

# Literacy Programs That Work

Sharing Knowledge  
and Experience

Nunavut Literacy Council



## Introduction

What makes one literacy program more successful than another? High quality literacy programs share many principles in common. These principles are often referred to as “best practices” or “good practice”. Both of these terms are used to describe what works best in a particular situation or environment.

So what are some of the principles that successful literacy programs share?

- A quality program is developed using the resources and expertise already available in the community.
- A quality program is based on the culture and language of the community. This strengthens self-esteem & a sense of personal identity.
- A quality program is built on the needs and strengths of the participants.
- A quality program has widespread community support. This can be accomplished by developing partnerships with other groups and organizations in the community allowing the program to share resources, experience, and information with others.
- A quality program provides learners with a safe and non-threatening environment. Some participants may feel more comfortable learning in a location outside of the classroom. Adult programs that are community-based & community-controlled are most successful.
- A quality program welcomes all participants and treats every one with respect and dignity.
- A quality program allows the participants to take ownership and to make decisions about the direction that the program takes.
- A quality program is flexible. Seize the moment! Adults have a lot of background knowledge and experience that contributes to their learning. Adults increase their literacy skills when they learn in a meaningful context.
- A quality program integrates traditional and modern activities into the learning. Many adults learn experientially – ‘learning through doing’. They need to be active participants in the process of learning.
- A quality program supports intergenerational learning or family literacy - allowing learners to integrate school with their day-to-day lives.



The following are examples of successful programs that have been delivered in Nunavut. These programs were developed using many of the principles outlined above. It is these qualities that make these programs good practice.

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**Program Name:** Learning to Throatsing

**Community:** Rankin Inlet

**Program Delivery:** Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Centre

**Contact Person:** Noah Tiktak, 867-645-2600

**Program Funders:** National Association of Friendship Centers, Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres (U.M.A.Y.C) through Pulaarvik Kablu Friendship Center (PKFC)

**Goals of the Program:** To have more young females involved in the youth program at the PKFC

**Length of Program:** On-going

**Description of Program:** Instructor Gorretti Panika teaches young women how to throatsing and to sew beaded head pieces called qaurusiq. She teaches different techniques of throatsinging and helps youth, aged 10 years and up, to understand the history of throatsinging, its purpose, its uniqueness, and its importance to the Inuit culture. The program is held twice a week for two hours. The primary location for the program is at the old radio station in Rankin but sometimes it's held at the PKFC or at the instructor's home.

**Highlights & Reflections:** All of the participants are female but males are always welcome to join. The participants enjoy working with Gorretti as much as she enjoys working with them. She emphasizes the importance of speaking Inuktitut and teaches them an Inuktitut word or two at each lesson. They talk and tell stories while they sew their qaurusiq or they take breaks from their sewing to practice their throatsinging. The participants often complain that the two hours they spend together sewing and throatsinging is not long enough.



**Program Name:** IQ Literacy Project

**Community:** Hall Beach

**Program Delivery:** Hall Beach Community Learning Centre, NAC

**Program Funders:** GN Department of Education  
Nunavut Arctic College

**Contact Person:** Dan Page, Coordinator of Community Programs 867-979-7240 [dpage@nac.nu.ca](mailto:dpage@nac.nu.ca)

**Goals of the Program:** To strengthen Inuit traditional skills and knowledge in the community of Hall Beach and to give participants an opportunity to learn more about their own town, history, language and culture.

**Length of Program:** 12 weeks

**Description of Program:** The IQ Literacy Project promoted Inuit culture and values through Elders sharing their knowledge and experience and through hands-on workshops on various themes. A project coordinator was hired to plan weekly themes and coordinate the guest Elders and artists who shared their knowledge in a workshop format. About 13 hours of workshops were offered per week during the 12-week project.

The instructors highlighted and discussed Inuktitut vocabulary that was used when talking about the themes. Stories, interviews and practical demonstrations were recorded and documented so that the knowledge can be used again in future literacy programs.



People came to the events that interested them most. The most popular themes were drum dancing and ajaaja, embroidery, ulu making, ivory carving and town history. As part of the ivory carving workshop, participants went walrus hunting. Other workshops included traditional Inuit games, sewing, astronomy, Thule culture and traditional knowledge. In the traditional knowledge workshop Elders talked about life on the land and participants practiced iglu building and dog sledding.

The students in the Pre-employment Preparing for Change class were able to attend the afternoon events of the IQ Literacy Project and found them very valuable.

**Highlights & Reflections:** Practical and evening events were most popular and attracted dozens of people. Elders really enjoyed the experience. Some became very involved in the program and developed a great relationship with the CLC students and staff. Participants in the IQ Literacy Project were impressed at the depth of the knowledge and experiences they gained from the Elders.

“Development of the community builds on the people’s strengths, not upon the weaknesses and problems. Elders are a great asset and precious resource.”

Pascale Dion  
Community Adult Educator



**Program Name:** Innuqatigiitarpalianiq Literacy Program

**Community:** Arctic Bay

**Program Delivery:** Arctic Bay Community Learning Centre, NAC

**Program Funders:** GN Department of Education  
Nunavut Arctic College, Nunavut Youth Consulting

**Contact Person:** Ron Elliott 867-439-9913  
[relliott@nac.nu.ca](mailto:relliott@nac.nu.ca)

**Program Partners:** This is a collaborative project with cooperation from community groups such as Arctic Bay Search & Rescue, Inuujaq School, Recreation Committee, Economic Development Committee, Arctic Bay Youth Justice, and Health & Social Services.

**Goals of the Program:** to increase participants' Inuktitut skills and cultural literacy skills, thereby encouraging wellness and strengthening the individual's sense of self-worth and identity.

**Length of Program:** 25 weeks

**Description of Program:** The Innuqatigiitarpalianiq Literacy Program is an open, informal, drop-in program. People participate in the sessions that most interest them. The program collaborates with Elders, who share their knowledge and expertise and help facilitate healing and community building. Here is a brief description of some of the activities that happened in the first year of the program:

**Community/Team Building & Traditional Knowledge:** The group used cooperative games & Inuit games, story sharing and writing, books, computers and the Internet to explore traditional knowledge, career & life planning and community history. Activities included mapping of traditional camps with visits to the camps, exploring family relationships and creating family trees, making traditional tools, building a qamutik, building iglus, and making sinew.



**Inuktitut Language Development:** Because the Inuktitut language must be used to explore traditional knowledge, students practiced and built their Inuktitut oral language skills. Participants used oral skills, reading and writing to develop CDs, puzzles, newspaper articles and a calendar.

**Inuit Art:** The male participants worked on carving, crafting ulus and harpoon heads while the female participants worked on sewing and designing their own products.

**Traditional Navigation:** Participants researched traditional place names with Elders, and then put the names on maps which were later distributed to the community. They learned traditional navigation techniques while out on land trips with Elders.

**Traditional Stories & Myths:** Elders shared stories which the participants video-taped. The students learned how to save the images they collected to the computer and to DVDs.

**Highlights & Reflections:** During the first year of the Innuqatigiitarpaliniq Literacy Program the organizers noticed that the open environment encouraged many people in the community to participate. An average of 14 attended daily, with as many as 32 people joining the activities at times. Even after the program ended, up to 10 people continued to come to the Community Learning Centre each day to work on reading, computers or just to meet & discuss issues they are dealing with in their lives.

The Innuqatigiitarpaliniq Literacy Program addressed wellness and personal development directly through program content and indirectly through social interactions and spin-offs that occurred through the program. An important outcome that was not expected or planned for was noticed as the program progressed: “Many of the Elders commented that it was a great benefit to them that they were able to share their knowledge and expertise. For the map-making exercise all of the Elders felt this was a part of a healing exercise as it brought them back to their traditional roots.”

“This was a project that promoted and enhanced community wellness and continuous adult learning through language, culture and traditional knowledge. This was the first formally funded Inuktitut language and culture program – despite the obvious links to community wellness – that responded to the challenges of substance abuse, violence and loss of individuals, families and community. The program met with tremendous success and the community rallied behind the project by offering many in-kind contributions of time, resources and materials.”



**Program Name:** Inuktitut Literacy & Culture Program

**Community:** Iqaluit

**Program Delivery:** Iqaluit Community Learning Centre, NAC

**Program Funders:** National Literacy Secretariat  
GN Department of Education, Nunavut Arctic College

**Contact Person:** Dan Page 867-979-7240  
dpage@nac.nu.ca

**Goals of the Program:** To increase students' Inuktitut literacy skills and to bring Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit to the Iqaluit Community Learning Centre.

**Length of Program:** 15 weeks

**Description of Program:** The Inuktitut Literacy & Culture Program consisted of an Inuktitut literacy class as well as three cultural workshops: Sewing with Traditional Patterns, Traditional Storytelling & Stencil Printmaking, and Traditional Dog Team Workshop.

The Inuktitut literacy class combined oral Inuktitut skills with reading and writing. There was a broad range of skills in the class from those who were just beginning to learn the symbols to those who were learning Inuktitut keyboarding. The students commented that they appreciated being able to think in Inuktitut and use more traditional words that are not being used today.

In the two-week sewing workshop students made sealskin mitts, duffle socks or slippers; some completed several projects. Students learned new vocabulary, oral and written, associated with seal skins, patterns, sewing techniques and tools. They improved general conversational skills since the instructor spoke only Inuktitut.

The Traditional Storytelling and Stencil Printmaking workshop was two weeks long as well. Students were mesmerized by the stories. Some commented that it was the first time they had heard stories told in the old way. Students practiced the arts of drawing, stenciling and printmaking. They learned to mix colours, work with and care for tools, to print on a T-shirt and how to sell their artwork. To top off the workshop, they had a show and sale of their work at the end of the two weeks.

The students went on a six hour dog-team trip in March. They learned about the history, care, training, driving and feeding of dogs, as well as the parts of the qamutik and the harnesses. They talked about the different styles of dog-teaming in different communities and listened to several dog team stories. All the interaction was in Inuktitut and students asked lots of questions. They had fun and adventures along the way, including seeing caribou on the sea ice.

Comment from a student on the dog team trip: “Best Day of My Life”

**Highlights & Reflections:** On Inuktitut Literacy: “Moe [Instructor], you should do more teaching in Inuktitut because it’s really important to us.”

On sewing: All students felt a tremendous sense of pride in work completed. For most students these were the first pair of sealskin mitts they had ever made. Having a respected Elder as an instructor created a special atmosphere for students. A warm sense of community developed between everyone.

On storytelling and art: It was exciting to see how this experience strengthened family connections for students. One student said, “My dad saw me drawing and came over to help me.” Another said, “My mom saw me drawing and said it reminded her of my grandfather. There must be some of him in me. I didn’t know. She is so proud of me.”

Two students were inspired to apply to Kakivak for a “Small Tools Grant”. One actually did receive close to a thousand dollars worth of carving tools and has just begun to do her own work.

**Program Name:** May Hakongak Community Library & Cultural Centre Programs

**Community:** Cambridge Bay

**Program Delivery:** Kitikmeot Heritage Society (KHS)

**Program Funders:** Department of Culture, Language, Elders & Youth, Nunavut Library Services, Municipality of Cambridge Bay, Canadian Heritage, Kitikmeot Inuit Association, Coca Cola's Share the Stories.

**Contact Person:** Colleen Rusk, Manager 867-983-3009, [heritage@polarnet.ca](mailto:heritage@polarnet.ca)

**Program Partners:** Department of Culture, Language, Elders & Youth, Nunavut Library Services, Municipality of Cambridge Bay, Canadian Heritage, Kitikmeot Inuit Association, Ikaluktutiak District Education Authority, Kiiliniq High School.

**Goals of the Program:** To deliver a range of cultural and educational programs and services aimed at incorporating modern knowledge with Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit.

**Length of Program:** On-going

**Description of Program:** Through the May Hakongak Community Library & Cultural Centre, the Kitikmeot Heritage Society has delivered a range of programming aimed at promoting and supporting literacy and language skill development in both English and Inuinnaqtun. In 2002 the KHS opened the newly constructed May Hakongak Community Library & Cultural Centre. The centre is a fully integrated public library, school library, cultural centre, museum, archives, and art gallery. Some of the programs offered through the centre include:

**Community Library Services:** This service provides children and adults with access to books, videos and other resources and research assistance. Both modern and traditional sources of information are offered to library patrons.



**Museum and Archive Program:** The centre includes museum displays and archives that offer students and community members with information on the culture and history of the people from the region.

**Traditional Skills Programs:** The centre offers various traditional skill development programs throughout the year. These include skin preparation and sewing and traditional tool making. These programs also encourage the interaction of elders and youth.

**Summer Camp Programs:** Each summer the centre runs traditional oral history and archaeological camps. Elders, students and researchers work together to learn more about the history and prehistory of the area. The camps offer participants with an Inuinnaqtun immersion experience as well. The information collected is then used to develop learner materials, and other resources for community use.

**Family & Adult Literacy Programming:** The library program includes children's reading circles, summer reading programs and other activities that promote literacy. The centre also offered a drop-in adult literacy tutoring program that ran throughout the school year.

Other programs include traditional place names programs, cultural and historical activities and events for tourists and special community events such as singing and drum dancing both in the centre and in iglus specially built for the event.

**Highlights & Reflections:** The success of the programs and services delivered by the KHS is most certainly due to their ability to base the programs on the culture, language, and interests of the community which they serve.

**Program Name:** Rebecca P. Idlout Library Programs

**Community:** Pond Inlet

**Program Delivery:** Rebecca P. Idlout Library

**Contact Person:** Philippa Ootoowak 867-899-8972  
[pondinletlibrary@yahoo.ca](mailto:pondinletlibrary@yahoo.ca)

**Program Partners:** The Rebecca P. Idlout Library and its Library Board have had various partners for their programs. More recently these have included the Nattinnak Visitors' Centre (the Library being housed in the same building), Parks Canada, Qikiktani School Operations, Inuit Heritage Trust, the Home Care Elder's program and the local schools.

**Goals of the Program:** To encourage residents of Pond Inlet to use the library; to offer programs and resources that people of different ages and backgrounds would enjoy and find useful; to encourage people to explore their culture and history orally and through reading and writing.

**Length of Program:** On-going

**Description of Program:** Over the years the Pond Inlet Library has sought funding for, and delivered a number of interesting and valuable programs. Here's a sampling:

**Preschool Program:** The library has run a preschool program for 14 years. The preschool happens once a week throughout the school year from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. Library staff plans an activity time and story time for small children and their caregivers. Parents are encouraged to stay and participate with their children. This is convenient for parents because preschool is timed so that they can pick up their school-aged children after the preschool session is finished. By participating parents learn valuable ways they can support their children's language and literacy development at home. Every year the library has to seek funding to operate the preschool program. If funding doesn't come through right away in the fall,





parents always ask about the program. It has become a regular program in Pond Inlet that people look forward to for their children.

**Oral History Program:** In 1994, when the Pond Inlet Visitors' Centre was in the planning stages, Parks Canada contributed funding to interview local Elders and record their stories. These interviews provided background information for the displays at the Visitors' Centre. Since the Rebecca P. Idlout Library shares space with the Visitors' Centre, Parks Canada donated the video recordings of the interviews to the library. Library staff and community residents treasure this valuable resource and there are plans to copy, catalogue, transcribe and translate the interviews when funding and resources allow. In the meantime, people can view the video recordings in the library. An author, Shelagh Grant, has used the interviews to do research for her book, *Arctic Justice: on trial for murder, Pond Inlet 1923*.

**Elders' Program:** The Pond Inlet Home Care Staff run an Elders' Program every Wednesday in the Nattinnak Centre when elders can also visit the library. Philippa, as librarian, views this as an opportunity to show the Elders what the library has to offer and where to find it. Once a month a special theme is introduced with an historical background, comparing it to events that were taking place in Pond Inlet around the same time. For example, one theme looked at traditional hymns known to the Elders through translation by the early missionaries; another theme was silent films from the early days of cinema. The Elders group enjoyed watching Charlie Chaplin's *Gold Rush* - the great thing about silent films being that everyone can enjoy them as language is not a barrier! The Elders of Pond Inlet also participated in a Mapping Project through Inuit Heritage Trust. While that project was underway, Philippa showed the Elders various books that contain old maps of the region. These programs and visits have encouraged Elders to feel quite comfortable in the library and know where to find resources in Inuktitut and those that interest them most.

**Photo History Collection:** The Pond Inlet Library has an extensive collection of old photographs which they have been gathering since 1993. Many of the photos come from the National Archives in Ottawa and the Hudson Bay Archives in Winnipeg. Private individuals have donated others. These photos are displayed in binders in the library and are available for anyone to look at. In recent years, students attending the Nunavut Sivuniksavut Program in Ottawa have been involved in a project to identify people from old photographs collected by the National Archives. The students interviewed Elders in their home communities to find information about the photographs from their region.



This year a young person from Pond Inlet was asked to continue the work on identifying the archival photographs through the Rebecca P. Idlout Library since no local student was currently attending the NS Program. Angela has found that talking to Elders and trying to determine who the people in the photos are, has been very interesting. Later this year, Nunavummiut should be able to look at many of these archival photographs on the internet through a new website being created by the Library and Archives of Canada.

**School Programs:** Each Thursday morning throughout the school year the library is open to school and college class groups. Since this time is very limited teachers have to book ahead and plan what the students' needs are. Although both schools have their own libraries they are not staffed so Philippa tries to accommodate these groups in order to introduce this age group to good library skills and what is available to them for their school work at the public library. Teachers also benefit from this time, as they must accompany their students and are involved with any presentation given.

**Adult Hours:** Wednesday evenings is "adult only" time at the library – a chance for adults 16 years and older to read and explore the resources in a quieter atmosphere. Many adults use this time to ask for assistance with composing resumes or signing on-line for e-mail access.

**Display Boards:** The library has a visual display with books related to a certain theme. Philippa changes the display board regularly depending on events that are happening in town. During the Inuit Heritage Trust Mapping Project the display included atlases and books containing world and local maps.



**Highlights & Reflections:** "With the decentralization of the Government of Nunavut and the increase in visitors to the community, many newcomers have expressed their delight to find such a well stocked and interesting library here in a small northern community. As a Local Librarian I feel happy to hear these comments and this is always encouraging. I add that our young people have as much right to access current and accurate information as youth in any other part of Canada, after all they still need to write the same final examinations at high school! Literacy is important for all in any language and the library in Pond Inlet tries to encourage this through programs such as those mentioned here."

Philippa Ootoowak, Local Librarian



**Program Name:** Reclaiming our Sinew

**Community:** Various Kivalliq Communities

**Program Delivery:** NAC Community Learning Centres

**Program Partners:** Kivalliq Inuit Association & Community Learning Centres

**Goals of the Program:** To build the sewing and literacy skills of young women, to strengthen awareness of traditional skills and Inuit culture and to build the pride and self-esteem of the participants.

**Length of Program:** 24 weeks

**Description of Program:** Reclaiming Our Sinew is a 24 week program with six core courses. One part of the program focuses on preparing participants to go on to upgrading programs, enter the workforce or enhance their employability. The other part of the program focuses on teaching the traditional skill of skin preparation and sewing.

Mornings are spent learning traditional skin preparation and sewing techniques with Elders. By the end of the program, participants have learned the art of preparing, cutting and sewing skins. They have also learned how to make caribou skin parkas, pants, mitts and seal skin kamiks and pants.

In the afternoons the participants focus on upgrading their academic skills at the Community Learning Centre. They receive language instruction in English and Inuktitut, math, computer and typing instruction.

**Highlights & Reflections:** The idea for the program came from the Kivalliq Inuit Association and is an excellent example of putting Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit into practice. It was also a strong example of a partnership between the territorial and federal government, Nunavut Arctic College, the schools, the Hamlet and the Inuit organization.



“Since I started the course I’ve made caribou pants, parka, mitts, socks, seal skin mitts and three pairs of kamiks. I’m proud of my sewing and what I have learned from the elders.”

Shauna Ussak, Student



**Program Name:** Learning in the Workplace

**Community:** Rankin Inlet

**Program Delivery:** Rankin Inlet Community Learning Centre, NAC

**Program Partners:** A steering committee was formed to do an organizational needs assessment and plan and implement the project. The steering committee was made up of representatives of the government – both management and employees, the College, The Hamlet, private business, the Union of Northern Workers, the Chamber of Commerce and Community Futures.

**Program Contact:** Linda Pemik, formerly the Rankin Inlet Community Adult Educator, currently Director of Academic Affairs for NAC 867-857-2796 [lpemik@nac.nu.ca](mailto:lpemik@nac.nu.ca)

**Program Funders:** Workplace Education Program of GNWT Department of Education, Culture & Employment Nunavut Arctic College

### Goals of the Program:

- To promote the value of workplace education in the community
- To educate employers on the benefits to the organization of workplace basic skills training
- To provide individualized, learner-centred basic skills training in Inuktitut and English to employees in various workplaces
- To build capacity in Rankin Inlet for the upcoming Nunavut Territory
- To allow participants to attend classes during work time with no loss of wages

**Length of Program:** The program lasted 3 years from 1995 to 1998 for 8 months each year. The first year the program was half time.

**Description of Program:** The coordinator/instructor of the Learning in the Workplace Program worked with individuals or small groups from different workplaces in Rankin Inlet. In some cases the small groups were made up of employees from several different work sites because the participants had similar learning goals. Some of the participants were unemployed and wanted to work towards getting a job or further education. Here is a sample of the learning sessions that occurred:

**Apprentice plumbers:** Six participants from three workplaces worked on developing reading skills that would help prepare them for their apprenticeship courses.

**GED Preparation:** Seven learners from three workplaces prepared for their GED exams and as well as improving their general literacy and numeracy skills.

**Inuktitut Keyboarding:** Eleven participants from five workplaces worked on Inuktitut Keyboarding in a drop-in program. The course content was designed as a self-study guide, so people could work on their skills at their own pace at work, at home or drop in to the scheduled class.

**The Sewing Centre:** Participants worked on math skills related to their job, such as measurement and calculating amounts of fabric needed for patterns. They also spent time working on English reading and writing. Some participants got very involved in a debate about whether Rankin Inlet should become the capital of Nunavut. They made posters and put them up around the community, showing the pros and cons of being the capital city.

**Inuktitut as a Second Language:** The Inuktitut Learning in the Workplace coordinator/instructor taught Inuktitut as a Second Language to small groups in three different workplaces. This gave newcomers to town an orientation to Inuit culture and language, as well as allowed some longer-term northerners to improve their Inuktitut skills.

**Individuals:** Several employees who were supervisors at a group home and a student residence practiced writing monthly reports and daily logs about their work. A business development trainee and Workers Compensation Board trainee worked on writing briefing notes and reports for work. One government trainee was asked to learn to read government manuals. Several groups from different work sites didn't have guidance from their employers about job-related needs, so they worked on their English reading and writing skills through Northern-based themes.

One visually impaired participant wrote stories and songs and worked on learning Braille. Two unemployed youth worked on basic literacy and numeracy. One Elder worked in both Inuktitut and English to write stories of her life.

**Highlights & Reflections:** The Learning in the Workplace Program was valuable in that it allowed small non-government organizations and businesses to participate. While government can provide workplace training for their employees, there are many barriers for smaller workplaces. They may be able to get funding for workplace education, but it is difficult to find a qualified instructor in a small community who is willing to work on a very part-time basis.

In workplace education it can be a challenge to balance the needs of the employers with the needs of the employees. A learner-centred approach asked participants to think about their own needs and goals and to participate in creating a learning plan for themselves. This can be difficult for people who have experienced the traditional teacher-centred educational system. But many of the participants in Learning in the Workplace were able to become very involved in planning and directing their own learning after they began to understand that taking control was part of the process.

**Program Name:** Traditional Arts and Literacy Program

**Community:** Rankin Inlet

**Program Delivery:** The Matchbox Gallery, a private gallery and studio space owned by Jim and Susan Shirley of Rankin Inlet

**Program Contact:** Jim Shirley 867-645-2674  
[matchboxgallery@hotmail.com](mailto:matchboxgallery@hotmail.com)

**Goals of the Program:** To help participants meet their personal goals including developing their ability to earn a living as professional artists and upgrading their numeracy and literacy skills. Jim and Sue believe that arts learning and academic learning compliment each other and that students show impressive progress through this approach.

**Length of Program:** 14 weeks

**Description of Program:** The Traditional Arts and Literacy Program is intended as a foundation program from which students can choose their artistic direction. Participants in the program study most areas of the traditional arts including drawing, painting, ceramics, printmaking, and soapstone carving. While some of the students have some experience as artists, others have had no prior experience in the arts.

Basic mathematics, reading and writing are an integral part of the program. The instructors feel that the academic programming is successful because they take an individualized approach to preparing course materials and lesson plans. They use materials with northern content which is relevant to experiences, needs and interests of the participants and they gear lessons to individual levels of ability.

The day begins with mathematics. The students learn new skills and review skills they have studied in previous classes. The instructors also create very relevant word problems for math class. They use the students' names and their experiences in the program or in their lives outside class to pose realistic math problems for the students to solve.




Literacy instruction involves reading texts that are relevant to the students' experiences. The group reads aloud and works on vocabulary development based on the text. Daily journal writing starts the afternoon. Students and instructors deepen their interaction and communication through dialogue journals. This is an opportunity for meaningful writing in which students express their problems, goals and wishes and instructors respond. The instructors gradually introduce ideas about grammar, punctuation and spelling. Some students work on other writing projects such as autobiographies.

In drawing classes students study techniques for drawing from observation and imagination. They learn to use various drawing tools and materials to express their imagination in different ways. Concepts and related vocabulary are an important part of the drawing lessons. Jim and Sue see a critical connection between drawing and language as forms of personal expression.

The rest of the afternoon the students concentrate on painting, ceramics or sculpture. The instructors encourage the students to respect and understand the various tools and materials used by the artist. They also encourage people to find a way to express their own unique personality by using these media.

Jim's comments: "This portion of the day allowed people to learn about themselves, to develop their self-confidence, and to take the issues they have at the core of their humanness and give them a tangible and manageable form."

**Highlights and Reflections:** Jim and Sue believe that the connection between art and academic learning has been well demonstrated by the success of the Traditional Arts and Literacy Program. Students make remarkable progress in all areas of their learning. Jim and Sue have observed that students show greater progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills than they would in an academic-only upgrading program.

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The gallery also provides an important base for positive social interaction and communal experience. The social environment that students have established among themselves at the gallery has proven to be a significant source for healing and personal growth. The communal learning environment, which is the foundation of the survival of Inuit people since the beginning of time, comes naturally to most of the students. The social environment is an important antidote to the alienation that most people have had to come to terms with in their everyday lives. They learn and work in an environment where their individuality is encouraged, appreciated and supported by their peers.

“We feel that there are important implications for this program for the educational system as a whole. Needless to say, we are very excited about what we are doing.”

Jim Shirley



**Program Name:** Qimaavik Shelter Literacy Project

**Community:** Iqaluit - Apex

**Program Delivery:** Qimaavik Transition House operated by Baffin Regional Agvvik Society

**Program Funders:** GN Department of Culture, Language, Elders & Youth, GN Department of Education, Nunavut Literacy Council

**Program Contact:** Cheryl Nadeau, Executive Director, 867-979-4566, [agvik@nunanet.com](mailto:agvik@nunanet.com)

**Goals of the Program:** To develop and operate a literacy program for clients and former clients of Qimaavik Transition House and their children, and to provide educational counseling for clients and former clients.

**Length of Program:** 3 days a week throughout the year

**Description of Program:** There is a study room at the shelter equipped with four computers donated by the RCMP. The computers are fully functional with programs such as Microsoft Word, Mavis Beacon Typing Tutor, a drawing program and educational games. Just down the hall is a playroom for young children. While the instructor is working with clients and former clients, the in-house child-care worker is available to supervise their children. Other facilities at the shelter include a TV/VCR and a large living room area that can be used for large group meetings and presentations.

The clients and former clients participate in the following activities as part of the Literacy Program:

- Weekly visits to the Public Library
- Weekly visits to the Elders Center
- Tours of Nunavut Arctic College (main campus and Arts & Crafts)
- Presentations by guest speakers about health issues
- Resume writing
- First Aid Course
- Filling out job application forms
- Filling out college application forms
- Cooking



- Basic computer use
- Keyboarding
- Reading circles
- Reading to children and encouraging older kids to read to younger ones
- Private journal writing/reflective thinking
- Discussions about newspaper articles and current events
- Collages
- Word games
- Arithmetic
- Writing

The children of clients attend school, but face many challenges. They experience language difficulties if they come from a primarily Inuktitut-speaking community and are placed in a school with only English instruction. They also face ridicule from classmates because they do not come from the community and may be identified as being 'different'. These barriers to learning are eased because they have an instructor focusing on them each day for an hour at the shelter. This individual attention helps to compensate for a possibly alien or hostile school learning environment.

**Highlights & Reflections:** Some of the women are making choices to attend Nunavut Arctic College: one client is attending a course at the College and others are applying for future courses. Two clients attended a two-week sewing course at the College. Others are trying, and succeeding in finding employment: the participants worked on a total of ten resumes. After the instructor helped one client with the Skills and Interests Questionnaire, she applied for and got a job. She later shared her success with the other women, inspiring them to believe that they too could reach their goals.

Since the Literacy Program has been operating, clients have become more comfortable asking for help and come into the Study Room more readily.

The Qimaavik Shelter Literacy Project has provided many benefits to its clients:

- It supports both in-house and former clients and their children with their individual educational needs
- It provides opportunities for short-term skill development such as keyboarding
- It provides support for those wanting to seek employment
- It provides information and support for those wanting to pursue further educational opportunities within their home communities or elsewhere
- It empowers youth to feel more comfortable in their literacy skills so that the transition to a new school and community is easier
- Younger children and other extended family members observe these women and children using education as a means of improving their lives.

Qimaavik Transition House hopes to establish a literacy program that will grow over the next few years into a full-time program.

**Program Name:** Iqaluit Centennial Library Programs

**Community:** Iqaluit

**Program Delivery:** Iqaluit Centennial Library

**Program Contact:** Tori-Lynne Evans, Librarian  
867-979-5400, [tlevans@gov.nu.ca](mailto:tlevans@gov.nu.ca)

**Goals of the Program:** Community programming is designed to encourage people of all backgrounds and ages to feel comfortable using the Iqaluit Centennial Library and its resources.

**Length of Program:** Library programming extends over the entire year, with various regular programs, short-term projects and special events.

**Description of Program:** There are a number of different programs happening at the Iqaluit Centennial Library. The librarian and the library board look for ways to get all kinds of people into the library; then the positive experiences they have there keep them coming back.



**Story Time:** For three years drama students at Inukshuk High School have been running a story time for preschoolers, supervised by their drama teacher. They read to the kids and animate the stories – acting out the story and making it come alive for the children. They also get down on the floor and read one-on-one and they do crafts and other activities with the children. The activities are in both English and Inuktitut. This program brings high school students into the library who wouldn't come otherwise. Often they are inspired to get their own library cards and visit in their spare time. Working with young children gives the students confidence and allows them to try out their drama skills in a safe environment. There was once a film premier during Story Time. The National Film Board sent the library videos, a display, and incentive awards and they presented a premier of their video, Ludovic, for little kids.

“It sets a good example for children to see everyone at all age levels reading,” Tori-Lynne Evans

**Share the Stories:** The library received a grant from Coca Cola Canada for Share the Stories to purchase new children's library books. They held a big party when the books arrived.

**Pen Pal Program:** Children's programs at libraries in the South are very interested in getting to know more about Nunavut. In the summer the Centennial Library has a Pen Pal Program as part of the day camp. Children in Iqaluit are matched up with children at a library in the South. They have a chance to share information about where they live, to practise their writing skills and to make new friends.

**Summer Reading Camp:** This camp is offered in conjunction with City of Iqaluit. Day camp students come to the library to participate in readings and crafts.

**Volunteer for School Credit Program:** High school students assist in the library to earn their 25 hrs of community credits so that they can graduate. They help with shelf reading, tidying the shelves, straightening books, etc.

**School and Daycare visits:** The library has visits from all different ages and levels of students, including special needs students.

"Every library is different, but what works well here is requesting that children under the age of 16 read for 15 minutes before using the computers. Also, the children love to get 'special rewards' for reading and behaving in the library." Tori-Lynne Evans

### Special Events

**Canadian Children's Book Week:** Every year the Iqaluit Centennial Library hosts a Canadian author for Children's Book Week.

In 2003 the author was Jacqueline Guest and Rosemary Nelson in 2002. Margriet Ruurs came up as well in 2002, but on her own - not through Children's Book Week. Michael Kusugak, a Nunavut children's author from Rankin Inlet, also has done readings at the library.

**Read for 15:** The Nunavut Literacy Council sponsors the Read for 15 challenge during Nunavut Literacy Week. Nunavut communities challenge each other to see which can get the most people reading for 15 minutes that day. The Iqaluit Centennial Library is the reporting center for Iqaluit. For Nunavut Literacy Week the library also has a huge book sale to kick off Literacy Week.

"Book sales are quite the attraction in here. We sell a bag of books for \$5.00. You can't beat that price! Now we have a special area in the library so that people can take advantage of this book sale offer all the time." Tori Lynne Evans

**Canada Day Reading Tent:** The Iqaluit Literacy Committee sponsors the reading tent ... and the library gives away used books. People come in the tent to take books and to read. our activities in the Mole Sisters journal book.

**Scavenger Hunts:** The library participates in community scavenger hunts with groups such as the Francophone Society and with Nunavut Arctic College. The library is one location among many that the students/ children go to for the scavenger hunt.

**Arctic Winter Games:** During AWG's in 2002, the library worked with the AWG committee and we had a story writing contest for kids. They provided the volunteers and judges and it was amazing to see the children reading and writing stories.

**The Mole Sisters:** This is Tori-Lynne's report on an unusual special event: In the summer of 2003, the Iqaluit Library librarian, Tori-Lynne Evans and Lynn Watson, manager of the bookstore at Arctic Ventures, decided to invite the Mole Sisters to Iqaluit.

Rosalyn Schwartz is the author of the numerous Mole Sisters books—and now they can be seen on television. The Mole Sisters kit mailed to us consisted of two huge (around 4 feet) stuffed moles. They were actually quite large considering their audience level is geared for pre-school age. We also received Mole Sisters finger puppets, posters, bookmarks, coloring sheets, a journal to record events...this was all sent to us by Annick Press ([www.annickpress.com](http://www.annickpress.com)). All we had to do was to book an event or two here in town and record our activities in the Mole Sisters journal book.

We really did not know what to expect. We had both booked 'live' authors before but never over sized stuffed animals. The Mole Sisters were so soft, cuddly and cute--no one could resist hugging them. The first reading at the Iqaluit Library was a great success. After reading some Mole Sisters books (which included the children helping by animating with the finger puppets), children did some crafts. Everyone lined up to hug the Mole Sisters, get their pictures taken, and purchase some books.

The following week the Mole Sisters decided to venture out to the Iqaluit ballpark where all the five daycares were having an outdoor picnic. The Mole Sisters were happy to see so many young children having fun while listening to the stories. It was a perfect afternoon and the weather was wonderful!

The Mole Sisters could not resist sticking around Iqaluit for Canada Day. They proudly sat at the Iqaluit Literacy Committee's table, where free books and promotional literacy items were given away courtesy of Nunavut Literacy Council.



Soon it was time for the Mole Sisters to be shipped to their next location. Before they left, we had a farewell tea party outside the Iqaluit Library. The Mole Sisters were having a great time in their nicely decorated wagon while the children read some books, ate snacks, did some crafts and took home some prizes, courtesy of Arctic Ventures.

Having the Mole Sisters visit was truly a fun and inexpensive way to promote literacy in our community. Iqaluit Library is looking forward to having other events just like the Mole Sisters in the near future.



## Conclusion

This good practice guide is just a small sample of many of the excellent programs that are being delivered across Nunavut. If you have examples of good practice that you would like to share with people please let us know. We would like to share your experiences with others.

