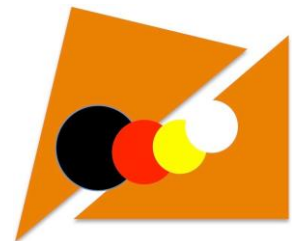


**Indigenous Literacy
Literacy & Foundational Learning for Indigenous Adults
Investment Strategy & Framework to Guide Calgary Learns**



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July 2016

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Executive Summary and History

We have always known that the schools haven't worked for our children – Finally now people are asking us. – Elder Consultation, Calgary 2016

Indigenous people across Canada share common experiences that are often very different from other populations struggling in learning systems. The legacy of the Indigenous historical trauma is just beginning to be understood by policy makers and other systems that have attempted to work with Indigenous communities with limited or no success. This history however, is a critically important foundation for all service systems to accept and value Indigenous principles of lifelong learning.

Colonial history disenfranchised Aboriginal peoples and created conditions, hierarchies, and powers that served some, while leaving First Nations, Inuit and Métis with little.

— Knowledge Center, 2009

In addition to divergent worldviews on literacy and learning, there are many barriers that have hindered opportunities for Indigenous people as learners. The removal of children from families, the severed links between culture and spirituality, the erosion of languages, the undermining of traditional leadership, the denial of political rights and the right to self-determination are all factors that contribute to low educational achievement and the ability to learn (Cappon, 2006). Along with low learner achievement, the result of this historical experience are reported in statistics that further highlight poor economic and living conditions, high suicide, unemployment and incarceration rates, and poor health (Berger and Epp, 2006).

This document is oriented towards Indigenous adult literacy. It must be noted however, that literacy as defined from an Indigenous lens is one of a collective and holistic lifelong journey, stemming from the belief that it includes all ages, beginning in the womb and even before. Traditional knowledge also tells us that learning continues after the spirit finishes its time on earth and returns to the spirit world; it is intergenerational in that all generations are constantly learning in their interactions with each other. This is different from some non-Indigenous approaches that gear their programs and services to discrete age groups. From an Indigenous worldview, intergenerational and family literacy is one way to address lifelong learning (George, 2008).

Calgary Learns is committed to funding literacy programs in Calgary for Indigenous people that, at their core, have foundational principals, ideas and ways of learning found in this document. Moving forward, all applicants or allies who receive funding from Calgary Learns for Indigenous literacy must be able to reference, at a minimum, this document in their applications and programming. We would also encourage proponents to go through the original documents found in the references section, other similar research, plans or studies to expand their understanding of Indigenous literacy programming.

Context

The following Objectives were established at the beginning of this research project, and form the context of inquiry for this document (as follows):

Objective 1:

What does Literacy and Foundational Learning for Indigenous Adults mean from a Calgary and area Indigenous perspective (what does Indigenous literacy mean)?

Objective 2:

How does history impact gaps in foundational and functional learning for Indigenous adults (eg. TRC, residential schools, intergenerational trauma, colonization)?

Objective 3:

How can we co-create an investment strategy that is culturally and socially relevant that still meets the requirements of Calgary Learns?

Methodology

The following methods and approaches were used to gather information, direction, and narratives found within this document:

- **Literature review**—current and historical documents/materials were reviewed, each of which are listed in the Reference section.
- **Focus Groups**—a total of five targets (5) focus groups were conducted in which participants were invited to provide input related to Indigenous literacy. Each group was asked a set of common questions, plus a set of questions developed specifically to each area:
 1. Community – Indigenous community members (at-large)
 2. Indigenous child/youth programs—programs who work specifically with Indigenous children and youth were included to gather input from a family systems perspective
 3. Educational institutions—post secondary institutions who offer Indigenous-specific supports and programs
 4. Indigenous organizations—Indigenous organizations that offer Indigenous programming with a strong emphasis on cultural inclusion
 5. Mainstream organizations—organizations who serve both Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients
- **Elder advisory group**—a total of five (5) consultations were completed with an Elders' advisory' group that consisted of four individuals, plus an Elders' Helper (skapios). This group included two Blackfoot Elders, one Cree Elder, one Anishinabe Elder. A Métis Elder was also included, however, she withdrew early in the process due to illness. Each of these individuals carry with them a long history of cultural, social, professional, and academic expertise with the Indigenous community.¹

¹ It is noteworthy that, during the course of these consultations, three of these Elders participated in an international capacity towards the advancement of Indigenous peoples: one as a keynote speaker at Harvard

- **‘Council’ of Elders**—Because the intent is to provide a foundational document with an authentic and effective cultural component, Elder consultation, guidance, and input is a critical component. A final consultation—in which the principles, strategy and framework were presented—was made to a larger council of Elders. This was to obtain cultural validation and final approvals from within the community before submitting to Calgary Learns. This council represented the diversity of nations living in, and around, the Calgary area. A total of eleven (11) Elders, and Elder Helper, were present from the following nations: Siksika, Stoney, Tsuu T’ina, Piikani, Cree Métis.

Cultural Authenticity and Integrity

As discussed in the following section, it is important to note that consultation, involvement and approval from Elders is a form of community and cultural validation not offered through any other mechanism. Working with Elders requires intentional cultural and organizational investments of time, patience, respect, protocol, ceremony, space, and capital. The role of Elders within mainstream programming is frequently reduced to an opening and/or a closing prayer. However, in order to retain any form of cultural authenticity or integrity, it is necessary to include Elders as active stakeholders and contributors through all stages of programming (development, implementation, and evaluation).

“Ally-ship” and Elder Guidance

“Ally-ship” is a new and emerging concept that is important for non-Indigenous institutions and programs to understand. A good starting point for each ally is to articulate the new relationship that their organizations are prepared to develop with Indigenous peoples. This can be particularly challenging in an urban environment due to the diversity of Indigenous peoples who call Calgary home.

Allies need to understand that Elders and core thinking has to be embedded into the entire value systems of how the program runs. Don’t just bring Elders in for the prayer. We need to look to immersion versus taking a class to learn. That will mean real empowerment for Indigenous people.

—Elders Consultation, May, 2016

The overall direction for this foundational document has been built upon the knowledge of Elders of the Treaty 7 territory. It must be recognized that Elders are the ones who came before us, and carry with them long histories of work, knowledge, experience, and insight in many different areas within both their own Indigenous communities and in mainstream environments. It is encouraged applicants approach Elders and knowledge keepers in the traditional way for additional oral guidance prior to considering a project.

Indigenous Principles of Learning

Given the evidence of gaps among Indigenous learners, a foundational framework for effective programming is encompassed within **Indigenous Principles of Learning**. These

University; another as a speaker at the United Nations and University of Calgary; and finally, as invited guests to offer input and partnership to Aotearoa Maori (New Zealand)

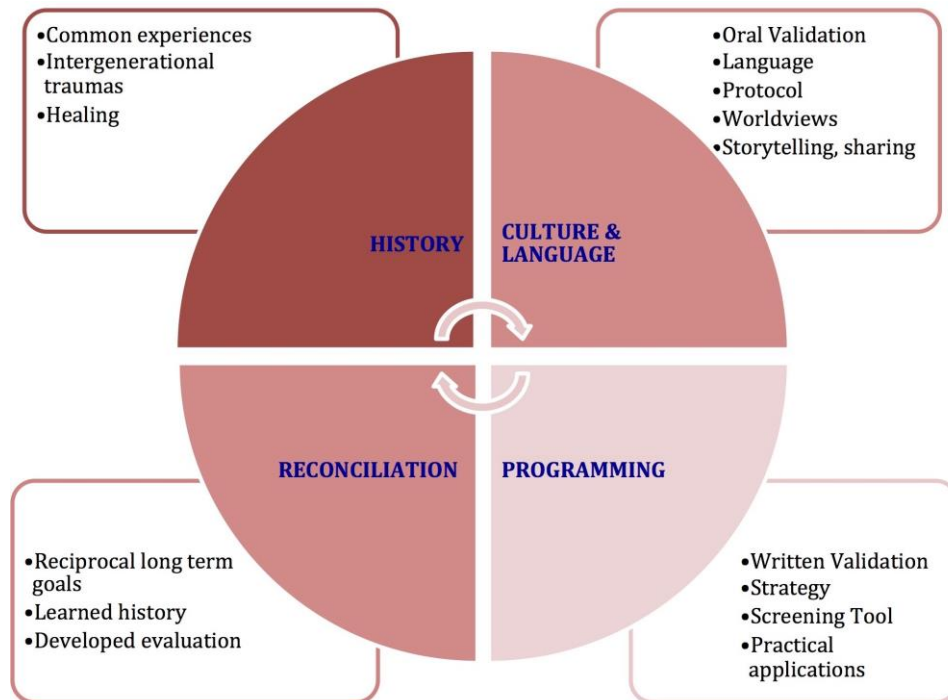
principles are extrapolated from each of the processes undertaken during the course of research—Elder consultation, community/organizational input and literature review:

1. Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, family, community, land, spirits, and ancestors
2. Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)
3. Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations
4. Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions
5. Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities
6. Learning involves patience, time and generosity
7. Learning recognizes the role and impact of Indigenous knowledge and experience
8. Learning is embedded in language and identity
9. Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story
10. Learning is a shared experience and cannot be separated from family, community or self

These principles represent an attempt to identify common elements in the varied teaching and learning approaches among Indigenous societies. They are valuable philosophical elements to guide Calgary Learns when working with Indigenous programming.

Framework

This document is organized into the following framework elements, components that Calgary Learns can follow in terms of strategy, further development, and implementation (clockwise, beginning with History):



What is Indigenous Knowledge?

To understand Indigenous concepts of literacy and learning we must first understand the construct of Indigenous knowledge. Knowledge overall can be defined as “the state of knowing, cognition, understanding, or that which is known.” (Webster’s Dictionary, 1988) Indigenous knowledge as a concept is different as it describes instead not one person’s knowledge or learning experience but more so the accumulated experience and wisdom unique to each persons individual Nation, society, and/or community of people. Most importantly this knowledge is understood from an Indigenous context and can include other ways of knowing, such as dreams, visions, insights and teachings and Elder’s knowledge about how to act, and what is true. (Little Bear, 2009)

According to Dr. Betty Bastien, in the Indigenous world, knowledge is about relationships. Bastien states, “*Knowledge is relational and dependent upon the relationships that are learned in childhood.*” Wilson and Little Bear (2009) concur adding that, “*Knowledge, accordingly, is not something contained in a book, a CD or other memory mechanisms. Knowledge, from an Indigenous perspective, is the relationships one has to “all my relations.”*”

According to Henderson and Battiste, since Indigenous knowledge is different from non-Indigenous knowledge as a life-giving and life-long process, it also carries with it the ability to restore and maintain the cultural knowledge and integrity of a people.

In Indigenous knowledge models, learning is viewed as sacred and holistic, as well as experiential, purposeful, relational, and life-long responsibility. The inclusion of IK in curricula will go a long way. It is embodied in relationships, songs, ceremonies, symbols, dramatic representation and artworks that animate the complete and accurate transmission of IK and authority from generation to generation. Last, but not least, it ...reflects an ecologically centered way of life.

—Little Bear, 2009

Indigenous Paradigms and the Importance of Language

If culture is the most fundamental aspect of Indigenous knowledge as a value system, then language must also be considered in Indigenous learning models.(Knowledge Centre, 2009; First Rider, 1994). Because of colonization, a large number of Indigenous languages have been lost and the number of people who speak their Indigenous language is dwindling. According to Nehiyawak teacher, Dr. Leona Makokis, “*Our languages guide us in our relationships*” (Makokis, unpublished). Additionally, in order to fully understand and participate in culture, the language of that culture must be understood and utilized by its people (Battiste, 2002). Henderson, Battiste and others agree, suggesting that,

Indigenous languages open the gate to Indigenous knowledge & heritage, the context for the sprouting of the spirit and its release into the learning journey. Individual learning spirits thrive in environments where they have the opportunity to engage in ceremony and language teachings.

—Henderson, 2000; Battiste, 2000; Goulet 2001;
Tunison 2007; Fulford, 2007

Language, songs, stories and ceremonies act as repositories of knowledge in the minds of Indigenous peoples and can help with decolonization efforts. Makokis observes, *“Our languages guide us in our relationships, so we see that the chaos that is presently engulfing our communities is primarily due to the suppression of our language.”* Beverly Hungry Wolf makes the same observations. According to Hungry Wolf, *“Language has an influence on the learning process”*.

Language reminds learners of their past, present and future. Learning, in connection with language acquisition, repairs the relationships lost through colonization so that learners can understand their spiritual gifts, that they are related to the Creator, and that every relationship carries responsibilities.

Integration of Language

Many Indigenous scholars have started looking to the future of literacy for Indigenous people via the relationship between original Indigenous languages and Canada’s two official languages. This is echoed by the emphasis on the integration of language by the Elders. What makes a difference for success among Indigenous learners is the recognition, connection and respect of culture embedded within the language, and the complexity of paradigms, customs and values intrinsically learned when using a language-based approach to teaching.

This is not to say that the pragmatics and core content of a program are to be abandoned or be instructed in an Indigenous language; for many programs, this is simply unattainable. What it infers is that language content, parallels, storytelling, cultural and interactive approaches are to be integrated alongside program content.

Ways of Learning – A Snapshot of Learning Styles

Indigenous	Mainstream
<p>Visions and Dreams: The importance of dreams was addressed by Virgil Bullshoe, <i>“Dreams are telling you something.”</i> He considers dreams a part of the learning process related to participation in ceremonies as it provides a way of remembering.</p>	<p>Four Developmental Stages by Jean Piaget are based on the idea that the developing child builds cognitive structures-in other words, mental maps, schemes, or networked concepts for understanding and responding to physical experiences within his or her environment.</p>
<p>Origin Stories: Origin and creation stories are elemental to the process of learning in ceremonies. <i>“Without knowledge of the stories behind the ritual one will be lost in understanding the ways of the Blackfoot.”</i> Dr. Reg Crowshoe believes that Blackfoot oral tradition and learning process is documented through ceremony.</p>	<p>Behaviorism by B. F. Skinner, holds a theory of animal and human learning that only focuses on objectively observable behaviours and discounts mental activities. Behaviour theorists define learning as nothing more than the acquisition of new behaviour.</p>
<p>Language: According to Hungry Wolf, the language has influence on the learning process. <i>“...the learner doesn’t grasp the full implications of ceremonial knowledge without knowing the language.”</i></p>	<p>Control Theory by William Glasser, which holds that behaviour is never caused by a response to an outside stimulus. Instead, the control theory states that behaviour is inspired by what a person wants most at any given time: survival, love, power, freedom, or any other basic human need.</p>
<p>Elders: Shade revealed that the Elders were careful in the kinds of advances imposed upon the learner.</p>	

"It seems like you not only had one main teacher but you had a lot of other teachers. Each teacher brought in a different perspective to the whole." He related that the teachers taught in both group and individual situations. Although the learner had one principal instructor, other teachers assisted in the learning process. Shade believes that the multiplicity of teachers added to a more rounded out understanding.

Rite of Transfer: In the learning process of ceremony one obtains knowledge through a rite of passage. Ritual is used as a method to bestow the entitlement of the individual to obtain certain knowledge within distinct parameters. The qualification to begin learning within the select boundaries is commonly called the right of transfer.

Experiential Learning: The learning process of ceremony is a hands-on approach. Since much of the learning process is experiential, the learner must gain sharp observational and listening skills. Developmental Learning: Ceremonial learning process is best achieved when the children are provided the opportunity to learn the traditional ways. Beverly Hungry Wolf said infants are nurtured in a serene environment to insure the "spirit" of the baby is ensured. Taking care of the spirit is transmitted during the raising of the children."

Holistic Concepts: The concept of an integrated whole of ceremonies is expressed through the assertion that everything is related. Acceptance of humanism as part of the learning process is expressed in the interviews. Intellectual and emotional aspects of being human are accepted in ceremonial learning and activity as part of the process. Although reverential spirituality is upmost in ceremony, contextual humanness is accepted to the point of mirth and jesting.

Critical Thinking: Critical thinking is tied to story telling and metaphor used in the learning process. The Elders' teaching methodology causes the learner to analyze information for meaning. The Elder is more of a helper in the learning process. *"...the Elder will help the learner find needed information by presenting a series of discussions on matters related to the situation. The learner must then draw their own conclusions from the information presented."*

Environmental Learning: Learning from the environment involved a communication with nature

Observational Learning by Albert Bandura, a social learning theory which states that learning occurs when an observer changes after viewing the behaviour of a model.

Social Cognition by L. S. Vygotsky, which asserts that culture is the prime determinant of individual development. Humans are the only species to have created culture, and every human child develops in the context of a culture.

Brain-based Learning that is based on the structure of the brain. As long as the brain is not prohibited from fulfilling its normal processes, learning will occur.

Neuroscience states that the nervous system and brain are the physical foundation of the human learning process. It links our observations about cognitive behaviour with the actual physical processes that support such behaviour. This theory is still "young" and is undergoing rapid controversial development.

Right Brain vs. Left Brain is a theory of the structure and functions of the mind that suggests the two different sides of the brain control two different modes of thinking. It also suggests that each of us prefers or uses one mode more than the other.

Learning Styles is an approach to learning that emphasizes the fact that individuals perceive and process information in very different ways. The learning styles theory implies that how much individuals learn has more to do with whether the educational experience is geared toward their particular style of learning than whether or not they are smart.

Multiple Intelligences is a theory of human intelligence, developed by psychologist Howard Gardner, which suggests there are at least seven ways that people have of perceiving and understanding the world. Gardner labels each of these ways a distinct intelligence—in other words, a set of skills allowing individuals to find and resolve genuine problems they face.

Constructivism, a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world. Each of us generates our own rules and mental models we use to make sense of our experiences. Learning is simply a process of

and the animals. The environment was our classroom.

Indigenous cont.

Protocols and Taboos: Obtaining knowledge of protocol and taboos is important to the learning process. Protocol also involves the status of the learner being eligible to receive certain information. *"...unless the individual has obtained the appropriate rite of transfer, the elder will probably not divulge certain kinds of things. The learner also finds that certain types of information can only be discussed in particular contexts with specific people. There are a multitude of taboos associated with individuals and the societies and ceremonies with which they are involved. The learner will usually be provided with the taboos related to their status in certain societies. The reason or the meaning of the taboo in most times is part of the learning process for the individual."*

Extended Family & Community: The impact of extended families living apart from one another has an effect on learning culture and language. Living within close proximity of members of the extended family who spoke traditional languages and lived the culture went a long way to teaching the youth.

Symbolism: *"Everything has a purpose, a meaning, every action reflects something." Pard said that very few Indians today understand the meaning of the existence of things in their life as a Native person. "According to Crowshoe, the stone effigies found throughout the traditional Blackfoot territory are actually boundary markers. The effigies, especially those of the human figure, were a representation of foreign people who were being held back from entering Blackfoot territory.*

Spirituality: *"There is a divine force present with the bundle keepers," disclosed Little Wolf. "There is energy in those songs, meaning keeping up their spirit. They know that the spirits are living with them." "The concept of inherent sanctity within a person is a phenomenon accepted in native cultures as part a part of the way of knowledge.*

Revitalization: *"The positive thing in this situation, is the fact that the middle-aged people are supporting revitalization of the language and the culture." This has caused some of the older people to come forth and support learning who heretofore withheld information. (Revitalization) has created a new group of people now willing to consider practicing the old ways.*

adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences.

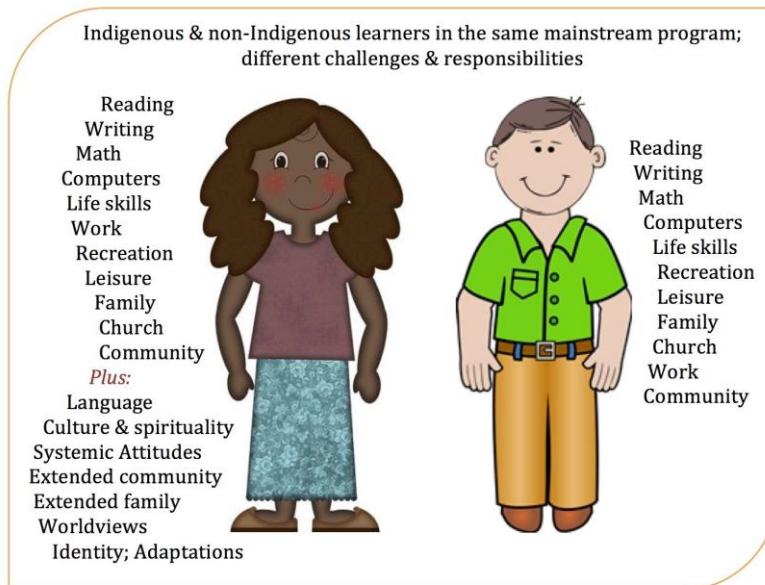
Philosophy: Dr. Reg Crowshoe considers ceremony as the way of documenting oral traditions. “...ceremony is a way of transmitting knowledge” In essence, Crowshoe believes that the symbolic concentric circle grid of teepees overlaid by social groupings represents the process of learning.

Effects of Cultural Confusion

A primary difficulty encountered by learners is the dual role they play as practitioners of their culture and their role as contemporary workers engaged in an urban environment. A telling statement that came from a community member during the consultations reveals this challenge:

When I take a program, it seems that I have to learn the non-Native elements, and then be able to translate that back to the world that I live in with my family. Most of the programs I've taken don't recognize that we [Indigenous people] are different. The non-Native stuff I learn helps to me work in the white world, if I can pass all their exams and tests, but it doesn't help me to live in my Native world. And in today's society, I have to do both in order to support my family.

The subtext of this statement is the need to provide mechanisms that, first, ensures the Indigenous learner to succeed in a program (eg. trades certification, high school, life skills, financial/academic literacy); and, second, provides the rationale for delivery methods that are culturally and socially relevant to the Indigenous learner.



Cultural Literacy

Cultural literacy can be defined as, “a system that recognizes and uses collective beliefs, customs, world-views and social identity relationships to interpret and act on” (Vass, Mitchell, & Dhurrkay, 2011). For many Indigenous groups, there is a strong connection between systems of wellbeing

linked with land, law and relationships that enable communities and people to be in a state of wellbeing.

For non-Indigenous systems, cultural literacy is an area in which there is a need for continual improvement, particularly in relation to understanding Indigenous frameworks of learning. Some attempts have been made within mainstream education services to incorporate the cultural differences of Indigenous learners: local people are employed as community liaisons, cultural brokers and learning assistants; Indigenous artworks are commonly used in promotional material. However, until the depth of worldview and language issues are recognised, programming reflective of Indigenous cultural literacy and Indigenous worldviews will remain limited.

Historically, learning for Indigenous peoples was not compartmentalized away from real life; rather, epistemological structures viewed learning simply as a fact of life. In other words, education or learning was conceived as a lifelong process, shared in a holistic manner given the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual dimensions of human development (Battiste and McLean, 2005). According to Pepion (1992), prior to contact, multiple ways of learning were used in Indigenous communities which attained better results, and had more meaning for people.

Literacy and Indigenous Literacy

A comparative description of what is considered “literacy” within an Indigenous context and the mainstream context.

Indigenous Literacy	Mainstream Literacy
<p>Contemporary research describes Indigenous literacy as an approach that can “<i>amplify socially organised practices</i>,” in the delivery of programming in which basic skills for decoding, encoding and fluency connect to all aspects of an individual’s and a community’s sense of social life; sometimes referred to as ‘empowerment’ (Barton 1994; Gee 1996; Freire 1985; Fairclough 1992). Indigenous literacy is also described as;</p> <p><i>An integrated complex of language and thinking processes and skills, incorporating a range of habits, attitudes, interests and knowledge, serving a range of purposes in different contexts.</i></p> <p>— Victorian Department of School Education and Catholic Education Office of Victoria, 1997 <small>quoted in Lo Bianco & Freebody</small></p>	<p>The most widely accepted definition of literacy appropriate for a broad adult community was established by the Australian Council for Adult Literacy, as follows:</p> <p><i>The integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking; it incorporates numeracy. It includes the cultural knowledge which enables a speaker, writer or reader to recognise and use language appropriate to different situations. For an advanced technological society such as Australia, the goal is an active literacy which allows people to use language to enhance their capacity to think, create and question, in order to participate effectively</i></p> <p>— Australian Council of Adult Literacy Policy Statement, 1989, cited in Wickert & Kevin 1995</p>
<p>According to the Treaty 7 and urban Elders consultation, Indigenous literacy is “<i>a lifelong process; it is simply not book learning. Indigenous literacy is being able to walk comfortable within the mainstream world and the Indigenous world.</i>”</p> <p>Indigenous literacy is a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive system • Critical thinking • Oral systems 	<p>In 2001, Greer, Pleasant and Zarcadoolas developed a comprehensive, detailed model for health literacy that can be re-built to define basic literacy:</p> <p><i>The evolving skills and competencies needed to find, comprehend, evaluate and use information and concepts to make educated choices, reduce risks, and improve quality of life. A literate person is able to general concepts and information to novel situations. A literate person is able to</i></p>

- Values and morals
- Family and community
- Worldviews prior to colonization

participate in ongoing public and private. This dialogue, in turn, advances literacy, individually and collectively”

— Vass, Mitchell & Dhurrkay, 2011

While the benefits of improving literacy for Indigenous people cannot be denied, the question remains, “how do we blend the necessary cultural and worldview lenses to achieve these results?” Worldview can be defined as the way that groups of people categorise and conceptualise their reality. It is the foundational philosophy that informs each group’s perception of their respective worlds in society.

From a holistic or lived perspective, Indigenous literacy then requires an approach that is embedded, or integrated, into peoples lives, work, community, learning or leisure.

— Kral & Falk, 2004

Factors that Inhibit Literacy for Indigenous People

In many Indigenous cultures and communities, the learning journey that each person travels includes an awareness of one’s strengths, gifts, and capacities (Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, n.d., Appendix 1, p. 2). Learning journeys become difficult, unfulfilling, and, perhaps, impossible for Indigenous learners however, when they are overcome by factors that diminish their ability to learn. These include; lack of identity, lack of voice, low self-esteem and multiculturalism activities that characterize First Nations, Inuit and Métis among the many cultures that have been transplanted to Canada, rather than as Indigenous cultures.

As well many Indigenous people face barriers to learning. In 1998, the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (ONLC) Position Paper Program Reform identified the following barriers faced by Indigenous learners in the program:

- 8.3% said the availability of food was a problem
- 24.7% had experienced a suicide
- 67.1% had experienced unemployment
- 39.2% has experienced family violence
- 24.5% had experienced sexual abuse
- 47.9% had experienced drug abuse
- 61.1% had experienced alcohol abuse
- 14.9% had experienced rape
- 30.1% reported having a disability

Lickers (2003), in a case study of the Six Nations Literacy Achievement Centre in Ontario, found that Indigenous learners typically face additional unique barriers such as —mental, emotional, and spiritual dysfunction leading to an identity crisis for many learners. This identity crisis is related most significantly to the loss of connection with family and culture.

Along with the lack of identity, Indigenous learners often feel that they lack a voice because there are often few other Indigenous students in the learning environment. Bazylak (2002) found, in learning environments where there were other Indigenous people their voices joined together and —as a collective the voices offered support and strength for each other.

Programs and systems themselves can also damage the learning spirit of Indigenous learners. Systems are not neutral and unless they are aware of the worldview being projected, can remain instruments of assimilation to Western culture (Hookimaw-Witt, as cited in Berger, Ross-Epp, Moller, 2006). As a result of unchecked assimilationist paradigms, Indigenous learners end up accepting many of the racist stereotypes of themselves and, as a result, frequently suffer low self-esteem and negative feelings about themselves and their culture (Pauls, 1996).

Importance of Self-Esteem and Identity to Indigenous Literacy

A growing body of research demonstrates that Indigenous learner's self-esteem is a key factor in their success (e.g., Hilberg & Tharp, 2002; Kanu, 2002; Swanson, 2003). Literacy programs which honour the culture, language and worldview of the Indigenous learners are critical. The curriculum and pedagogy of programs needs to meaningfully represent and include Indigenous people's contributions, innovations and inventions - honouring 'who they are' and 'where they have come from' (e.g., Antone, 2003; Toulouse, 2007). One way this is achieved is thru mutual respect.

Respect is central to the success of Indigenous learners and has been reaffirmed through on-going research (e.g., Bell, 2004; Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat & Curriculum Services Canada, 2006). Respect shows learners that they are valued, sacred and that we have a place in this world. Research can also be articulated through the types of approaches being used. Hilberg and Tharp (2002; Toulouse, 2007) have identified that Indigenous learners lean towards:

- Holistic style of education (learning from whole to part),
- Use of a variety of visual organizers (multitude of hand- on manipulatives – agenda, maps)
- Reflective mode of learning (have adequate time to complete tasks & answer questions) and
- Preference for collaborative tasks (group and pair work in safe classroom environments that 'honour who they are').

Swanson (2003) suggests these practical applications demonstrate respect for Indigenous learners:

- Celebrate individual achievements and cultural background,
- Engage the student at a physical, emotional/mental, intellectual and spiritual level,
- Use a variety of teaching methods (with a particular emphasis on holism, visual organizers, kinaesthetic opportunities and reflection),
- Create an environment where humour and 'group talk' is accepted,
- Comprehending the Learning Spirit/Identity in and through Learning Units (family, community, peers, etc.)

Engagement of Family and Parents

Academics (Kraal, 2009) view Indigenous literacy as social practice that must involve family and parents – especially in the case of young learners to be successful. In addition to worldview, literacy is part of other more embracing social institutions and conceptions. From these perspective initiatives to increase literacy also need to take account of broader issues of importance for Indigenous families, such as the drive to retain or regain language and identity as a process of learning beyond the parameters of mainstream learning structures. For example, researchers recognise that Indigenous children who learn to read successfully do so because, being literate involves more than having individual technical literacy skills, it also depends on the relationship

between language behaviours and supporting family relations, role modelling and cultural practices. By locating literacy in the cultural practices in families – the result is the acquisition and transmission of everyday social habits and routines over successive generations.

In the Warlpiri region for example, the cultural bilingual program gave Warlpiri families a strong sense of ownership and pride in their school and their children’s learning. Some adults became qualified teachers, Warlpiri reading materials were produced and children observed their Elders taking on responsible leadership roles and using literacy in Warlpiri (and English) meaningfully. Moreover, children attended school because they accompanied their Elders who were involved in the bilingual program

Engagement of Community

Community support and engagement has also been regarded as a positive factor in Indigenous literacy practices. The involvement of community is a key aspect in the literacy acquisition. Since Indigenous people understand the world in terms of relationships, the inclusion of community in the learning process of Indigenous is fundamental. Dubbed community literacy, authors (Vass, Mitchell, & Dhurrkay, 2011) describe, “*knowledge about sources of information, and about agendas and how to interpret them, that enables citizens to engage in dialogue and decision making* “. Community literacy also relates to a person’s ability to understand how Indigenous systems can interact with broader Western systems.

An important support system to literacy success, the literature also stresses the importance of positive relationships with communities and parents to encourage learner achievement and positive learning outcomes (Goulet, 2001; Knowledge Centre, 2009). As Ignas (2004) explains,

Educational research is clear: improvements in educational outcomes are connected to valuing Indigenous and minority students’ cultural context and their communities’ local level knowledge.

Most importantly, engaging Elders and traditional knowledge keepers supports both programming and students while acting as cultural anchors and guides. Finally, when considering the potential scope of Indigenous literacy, community involvement can, in fact, be viewed as community development. As Little Bear (2009) says,

We know that these root problems are not solved if one or a few people in low-income neighbourhoods achieve educational success, and then move out of the low-income neighbourhood. When that happens educational success is ‘exported’.” But the objective should be “... that whole communities, and not just selected individuals, benefit from education. We might imagine this as a process of community learning, community transformation....

Parallels Concepts to Learning

Dr. Reg Crowshoe, respected Piikani Elder and an active member of Calgary’s urban Indigenous community, has been a trailblazer in helping policy makers, governments and programmers understand how divergent worldviews may be seen as parallel processes. By recognizing where parallels exist between Indigenous and mainstream “literacy,” we begin to understand where approaches can be aligned to help both the learner and educator. The table

below demonstrates how some existing Western practices can be paralleled with Indigenous approaches to learning.

Parallels between Learning Theories

Indigenous Approaches	Mainstream Approaches
<p>Experiential Learning: The learning process of ceremony is a hands-on approach. Since much of the learning process is experiential, the learner must gain sharp observational and listening skills.</p>	<p>Observational Learning, a social learning theory which states that learning occurs when an observer changes after viewing the behaviour of model.</p>
<p>Critical Thinking: Critical thinking is tied to story telling and metaphor used in the learning process. The Elders’ teaching methodology causes the learner to analyze information for meaning. The Elder is more of a helper in the learning process. <i>“...the Elder will help the learner find needed information by presenting a series of discussions on matters related to the situation. The learner must then draw their own conclusions from the information presented.”</i></p>	<p>Constructivism, a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. Each of us generates our own rules and mental models that we use to make sense of our experiences. Learning, therefore, is simply a process of adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences.</p>
<p>Holistic Concept: The concept of an integrated whole of ceremonies is expressed through the assertion that everything is related. Acceptance of humanism as part of the learning process is expressed in the interviews. Intellectual and emotional aspects of being human are accepted in ceremonial learning and activity as part of the process. Although reverential spirituality is upmost in ceremony, contextual humanness is accepted to the point of mirth and jesting.</p>	<p>Four Developmental Stages are based on the idea that the developing child builds cognitive structures- in other words, mental maps, schemes, or networked concepts for understanding and responding to physical experiences within his or her environment.</p>

History – Oral & Written Validation

Fundamental Reasons for Gaps in Learning

Learning can be defined as acquisition of knowledge or a skill by study, instruction, practice or experience; to commit to memory; to come to know or be aware of. According to Indigenous scholars however, Indigenous learners across Canada are at a serious disadvantage if you consider literacy scales as the minimum required for adults to succeed in today’s economy and society. (Little Bear, 2009; George, 2008; Canadian Council, 2007)

According to the Auditor General, it would take 28 years to close the education gap between Indigenous people living on reserves and the Canadian population (ACCC 2005). There is literature that points to a number of reasons for this education gap, most of which can be categorized as the following:

- **Historical**—assimilation policies of education, particularly through but not limited to residential schools
- **Geographic**—many people live in remote and/or rural communities away from centres where secondary and post-secondary school programming takes place
- **Cultural**—practices in the institutional educational system differ, particularly in the non-recognition of the role of spirit in learning
- **Individual and personal barriers**—finances, daycare, transportation, histories of trauma, and competing priorities such as family, to name a few
- **Systemic**—racism, disparities in resources, as well as the policies and practices which do not adequately address the high level of need in education

Factors that Enhance Literacy for Indigenous People

According to Samuel Sam, a Coast Salish Elder, factors that enhance the learning spirit for Indigenous people also lead to success in other areas of learners' lives (Tunison, 2007). A common theme throughout the research literature is the connection among culture, community, literacy and the learning spirit. Cordoba 's (2006) study of Indigenous literacy stressed –Literacy is who we are.

Typically, Western society considers a learner to have been successful if he or she has completed kindergarten to grade 12 (K12) education in a reasonable length of time, has fulfilled a significant measure of his or her potential, and seeks further learning when necessary to achieve a particular level of economic and social well-being.

While these definitions of successful learning are relatively universal in that they are worthy goals for all learners, Indigenous learners see learning success as cultural reintegration in and through educational and collective self-actualization (Richardson & Blanchet-Cohen 2000).

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) concluded that:

Despite the painful experiences Aboriginal people carry with them from formal education systems, they still see education as the hope for the future and they are determined to see education fulfill its promise. (3:434)

Corbiere (2000) went one step further suggesting that Indigenous education should be based on the learning styles and teaching methods employed by Indigenous people in historic and contemporary times (Hampton as cited in Corbiere, p. 4). One example of this approach is the Six Animation Theme Bundles (ATB identified by the Canadian Council on Learning, 2007) that describe necessary components of successful Indigenous learning:

1. Comprehending the learning spirit/identity in and through learning units (family, community, peers, etc.)
2. Indigenous language learning
3. Diverse educational systems and learning
4. Pedagogy of professionals and practitioners in learning
5. Technology and learning
6. Learning from place

Intergenerational Trauma, Literacy and Loss

The connection between positive literacy programming for Indigenous people and intergenerational trauma must be understood historically, the experience of Indigenous people within institutional learning systems has been the opposite (George, 2008). According to many Indigenous literacy practitioners, *“it as a given that all of the learners will have experienced some type of trauma”*.

Instead of learning, Indigenous people experienced spoken and unspoken messages that it was not okay to be who they were. According to Swanson (CJNE 2003);

Those who attend literacy programs today may be the same people who [as children] experienced disillusionment and discouragement.

The reality is that many of the learners in programming today are dealing with one or more symptoms of residential school syndrome or intergenerational trauma and that this reality should be considered when judging the learners' ability to learn. This being said, practitioners of literacy must have a deep passion for what is possible, encourage learners spirit and bravery in the face of hardships.

Possibly one of the greatest tragedies of the residential school era was the loss felt by individuals, and entire Nations to a shared sense of interconnectedness, and holism. Disruptions to this system of connected balance – sometimes defined as the Medicine Wheel, has been seen to affect a learner's abilities in all four areas of spirituality, mentality, emotionality and physicality. Due to colonizing practices, learners often come to literacy programming with several layers of issues that need to be resolved before learning can take place.

1. Spiritual Loss

According to educators (Battiste, 207; Knowledge Centre 2009) learning systems that deny the importance of spirituality reduce education to the mind, and removes the benefits of learning from the community, from experience, from interaction with the natural world, from ceremonies, relationships with Elders (Anuik, Battiste, & George, 2008).

2. Emotional Loss

Battiste (2002) and Tisdell identify emotional trauma as the self-doubt and poor cultural identity that Indigenous learners often bring to learning environments. According to Tisdell (2003),

In order to move to an overall positive cultural identity, individuals will go through a process of unlearning what they have unconsciously internalized. Part of this process is learning their own history from the perspective of members of their own culture, reclaiming what has been lost or unknown to them, and reframing what has often been cast subconsciously as negative in more positive ways.

3. Mental Loss

Ningwakwe (2007) describes the affect of violence on learning. *“Violence and trauma are major barriers to learning. In my research I have found that trauma can cause blockages to learning”*. Candace Pert (1997), a neuroscientist also talks about body as the unconscious mind where, *“Repressed traumas caused by overwhelming emotion can be stored in a body part, where past traumatic life and school experiences cloud the intellect, and thus impede learning”* (George, 2007; Naparstek, 2004).

4. Physical Loss

Elder Janice Longboat, a Mohawk traditional teacher and healer, believes the body provides important information to its owner: “*our whole body is Indigenous literacy.*” In Canada excessive pediatric obesity has been reported in eastern Indigenous communities (2000). Although it cannot be confirmed, it has been suspected that a complex interaction of genetic, environmental and behavioral factors remains responsible. High fat diets, low physical activity, and excessive television time are all indicators that re-norming to healthier pre-contact behaviors are needed.

Programming – Oral & Written Validations

Criteria for Indigenous Programs – Screening Tool

The following criteria was established through consultation with Treaty 7 Elders and urban Elders, focus groups, practitioners in the literacy field, and a literature review. This Screening Tool will be used specifically by Calgary Learns adjudication committees to evaluate future applications for Indigenous programming.

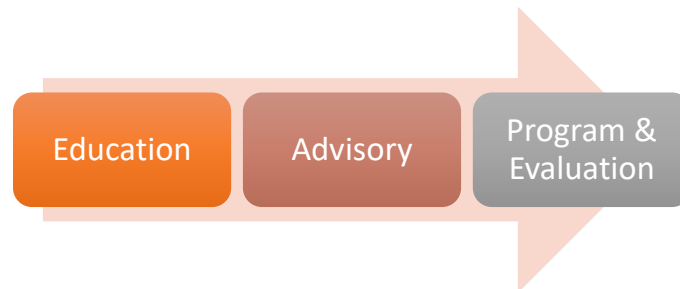
1 = Little content 2 = Some content 3 = Acceptable content

	1	2	3
PART I: CRITERIA QUESTIONS			
a) Does the program design use culturally relevant oral & written learning tools? (written, eBooks, oral stories, song, media teachings)			
b) Has the program demonstrated an ability to create pathways between high school and post-secondary by working directly with university, colleges & trades that supports successful transition(s)?			
c) Has the program demonstrated how it supports Indigenous learners to deal with intergenerational trauma through the use of culturally relevant & sensitive teaching model(s)?			
d) Has the program demonstrated how it will provide both oral & written teachings, in equal measure, using a culturally relevant delivery model (eg. circle, storytelling, land based)			
e) Has the program demonstrated how it is offering literacy from a family-systems perspective?			
f) Has the program demonstrated a commitment to operating, at a fundamental level, from an Indigenous perspective of learning & literacy?			

g) Has the program demonstrated the ability to create a culturally safe and supportive learning space for the Indigenous learner?			
h) Does the program have an effective and culturally relevant plan to evaluate the success of the program, from an Indigenous perspective methodology and criteria?			
i) Has the program demonstrated how it will integrate the use of Indigenous language as part of its core teaching requirement?			
j) Has the program established relevant working partnerships with Indigenous organizations, Elders, and knowledge keepers?			
k) Does the program mandate and delivery demonstrate an effective understanding of “reconciliation”?			
PART II: LEARNING PRIORITIES, IN RELATION TO INDIGENOUS LEARNERS			
a) Healing approaches			
b) Legacy education			
c) Elder involvement			
d) Cultural resurgence			
e) Indigenous identity			
f) Language integration			
g) Evaluation with Indigenous indicators			
h) Indigenous allies			
i) Decolonizing practices and policies			
j) Assistance with intergenerational trauma			
k) Protocols and practices			
l) Local Indigenous resources			
m) Indigenous partnerships			

Strategy – Practical applications

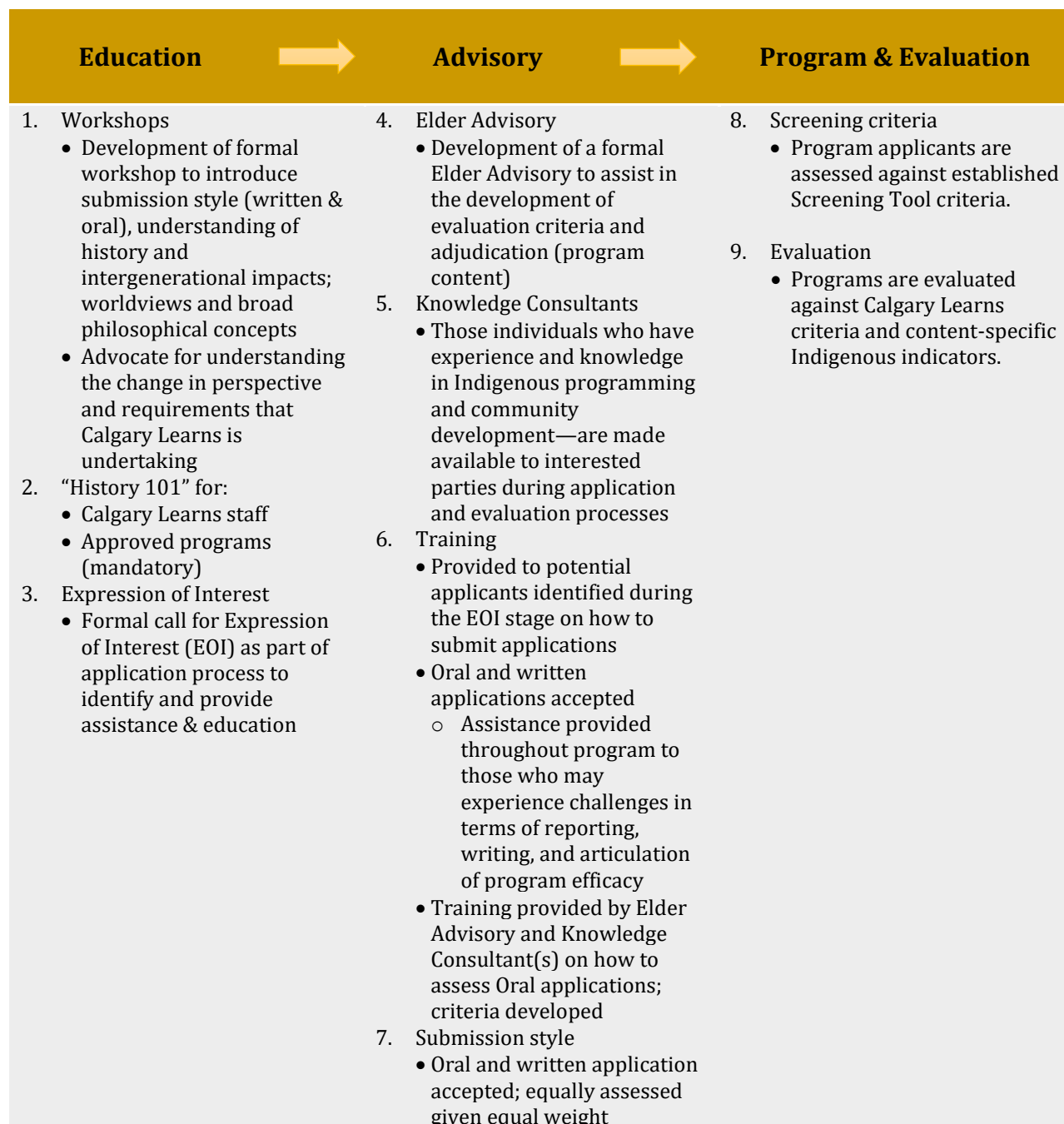
In order for change to occur successfully for both Indigenous learners and Calgary Learns in terms of working with Indigenous clients, three basic elements of Strategy are recommended (in this order):



Education – speaks to the need for a comprehensive understanding of historical experiences and impact that intergenerational trauma has on the Indigenous learner. This understanding helps to guide the types of approaches and programs supported by Calgary Learns for Indigenous programming, and is recommended for both Calgary Learns staff and funded programs.

Advisory – formation of an active Elder Advisory to guide Calgary Learns through education, introduction, implementation, and evaluation of programs; developed network of “knowledge consultants” to be called upon during processes.

Program Evaluation – Programs are assessed against the established Screening Criteria (Tool); development of culturally and socially-relevant co-created evaluation indicators and criteria to be a mandatory part of funded programs; programs are informed of requirement after successful adjudication and during signing of funding agreement.



Strategy Timeline for Calgary Learns

Short Term:

- 1) Establish an active Elders Advisory to assist in adjudication, support resource, and validation of competent cultural program content
- 2) During the next round of requests for proposals, utilize the developed “Criteria for Indigenous Programs – Screening Tool” as guidance and adjudication;

- 3) Create a pre-application mandatory, “knowledge workshops” for potential funding applicants to attend prior to funding applications being submitted;
- 4) Offer assistance to Indigenous organizations and applicants to complete proposals should they request it.

Medium Term:

- 1) Create “Indigenous history 101” workshops for Calgary Learns staff and approved Calgary Learns programs;
- 2) Make participation of “Indigenous history 101” a mandatory part of funding agreements
- 3) Create a listing of “knowledge consultants”, including Elders, cultural brokers or Elders helpers for funded organizations to access during programming;
- 4) Receive training from Elders and knowledge consultants on how to appropriately assess oral applications;
- 5) Accept both oral and written application proposals, weighted equally;
- 6) Co-create program evaluations in partnership with successful programs and Elder advisors to ensure they are both relevant to the nature of the programming being delivered as well as demonstrate alignment to the Indigenous Principals of Learning and the Primary Programming Areas.

Longer Term:

- 1) Evaluate effectiveness of overall Strategy and Calls to Action components on an annual basis over the next five (5) years; revise accordingly.

Investment Areas and Programming Direction for Calgary Learns

Consistently, it is shown that promising practices that mitigate literacy and learning gaps among Indigenous people are:

- Community-based
- Developed with Elders and traditional knowledge keepers at the core
- Involve interactive and visceral activities that engages the learner and allows the program to be more culturally relevant (Tunison, 2007; George, 2008)

Supporting these premises, Ignas (2004) documented a science curriculum developed for North Coast Indigenous people called “Forests for the Future” that blends local Indigenous knowledge and epistemologies with Western scientific knowledge. Similarly, in a research project conducted in several Winnipeg inner-city high schools, Silver, Mallett, Greene & Simard (2002) concluded that learning outcomes for Indigenous learners are enhanced when the entire community is engaged and involved in the entire process from curriculum development and delivery to role modelling and local economic development. The Centre for Urban Aboriginal Education has identified a number of investment areas and best practises when creating Indigenous learning and literacy programs:

- Implement a strategy designed to produce Indigenous instructors in numbers proportionate to the Indigenous student population
- Secure appropriate funding for adequate training of instructors

- Revamp program content and curricula to integrate Indigenous teachings and knowledge into conventional Western programs
- Include courses/components with specific Indigenous content
- Institute an “Elders/artist-in-residence” aspect into programs
- Create and deliver content that dismantles entrenched racism and paternalistic attitudes
- Establish true working partnerships between Indigenous groups and educational institutions
- Create working partnerships between educational institutes and industry
- Establish partnerships among post-secondary institutions and training programs
- Establish partnerships between educational institutions and government departments

Other successful approaches to Indigenous literacy have been identified and should be considered by literacy programs:

- A recognition of the role spirituality plays in the everyday lives of the Indigenous learners compartmentalization of spirituality and tradition is a less viable way of engaging subject matter and students
- Instructors must listen to Indigenous learners; worldviews and cultural constructs are positioned on narratives, listening, speaking and sharing that serves as a model for bringing the whole self to the table
- Strive to make the literacy program a welcoming environment, a place for the learners to explore their literacy-related issues and discover ways and means of resolving them
- Treat learners as a whole person
- Intake should be continuous and informal so instructors get to know the learners. Build on learner strengths identified during an initial assessment, with a goal of building on that success; sometimes referred to this as “scaffolding”
- Create a pace of programming that is flexible so as to respect the personal rhythms of the learners
- Allow learners the time to resolve a personal or family issue, and welcome the individual back upon return
- Use talking circles as a way of to develop “community”; sharing allows the learner to realize they are not alone in their challenges and apprehensions
- Recognize the transformative nature of programming as a way to encourage healing
- Use positive messaging throughout the learning process as a way to recruit, retain and assist learners to succeed
- Ensure Elders or traditional teachers are a core part of the programming
- Help learners acquire cultural teachings that they can integrate into everyday lives
- Include land-based programming
- Embrace Indigenous approaches to teaching and learning that reflects three broad philosophical positions:
 - a) Inherent multi-dimensionality of learning
 - b) Holism—balancing the spirit, heart, mind and body
 - c) Relationally—kinship and the sense of belonging with social and natural laws
- Incorporate Indigenous languages into programming
- Honour Indigenous ways of knowing, expression and being into programming; this includes honouring dreams and visions
- Create responsive systems and programs that reflect Indigenous worldviews; by making education more culturally and socially relevant, these models counter the marginalization of Indigenous history, knowledge, values, and experiences

Investment

Indigenous literacy is as much about the process as it is about the product. To achieve success, funders must consider the necessary costs involved in embracing Indigenous learning models. According to BASA (1998) the level of funding for Indigenous literacy programming is insufficient to cover the expenses related to fully and effectively implementing a truly holistic approach. BASA states that, Indigenous literacy organizations throughout Canada...are existing 'hand to mouth'... The NADC puts it even more directly:

Currently, many Aboriginal literacy programs receive \$40-\$50K per year. These dollars MUST cover both administration and delivery. This means that practitioners' salaries are often less than \$30K annually...wages are either at or slightly above poverty level wages.

- George, 2002

Reconciliation – Calls to Action

Calls to Action for Calgary Learns to Support Indigenous Literacy Programming

Canada's current context of healing and reconciliation requires all systems to change. The onus for improved outcomes for Indigenous peoples must not be placed on the individual learner alone; it must also be placed on the structural and systemic barriers that exist and re-create racism within larger systems (Kirkness and Bernhardt, 1995). Solutions for improving the literacy levels of Indigenous people will require changes to how we understand Indigenous worldviews, histories and relationship to Canada.

Calls to Action (recommendations) for Calgary Learns to build a responsive learning/funding framework include:

- 1) Seek direction from, and gain from the experience of Indigenous Elders, Indigenous educators, consultants and experts, over the long-term and on a consistent basis;
- 2) Seek direction from Indigenous programs and institutions that have achieved successes (best or promising practices) and build from their initiatives;
- 3) CL to sponsor into each funding cycle a "Knowledge Gathering" that brings together the Elders, healers, and knowledge consultants with funded programs to build trust; learn epistemologies, approaches, and worldviews; share progress and challenges; establish communication and networks;
- 4) Recognize and fund programs that embrace Indigenous epistemologies as foundational components in all parts of funded programming including goals, indicators, and measures;
- 5) Recognize and fund programs that use validated oral and written sources and ways of learning;
- 6) Enable Elders and community members to define or contribute to goal setting, problem solving and outcomes of the programming via a Calgary Learns advisory committees;
- 7) Include other systems and partners in building an Indigenous literacy community in Calgary and Alberta;
- 8) Require individuals working within the programs and system to have knowledge and understanding of Indigenous world views and ways of knowing (histories, cultures, identities, and experience) so all are able to respond to the needs of all learners;
- 9) Assess the cultural competency and safety of funded programs prior to funding agreements.

Literacy as defined by Elders of Treaty 7 and Southern Alberta—Oral Validation (Stories)

Literacy is a Descriptive System (Story):

Literacy in my language is hard to define into English. I would look at reading as a descriptive system. How we describe designs, plants, animal or plant that would be our reading. Our writing has many different types. My great grandson, how do you write his name in Blackfoot – I know how to draw his name but I don't know how to write it. You describe the baby – their culture and then you blend that with the description of the name. That way you know that it's a Piikani name. It's more descriptive. In oral perspective the description is our reading – Elder, 2016

I have a brother who teaches on the reserve. I teach the traditional language. We have to be very descriptive and start from the basics. He takes people out on the land to teach them language and how these things live in the world. The word moss, you need to understand what moss is and how it fits into the entire worldview. Same with hunting and trapping they learn from hands on activities. That's how we learnt - people never told us to sit and learn this. Listening skills were critical. Listening and understanding by role modeling and doing. Paying attention and incorporating watching and listening as a way of learning – Elder, 2016

We all need support to be literate. I stayed at a grade 3 level for long time in residential school. I was a cleaner instead of learning. When I had kids I couldn't help them read and write but I taught my kids our traditional values. When the kids went to school they had that. I couldn't help them with their homework – how I learnt to read and write was by reading romance novels – I always wanted to learn but when I was in residential school no one knew my eyesight was bad so I could learn. When I came to Calgary I went to university and now I teach – Elder, 2016

Literacy is Critical Thinking (Story):

Literacy is also critical thinking you need to be able to have critical thinking when you describe things so that the meaning comes out. When I was in the little bird society the frog use to have strong legs for swimming. When you draw the description of a frog it shows the strong legs, the animal itself and its characteristics and you put the two together in to symbol form. The sound of a frog also goes into the description. When we are learning our language the little kids are taught with the sounds so that the kids understand the connection. For example, dog sound, frog sound. He hears the sounds and then puts the sounds together to make the descriptive word. You also understand the place in nature and its relationship in the world. After awhile you put all of the sounds and words together and all of the other places where each object has a place in the statement – Elder, 2016

Asking for a drink of water – you visualize someone giving someone a drink of water. That's when you start to comprehend the language. My dad used to tell me about his father. His name was World Runner. He told my dad a story about Old Sun.

When they met signing the treaty – is was a story I heard from my dad. Old son told my grandfather I love all my kids the people in Siksika. The reason they are my kids is I took all the

people as my kids. I'm glad to see them working together. That they are meeting. But now we are going to sign the treaty with the white man. I'm worried about some of our kids are going to make friends with the white kids. We are going to make mistakes.

When I think about the story I think about how you need to understand all the words to be able to truly understand the story. When you talk about the mistakes (1877) the old man was already understanding that we would lose our ways, our language and our stories. He knew that our mistakes would be in that we wouldn't be able to understand the description and meaning of who we are. How the description was put together into other description and how that became a story of who we are. It becomes a package of knowledge that people need to understand in the onset of the story. Then people have critical understanding of who they are in the culture – Elder, 2016

Literacy is an Oral System(s) -Story:

The signs are very important - used to make signs first to the youngest people then we would put words to the signs. Even in our ceremonies when we are doing the motions the sign language is very important – knowing the sign language is very important to Indigenous literacy. People may be illiterate but if they know sign language they can still communicate. Are they really illiterate? Even if people can't talk there is traditional sign language that people used to use. Grunts, facial expressions go to the basics about oral language and how people value oral language – Elder, 2016

Oki – how can you comprehend the word if its written on a board. If you learned Oki from the Little bird society, then people understand the language in the context of the culture and the community. It's done in a lived and natural system. Sources and knowledge come in with all of the inputs to do critical thinking from that perspective. Its not only reading and writing – we come from traditional backgrounds where oral stories are how we are taught. From the stories and from listening to our grandparents. When I teach I tell stories and try to keep out traditions alive. We are competing with technology and other ways of learning – Elder, 2016

There are two differences in oral and written knowledge – if we find the parallels to help both sides the similarities between a traditional story and a mega byte on a cell phone. That's where comprehension starts and how we can start make translations between the Elders stories and the kids today – Elder, 2016

Songs are part of the validation concepts. It is important in an oral culture. If you have a dog how do you say that dog is yours and it lives with you. In English you buy a dog and here is the receipt. Songs are the way we validate the rights and privileges, right of honour that shows that your physical diploma or relationship to i.e. your dog. When we learn our language we use the songs to describe our relationship with others and with the world. When you know the songs you understand the language the actions that go with it. If you just sing a song without the validation or rights to do it, you will be punished. There is a belief system that goes with the songs and language. – Elder, 2016.

Oral systems of management – Songs give people the rights to certain actions and ability to have the rights and privileges. Its like having the report cards. Section 35 gives jurisdiction to the land for First Nations. If we want to protect Section 35 in the Constitution, then we need to define what these words and practices mean. When we work with western organizations – Indigenous people need to be the ones defining. We can no longer let our model be defined and resourced by Western standards anymore. – Elder, 2016

Western culture is individual culture. Oral culture is a social type of culture. Oral cultural teaching – people help the group to make sure that all the teachings are being transferred. There is a difference between how we teach as a collective and how we teach as a person individually. Women’s role was the values and the men’s roles was the action and each have to support the other. Right now we are losing the oral – stewardship roles where we work together and help each others in a communal way. This is the traditional way of learning. To support each other to learn and learning is the ceremony – Elder, 2016

Literacy is Morals and Values (Story):

From my experience working with Indigenous people around the world – I had roommates with different language but because of common values we can understand each other. We learn from a place of values, by examples and by watching how people behave and how you behave. You will always understand that person because you speak with respect and love even though you may not agree with everything they say. We have to build from a perspective of unconditional love and respect for all indigenous people and the traditional stories and values about how to be – Elder, 2016

Two parts - practical part and the moral and ethical part. In our language we say thank you in western language – we don’t have words for thank you in Blackfoot. When we talk about being descriptive we showed those by action. You show people you love them by their action. When they describe thank you in Blackfoot you would say thank you in the language. The value part is in the action part and is seen in the oral part. It’s the feeling of how people behave around you – Elder, 2016

Elders were a big part of the program to tell the stories. Another critical part was the drumming, dancing, language and story telling. After PICSS closed down there was a void. There was a lot of experiential learning that the students received that there was no other place to learn this. What does a warrior mean, there was a grandmother matriarch that you had to go and talk to if you got into trouble? It was values based. You expedite your learning in a value based system – Elder, 2016. PICSS – you learned your language, I learned drumming and was attracted to that part. The language class that I went to – it was hard to learn because it was done in the school. If it was done in the environment and in context with the action it probably would have stuck better. It was hard to understand – Elder, 2016

When young people learn to sing you have to start to learn the language so that you know what you are signing about. It forces the young kids to learn the language. Singing can be an approach to language and re-building back their culture. It brings them back to the old stories and Elders. – Elder, 2016

At Blue Quills you have an Elder assigned to you where you can learn with that person in relationship. That would have been really helpful. The other issue was that the kids didn’t see any value to having the value. Everything in life is English. Young people need to see the connection between having language makes you be a better strong, understand their parents and grandparents. When I go to ceremony I don’t really understand what happening because the teaching is in Cree and the environment is Cree but I don’t have the connection. My driver is that if I’m going to follow an way of life I’m not complete without the language – Elder, 2016

Literacy is Family (Story):

You need support from all the family members to help people learn and be literate. How do you implement the Indigenous part of learning? You have to start at the most basic level when you teach Indigenous literacy. 3 reasons why to learn to be a better learner – better jobs, safety meaning that people who are literate can pass on to their children what is important – you are a role model for the rest the family, you can provide for your family and you have a better work ethic – Elder, 2016.

It has to be for the betterment for all the Nations. What the Elders talk about is the holistic approach to learning. The Maori talked about their culture, the boats they used. For PICSS we used the tipi and the students had to sign a contract that as parents of students in the school had to agree to go to school and attend the parenting classes to be able to best help their kids – Elder, 2016.

Literacy is a Return to Worldviews Prior to Colonization (Story):

The new Prime Minister thought he was francophone but he only knew the language but not the French values. When we look at oral cultures you need the values and description to be able to say you are a cultural speaker. – Elder, 2106

The iPhone – you buy band widths which is a storage box of knowledge – for kids that knowledge – for the Elders they have knowledge and they store the knowledge in stories – oral bandwidth and megabytes. If you were an Elder and had the songs for making arrow heads, then he would smudge down as a teachers and he would tell the 4 stories around how to make those stories – you can gain knowledge with the traditional knowledge and ways of gathering the information – Elder, 2016

We were talking to the Inuit. They were marking out their traditional territory but the Inuit said that the boundaries were not the right boundaries. They told the stories about how they always knew where the boundaries were in their language and on the land. Modern oral skills – they are like when you take a video game we can put our stories into video game and as the kids go through the actions in the game then the kids will understand the skills from the context of the game. That's how they are trying to translate sounds, facial expressions, values and principals coming from real experiences and understanding the stories from a whole system. When you jump over to a western system then you have to start looking at where the parallels are to bring the Indigenous perspectives to western systems. – Elder, 2016

If you don't monitor the cultural authenticity of helping people practice an Indigenous approach people go right back to western thinking. This way of learning is complete immersion. Sanctify creator the kindness and respect for all of existence. That's where the models of learning came ahead – as soon as you put the smudge down the learning is there. Its an entire and whole process so that the language just come naturally. People take ownership and responsibility for the language and the cultural integrity, respect and honour. When the oral teachers, Elders started to be lost then the language started to decrease. Popcorn is described as exploding teeth – really the word translated in context is cloud food – Elder, 2106

Literacy is Spirit (Story):

When the spirits take a rock and rub it becomes perfectly round. One is a stronger the spirit can work to take sickness away but the sage can be used to purify. When you look at a story and there is knowledge or feeling behind it, that's what is recognized as spirit. For literacy, when you start to understand what the stories mean then there is spirit supporting and the spirit is driving the acquisition of spirit. That is the true literacy of spirit. The spirit of a ceremony is the powerful transference of true learning especially when its cultural. It's the connector. Learning goes both ways. If our kids can understand their learning spiritually then they can come to our ceremonies and learn even more. We have to make the learners comfortable with the spirit in oral learning. We have lost that. There are different kinds of spirits – healing, funny, bad ones. — Elder, 2016

Some knowledge is sacred – knowledge is like spirits. There are many different types. Once you get to the concept of sacred knowledge then you need to get permission to begin to understand or use this knowledge. You have to earn certain kinds of knowledge over many years of learning. There are consequences to taking sacred knowledge with out permission. — Elder, 2016

Examples of Age-Specific Learning Models

Below are Indigenous models of learning that proponents may consider when developing their programs.

Early Learning

1. The Step by Step Child and Family Center in Kahnawake, Quebec is a locally controlled, developmentally and culturally appropriate preschool program. Six components are offered as the core of early learning for First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) children: language and culture, education, health promotion, nutrition, social support, and parent involvement.
2. Kapachee Training Centre's Little Tots Program in Southern Saskatchewan is governed by a local Board of Directors. The program uses holistic approaches to early childhood education, supporting the development of Métis cultural understandings.
3. Aboriginal Head Start in urban and rural communities and on-reserve concentrates on the health of the entire family while focusing on the language/culture, school readiness, and health and wellness of its pre-kindergarten children.
4. First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative and the Brighter Futures Campaign are programs that devolve authority in two significant realms: the development of culturally relevant early childhood programming and the control over the enumeration of the qualifiers for healthy and able children, families, and communities.

Kindergarten to Grade 12

1. The Okiciyapi Partnership in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, includes Saskatoon Public School Division, Saskatoon Tribal Council and the Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. These organizations work in partnership to promote, strengthen and facilitate First Nations and Métis education through projects, such as the inclusion of FNMI content, perspectives, and ways of knowing into the learning program, representative workforce initiatives, language/culture programs, research on FNMI education, anti-racist education, and shared governance.
2. Seven Generations Education Institute Culture Camps, Fort Francis, Ontario. The Anishinabek camps include the presence of Elders and traditional teachers. They are founded on traditional teachings that stress connection to land, languages and traditional ways of hunting, gathering and preparing medicine.
3. Forest for the Future, Tsimshian territory of British Columbia, is a social studies and science curriculum project designed for high school students. The curriculum focuses on four unit plans that incorporate Indigenous and western scientific knowledge to meet the ecological needs of the local community.

Post Secondary

1. Teacher Education Programs across Canada offer programs in local communities and account for community needs in learning when contemplating courses and delivering instruction.
2. Nunavut Sivuniksavut Program is a transition program for Inuit high school graduates. It is a locally-owned program that takes a holistic approach to meeting the needs of learners. It recognizes the historical legacy of colonialism and the contemporary situation of Inuit in Canada.
3. Nunavut Arctic College provides community centered education and training characterized by a culture of openness, inclusiveness and tolerance and respect for Inuit knowledge and values. The College has three campuses and 24 Community Learning Centers in 26 of Nunavut's communities. Contact: <http://nac.nu.ca>
4. Toqwa'tu'kl Kjjijitaqnn/Integrative Science Program and Mi'kmaq Studies at Cape Breton University, Nova Scotia, reconciles Mi'kmaz knowledge frameworks with western science in a four-year Bachelor of Science in Community Studies degree. The program involves community members and Elders, creates opportunities for out-of-doors learning experiences, and employs project-based learning with topics of interest to the students and community.
5. Red Crow Community College is an entity of Kainaiwa, or the Blood Tribe and it is allied with First Nations Adult and Higher Education Consortium (FNAHEC). The Red Crow Community College launched a school of Kainaiwa Studies in 2002, offering a series of undergraduate-level courses based on a curriculum that is anchored in the philosophies, theories and methodologies of Blackfoot knowledge systems.
6. University nuhelot'Ine thalyots nistameyimakanak Blue Quills First Nations College, St. Paul, Alberta is mandated by the seven member/ owner First Nations through their Chiefs and Board of Governors to advance and protect iyiniw pimâtisiwin ekwa iyiniw mâmitoneyicikan (indigenous forms of life and thinking) through teaching, research, and community service, guided by the natural laws of the nehiyawak (Cree people), and grounded in nehiyawewin (Cree language), and aligning with the Blue Quills philosophy, vision, and mission statements.
7. The Genesis Group, Yellowknife, is a Division of the Northern Learning Institute NWT Inc. The Genesis Group has expertise in the development and delivery of training programs, research, evaluation and assessment, writing and curriculum development. A key corporate objective is to assist Indigenous Northerners enhance their lives through education and training advancement. The Interactive Apprenticeship Study Project is an innovative online interactive learning and support system that improves educational opportunities for Indigenous Canadians and assists with successful transitions into careers in the trades.
8. Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research (GDI) was established in 1980 in Saskatchewan with a mandate to promote Métis culture through development and

distribution of relevant materials and collections, and to deliver Métis specific educational programs and services. This was followed later by the establishment of Dumont Technical Institute (1992) to deliver ABE and Skills Training to Métis students across the province. GDI is the only Métis owned and directed educational institution in Canada.

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