the workforce directly or to take vocational training before entering the workforce. Beginning in 2011-12, the Government of Canada committed to investing \$27 million over five years; territorial colleges will be able to decide how to best build capacity, such as hiring more instructors or developing educational resources. In the case of Aurora College, NABEP funding will cover about 12 initiatives leading up to 2014-15.

At Nunavut Arctic College, a change agenda is countering the dubious reputation that adult education has as a result of its “deficit model of education,” said Cindy Cowan,

Arctic College's director of community and distance learning. The deficit model focuses on the student as the major problem, rather than looking within the environment or the instructional practices in the classroom. The college is now increasing the number of bilingual educators and recruitment of elders; it's also developing, with support from Ilitaqsiniq—the NLC, a more Inuit-centred and holistic ABE curriculum that is learner-centred and culturally-rooted. To get the point across, the college went through a rebranding process, commissioning a new logo based on a fish lure.

In Nunavut, Cowan told the forum, the biggest challenge in adult basic education is integrating learning technology. College students are now experimenting with iPads and online community-building sites on the NING platform but there remain significant technology issues. According to research involving Arctic College instructors, the top barriers are: lack of bandwidth; lack of reliable connectivity; inadequate technical support; and lack of effective staff development.

The college is clearly giving great thought to the issue. In April 2012, it released *Addressing Barriers, Expanding Options: A practical strategy for integrating Information and Learning Technologies in Adult Basic Education* to kick-start a larger discussion on the role of technology in learning.

In Nunavut and elsewhere in the North, the biggest challenge in adult basic education is integrating learning technology. Lack of bandwidth, unreliable connectivity, and inadequate technical support all undercut the best efforts to engage adult learners in an effective way.

At Yukon College, the past five years has seen a growing shift in adult basic education, towards project-based learning: embedding numeracy, reading, and writing into projects. The shift has yielded promising results, as students are moving on with transferable and work-ready skills. In her presentation, Colleen Stevenson, chair of the School of Access at Yukon College, showed a video of a trades-based project in which students built a prototype greenhouse through the Yukon Research Centre, an arm of the College.

Northern colleges are not the only places showcasing innovative adult learning. Spencer Tracy, an instructor at the Native Women's Association Training Centre in Yellowknife, showed Made in the North attendees a 600-page math instructional resource packed with examples and hands-on activities relevant to northern learners at a grade 4 to 6 level, with an emphasis on aboriginal culture and place-based references. As Tracy explained,

math is not well contextualized in NWT schools, and the new math resource immediately engages learners who otherwise would be uncomfortable with math-based problem-solving.

Another big hit at Made in the North was Dechinta: Bush University Centre for Research and Learning. Dechinta is a northern-led initiative delivering land-based educational experiences such as hide preparation and academic courses such as northern land claims and governance, all accredited by University of Alberta. Erin Freeland Ballantyne, Dechinta's executive director, wowed participants when she discussed the theoretical foundations of Dechinta, its current programming, and plans for the future. Led by northern leaders, elders, and professors, the programs are offered in a remote lodge accessible only by bush plane, snowmobile, or dog team. They provide students with a transformative learning experience that's truly Made in the North.

Navigating Multi-cultural, Multi-lingual Worlds

THE REVITALIZATION OF ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES and the recognition of “multiple literacies” are themes that strongly resonate across Canada’s North, so it was no surprise that these themes came up time and again during Made in the North proceedings. The two themes are related: they both speak to the need to understand and support different ways of knowing and navigating the world. Effective northern adult learning policies and practices must be informed by these dual perspectives.

A number of panelists shared their experiences relating to working in literacy development in the context of Aboriginal language revitalization. Becky Kilabuk, who works with Inuit youth in Nunavut, talked of growing up speaking her first language but getting subtle messages as she grew older that her native language was “not good.” She said young people have difficulties living between two worlds and that language programs help them bridge the gap and reclaim their confidence. Kilabuk showed a video clip she produced with a friend, called *Feel the Inukness*, that was a YouTube sensation. Against a soundtrack of accordion music, a young man jauntily visits Iqaluit landmarks, dancing with people he meets along the way. The clip drew chuckles and toe tapping from the delegates.



And there were other stories told of language resilience and literacy. Mary-Rose Sundberg, director of the Goyatiko Language Society in Dettah, NWT, spoke about a number of community-developed language learning initiatives, such as the Wiliideh Language Game that uses repetition to teach language, and a project involving the translation of more than 700 historical tapes of elders and their stories about land, trails, and place names. Marilyn Jensen, an instructor at Yukon College, spoke about the newly developed Language Nest Program. Adapted from a similar language revitalization program in New Zealand, it brings fluent speakers and elders into early childhood education, creating immersion-style learning for children ages one to four. The “language is sleeping,” she said, and it can be reawakened through ceremonial activities and rites of passage.

One of the more ambitious programs in language revitalization is the Ulukhaktok Literacies Research Project. Ulukhaktok (formerly known as Holman) lies on the west coast of Victoria Island. This “visual repatriation” initiative was a joint research project between the communities of Ulukhaktok, NWT, and Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, NWT Literacy Council, and University of Lethbridge. As part of this research, the team documented elders’ stories and songs, and knowledge and toured the collection of old Inuinait clothing and tools stored at the British Museum in London. Community members and elders from Ulukhaktok and Cambridge Bay are now labelling the artifacts in the Inuinnaqtun language.

“If we mis-understand and mis-define the nature of the learning problems we’re trying to fix, and apply solutions based on this mis-diagnosis, then we will see little or no results for our efforts.”

— Nancy Jackson, adult literacy and skills training researcher

The issue of multiple literacies, too, carries significant implications for adult educators in the North. One implication is that literacy development cannot be standardized. As Nancy Jackson, of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, said, activities such as reading, writing, numeracy, or document use all take place and get their meaning as part of some relationship with other people, within families, communities, or workplaces. In real life, literacies are complex and always embedded in social and cultural activities.

This more integrated way of understanding literacy and adult basic education does not lend itself to the kinds of standardization and statistical measurement that most funding bodies require. There is a gap between current theory and current policy directions, Jackson said. “There is a fundamental problem of mismatch between ends and means. That is, if we mis-understand and mis-define the nature of the learning problems we are trying to



fix, and apply solutions and then assessments that are based on this mis-diagnosis, then we quite predictably will see little or no results — no return — from our efforts and our investment. Fortunately, this does not mean that people aren't learning anything in literacy programs; they regularly show us quite the contrary. But it means that the official tools being used to measure and report that learning are unable to capture what is actually being achieved. The result is considerable frustration on all sides.”

There is no denying the emotional undercurrent to discussions around revitalizing languages and recognizing many forms of

literacy, something participants at Made in the North experienced. On the final day of the Forum, a group of delegates in the Nunavut caucus sat together and shared thoughts on disappearing languages. Elders related their difficulties in talking with grandchildren because of language barriers, while others lamented how young people are facing a crisis of culture and economy, and how people of all ages are taking their lives because they have no sense of identity. Listening in via translation, one delegate, who has worked in the field for many years, said it wasn't until this emotional exchange that she truly understood the seminal role language plays in our lives.

Adult Learning in Action

IN A FLASH OF DIVERGENT THINKING, THE FIGURE OF A SPIRAL was incorporated in the Made in the North logo as a graphic riff on the idea of northern lights. It turned out to be an apt metaphor with deeper meaning. A spiral is a symbol of growth and change. As Nancy Jackson, of OISE, pointed out, it is used by educators who share the view that the most effective learning happens in just such an expanding spiral of growth and change, signaling an approach to learning that is holistic and inclusive.

This was the sort of learning environment that Made in the North planners were seeking to create. There were well-received keynote and workshop presentations, yet at the heart of the Forum were conversations and sharing and experiencing. It happened through



four rounds of moderated table discussions. It happened at lunch tables and in the hallways before and after sessions as participants shared their opinions and stories from their part of the North. It happened during hands-on learning sessions and interpretive tours of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre and Northern Images Art Gallery. It certainly happened at a rousing community feast held at Chief Drygeese Centre in Dettah, a small Dene community just outside of Yellowknife, where participants enjoyed musical performances from all three territories and demonstrations of hand games by young people from Dettah.

Walking around the room at the end of the Forum, an observer could look at the many sheets of flip-chart paper taped to the walls and find clues to what transpired during Made in the North:

Learning how to learn (life long, life deep, life wide)

Policy and practitioners need to come together and connect to understand each other

Relationality: skills necessary to live well; learning depends on the environment; learning is not packaged

We're talking about similar things but using different terms and language to talk about them; there's a common language to be found

Solutions need to be local but we can take ideas from others to create our own

So many locations, similar barriers and same issue; sometimes we feel alone but not alone here

We need a system, a bridge so we can understand each other from different cultures

You can't do this alone; networking is important

If you wait for messages to trickle down they won't be the right ones; need to be proactive

Tension between what happens on ground and policy

We need excellent communication to build partnerships using multiple intelligences to teach and share information so we deliver a rich message

Adult literacy exposes the gaps that elementary education created

Research will never change policy (a-ha moment); boots on the ground, making it political; research plays a role/applied research

There is more than one north in Canada; three territories are as different as they are similar

Residential school experience referenced often

Having one employer who understands helps us to speak with other businesses; things change when an employer can speak to an experience

We need to build cultures of learning in our own organizations

Delegates enthusiastically endorsed the idea of a pan-northern network to continue the work started at the Forum and to learn more about successful initiatives. They recognized the important role non-formal learning plays in adult learning, and the need to have the flexibility and the funding to deliver on this promise. There was already talk of another Made in the North Forum in two or three years.

Most of all, there was a sense of pride in how people in Yukon, NWT, Nunavut, and Labrador were developing innovative, made-in-the-north, programs that responded to northern needs.

“The North is growing,” said one delegate. “This conference would not have happened 20 years ago. It hits the context of where we’re living. We can bring transferable knowledge back to our communities.”

Appendix: Evaluation Findings

MADE IN THE NORTH PARTICIPANTS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY to provide feedback both during and after the event. The formal evaluation process included spot interviews and written evaluation forms as well as an online survey conducted one month after the Forum. Delegates eagerly shared their views: more than 70 percent completed the final evaluation form and more than 40 percent completed the post-Forum online survey, impressive response rates.

Here are some of the findings from the Made in the North Evaluation Report relating to learnings and outcomes.

The praise for Made in the North from participants as exceptional was unanimous. Words used to describe the event included “powerful, respectful, exciting, life-changing, inspiring, collaborative, well-organized, awesome, and moving.” According to the post-Forum survey, 72 percent said the event was better than they had expected.

Participants indicated that the event was important to them for several reasons:

- It is useful to share across the three territories the work each is doing; how people are addressing gaps and what is working.
- There is the need for a northern solution; although the territories are different they are “looking through the same lens.”
- Working together is a way to solve systemic problems because people tend to work in isolation.
- The North was described as unique with its shared issues much different from the South.

Forum Content

Overall, the feedback on the content of the event was unanimously favourable. Content that was important to participants included the focus on literacy, language, and the inclusion of culture and traditional values. The focus on northern issues and programs through the sessions and speakers was equally important. The sessions were described as “excellent” and of “high quality,” with presenters and speakers that were “provocative” and “exceptional.”

Northern-focused sessions generally resonated more with participants than did the few southern-focused sessions.

Other aspects relating to content that were rated highly included:

- table conversations;
- informal networking time;
- Paul Andrew’s keynote address;
- sessions that focussed on non-formal literacy, PLAR, and embedded literacy;
- successful initiatives; and
- the community feast at Dettah.

Major Outcomes

Participants’ top outcomes in order of importance:

1. The opportunity to network with others
2. The identification of effective practices for the North
3. The identification of shared challenges and solutions across the territories

Participants learned:

- about successful northern initiatives to address learning and essential skills — a northern approach to learning with a common language;
- to have confidence in their unique approaches to literacy and learning, including connections to traditional culture;
- commonalities across the territories;
- ideas they can use in their work;
- the importance of non-formal learning and embedding literacy into non-formal programming;
- the importance of indigenous languages to identity; and

- the importance of workplace literacy and having a northern approach that is holistic.

New and strengthened partnerships and relationships

- Sixty percent of survey respondents connected with people outside their network after the Forum.
- One person hired a consultant from the Forum.
- A business partnership was formed as a result of the Forum.
- The coalitions have been invited to a college meeting to discuss the planning of a conference.
- Learnings from the Forum are informing work on new policy directions in one territory.
- Learnings from the Forum are being used to implement new approaches to reading.
- One person will be using approaches to language revitalization learned from other territories.
- The literacy coalitions have a better understanding of what goes into an effective partnership.

Learn More

:: Forum Organizers

Made in the North Forum: <http://www.madeinthenorth.ca/>

Ilitagsiniq-the Nunavut Literacy Council: <http://www.ilitagsiniq.ca/>

NWT Literacy Council: <http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/>

Yukon Literacy Coalition: <http://www.yukonliteracy.ca/>

:: Funders

Government of Canada's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills: <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/>

Government of the Northwest Territories' Department of Education, Culture and Employment: <http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/>

Government of Nunavut's Department of Education: <http://www.edu.gov.nu.ca/>

Yukon Territorial Government's Labour Market Programs and Services, Advanced Education: <http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/advanceded/>

:: Sponsors

First Air: <http://www.firstair.ca/>

Arctic Cooperatives: <http://www.arcticco-op.com/>

The Explorer Hotel: <http://www.explorerhotel.ca/>

ACCESS BC: <http://www.accessfutures.com/>

ConocoPhillips Canada: <http://www.conocophillips.ca>



:: Projects and Organizations Referenced in this Report

Aurora College: <http://www.auroracollege.nt.ca>

Canadian Union of Public Employees: <http://cupe.ca/literacy>

Culinary Arts Institute, Métis Nation of British Columbia: <http://www.mnbc.ca/>

Dechinta: Bush University Centre for Research and Learning: <http://dechinta.ca/>

Feel the Inukness (YouTube): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iawDXQGQsro>

Goyatiko Language Society: goyatiko@ssimicro.com

Linking Essential Skills to Life Project: thorogood.consulting@gmail.com

Miqqut Project: <http://www.ilitaqsinic.ca/miqqut-project>

Native Women's Association Training Centre: <http://nativewomensnwt.com/training-centre.html>

Nunavut Arctic College: <http://www.arcticcollege.ca/>

Qikiqtani Inuit Association: <http://www.qia.ca/>

Side Door Youth Centre: <http://www.sidedooryk.com/>

Storytelling and Digital Media Lab: http://www.townofrigolet.com/home/my_word.htm

Tlicho Imbe Program: <http://tlicho.ca/node/1112>

Ulukhaktok Literacies Research Project: http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/research_by_nwt.htm

Yukon College: <http://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/>