

# YUKON FIRST NATION LITERACY FRAMEWORK WORKSHOP

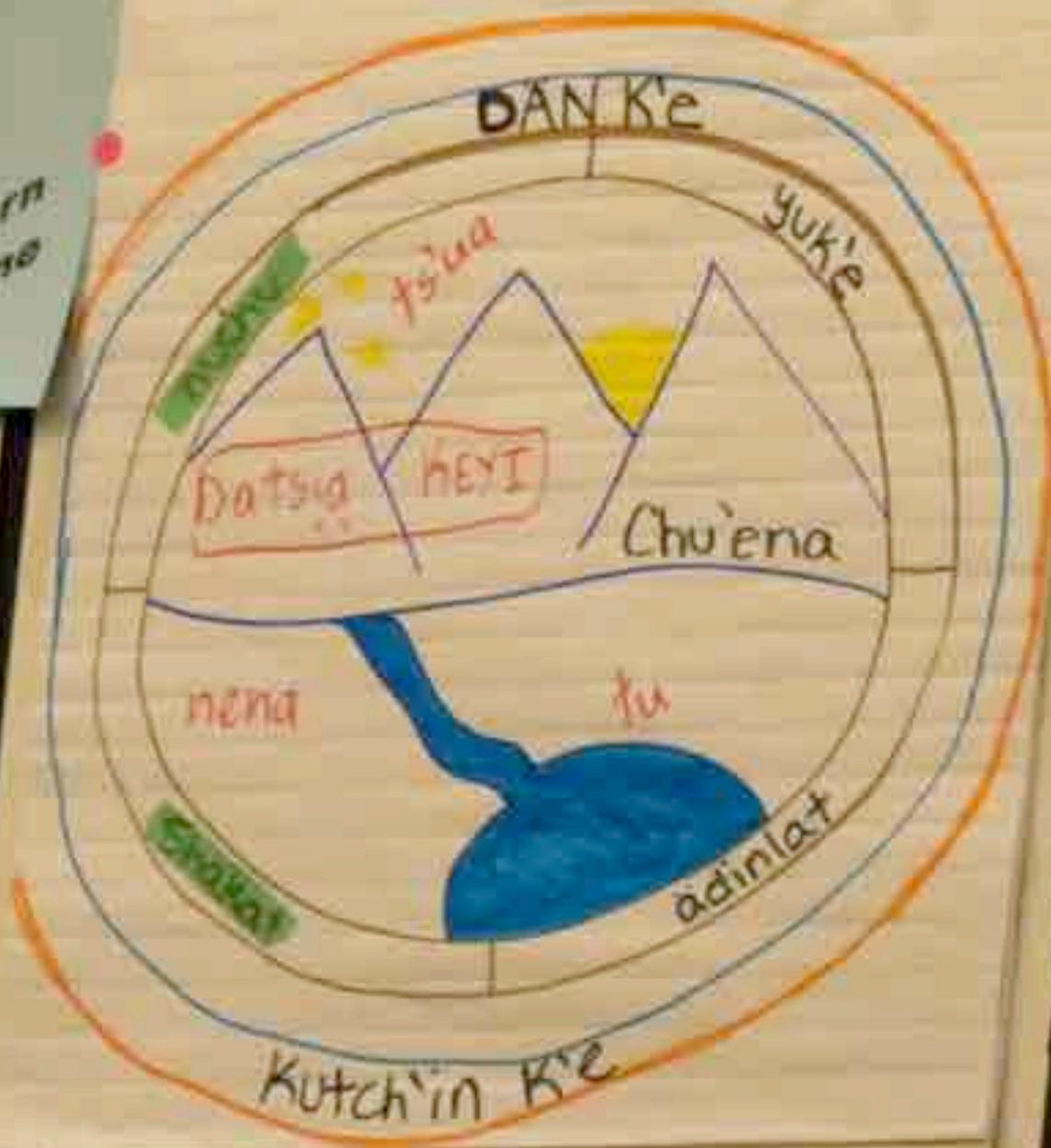
WHITEHORSE, YUKON JANUARY 22-24 2014



COUNCIL OF YUKON FIRST NATIONS  
2166 2ND AVENUE, WHITEHORSE YUKON Y1A 4P1

“Working Together, Moving Forward”

Southern  
Tutchone



Literacy is knowing who we are  
as Southern Tutchone Dan to be  
able to live in today's world

Photo: SharonShadow (presenting  
an illustration representing the  
Southern Tutchone language group  
developed during the Wishes and  
Challenges visioning session).

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## INTRODUCTION

**THIS IS THE BEGINNING - WE ARE PLANTING THE SEEDS...**

The Council of Yukon First Nations education staff, Tina Jules, Education Director, and Jenn Wykes, Programs Coordinator, are very pleased to launch the **Yukon First Nation Literacy Framework Workshop Report: Working Together, Moving Forward**. Acknowledgement and gratitude go out to Peter Johnston who provided his expertise in leading discussions and in motivating the audience throughout the workshop and to Rhoda Merkel for assisting in facilitating and writing the initial versions of this report. We would also like to express deep appreciation to CYFN Executive Director, Mi-1

chelle Kolla for her guidance and support as well as Roseanna Goodman-McDonald who initiated this project. Thank you to all dignitaries, officials, presenters, our Elders and to all workshop participants.

The Yukon First Nation Literacy Framework Workshop brought together Yukon First Nations, Yukon Government, First Nation Education Commission members, Community Education Liaison Coordinators, K-12 teachers, language teachers, curriculum developers, Elders, and other literacy stakeholders in Yukon. The intent of the workshop was to work with Yukon First Nations, alongside our partners in Yukon Education, to develop a draft Yukon First Nation Framework for Literacy focussing on cultures and languages. Woven from traditional perspectives, this framework will inform a pilot project for literacy in the upcoming year (funding dependent). The forum also provided an opportunity for Advanced



Photo:  
Peter Johnston

Education to gain feedback on the Yukon Literacy Strategy, currently under development by the Department of Education. It was understood, however, that information gathered at the workshop does not constitute formal consultations with Yukon First Nations as concerns the Yukon Literacy Strategy.

This report provides an overview of the workshop and presents a first draft of Literacy Plans for Yukon First Nations to develop further with their communities.

All Education Partnership Project (EPP) initiatives funded by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) have the goal of closing the education gap by improving YFN student learning outcomes.

This workshop aimed to:

- Lay out YFN philosophies and definitions of literacy from a traditional perspective;
- Flesh out a YFN vision with priorities and goals for literacy development;
- Identify YFN cultural perspectives and ways of knowing and doing that will support excellence in English – reading, writing, speaking and understanding (and other areas);
- Provide traditional YFN perspectives to help inform the Yukon Literacy Strategy; and
- Provide information that will shape a pilot project aimed at increasing literacy levels.

This initiative was made possible with support from our partners: all Yukon First Nations, Yukon Education and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

### **We are Working Together, Moving Forward.**



Opening prayer:  
by Francis Woolsey, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council



“Why is a Yukon First Nations perspective on literacy important?”  
 Because it is who we are and where we come from.  
I dentity!

## OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATIONS

Photo: (clockwise from top left) Selena Pye, Ingrid Johnson, Geraldine James, Elder Pearl Keenan, Colleen Segriff, Janet McDonald, Elder Dorothy Smith, Evelyn Troy and Melanie Tourangeau

Tina Jules, CYFN Director of Education, presented an overview of the Yukon First Nation Literacy Framework initiative and acknowledged Yukon Education and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) as partners in education that have helped to make this project possible.

Elders Panel: Honouring our Elders’ point of view is where all First Nation consultation begins. It was right and fitting that an Elders’ panel was staged to launch the opening, to infuse our workshop on literacy with the wisdom held in Elder perspectives. The presenters represented a cross section of the First Nations and languages across Yukon.

Dr. Judy Arnold, Director of Programs and Services, Yukon Education, presented First Nation student achievement reports compiled by the department. The information presented helped build an understanding of why data is important to improving student learning outcomes. The reports will provide the baseline data and information needed to inform education practice and improve the learning outcomes for students.

Norma Shorty’s presentation set a tone of inspiration that was referenced throughout the creation of the framework. Her Ph.D thesis describes an inland Tlingit version of what might have happened to the

ancestors of her mother Emma Shorty's clan. The Best Practices for Literacy Programs correlate with the magical moments of revelation that occurred during her research.

Dr. Alyce Johnson, Kaajèt (Crow Clan, Southern Tutchone) presented Evidence Based Literacy Success Stories in First Nation Schools. She highlighted

Yukon Literacy Strategy and sought input and feedback from the participants. The main objective was to determine how the Yukon Literacy Strategy and YFN Literacy Framework could work together. Tina Jules and Shawn Kitchen led this component of the workshop, drawing out YFN perspectives that need to be incorporated into the Literacy Strategy.



Photo: (left to right)  
Melanie Tourangeau,  
René Dove,  
Stefanie Sidney and  
Geraldine James

Aboriginal data/statistics and referenced success stories from First Nations from around the world as options to consider during our workshop.

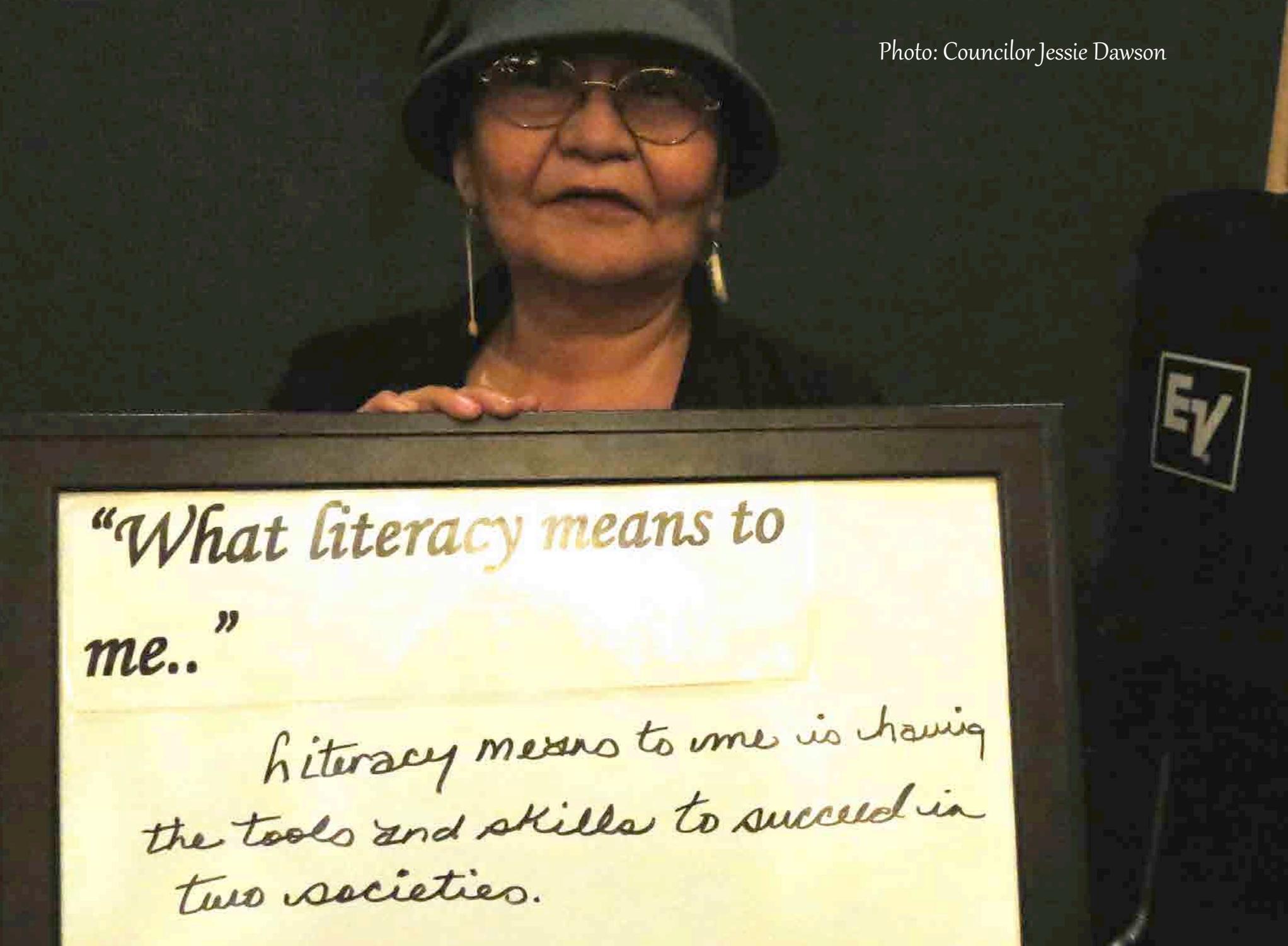
Principal Melanie Bennett discussed the benefits of *Talking Tables*, a program in Elijah Smith Elementary School led by teacher Stefanie Sidney. In a joint presentation, Melanie and Stefanie provided a background to this learning strategy using a video to showcase their successes. Importantly, they expressed their ideas around how concepts of the program could inspire discussion on culture and language integration in the YFN Literacy Framework.

Shawn Kitchen, Assistant Deputy Minister of Advanced Education, Yukon Education, presented the

With a little added humour, Dr. Albert Trask, Assistant Deputy Minister of Public Schools Branch, Yukon Education, presented a Power-Point about GEESE which he

used as a metaphor to emphasize the importance of collaboration between Yukon Education and Yukon First Nation Education stakeholders. He believes that through strong partnerships we can all realize and craft an overall literacy strategy that represents all Yukon and Yukoners.

Ed Schultz, Executive Director of Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and current Chair of the Joint Education Action Plan Working Group, presented an overview and an update on the development of the Joint Education Action Plan in support of YFN students. Ed Shultz's presentation punctuated the whole workshop with very powerful, inspirational words in the closing remarks.



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## WELCOMING COMMENTS

The workshop opened with welcoming comments provided by our dignitaries:

### COUNCILOR JESSIE DAWSON ON BEHALF OF CHIEF RICK O'BRIEN, KWANLIN DÜN FIRST NATION

"Danji, good morning.

I am honoured to be here today to welcome you to the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, which we share with the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Welcome Elders, Grand Chief Massie, Yukon Government officials, educators, support staff, ladies and gentlemen and other invited guests.

My grandmother is 92 years old. She was taking classes in our community to learn how to read and write. She learned her numbers by going to BINGO and by watching the TV screen. When she learned how to write it was like a little girl getting something she always wanted for the first time. When I went to visit her, she was so happy! She said 'grandchild, I learned how to write today. I know how to spell cat.' She spelled it out for me, 'C-A-T'. I understood how important it was for her to do this and I was happy for her. Education is so important!

I acknowledge how much work the Educators have done.

Thank you.

On behalf of Chief Rick O'Brien, the Council, and our First Nation, I would like to say Mussi Cho for inviting us and we wish you all the success in this workshop. For those of you who have travelled here, we hope you enjoy your time here in our traditional territory and that you have safe travels back to your home and to your families and communities.

Mussi Cho! Kwanachish! Thank You!"



Photo: Grand Chief Ruth Massie

*“Why is a Yukon First Nations perspective on literacy important?”*

## GRAND CHIEF RUTH MASSIE, COUNCIL OF YUKON FIRST NATIONS

Grand Chief Massie welcomed everyone to the traditional territory of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and expressed her support for the CYFN Education Yukon First Nation Literacy Framework Workshop.

Grand Chief Massie's message emphasized that "literacy is vital to the future success for all of our Nations."

She thanked all the delegates for sharing their expertise and knowledge and is glad to see us ***Moving Forward***.

Ruth Massie became interim Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations in March 2010 and was elected to Grand Chief in July 2010. In July 2013, Ruth Massie was re-elected Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations for a second consecutive three year term. She is a founding member of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council which, in 1987, re-established itself as a distinct First Nation by negotiating their separation from Kwanlin Dün First Nation. From 1989 to 1992, as a director on the board of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, she assisted with the negotiations of Ta'an Kwäch'än Council's land claim and self-government agreements.

Ruth (Mongllut) is a Wolf Clan member of the Jenny LeBarge family from Winter Crossing, Yukon Territory. Grand Chief Massie was born and raised in Whitehorse, pursuing post-secondary studies in business and commerce.

An experienced business woman, Ruth went on to serve as general manager of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council's Mundessa Development Corporation, a position she held until 2004 when she was elected Chief of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Chief Massie served two terms as Chief of Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

## HONOURABLE ELAINE TAYLOR, MINISTER OF EDUCATION

Minister Taylor welcomed the delegates. She stressed the importance of ***Working Together*** to connect the Yukon Literacy Strategy with the Yukon First Nation Literacy Framework.

Elaine Taylor was first elected to the Yukon Legislative Assembly as the MLA for Whitehorse West in the general election of November 4, 2002. She was re-elected in the general elections of October 10, 2006 and October 11, 2011. Previously, Ms. Taylor served as Deputy Premier, Minister of Community Services, Minister of Education, Minister of Environment, Minister of Justice, Minister of Tourism and Culture, Minister of the Public Service Commission and Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate. She has also served as Government House Leader, Chair of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees, Chair of the Cabinet Committee on Legislation and Chair of the Legislation Overview Committee. Prior to her election to the Yukon Legislative Assembly, Ms. Taylor served as Executive Assistant to Government Leader, Honourable John Ostashek, and as a researcher and constituency caseworker for the Yukon Party Caucus.

Born and raised in Watson Lake, Ms. Taylor attended Johnson Elementary and Watson Lake Secondary Schools. She attended Concordia College in Edmonton, Alberta, and subsequently graduated from the University of Alberta with a Bachelors of Arts degree majoring in Political Science. She resides in her electoral district with her family.



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## WE HONOUR OUR ELDERS - ELDERS PANEL

To set the tone for the Yukon First Nation Literacy Framework, Elders David Johnny, White River First Nation; Annie Bernard, Gwitch'in; Mary Battaja, First Nation of Na-Cho N'yak Dun and; Dorothy Smith, Ross River Dena Council were asked to speak on:

**WHAT LITERACY MEANS TO THEM**

*Photo: (left to right) Elder Pearl Keenan and Ingrid Johnson*

# WHAT LITERACY MEANS TO US...

## DAVID JOHNNY

David Johnny talked about his childhood. He grew up in the bush at Big Scotty Creek. They would stay there for three or four months at a time. His classroom was 24 -7. They spoke their language, learned to respect their Elders and learned about medicines. In the old days they had 'Nginza', a ceremony that involved tying a kid up to a tree and letting them stay there over a period of time. The tied up person could not move; they could not do anything. They had to sit and be quiet. This helped develop their patience. "We needed to learn this so when we hunt for beavers we could sit still and quiet watching the beaver's dam for over two hours. We have lost this." In the bush he learned to hunt. He said, "Boys became men – girls became women. We were also sent to Alaska for training to learn their ways and to help them...for NO PAY. We are lifelong learners."

## ANNIE BERNARD

Annie introduced herself in her Gwitch'in language. "I too grew up in the woods with my Grandma. We only spoke Gwitch'in. My Grandma said, 'You do good! Just keep trying. And if you don't know what to do, go ask Sara Simon.' We need each other to balance each other. All races need each other. Literacy opened everything up for me when I learned it. There is such a JOY that comes from reading. You need to learn to READ. It is self educating literacy."

## MARY BATAJA

Mary introduced herself in Northern Tutchone and again in English. Mary believes people have to apply themselves in learning their language and practice it every day. Mary was born on the land. As a

child she lived on the land. "Listen! Learn! Don't talk back to your Elders. There is always a time and a place and a reason why things happen. Pray about things when they don't work out. It is not all work – have a sense of humour. Love to laugh. Literacy was in the past, in the present, and it will be in the future. We just don't think about it until it is put before us. The Elders and I talk. We know times are changing and technology is good."

## DOROTHY SMITH

Dorothy introduced herself in the Kaska and English languages. Her native name means 'Run Like the Wind' and she was raised on the banks of the Pelly River. She has been a Wolf Clan Chief for Pelly Banks since 1992. In reference to literacy she said, "students should learn both ways." Dorothy said she is going to try to tell more legends because we are forgetting about them. She went to the residential school in Lower Post when she was eight years old. By eight she already knew how to sew. She was taught the ways of the bush. Her dad told her 'go for it – you can do whatever you want.' "Now, because of what my dad said I have the confidence to speak my mind. In Lower Post I saw children beaten for speaking their language. Language and culture is not just language; we must teach more culture." She is teaching her grandchildren all our ways, and telling her husband to teach them too. "Hunting is how a young man comes of age. After his first kill he is told that he is now a good provider, a good hunter, and a good man. There are laws about hunting like don't kill cow and calf, give meat away. But respect is number one and we must give, teach, be honest and never lie."



Photo: (left to right) Elders Dorothy Smith, Mary Battaja, Annie Bernard and David Johnny (Elder's panel).



Photos: (clockwise from top left) Elders Lizzie Hall, David Johnny, Mary Battaja and Annie Bernard.



Photo: Dr. Judy Arnold

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# SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

## YUKON FIRST NATION STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGY - "KNOWING, DOING AND WORKING TOGETHER"

DR. JUDY ARNOLD,  
DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES, YUKON EDUCATION

A questionnaire called "Questions to Consider about Knowing, Doing and Working Together" was asked to be completed by the participants and sent back to [Judith.Arnold@gov.yk.ca](mailto:Judith.Arnold@gov.yk.ca)

Being able to **walk in two worlds** is the foundation to bloom. What are the challenges?

There are fundamental tensions in:



### **Knowing:**

- We start with what we know: create shared certainty;
- We must accept responsibility *together*;
- It takes courage to say I didn't do it right.

### **Doing:**

- Demonstrating competencies and trusting enough to disclose vulnerabilities.

### **Working Together:**

- Leading and learning;
- We are not top down or bottom up – we meet in the middle.

Elders were asked:

### **How can we work together?**

- We have to tell each other we can do it. We have to take more time to work with Elders. I was afraid to be wrong in school; it made it hard to learn. We can't go against our beliefs to accomplish the overall goals of the Yukon Government.

- Working together to you means going to Chief and Council. You must consult the community. I am happy to be here, but sad too. Language and culture is who I am since I was a little girl. I have the internet in my head. We (Elders) talk from our hearts.
- We need more communications. First Nations don't sit down with other First Nations anymore. We need to get to know one another and learn from one another. If we do this, our children will follow.

### **Conditions for Learning**

Learning is a social activity that is influenced by the environment inside and outside the school and the academic, social, emotional and cultural capacity of the learner to engage in the process.

### **Data Sets Available from the Yukon Education include:**

Enrollment; attendance; students on Individual Education Plans; kindergarten data; Yukon Achievement Tests (Yukon Foundation Skills Assessments); survey data, secondary grade to grade transitions; course pass/fail rates; BC Provincial Exams; grade 11 or 12 Language Proficiency Indicator; grade 12 graduation; six year completion rate; and the secondary Exit Survey.

Data sets are helping us build a story. We are asking why? Communication is a huge piece. We are being critical when we are looking at data and evidence. What are we going to do together? It is hard, and so, we need a story.

*(The data sets for Enrollment: Self-Identified First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Students in Yukon were referenced.)*

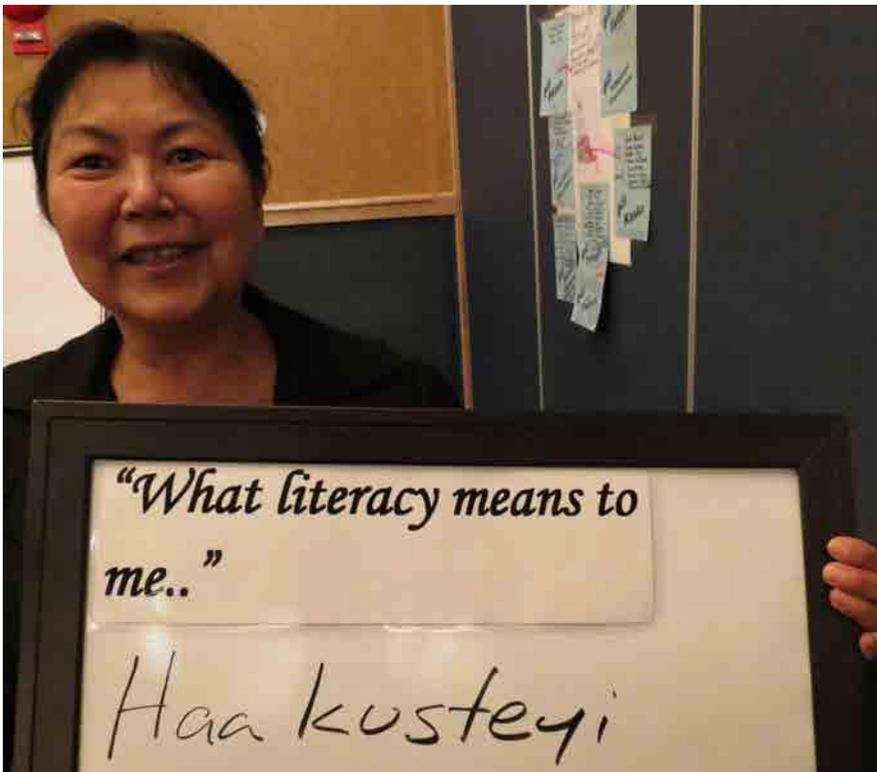


Photo: Norma Shorty

## PH.D THESIS: BEST PRACTICES FOR LITERACY PROGRAMS FOCUSING ON CULTURES AND LANGUAGES

### NORMA SHORTY, PH.D CANDIDATE

Norma walked the participants through her journey in her work to complete her Ph.D thesis. Her presentation described the research results of the Tlingit story gathering process on Kookhittaan and the Çaanax.ádi clans of Teslin, Yukon. She described an inland Tlingit version of what might have happened to the ancestors of her mother's (Emma Shorty) clan. Her work brings forward Tlingit clan and migrations stories from Teslin, Yukon and Taku Kwan, Juneau, Sitka, and Angoon, Alaska. Due to past policies of contact and colonization and sometimes Tlingit law, inland Tlingit stories were often hidden from public view. Indigenous peoples' research processes need to stand on their own (Marie Olson, Harold Jacobs, Sam Johnston, Pearl Keenan, Emma Shorty and the late Roddy Blackjack—for his side-by-side model) as do western research processes (Wilson, 2009). Norma's thesis focuses on defining Tlingit literacy frameworks as part of the dissertation writ-

ing process. She asks "how well does written and published work stand up to Tlingit literacy frameworks, which include but is not limited to petroglyphs, regalia, headbands, clan shirts and Elders' knowledges...".

Wilson, S. (2009). *Research as Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.



Photo: Dr. Alyce Johnson

## EVIDENCE-BASED LITERACY SUCCESS STORIES IN FIRST NATION SCHOOLS

### DR. ALYCE JOHNSON, KAAJÈT (CROW CLAN, SOUTHERN TUTCHONE)

In the opening of Alyce's presentation we looked at statistics for Aboriginal Education in Canada. Aboriginal peoples make up 3.8 % of Canada's population. Alyce pointed out that governments are planning around the labour market. She encouraged us to consider this when planning our literacy framework.

How do we increase graduation rates among Aboriginal students? South Australia, Nova Sco-

tia, N.W.T. and an online school were used to illustrate success stories. These case studies showed how learners can be immersed in culture and language whereby parents sign a contract committing to live a cultural lifestyle. To be successful, this method must begin early in literacy instruction. Indigenous knowledge and methods of learning have been acknowledged as an eighth intelligence by Howard Gardner, the renowned author of the book *Frames of Mind*.

How do we want to create a multilingual, culturally aware student?

- With experiential learning on the land, using technology;
- Have a First Nation perspective and attitude;
- Get them while they are young;
- Be Bold, Be Strong—make a statement about what you want to see in the next 25 yrs.



Photo: (left to right) Jeanette Gallant and Dr. Judy Arnold

## WISE, STRONG AND NEW: EFFECTIVE LITERACY APPROACHES FOR K-12 STUDENTS

DR. JUDY ARNOLD,  
DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS AND  
SERVICES, YUKON EDUCATION

DEB GOHL,  
SECONDARY PROGRAMS  
CONSULTANT AND  
JEANNETTE GALLANT,  
INTERMEDIATE PROGRAMS  
CONSULTANT

Vision Statement: Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing are good for all learners.

Dr. Judy Arnold, Deb Gohl and Jeannette Gallant gave a presentation on the Network of Inquiry and Innovation (NOII) which gave rise to the Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network (AESN). A video was shown to promote the benefits of this networked inquiry-based initiative.

Three ways Yukon Education is promoting **'Moving Forward'** is by weaving:

- **Wise:** traditions informed by the wisdom of our local First Nations' teachings;
- **Strong:** knowledge about teaching and learning informed by educational research and evidence-based practice;
- **New:** attention to new, innovative practices that keep First Nations' knowledge relevant and vibrant.

Currently, in Yukon schools, oral traditions, on the land experiences, the incorporation of traditional

knowledge and culture into literacy content and approaches, Elders in the school and the *NorthWind* books, are priorities.

It is by drawing on the wisdom of First Nations, by opening up our thinking and paying attention to evidence, that we will weave the way forward. This shapes the basis of work to be implemented.

How are we going to move together for our kids?: with inquiry-mindedness and by weaving **Wise, Strong and New.**



Photo: Melanie Bennett

## CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE LITERACY ACTIVITIES THAT IMPROVE READING AND WRITING: TALKING TABLES

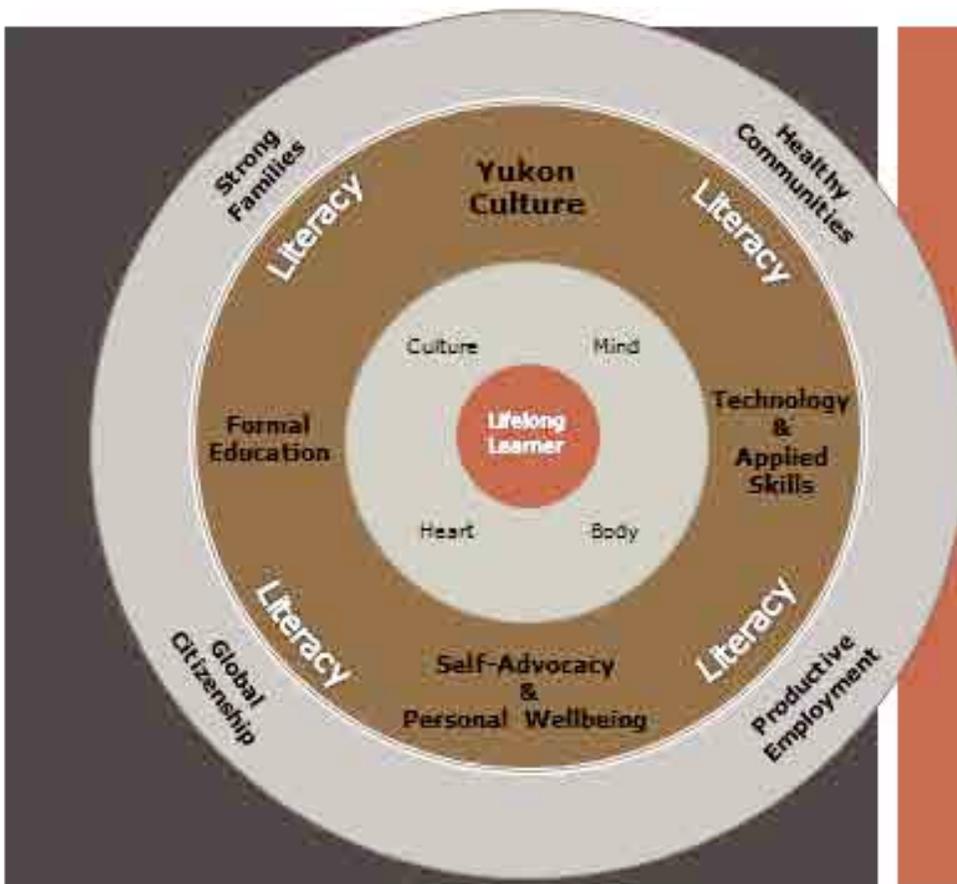
MELANIE BENNETT, PRINCIPAL  
AND STEFANIE SIDNEY, TEACHER  
ELIJAH SMITH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Melanie was told by a principal that she would never succeed. She was determined to prove him wrong. Her success is proven in her work in schools over the past 22 years. She has worked on the front line supporting First Nation children and advocating for cultures and languages. She used the story of the Wampum Belt from the Anishnabee First Nation to explain the importance of being able to walk in both worlds. The Wampum Belt is made of two lines of blue beads on both sides of lines of white beads. The white beads represent a canoe; the blue beads are the water. One side is the native world; the other the non-native world. Her uncle told her when she was patronized and told she would not succeed, 'you just tell that principal not to tip your canoe.'

Melanie is now the principal of Elijah Smith Elementary School. Her school offers a program called *Talking Tables* to promote literacy among her students. A video was shown to highlight how Stefanie, a Teslin Tlingit woman and a teacher at Elijah Smith, is implementing the program. Students use chant, auditory, vocabulary phonological awareness and fluency activities to learn language. This method of instruction could be applied to any First Nation culture and language teaching. Stefanie said she is "glad to be in the age to see the indigenizing of teaching strategies."



Photo: Stefanie Sidney



within differing social and cultural contexts that are necessary for an individual to participate confidently and fully as a citizen in a changing society.

**Goal:** Yukoners embrace life-long learning and have the literacy skills they need to succeed on their own terms at school, at work, within their families and as member of diverse communities.

## YUKON LITERACY STRATEGY

### SHAWN KITCHEN, ADM ADVANCED EDUCATION, YUKON EDUCATION

Over the past year, Advanced Education has been leading a working group comprised of literacy stakeholders, government departmental representatives and community agencies to work on a Yukon-wide Literacy Strategy. Shawn presented the working draft of the strategy in its current form as follows:

**Visual Diagram:** Literacy Wheel (above)

**Vision Statement:** Yukon’s vision is an enduring culture of literacy.

**Philosophies:** The new literacy strategy will set strategic direction for early childhood, K-12, and adults, recognizing the life-long learning continuum for the next ten years.

**Definition of Literacy:** In Yukon, life-long literacy encompasses a wide set of skills and competencies



Photo: Shawn Kitchen

### Next Steps for Improving Literacy:

#### Objectives:

Awareness – increase understanding of literacy and its importance.

Opportunity and Achievement – Provide a variety of equitable, accessible and innovative programs to

support people in achieving a desirable standard of literacy.

Quality – Ensure programs meet quality and cultural standards.

Partnerships – Build and maintain coordination and partnerships amongst literacy stakeholders.

Shawn facilitated a brainstorming session with the goal of teasing out individual ideas on how the Yukon Literacy Strategy and the Yukon First Nation Literacy Framework could work together. The following is a synopsis of the outcome of the session.

*Brainstorming Question:*

**How will the Yukon First Nation Literacy Framework and the Yukon Literacy Strategy connect and support one another?**

Feedback from the participants (in no particular order) is as follows:

- The Yukon Literacy Strategy is one part of the whole;
- Better communication is required between groups;
- You must meet with First Nations at the community level;
- Employment services in the community are required;
- It needs to be embedded, not connected;
- By establishing respectful relationships with YFN communities, coordinating implementation of programs/services and by ensuring that YFN values beliefs, cultures and languages are integral to the process;
- You must consider First Nations as partners, not stakeholders;
- The Yukon Literacy Strategy seems to focus on specific outcomes. The First Nation perspective is focused on the whole person and on community;
- Literacy for everyone (leadership, community, family, child);
- Indigenize delivery strategies and resources to validate identities and to resonate;
- Community healing for those enduring the effects of residential schools – so parents/grandparents can support their children;
- Yukon Literacy Strategy encompasses all stakeholders;
- Provide validation;
- Accessible, inclusive, living document – always remembering the children;
- Are the needs of our special needs students being met?
- Shared working groups – like this!
- Objectives must include reference to personal identity and culture (language);
- Carry the message together – work with each First Nation and Elders – work with communities to build understanding and provide support;
- A specific First Nation objective be added to the Yukon Literacy Strategy vision, goals, and objectives;
- Recognize and respect commonalities and differences – both are valid and important perspectives;
- Environmental scan of First Nation literacy services be completed – CELCs utilized to administer surveys;
- Community-based!
- Always be grounded by... *Together for our Children Tomorrow*;
- Strengthen First Nations' languages and cultures;
- Support each other through respectful dialogue;

- Integrity, quality, balance, open communication – programs to address First Nations’ needs;
- YFN Literacy Framework will provide plain-speak benefit;
- Share information with each group and remember we are working *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow*;
- Yukon First Nation languages and cultures are integral;
- Finding common ground;
- Establish relationships – understand what the two groups are doing - and communicate respectfully;
- Coordination on implementation (the relationship that is established during development is carried on into implementation);
- That we don’t lose our (YFN) core values, beliefs and understandings in the process;
- Coordination of programs – working in synchrony; and
- Indigenous framework and methodologies.



Photo: (left to right) Janet McDonald, Dorothy Smith, Ingrid Johnson, Linda McDonald and Betsy Jackson



Photo: (left to right) Roberta Hager, Enna Vitrekwa, Annie Bernard, Helen Loots

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## BREAKOUT SESSIONS

The following breakout sessions were designed to generate a response to the Yukon Literacy Strategy and provide Yukon First Nation perspectives on their literacy goals and needs; to begin the development of local frameworks representing the First Nation culture/language groups and; design a draft Yukon First Nation Literacy Framework held in common by all Yukon First Nations.



## LINKING THE YUKON FIRST NATION LITERACY FRAMEWORK WITH THE YUKON LITERACY STRATEGY

TINA JULES, CYFN EDUCATION DIRECTOR

AND SHAWN KITCHEN, ADM ADVANCED EDUCATION, YUKON EDUCATION

In the work of connecting First Nation perspectives on literacy with the Yukon Literacy Strategy, the following questions were asked:

**“Is there a gap in the Yukon Literacy Strategy around culture and language, and if so, how can we fill it?”**

**“How do the two come together?”**

**“What are the opportunities for working together and for advancing both?”**

## **Workshop Outcomes:**

### **YFN Perspectives on the Yukon Literacy Strategy:**

The comments in **BLUE** were additions and edits added collaboratively during this workshop.

#### **Vision:**

Yukon's vision is an enduring culture of literacy including Yukon First Nations' languages and cultures.

#### **Goal:**

All Yukoners embrace life-long learning and have the literacy skills they need to succeed on their own terms at school, at work, within their families and as members of diverse communities

#### **Objectives:**

Awareness – increase understanding of literacy and its importance to all Yukoners.

Opportunity and Achievement – Provide a variety of equitable, accessible and innovative programs to support people in attaining a desirable standard of literacy.

Quality – Ensure programs meet quality and cultural standards.

Partnerships – Build and maintain coordination and partnerships amongst literacy stakeholders.

Language fluency and cultural competency grounded in traditional law and land-based learning opportunities that teach respect for self, others, land and water.

#### **Outcomes:**

##### **Early Years:**

- Children and parents are using First Nation languages at home.

- Children are meeting developmental milestones including traditional First Nation 'milestones'.
- Children come to kindergarten prepared to learn.
- Language immersion – Headstart programs for all First Nation language groups.

##### **School Age:**

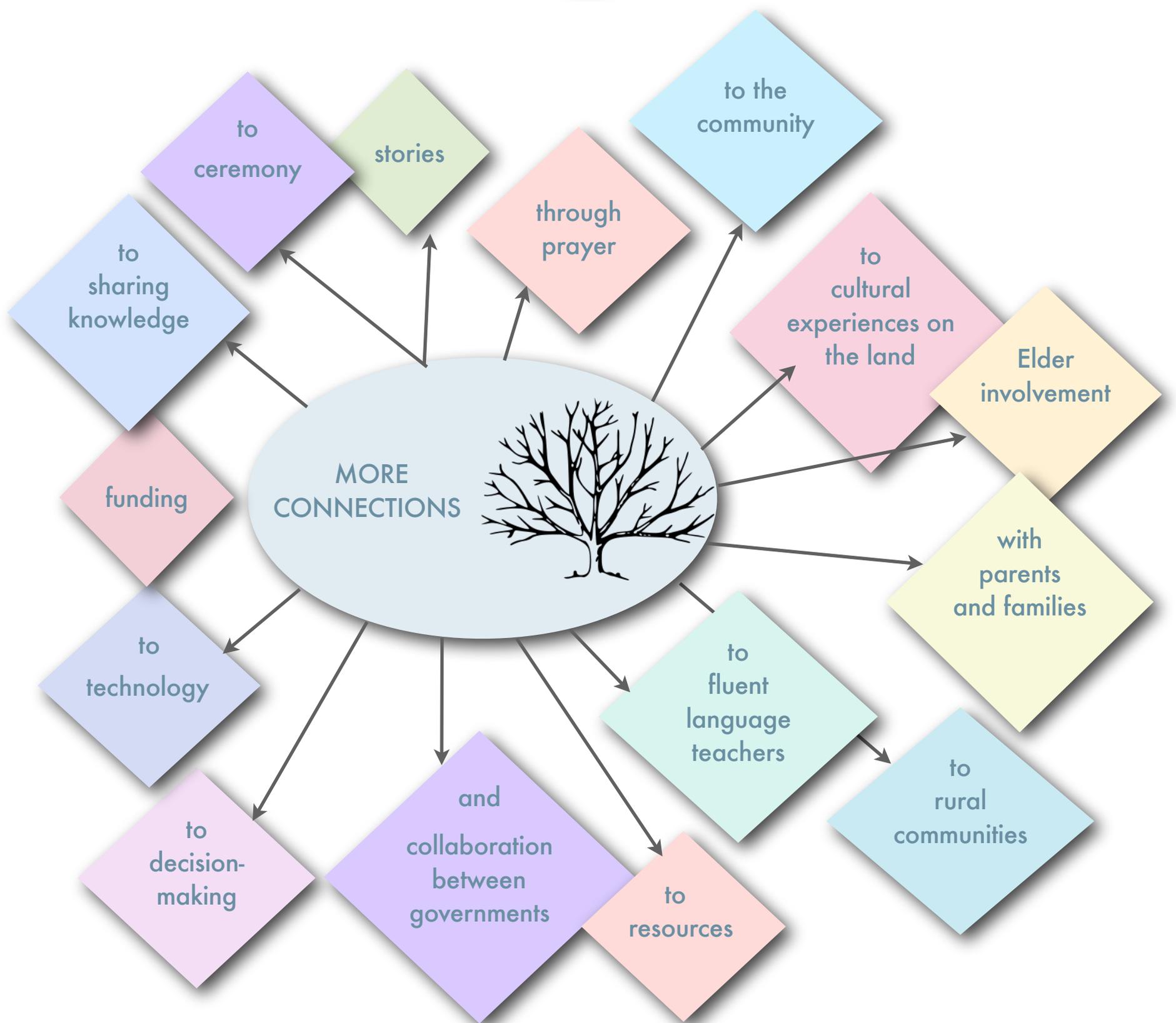
- First Nation students go through coming-of-age training.
- First Nation students know who they are and where they come from based on traditional law.
- Students meet or exceed acceptable standards in Language Arts (grades 4, 7, and 10).
- High school Dogwood Completion within 6 years of Grade 8.
- Successful transitions from Grade 8 to 9, and 9 to 10.
- Improved overall graduation rate.
- Improved numbers of students who have successfully completed their program of study as identified in their Individual Education Plan.
- Improved language fluency.
- Increased opportunities to learn about First Nation culture and traditional laws at all grade levels.

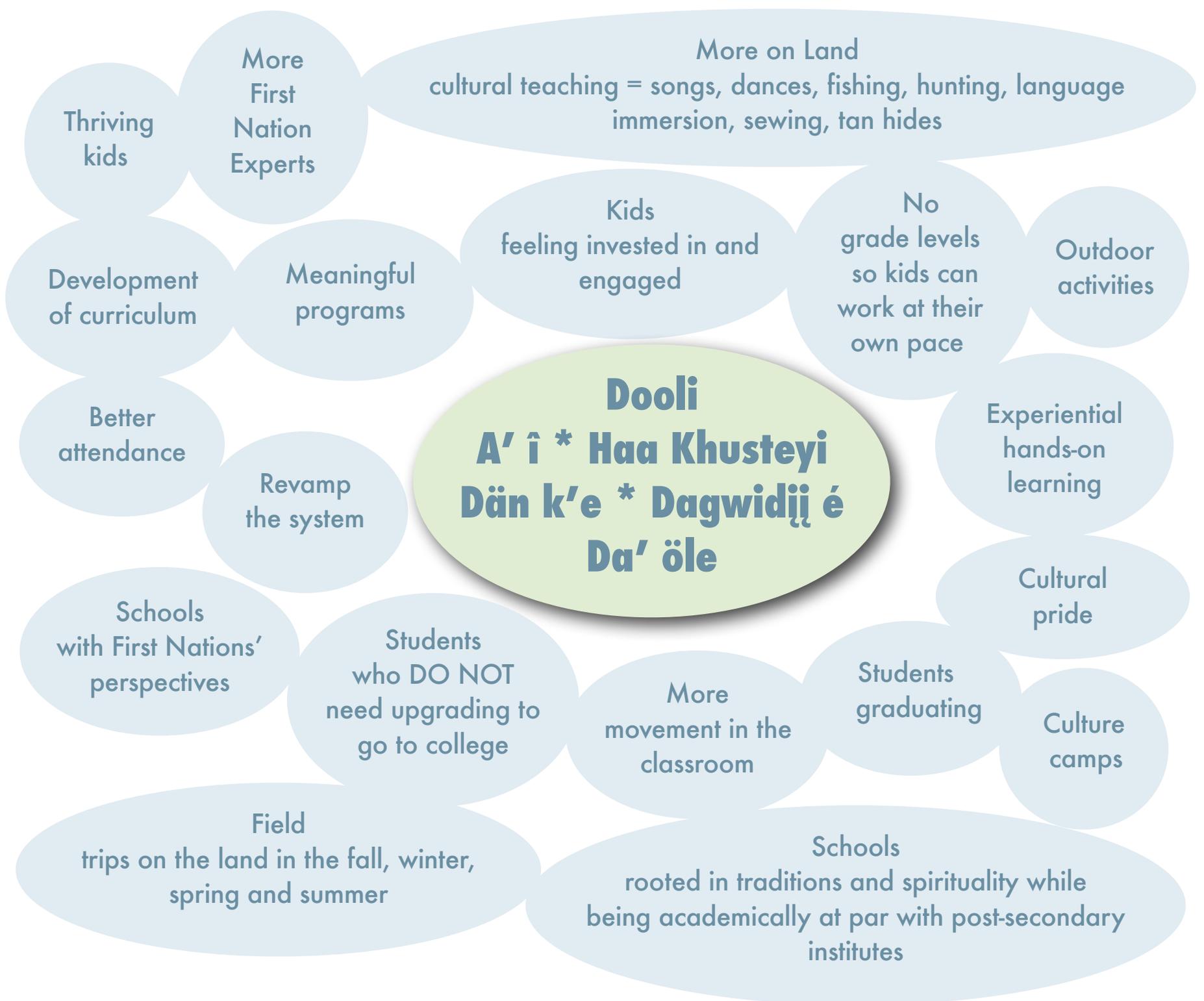
##### **Adult:**

- First Nation people are fluent in their language and able to teach and communicate in that language.
- Improved scores on international literacy surveys.
- Individuals have achieved a high percentage of the goals in their action plans.
- All learners become stewards of the land.

# What do you WISH the path to our future to look like?

## # 1 BACK TO THE LAND





### Challenges in moving forward:

Funding – people volunteering their free time – outcomes required to be successful in high stakes testing like BCP's – pressure on students to do many things that they have no time for: camps, etc. – drugs and peer pressure – political hurdles – teachers unable to go the extra mile – attendance – political red tape – not enough career planning with students – reinventing the wheel – insufficient resources to help all the different levels of learning in one classroom – lack of understanding, desire to change – education system based on book learning.

*“The link between our past and our future is getting thinner and thinner.  
NOW is the time to Move Forward.”*

(Quote by Ed Schultz)

Our Yukon First Nations literacy vision is for life-long learners to walk in both worlds to empower the present and future generations to be competent citizens <sup>through</sup> FN's traditional laws, knowledge, languages & cultures.

Yukon's vision is an: "enduring culture of literacy" respecting YFN laws, languages & culture as expressed in the YFN literacy framework.



## CREATING THE YUKON FIRST NATION LITERACY FRAMEWORK

Photo: (top right) Geraldine James and (bottom left) Colleen Joe

The Umbrella Final Agreement process was referenced to illustrate the process we would use to create a Yukon First Nation Literacy Framework. It is clearly understood that this is not a final framework, but rather one that will require further input, fine tuning and feedback from each community— The framework is a living document that will change and evolve.

The Yukon First Nation participants were assigned to the cultural/ language group they affiliated with. There are eight language groups in the Yukon.

The language groups were organized into the following five groups::

1. Southern Tutchone
2. Northern Tutchone/Upper Tanana
3. Tlingit/Tagish
4. Kaska
5. Hän/Gwitch'in



Each group created a local framework with the following components:

- **Philosophies:** What does literacy mean to us?
- **Definitions of Literacy:** This is our definition of literacy.
- **Visual Metaphor:** This picture/illustration shows what literacy means to us.
- **Vision Statement:** “Our hopes, our dreams” and “our vision”
- **Priorities:** (brainstorm)
- **Goals:** (prioritize as goals)
- **Next Steps for Improving Literacy:** (actions needed)

The outcomes of this exercise resulted in a first draft of local literacy frameworks.

# GWITCH'IN AND HÄN

*Dagwidj'ë / Da' öle* (Our entire traditional/cultural First Nation way of life.)

**Participants:**

**Vuntut Gwitch'in First Nation:** Annie Bernard, Glenna Tetlich, Enna Vitrekwa, Gary Njootli

**Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation:** Melanie Bennett

**Recorders:** Anne Moore, Ashley Doiron

**Vision Statement:** A school that is open to all students based in our First Nation philosophies.

**Philosophy:** We want to live Dagwidj'ë everyday with the freedom to move forward, with confidence, balance and vision.

**Definitions of Literacy:** The process of literacy is watching, seeing, doing, and practicing. It results in the learner having the ability to accomplish the task at hand. Literacy develops self-awareness and the opportunity to explore using all resources available.

**Goals:** To develop life-long learners with balanced literacy skills who can succeed on their own terms as a member of our First Nation and in the global society; we can learn together and develop balanced students who can walk in both worlds.

**Next Steps for Improving Literacy:**

- use technology to capture our living libraries known as our Elders' songs, stories and drumming to use in ceremonies
- more Elder representatives in all schools
- to develop an assessment that is valid to/of/for First Nations learners
- to create First Nation schools in all the communities in the Yukon and build capacity of First Nation people to work in the schools



**Visual Metaphor:** This picture/illustration shows what literacy means to us.

## NORTHERN TUTCHONE AND UPPER TANANA

**Dooli** (*Our entire traditional/cultural First Nation way of life.*)

### **Participants:**

**First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun:** Roberta Hager, Mary Battaja

**Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation:** Melanie Tourangeau

**Selkirk First Nation:** Lizzie Hall, Gina Gill

**White River First Nation:** Bessie Chasse, Ruth Johnny, David Johnny

**Vision Statement:** To have citizens follow Dooli through lifelong learning and teaching; to empower strong, confident and independent people with genuine common grounds.

**Philosophies:** Incorporating Dooli into all aspects of literacy is essential. Dooli considers the whole picture of an individual and life on earth, from birth to the next life. It teaches survival, recognition, respect for the land, plants, people and the Creator. It is common sense actualized.

**Definitions of Literacy:** Dooli literacy is to communicate and express by seeing, hearing, listening and doing, values, expressing wants, needs thoughts, knowledge, experience and life skills that allow independence.

**Goals:** To teach and empower people through language and culture by getting people involved to preserve in consideration of future generations.

### **Next Steps for Improving Literacy:**

- culture camps/immersion camps
- teach Dooli Law
- involve Elders in culture and language
- create an inviting environment for all
- update language



**Visual Metaphor:** This picture/illustration shows what literacy means to us.

## TLINGIT AND TAGISH

**Haa Khusteyi** (*Our entire traditional/cultural First Nation way of life.*)

### **Participants:**

**Teslin Tlingit Council:** Connie Jules, Norma Shorty, Danielle Sheldon, George Bahm, Stephanie Sidney, Pearl Keenan, Susan Smith, Ingrid Johnson

**Carcross Tagish First Nation:** Geraldine James

**Vision Statement:** Our Vision is to have lifelong learners grounded in their own culture, language and identity! in order to be a successful GLOBAL CITIZEN.

**Philosophies:** We would like a school of our own: First Nation owned and operated by us using Clan knowledge – a Clan structured school.

**Definitions of Literacy:** Literacy is Haa Khusteyi.

**Goals:** To learn our language and culture with authority and jurisdiction (take control): to develop and implement our own literacy strategy.

### **Next Steps for Improving Literacy:**

- immerse in language learning programming - on the land learning
- resource and technology: singing, drumming and ceremony
- traditional knowledge clan teachings
- learn about our agreements in the education system
- indigenizing teaching strategies
- adopting legislation: empowering our Elders
- we need research and documentation presented to First Nations
- resource sharing: nation to nation collaboration
- WE be the teachers
- establish a Council of Movers and Shakers



**Visual Metaphor:** This picture/illustration shows what literacy means to us.

# KASKA

Á î / Ilata (Our entire traditional/cultural First Nation way of life.)

## Participants:

**Liard First Nation:** Helen Loots, Janet McDonald, Selena Pye, Linda McDonald

**Ross River Dena Council:** Dorothy Smith

**Recorder:** Colleen Segriff

**Vision Statement:** We want fluency in the Kaska language, competency in our culture, pride in knowing who we are, where we come from and the ability to live successfully in two worlds. (We want local control over language and culture with a fully funded cultural centre.)

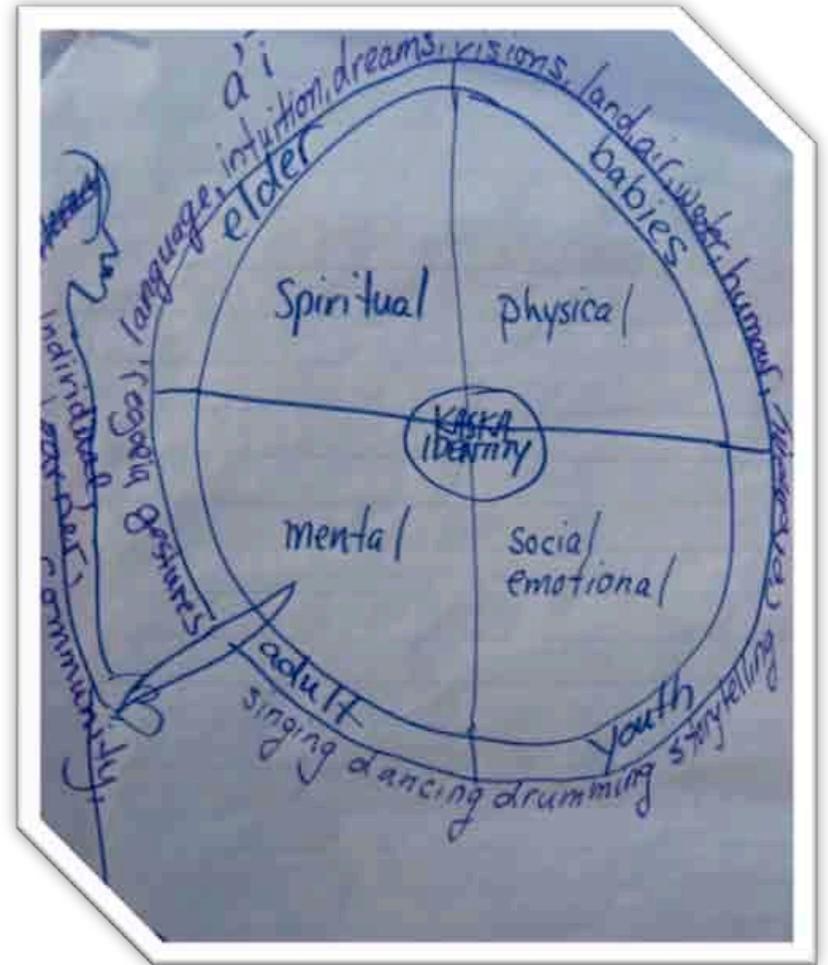
**Philosophies:** To see students successful in both worlds, for them to be healthy in all areas (spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional) and for them to have Kaska pride.

**Definitions of Literacy:** Ilata

**Goals:** To produce fluent Kaska teachers; to develop a K to 12 Kaska curriculum with a scope and sequence so you can go from a beginner to a fluent speaker; to have Elders and community members teach Kaska culture at the Kaska Cultural Centre and House of Learning.

## Next Steps for Improving Literacy:

- encourage First Nation leadership to make this a funding priority
- develop Talking Table materials to use in Kaska class at the elementary level and encourage oral language and natural conversation
- research Cultural Centre possibilities – what we would like and possible locations
- start using language while sewing; host a lunch where only Kaska is spoken; video conference with UBC to host Kaska learning opportunities with Ross River and Watson Lake; conduct research of universities that offer accredited language programs; create a website for Kaska language resources that honours all dialects; meeting of fluent speakers to market and value Kaska and encourage people to speak Kaska
- create one lesson for a Kaska Talking Table (song, rhyme, animals)
- using Dane-zaa curriculum as a model, create Kaska K-12 language and culture curriculum
- Master Apprentice programs; summer immersion camps; develop on-line materials and have families learning the language together



**Visual Metaphor:** This picture/illustration shows what literacy means to us.

## SOUTHERN TUTCHONE

**Dän K'e** (*Our entire Traditional/Cultural First Nation way of life.*)

### Participants:

**Champagne and Aishihik First Nation:** Colleen Joe-Titus, Sharon Shadow

**Ta'an Kwäch'än Council:** Frances Woolsey, Betsy Jackson

**Kwanlin Dün First Nation:** Pat Joe

**Recorders:** Evelyn Troy, Therese Lindsay, Tannis Preete

**Vision Statement:** We want our people to know who they are and be the best they can be; to be empowered to have Southern Tutchone identity [and live] in both worlds.

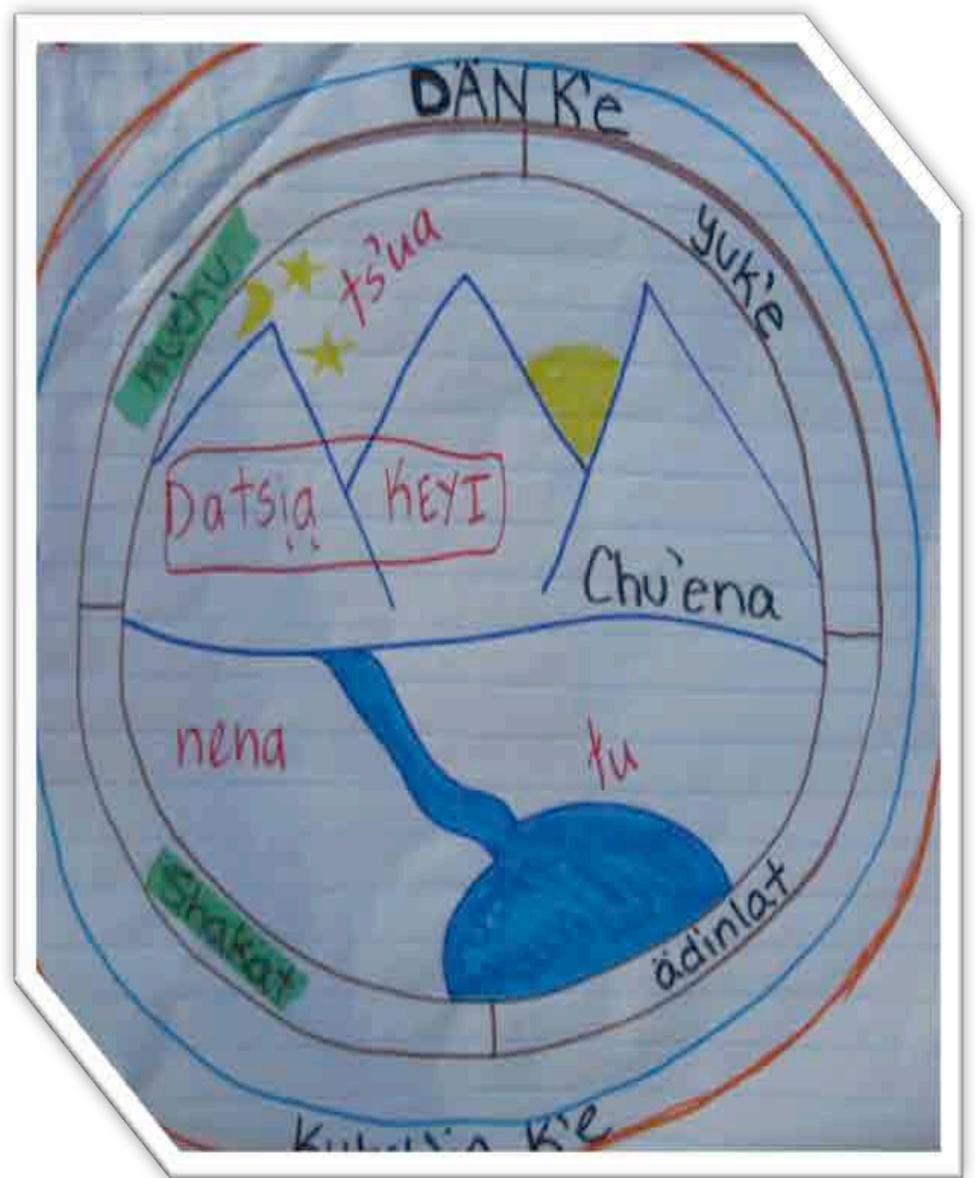
**Philosophies:** Revitalize Southern Tutchone language and culture by being able to read the land, know and live the clan system, and by making a paradigm shift of what success looks like. Literacy is the responsibility of everyone.

**Definitions of Literacy:** Literacy is to know who we are as Southern Tutchone Dän and be able to live Dän K'e in today's world.

**Goals:** More funding to empower parents to become more involved in their children's education, and to have more engagement with Elders in the education process so they can pass on their on-the-land teachings, stories, language, songs and skills.

### Next Steps for Improving Literacy:

- schools need to create a safe, welcoming environment
- create a "parents club" to empower and teach
- expand Elder in school program to having a full time Elder in all schools and communities
- access to land-based programming
- secure long-term funding



**Visual Metaphor:** This picture/illustration shows what literacy means to us.

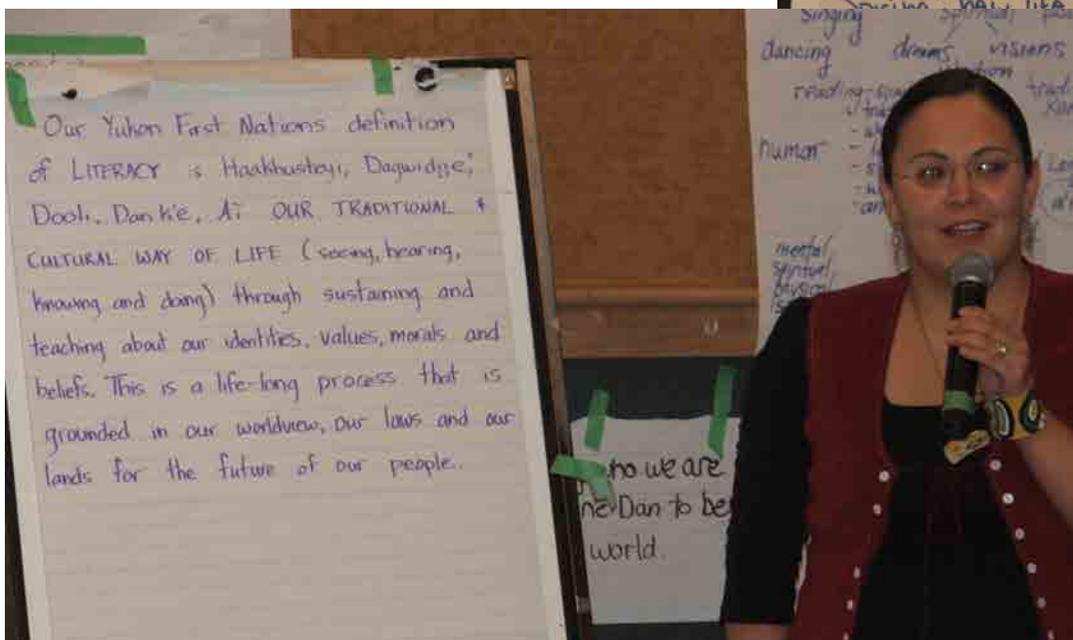
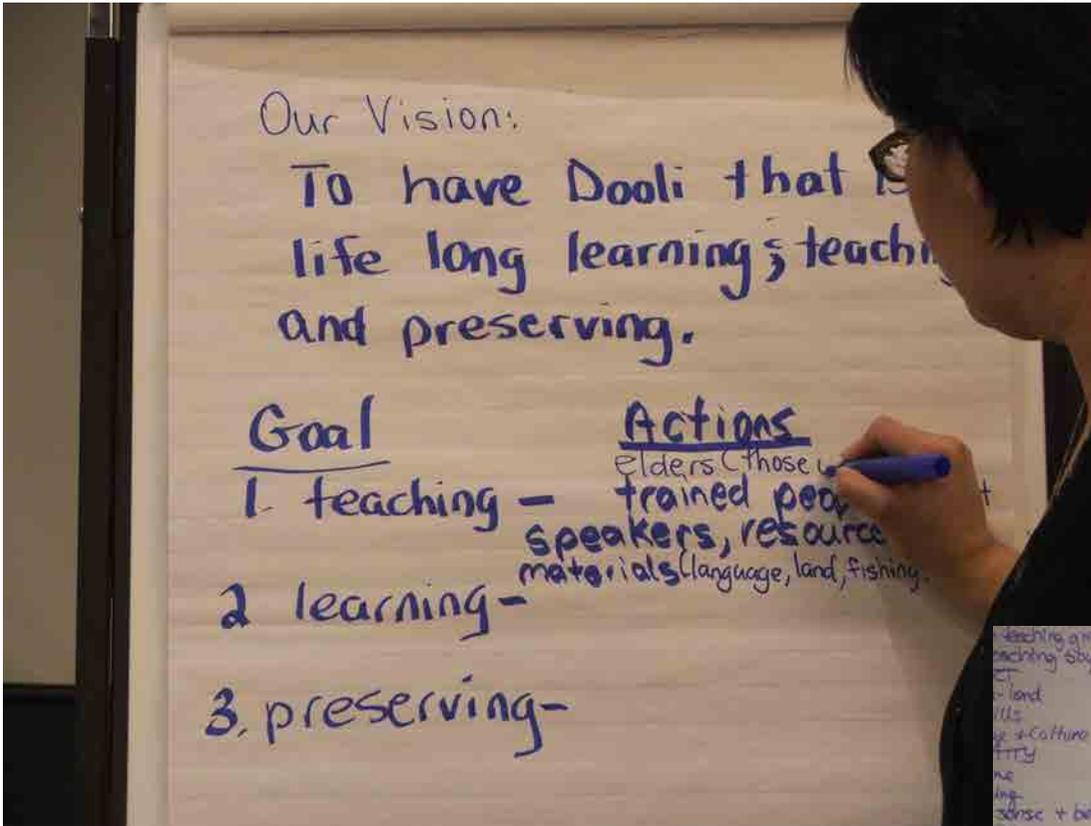
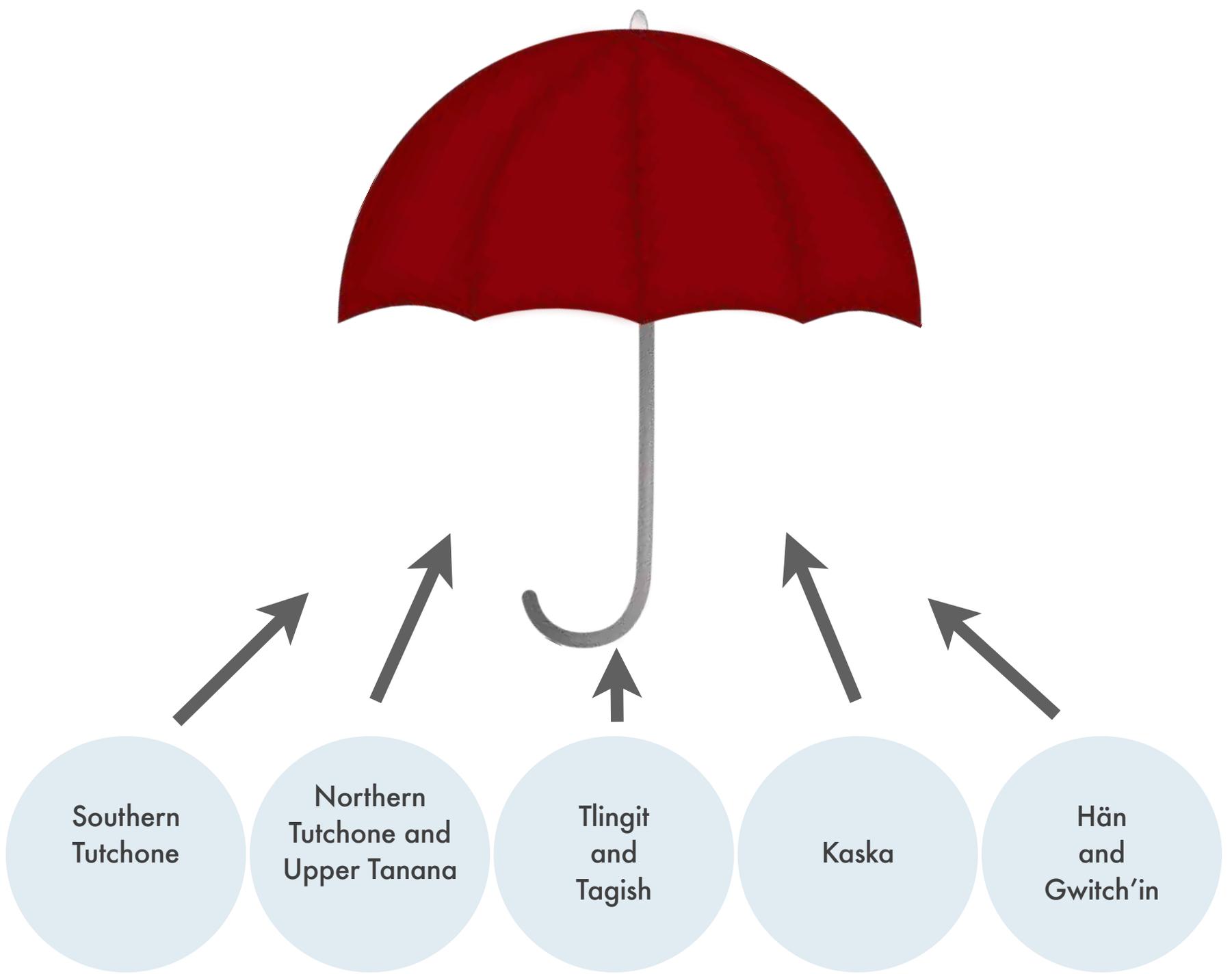


Photo: participants hard at work; (clockwise from top left) Melanie Tourangeau, Elder Pearl Keenan, Roberta Hager, Glenna Tetlich, Stefanie Sidney and Janet and Linda McDonald

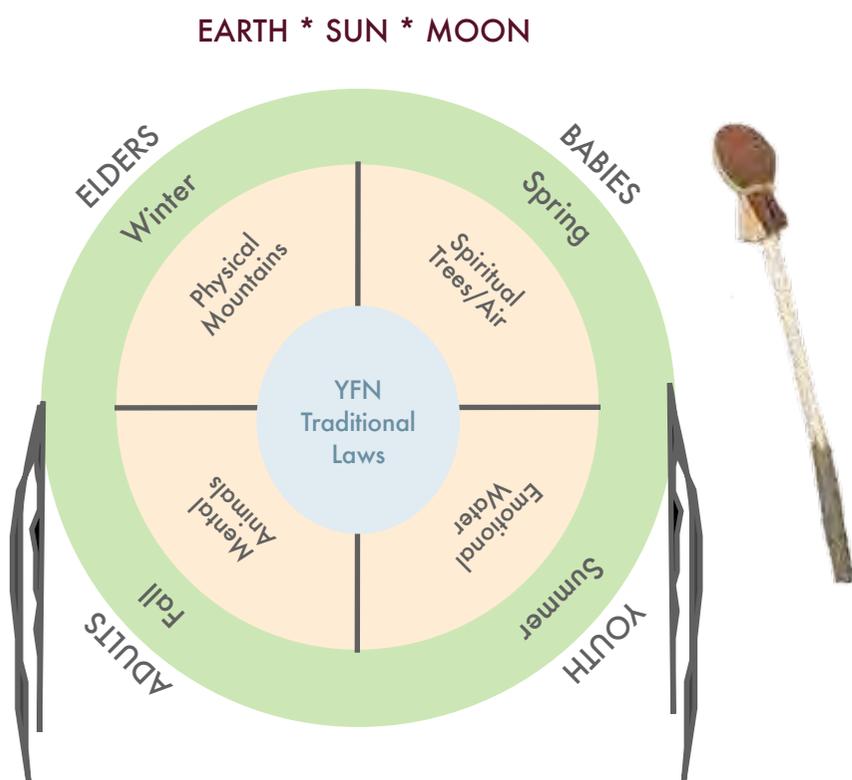


## THE YUKON FIRST NATION LITERACY FRAMEWORK

Once the groups completed the activity of developing a literacy framework specific to each language group, they reassembled into the larger group to shape *plant seeds* for a Yukon First Nation Literacy (umbrella) Framework. This framework contains the common elements drawn from the individual draft literacy frameworks representing the cultural/language regions.

# YUKON FIRST NATIONS LITERACY FRAMEWORK

## OUR ENTIRE TRADITIONAL CULTURAL WAY OF LIFE



**Visual Metaphor:** This picture/illustration shows what literacy means to us.

**Vision Statement:** By working together in both worlds; through traditional knowledge, language and culture; to have lifelong learners and to empower the present and future generations.

**Philosophies:** Our traditional cultural way of life is seeing, knowing and doing through sustaining and teaching about our identities, values, morals and beliefs. This is a life-long process that is grounded in our world views, our laws, our languages and our lands for the future of our people.

**Definitions of Literacy:** Haa Khusteyi; Dagwidijje; Dooli; Dän k'e; A'î/Ilata; Da' öle

**Goals:** Language fluency and cultural competency grounded in traditional law and land-based learning opportunities that teaches respect for self, others and the land. We would like to open a First Nation school based on First Nation philosophy, spirituality, language and traditions which supports parent and Elder involvement in all traditional and academic learning.

### Next Steps for Improving Literacy:

- Encourage language fluency using immersion camps, immersion K to 3 in schools, grade 1 – 12 half day immersion and informal community based events.
- Revise YFN Language legislation making FN Languages official.
- Build resources and technology to share between nations.
- First Nations schools become a mandate; collectively build the capacity of First Nations to work in schools starting at the community level to direct leadership.
- Outside classroom involvement by inviting Elders and parents to participate in winter/summer camps on the land, incorporate coming of age and training ceremonies.



Photo: (left to right) Elder Lizzie Hall, Melanie Bennett and Dr. Judy Arnold

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## CONCLUSION

Yukon First Nation literacy statistics on YFN Languages and the English language reflect the need for all partners to coordinate and collaborate efforts for improving the literacy rates. These efforts are pertinent across the spectrum of lifelong learning: early childhood; kindergarten to grade 12 and adult literacy.

There are 14 Yukon First Nations in the Yukon, with 8 distinct languages. Eleven of the 14 Yukon First Nations are self-governing. The Yukon First Nation Literacy Workshop hosted in January of 2014 brought many Yukon First Nations together to begin the process of identifying visions, philosophies, definitions and priorities for literacy among specific language groups as well as Yukon First Nations as a collective. In large part, the final product produced, the Yukon First Nation Literacy Framework, provides insight and some clarity for all literacy stakeholders as it concerns Yukon First Nation perspectives on literacy. This framework will undergo further development and localization with each Yukon First Nation over the next one to three years, pending financial supports.

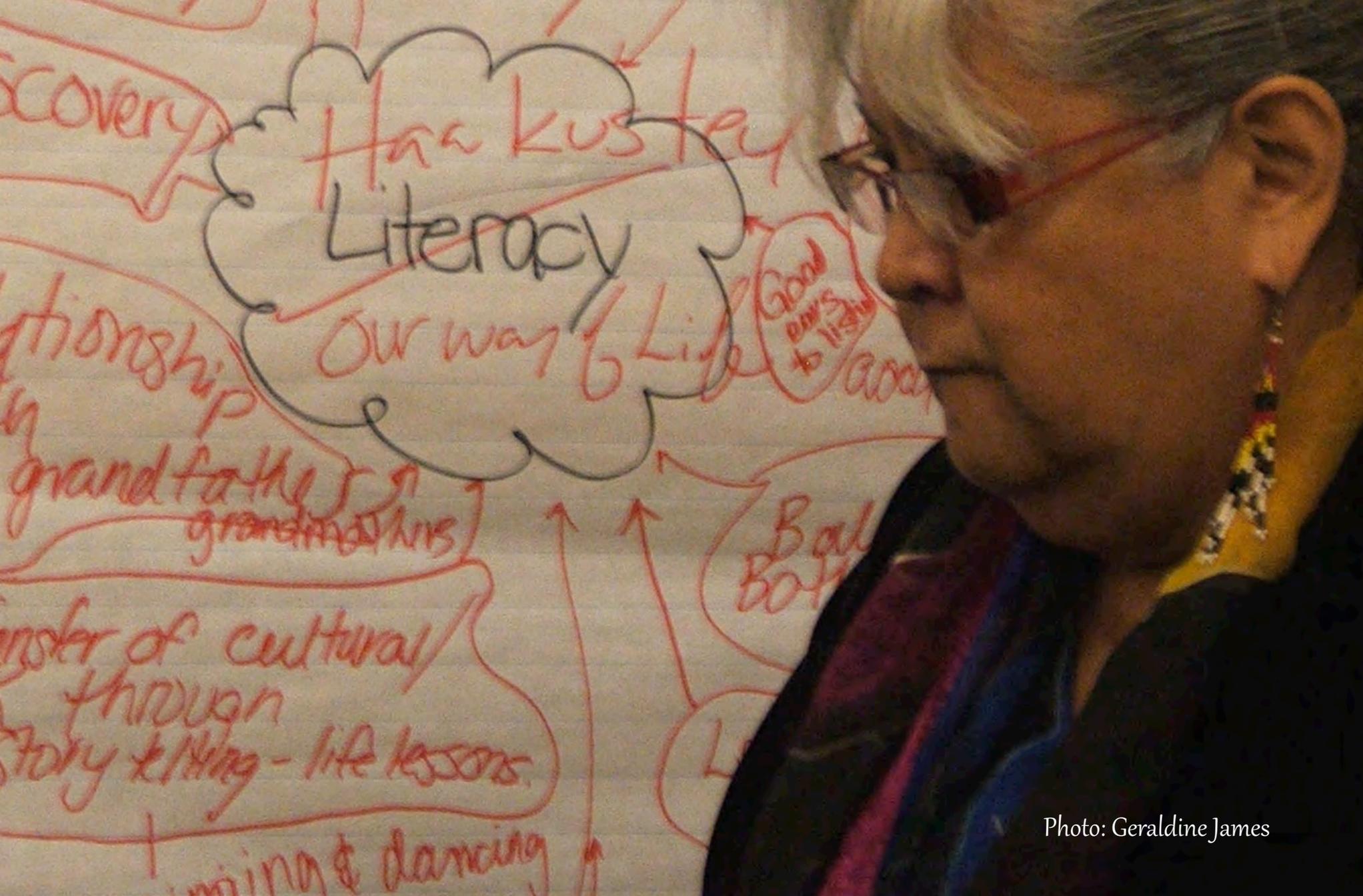


Photo: Geraldine James

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## NEXT STEPS

There is a Yukon First Nation Student Success Workshop planned for Feb 18th-20th, 2014. This initiative is unfolding with the assistance and support of Judy Arnold and Janet McDonald from the Department of Education and Gerry Ewert and Melissa Carlick from Yukon First Nation Statistics Branch. CYFN Director of Education, Tina Jules, is leading the initiative.

The main goal of this project is to move forward on improving YFN student learning outcomes and overall student success. A pilot project will involve collaboration with two to three individual Yukon First Nations to develop local Student Achievement Reports and Education Programs, Services and Resources Reports. These reports will generate baseline data using First Nation-determined educational priorities as well as traditional frameworks. The reports will be a beginning point leading into the development of a model process and template that tells a data and information story from First Nation and western education perspectives. The next phase will involve the implementation of interventions and best practices to increase student achievement.

There will also be a Yukon First Nation Education Summit: Joint Education Action Plan Review on March 4th – 5th, 2014.

## CLOSING STATEMENTS

### DR. ALBERT TRASK, ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER, PUBLIC SCHOOLS BRANCH, YUKON EDUCATION

Dr. Trask said he was honoured to be included in the Yukon First Nation Literacy Framework process and was impressed by the energy in the room.

“We have the same spirit. First Nations eat and breathe in the awareness of the Great Spirit. This is

the first huge difference between how we think and how the government thinks.

‘First Nations feel accountable to more than yourselves: you are a group, not a group of individuals – you are a family unit. There is HEART in your decision making process. Words have so much power! We can feel affirmed by words like: partnerships, support, respect. Words are about a journey, about helping people along their way. We are here to support people on their journey. I believe in the power of the story. It can change your life. We are telling the collective story.’

Dr. Trask presented a Power Point presentation (by Dr. Robert McNeish, 1972, Baltimore, Maryland, USA) with geese as a metaphor to emphasize the power of teamwork. The final message to remember was:

*“It is indeed a reward, a challenge and a privilege to be a contributing member of a team!”*



Photo: Dr. Albert Trask



ED SCHULTZ, EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR OF LITTLE SALMON  
CARMACKS FIRST NATION,  
CHAIR OF THE JOINT  
EDUCATION ACTION PLAN  
WORKING GROUP,  
FIRST NATION EDUCATION  
COMMISSION MEMBER

Photo: Ed Schultz

***“This Joint Action Plan represents perhaps our last opportunity of survival for our languages and culture in its purest form. If we can get back to our traditional ways - the indigenous people can teach the world to be respectful about the ways of the earth. The link between our past and our future is getting thinner and thinner. Our links are disappearing. It will be our fault if we miss out on realizing that. This process is a fight to fight – TODAY. ‘Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow’ was our last fight. TODAY, this process is our next. If we don’t do the work, it won’t get done to the satisfaction of our people.”***

## CLOSING PRAYER

By Randall Tetlich of Vuntut Gwitch'in Nation

***“The land and animals were our first teachers...***

***We want them to teach us still.”***

THIS REPORT WAS PRODUCED BY:



TOGETHER TODAY... FOR OUR CHILDREN TOMORROW

COUNCIL OF YUKON FIRST NATIONS

2166-2<sup>ND</sup> AVENUE, WHITEHORSE YUKON Y1A 4P1