Aboriginal Literacy and Essential Skills Pilot Project

Literacy Victoria
EMPOWERING ADULT LEARNERS

Disclaimer/Disclosure Statement

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) provided funding for the multi-year Aboriginal Literacy and Essential Skills (ALES) Pilot Project.

The views and opinions expressed in this final report do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada or HRSDC. The ALES Pilot Project final report is intended to encourage broad participation in Aboriginal community-based adult literacy and essential skills development program and service delivery, particularly on-reserve First Nations learning.

The examples and resources associated with the ALES Pilot Project final report are based on Literacy Victoria's collective work from February 2010–February 2013. Literacy Victoria obtained permission to utilize the photographs and related images in this final report.

The ALES Pilot Project worked with First Nations communities on southern Vancouver Island. Therefore, unless stated otherwise, the focus of our reporting will be specific to First Nations communities and on-reserve literacy and essential skills program delivery on southern Vancouver Island.

Literacy Victoria recognizes that it is not in a position to influence decision-making and/or planning as it pertains to adult literacy and essential skills development with First Nations communities on southern Vancouver Island, HRSDC or related government agencies. However, Literacy Victoria highly encourages dialogue with literacy organizations, academia and Aboriginal/provincial/federal levels of government about opportunities to collectively advance community/grassroots-driven literacy and essential skills development program design and service delivery.

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ABORIGINAL LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS PILOT PROJECT FINAL REPORT: RESULTS AND REFLECTIONS FROM SOUTHERN VANCOUVER ISLAND

Executive Summary

> *"Our agenda for First Nations education involves three key ingredients: stability, systems and support. 'Stability' means stable and secure funding - a guarantee - to achieve specific standards and requirements. 'Systems' means building education systems by and for First Nations that include key supports for our languages and cultures. 'Support' means linking and broadening the support among all education institutions and jurisdictions— in particular, universities and colleges—to achieve success. Education is a determinant of social and economic health and creates key links to our other priorities: governing capacity and sustainable economic development...Let us turn the page to a new chapter, together."*
>
> (National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, Assembly of First Nations, 2010, p.1)

On southern Vancouver Island in British Columbia (BC), Canada, Aboriginal literacy programs—specifically First Nations literacy and essential skills programming—are delivered on reserve, in individual communities and in workplaces.

Currently, the overall effect of these literacy and essential skills programs cannot be assessed because they are designed and delivered separately rather than comprehensively. Similarly, it is often difficult to see where there might be literacy and essential skills program delivery gaps or where both formal and informal learning opportunities may exist.

For Aboriginal (specifically, First Nations on reserve) literacy and essential skills programming, there is a need to

- **increase access** to literacy and essential skills curricula and resources for adult Aboriginal learners in the social and cultural context of families and communities;

- **increase knowledge exchange and collaboration** between Aboriginal communities and key strategic partners; and

- **strengthen commitment** to improving the literacy and essential skills of Aboriginal adults at both local and regional levels.

For the three year community-based Aboriginal Literacy and Essential Skills (ALES) Pilot Project, Literacy Victoria assisted First Nations communities on southern Vancouver Island (BC, Canada) and their

citizens in developing a learning vision and set of pathways that are culturally relevant and reflective of customized community literacy and essential skills needs, interests and priorities. Specifically, Literacy Victoria worked with five southern Vancouver Island First Nations communities as pilot sites (representative of urban and remote First Nations communities) that utilized the Canadian Council on Learning's *First Nations holistic lifelong learning model* and sought advisory support and guidance from the WILNEW (Victoria region) Committee and other First Nations community learning champions.

The WILNEW Committee is comprised of 10 South Island First Nations communities: Beecher Bay First Nation, Esquimalt Nation, Malahat First Nation, Pacheedaht First Nation, Pauquachin First Nation, Songhees Nation, Tsawout First Nation, Tsartlip First Nation, Tseycum First Nation and T'souke Nation.

First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model
Living DRAFT
Last Updated: June 6, 2007
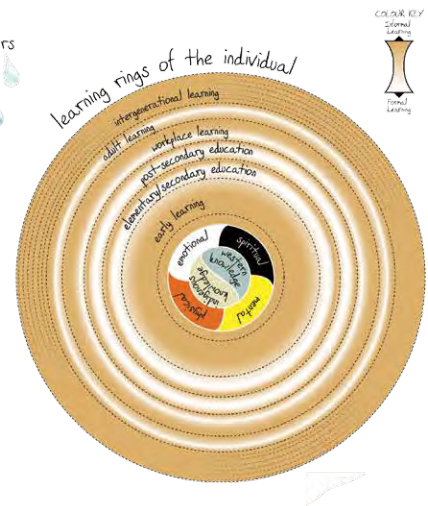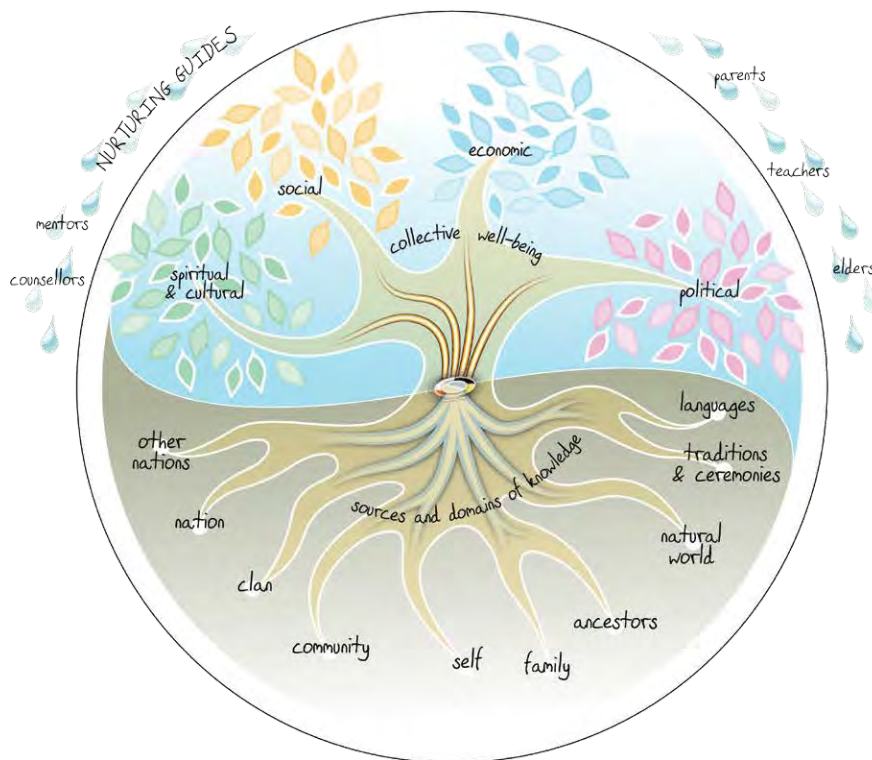
The *First Nations holistic lifelong learning model* shifts the emphasis from a piecemeal approach to education that is often based on external assessment to an identification of cultural relationships and sense of place that contributes to learning and increased self-confidence.

First Nations holistic lifelong learning model

(Source: Canadian Council on Learning, 2007)

The ALES Pilot Project is recognized as the first comprehensive First Nations literacy and essential skills planning process on southern Vancouver Island.

As part of the ALES Pilot Project, the project team

- **developed a regional First Nations adult literacy and essential skills framework** that included key components such as taking a learner-centered holistic approach; integrating cultural values and traditional language(s); utilizing an asset-based approach in assessing a community's state of readiness; understanding Aboriginal ways of learning and multiple literacies; being aware of historical trauma related to learning and the need to heal; integrating learners' families and related social support networks; empowering First Nations communities to "lead by example"; planning for the future at all levels; incorporating technology and social media into learning activities; and growing relationships and understanding cultural protocols;

- **facilitated and developed individual and community learning plans** that included designing templates for future use and customization by First Nations communities and literacy organizations outlining pre-planning (e.g., building relationships, identifying assets and gaps, engaging in a group dynamic process), planning (e.g., organic place-based learning plan development) and post-planning/initial implementation (e.g., meeting with Chief and Council, participating in cross-cultural awareness to identify resources for specific community learning needs) phases of individual and community-based learning plan development;

- **adapted culturally relevant learning and assessment benchmarks for First Nations adult learners** to inform curricula, assessment, learning plans, learning programs and services. The ALES Pilot Project was particularly interested in identifying how to adapt and integrate Western and Aboriginal worldviews as it related to benchmark development. This meant recognizing mainstream (Western) adult literacy benchmarks while honouring Aboriginal ways of knowing for the collective purpose of mapping literacy and essential skills development in a meaningful way for First Nations learners. An accompanying tutor guide related to First Nations adult literacy benchmarking was prepared and is intended to assist tutors in recording, tracking and maintaining literacy, learning and essential skills results of learners; and

- **designed culturally relevant curriculum that utilized a "pathways" approach** where the content focused on food safety and meal preparation on southern Vancouver Island. The curriculum established a pathway (connection) between local traditional stories; the historical, social and cultural contributions of traditional foods in relation to the land; the promotion of healthy living and lifestyles while engaging in literacy-based activities; and career development.

All of the above mentioned resources are living documents. They are intended to be customized and adapted (as deemed necessary) by individual First Nations communities reflecting specific cultural protocols, values, customs and needs in relation to adult literacy, learning and essential skills development.

The reflections about the ALES Pilot Project described in the final report are intended to shed light on lessons learned and associated practices to advance grassroots adult literacy and essential skills development in a sustainable manner for First Nations adult learners (living on reserve), their families (households) and communities on southern Vancouver Island. Communities "set the pace" and grew their respective "learning tree" from within their Nations, identifying adult literacy, learning and essential skills needs, interests and priorities.

Through the ALES Pilot Project team's collective efforts, the multi-year Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HSRDC)-funded initiative endeavoured to ensure that First Nations communities and their citizens on southern Vancouver Island achieve a level of literacy to allow for full participation in life. The Pilot Project's results and its resources are accessible to a diverse range of communities and organizations in both digital and print formats.

> *Literacy Victoria welcomes the opportunity to engage in discussing, sharing and mobilizing knowledge about community-driven adult literacy planning and partnerships between Aboriginal communities, various levels of government, academia and literacy organizations across Canada.*

Key Words

Aboriginal; adult literacy; essential skills development; First Nations communities; community development; southern Vancouver Island

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Acknowledgements

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As the Aboriginal Literacy and Essential Skills (ALES) Pilot Project was a collaborative team-based initiative, Literacy Victoria extends its gratitude to the following individuals and groups who all played individual and collective roles during the multi-year project from initial planning, implementing to final reporting:

Project Funder

- Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (Government of Canada)

Partnerships

Formal and informal partnerships were paramount to the success of the ALES Pilot Project – our further thanks are extended to the following First Nations communities and organizations, learning practitioners and Aboriginal service delivery providers who advanced the ALES Pilot Project co-learning journey related to adult literacy and essential skills development on southern Vancouver Island:

- Canadian Council on Learning;
- Coast Salish Employment Skills and Training Society (CSETS);
- Esquimalt Nation;
- First Nations Technology Council;
- NIL/TU,O Child and Family Services;
- Pauquachin First Nation;
- Saanich Adult Education Centre;
- Saskatchewan Literacy Network;
- Songhees Nation;
- Tsawout First Nation;
- Tseycum First Nation; and
- WILNEW Committee.

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ALES Pilot Project Team

- Dr. Natasha Caverley, ALES Pilot Project Administrator;

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Thank you/Hych'ke/Huy ch q'u.

Background

April 2013

Empowering Adult Learners

Purpose

The Aboriginal Literacy and Essential Skills (ALES) Pilot Project was a three year community-based initiative that assisted First Nations communities on southern Vancouver Island (BC, Canada) and their citizens in developing a learning vision and set of pathways that are culturally relevant and reflective of customized community literacy and essential skills needs, interests and priorities. Specifically, Literacy Victoria worked with five southern Vancouver Island First Nations communities as pilot sites (representative of urban and remote First Nations communities) that utilized the Canadian Council on Learning's *First Nations holistic lifelong learning model* (see Figure 1) and sought advisory support and guidance from the WILNEW Committee (10 South Island First Nations communities) and other First Nations community learning champions.

The ALES Pilot Project is recognized as the first comprehensive First Nations literacy and essential skills planning process on southern Vancouver Island.

In Figure 1, the graphic of a living tree illuminates the organic and self-regenerative nature of First Nations learning.

Figure 1. *First Nations holistic lifelong learning model* (Source: Canadian Council on Learning, 2007)

First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model

Living DRAFT
Last Updated: June 6, 2007
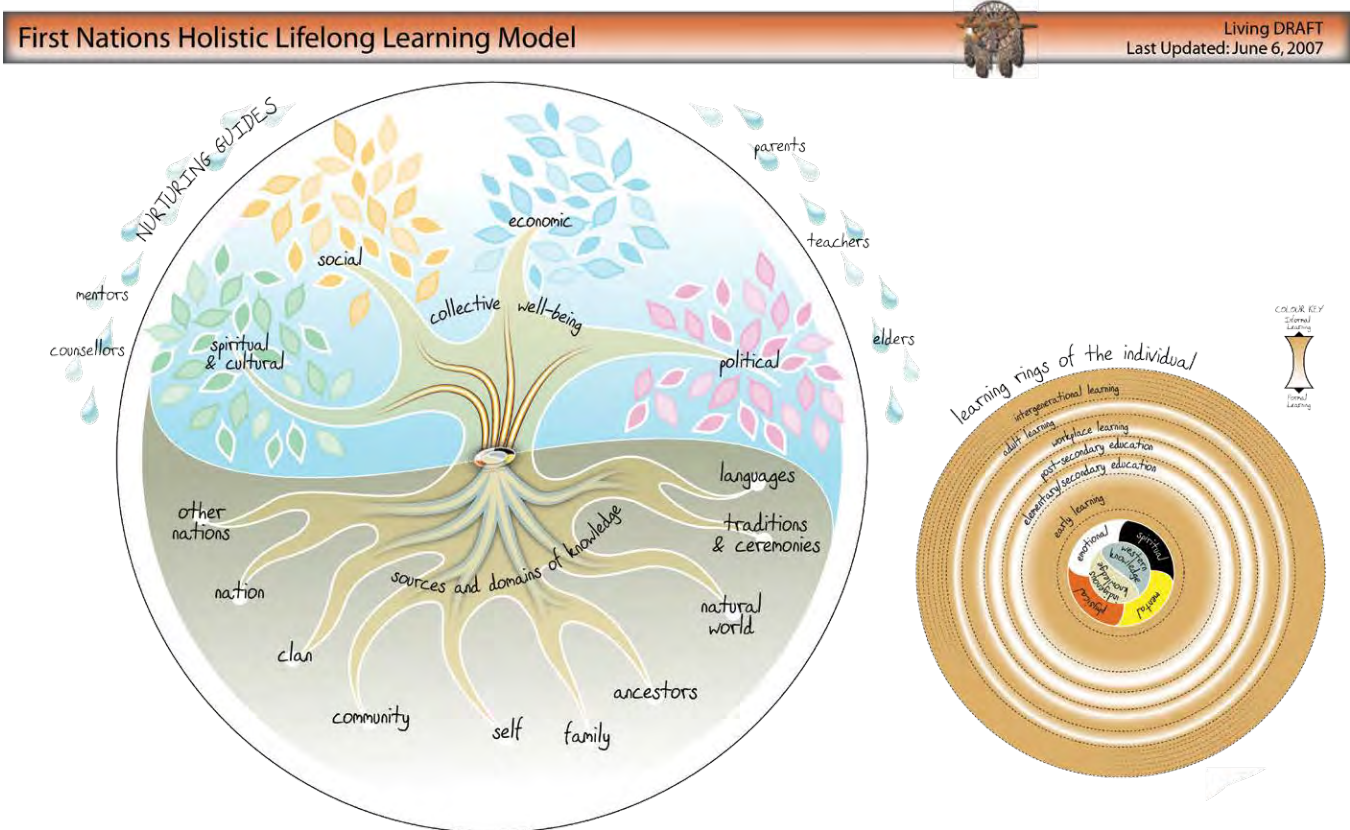
The trunk of the tree illustrates the lifelong recurrent informal and formal learning of an individual as well as the four dimensions of personal development—spiritual, emotional, physical and mental—and the tree roots draw from the cultural heritage, values and multiple sources and domains of both Indigenous and Western knowledge traditions. The trees' branches and leaves represent spiritual, cultural, social, economic and political collective well-being that both nourish and are nourished by the roots and cleansing rain of family and community, whether parents, teachers, Elders, mentors, or counsellors (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007; Faris, 2013).

The ALES Pilot Project team made adaptations to the *First Nations holistic lifelong learning model* that included transforming the learning tree to a cedar tree, which is more culturally and geographically appropriate on southern Vancouver Island. Language describing the different components of the learning tree were translated into the plain language format. The learning tree was and continues to be the foundation and focus of all ALES Pilot Project workshops and learning plan development (community and individual). Information gained from the use of the adapted learning tree was integrated into culturally relevant adult literacy benchmarks and curricula that were adapted for this Pilot Project.

> *Honouring the history and traditional land of each community is a fundamental approach to growing learning pathways.*
>
> Ruth Derrick, Literacy Victoria Executive Director

BACKGROUND

The ALES Pilot Project had four main organizing principles:

1. First Nations communities are culturally diverse and have varied learning needs and approaches to learning;

2. Aboriginal literacy-based curricula, assessments, learning plans, programs and services need to be designed for different skill levels;

3. The creation of culturally relevant First Nations literacy curricula needs to be both clear and transparent and carried out in collaboration with our First Nations partners; and

4. Culturally relevant individual and community-based First Nations learning plans are needed to foster individual and community ownership regarding literacy skill development.

The ALES Pilot Project's notable accomplishments were

*   creating a regional First Nations Literacy Framework drawing on the Canadian Council on Learning's *First Nations holistic lifelong learning model*;

*   adapting culturally relevant First Nations adult literacy benchmarks (and related evaluation criteria) for First Nations adult learners on southern Vancouver Island;

*   customizing a culturally relevant literacy curriculum on food safety and indigenous meal preparation on southern Vancouver Island utilizing a "pathways" approach;

*   facilitating the development of individual and community-based First Nations learning plans;

*   providing community and individual learning support to First Nations communities and associated Aboriginal organizations on southern Vancouver Island—including plain language and financial literacy guidance on fundraising, learning and essential skills assessment;

*   recruiting and training ALES learning champions in participating southern Vancouver Island First Nations communities;

*   working in partnership with the Coast Salish Employment and Training Society (CSETS) to share resources, thus ensuring positive connections between our respective HRSDC-funded initiatives. As the ALES Pilot Project was delivered, CSETS prepared a Literacy and Essential Skills Tool Kit and an associated Resource Guide to assist adult literacy providers on the south to mid-Island who have varying experience working with Aboriginal learners (Coast Salish Employment and Training Society, 2013a);

*   developing a sustainability plan for the ALES Pilot Project that identifies success factors for advancing this multi-year community-

based initiative, and core components for future Aboriginal literacy and essential skills programming post-February 2013 (the conclusion of the HRSDC-funded ALES Pilot Project); and

- extending knowledge by sharing Aboriginal-specific literacy and essential skills resources on the

  - ALES Pilot Project website - http://www.literacyvictoria.ca/ aboriginal-literacy-and-essential-skills-pilot-project /, and

  - ALES Pilot Project Blog - http://aboriginalliteracyandessentialskills.blogspot.ca/

Topics that were discussed on the ALES Pilot Project blog included, but were not limited to, the role of Aboriginal languages in literacy; learning and culture; social media and literacy; the role of literacy in Aboriginal economic development; "indigenizing" adult education/post-secondary education; defining, sharing and celebrating community-based success (from an Aboriginal perspective); and the role of education for First Nations people in Canada.

Expected outcomes

Through the advancement of the above mentioned ALES Pilot Project accomplishments, the following expected outcomes were achieved:

- Wider access to literacy and essential skills curriculum and resources relevant to the social, economic and cultural context of First Nations communities for First Nations adult learners and practitioners;

- Strengthened sense of learner and community engagement and ownership over literacy and essential skills development and interventions;

- Coordinated approach to literacy and essential skills intervention in southern Vancouver Island's First Nations communities; and

- Strengthened capacity of southern Vancouver Island First Nations communities, facilitating future engagement and collaboration around Aboriginal literacy and essential skills.

Project duration

The ALES Pilot Project was a three-year initiative that commenced February 2010 and concluded in February 2013.

Trends and developments

Aboriginal people in Canada

Aboriginal people represent the fastest growing population in Canada. According to the 2006 Census, 1,172,790 Canadians identified as Aboriginal (self-identified as being First Nations, Métis or Inuit), which represented approximately 4% of the total population of Canada. From 1996–2006, the Aboriginal population of Canada increased by 45%, while the non-Aboriginal population grew by 8% (Statistics Canada, 2008).

> **At a glance: Other statistics about Aboriginal people in Canada**
>
> In 2006, 54% of Aboriginal people in Canada lived in urban areas—an increase from 50% in 1996 (Statistics Canada, 2008).
>
> The 2006 Census data reflected that the median age for individuals who identified as Aboriginal was 27 years, while the median age for non-Aboriginal people was 40 years.
>
> In 2006, a smaller proportion of First Nations people lived on reserve than off reserve. An estimated 40% lived on reserve, while the remaining 60% lived off reserve.
>
> (Source: Statistics Canada, 2008)

Despite these demographics, challenges exist for Aboriginal people that include, but are not limited to,

- **high unemployment rates**—based on 2006 Census data, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada–HRSDC (2010) reported that the national rate of unemployment for Aboriginal people in Canada was 14.8% while the rate of unemployment for the non-Aboriginal Canadian population was 6.1%;

- **low labour force representation**—in 2010, 62.6% of the Aboriginal population participated in the labour force compared to 67.1% of the non-Aboriginal population. The labour market downturn coupled with systemic low labour force representation by Aboriginal people further widened the social and economic gap (e.g., employment rates, education levels) between Canada's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations (Howard, Edge & Watt, 2012; Usalcas, 2011);

- **low wage earners**—in 2005, Aboriginal people between 25 and 54 years of age earned a median income of $22,366.00 per year compared to the Canadian median income of $33,394.00 per year (Statistics Canada, 2012). Off-reserve First Nations people had a median income of approximately $22,500.00, while on-reserve First Nations people earned a median income of just over $14,000.00 (Statistics Canada, 2012);

- **marginalization**—Howard et al. (2012) state that "the most significant issues employers face in retaining Aboriginal workers are dissatisfaction with career and skills development and cultural issues (e.g., racism and misunderstandings between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers)" (p.ii). George (2002) also acknowledged that institutional educational systems struggle to recognize and understand historical trauma, colonization, social and economic inequity in assisting learners—often "Aboriginal Peoples are streamed into classes for 'slower' Learners, or into the trades, in effect, 'labeled'…. Institutional educational systems…have used a deficit model. They have not focused on Learners' strengths" (p.13);

- **risk of traditional language and knowledge extinction**—due to colonization and assimilation initiatives (e.g., Residential School System), there has been an inability to foster the sharing of traditional languages and knowledge with younger generations (Canadian Council on Learning, 2011). For example, the First Peoples' Cultural Council (2010) stated that

  language loss is part of the loss of whole cultures and knowledge systems. This includes but is not limited to history, stories, spirituality, philosophy, human values, oral and musical traditions, scientific and environmental expertise, medical knowledge, cultural practices, rituals, social and community relations, and artistic skills and traditions. (p.7);

- **capacity building and resource limitations**—a lack of capacity building and resources (e.g., funding and infrastructure—includes broadband connectivity) in Aboriginal communities creates situations where Aboriginal holistic learning and related service and program delivery are short-term, ineffective and widen the social and economic gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in Canada (Canadian Council on Learning, 2011). Taylor (2011) stated that "the main barriers to social media use by Aboriginal peoples are slow connectivity and lack of broadband. Other contributing factors are poverty; low levels of education; and what one informant calls 'the social determinants playing out in a person's life'" (p. 9–10);

  In her address to the Canadian Club of Canada on May 25, 2011, former Auditor General of Canada Sheila Fraser discussed the challenges associated with federal government program and service delivery (in particular education) to First Nations communities, stating that "funding is insecure and often not timely because it is provided through short-term contribution agreements which are subject to the availability of funding—there are no statutory funding requirements or service standards" (Fraser, 2011, p. 4);

- **low educational attainment and low literacy levels**—education levels for Aboriginal people remain below that of non-Aboriginal people, particularly for higher knowledge and skilled-based occupations (Canadian Council on Learning, 2011; Howard et al., 2012; Wetere, 2009). Wilson and MacDonald (2010) outlined that there is a significant gap between Aboriginal people obtaining an undergraduate degree or higher degree at 8% compared with the rest of Canadians at 22%. Betz (2006) states that education and employment are directly related: As the amount of education people have increases, so do their opportunities for employment.

Statistics Canada (2008) findings show that 38% of the Aboriginal population will not graduate from high school and within that demographic, 50% of Aboriginal people living on reserve will not finish secondary school. Battiste (1998) explains this disparity in education as resulting from the colonial experience, which has left generations of Aboriginal people and communities with multiple healing issues, limited access to health care and education, and marginalized economic status. Statistics Canada (2005) acknowledges that literacy is an intergenerational issue. Parents with low literacy skills more frequently have children who grow up with low literacy skills. This is related to the cycle of poverty because the literacy skills of parents directly affects a family's income, health and overall quality of life. A compromised quality of family life makes it harder for Aboriginal children to acquire sufficient literacy skills.

Although barriers (e.g., low labour force representation and low educational attainment) exist for Aboriginal people in Canada, asset-based literacy and essential skills programming that is centered on needs and interests at both the local and regional level can greatly assist in meeting Aboriginal learners' needs in a culturally relevant manner (Wetere, 2009).

> *"Developing First Nations institutions and capacity will be critical to success. Real improvement will depend on the full participation of both First Nations and the federal government. They will have to work together to address many obstacles—and it will not be easy."*
>
> (former Auditor General of Canada Sheila Fraser, 2011, p. 4)

Location of ALES Pilot Project services

The designated location of services for the ALES Pilot Project was First Nations communities on southern Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada:

- Beecher Bay First Nation (Scia'new);

- Esquimalt Nation (SXIMEȽEȽ);

- Malahat First Nation (MÁLEXEȽ);

- Pacheedaht First Nation;

- Pauquachin First Nation (BOḰEĆEN);

- Songhees Nation;

- Tsartlip First Nation (W̱JOȽEȽP);

- Tsawout First Nation (SṮÁUTW̱);

- Tseycum First Nation (W̱SIḴEM); and

- T'Sou-ke Nation.

Five First Nations communities on southern Vancouver Island were designated as pilot communities based on their state of readiness and the intent that their respective learning plan journeys could be shared with other communities in the service delivery region.

Please refer to Figure 2 for a map of this specific ALES Pilot Project service delivery region.

Figure 2. ALES Pilot Project service delivery region (Source: Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, 2013)

Table 1. Demographic and language snapshot of southern Vancouver Island First Nations communities

Based on available statistics from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (2013a and 2013b) and the First Peoples' Cultural Council (2013), Table 1 provides a demographic and language snapshot of the above mentioned southern Vancouver Island First Nations communities in the Vancouver Island/Coast economic development region of BC (e.g., Brentwood Bay, Esquimalt, Mill Bay, North Saanich, Port Renfrew, Saanichton, Sooke and Victoria).

First Nations Community	Total number of registered band members (as of January 2013)	Median age (based on 2006 Census data unless stated otherwise)	Indigenous language(s)
Beecher Bay First Nation (Scia'new)	244	25.7	Hul'q'umi'num' / Halq'eméylem / hən̓q̓əmin̓əm, Nəxʷsx̌ay̓əmúcən and SENĆOŦEN / Malchosen / Lekwungen / Semiahmoo / T'Sou-ke
Esquimalt Nation (SXIMEȽEȽ)	283	Data not available	SENĆOŦEN / Malchosen / Lekwungen / Semiahmoo / T'Sou-ke
Malahat First Nation (MÁLEXEȽ)	301	25.0	Hul'q'umi'num' / Halq'eméylem / hən̓q̓əmin̓əm and SENĆOŦEN / Malchosen / Lekwungen / Semiahmoo / T'Sou-ke
Pacheedaht First Nation	274	26.5	Diitiidʔaatx̣
Pauquachin First Nation (BOḰEĆEN) *Note. median age is based on the 2001 Census as this community opted not to participate in the 2006 Census*	392	25.4	SENĆOŦEN / Malchosen / Lekwungen / Semiahmoo / T'Sou-ke and Hul'q'umi'num' / Halq'eméylem / hən̓q̓əmin̓əm
Songhees Nation *Note. median age is based on the 2001 Census as this community opted not to participate in the 2006 Census*	547	44.3	SENĆOŦEN / Malchosen / Lekwungen / Semiahmoo / T'Sou-ke
Tsawout First Nation (SŦÁUTW̱)	842	54.0	SENĆOŦEN / Malchosen / Lekwungen / Semiahmoo / T'Sou-ke

First Nations Community	Total number of registered band members (as of January 2013)	Median age (based on 2006 Census data unless stated otherwise)	Indigenous language(s)
Tsartlip First Nation (W̱JOȽEȽP)	882	Data not available	SENĆOŦEN / Malchosen / Lekwungen / Semiahmoo / T'Sou-ke
Tseycum First Nation (W̱SIḰEM) *Note. median age is based on the 2001 Census as this community opted not to participate in the 2006 Census*	178	24.2	SENĆOŦEN / Malchosen / Lekwungen / Semiahmoo / T'Sou-ke
T'Sou-ke Nation	251	31.1	SENĆOŦEN / Malchosen / Lekwungen / Semiahmoo / T'Sou-ke

Based on Milligan (2010), other 2006 Census statistics about Aboriginal people in the census metropolitan area (CMA) of Victoria* are as follows:

- Three percent (3%) of the total population was Aboriginal (self-identified as being First Nations, Métis or Inuit);

- Between 2001–2006, the First Nations population in Victoria grew by 14%;

- Sixty-two percent (62%) of the self-identified Aboriginal population in Victoria were First Nations people;

- The median age of the Aboriginal population in Victoria was 29 years, while the non-Aboriginal population of Victoria's median age was 43 years;

- Sixteen percent (16%) of Aboriginal women in Victoria (aged 25–34) reported having a post-secondary degree compared to 9% of Aboriginal men in Victoria (aged 25–34); and

- The unemployment rate for First Nations adults in Victoria was 10.5% compared to the non-Aboriginal population in Victoria at 3.6%.

*Note. First Nations communities in the CMA boundaries of Victoria include Beecher Bay First Nation, Esquimalt Nation, Pauquachin First Nation, Songhees Nation, Tsartlip First Nation, Tsawout First Nation, Tseycum First Nation and T'Sou-ke Nation.

"Nearly half of Aboriginal men (46%) and more than half of Aboriginal women (57%) aged 25–64 had completed postsecondary education, compared to about two-thirds (67% and 68%, respectively) of their non-Aboriginal counterparts."

(Shelly Milligan—Statistics Canada, 2010, p. 9)

A regional framework for First Nations adult literacy and essential skills

April 2013

Empowering Adult Learners

> *"The First Nation learner dwells in a world of continual re-formation, where interactive cycles, rather than disconnected events, occur. In this world, nothing is simply a cause or an effect, but the expression of the interconnectedness of life. These relationships are circular, rather than linear, holistic and cumulative rather than compartmentalized. The mode of learning for First Nations people reflects and honours this understanding."*

(Canadian Council on Learning, 2007)

Overview

The ALES Pilot Project participants endeavoured to integrate adult learning principles with Aboriginal resources and knowledge to support learning needs and goals of Aboriginal communities, particularly for First Nations adult learners living on reserve. Holistic learning was a fundamental aspect of this Pilot Project—an approach that recognizes that any and all things are interrelated in a lifelong learning pathway. Everyone is a learner and everyone is a teacher.

> *Lifelong learning has a historic dimension that, on the one hand, acknowledges the wisdom and learning handed down through the generations by Elders in an oral story-based tradition but on the other, a future-oriented perspective concerned with the land and the people in future generations. (Faris, 2013)*

There is also a life-wide dimension of learning in that every aspect of Aboriginal life—whether the roles of hunter/gatherer or family and community member—is learned experientially by apprenticeships beside parents, relatives or Elders who passed on the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary for a contributing membership in a family, clan or tribe. The basic literacies and essential skills of Aboriginal people have been and continue to be imbedded in the social practice of the people and are challenged by individual, community and environmental sustainability (Faris, 2013).

Components of the First Nations literacy and essential skills regional framework

Literacy Victoria recognizes the diversity of cultures, languages, kinship structures and ways of life of First Nations people on southern Vancouver Island. Therefore, in developing a regional framework for First Nations adult literacy and essential skills, it was important to recognize that no one cultural and/or learning (literacy and essential skills) model fits all First Nations people and their communities on southern Vancouver Island.

Based on the Canadian Council on Learning's *First Nations holistic lifelong learning model* and the collective experiences from people involved in the ALES Pilot Project, the following practices comprised fundamental building blocks for the design of a collaborative-based regional framework for First Nations adult literacy and essential skills:

- **Taking a learner-centered holistic approach.** Similar to the observations made by George (2002) in *Position paper on Aboriginal literacy*, that "the learner is the most important person in the program" (p.12), a learner-centred approach was a core aspect of a regional First Nations adult literacy and essential skills framework on southern Vancouver Island. Through this approach, First Nations learners, their families and communities' collective strengths, experiences and aspirations determined learning goals, program and service delivery philosophies, teaching approaches, learner activities and associated resources (e.g., culturally relevant benchmarks and curriculum) and materials;

- **Integrating cultural values and traditional language(s).** It was essential to develop culturally relevant resources and planning processes for the participating ALES Pilot Project First Nations communities on southern Vancouver Island. This included taking a holistic approach to learning (as noted above); adapting materials (e.g., benchmarks and curriculum); honouring cultural learning, spiritual learning and traditional language(s); and, where possible, involving Elders to provide their local knowledge during the community and individual learning plan processes;

Examples of cultural values

Although cultural values are unique to each First Nations individual and community, it is helpful to have a broad understanding of general traditional values when developing and subsequently implementing culturally relevant adult literacy and essential skills programs and services.

Respecting Elders' teachings. Elders' traditional teachings shared through stories, ceremonies, and prayers reflect local and culturally-specific knowledge that First Nations people gain within and between one generation to the next. Traditional teachings aid learners in developing perspectives on social, physical and spiritual practices. Such teachings often provide communities with a basis for local decision-making on topics such as education (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; King & Schielmann, 2004).

Recognizing one's connections to all living beings. In general, First Nations people are viewed as stewards of land, water, air and other living beings. Everything has spirit and there exist interrelationships among individuals and resources striving for co-existence. Also, there is often a recognition that community needs are paramount in maintaining a natural balance and harmony—unifying the mind, body and soul/spirit (Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall, 2007; Cajete, 2000; Parsons & Prest, 2003; Pepper & White, 1996).

- **Utilizing an asset-based approach in assessing a community's state of readiness.** Each ALES Pilot Project participating First Nations community varied in its level of readiness and need regarding the design and initial implementation of community and individual learning plans (L. Galway, personal communications, December 9, 2012). The ALES Pilot Project team utilized an asset-based approach where the assets of individuals and communities as well as their needs are identified and built upon.

  Among the assets to be built upon when strengthening basic literacy and essential skills in First Nation communities is that Indigenous worldviews celebrate holistic, lifelong learning, and intuitively understand that learning-in-community is a powerful form of experiential learning (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Participating First Nations communities were seeking the opportunity to utilize an asset-based approach to adult learning during the ALES Pilot Project as a means of achieving honest, open and transparent relationships. As previously mentioned, one model or approach does not fit all;

- **Understanding Aboriginal ways of learning and multiple literacies.** Aboriginal communities are culturally diverse and have varied learning needs and approaches to learning. According to Faris (2013), Aboriginal ways of lifelong learning focus on social-historical, ecological-holistic, and experiential elements. Seeking knowledge is carried out through long-term observation of relational

networks and the desire to maintain balance and harmony—natural co-existence.

Experiential learning or lived experiences provide opportunities for Aboriginal learners to expand their knowledge base through observation, stories, songs and ceremonies. Also, there was recognition during the ALES Pilot Project of multiple literacies: Being literate in society is dependent on the social, cultural, economic and political context of the learner;

Literacy "in action": An example

One example of informal learning that occurred during the ALES Pilot Project was through a community garden initiative. A community champion started the garden and many members of the community subsequently joined in during this process. As a collective, they not only grew healthy food but they also expanded their numeracy, document use, working with others, oral communications and continuous learning skills.

- **Being aware of historical trauma related to learning and the need to heal.** For many First Nations participants who engaged in the ALES Pilot Project, there was historical trauma relating to the Residential School experience and residue effects of participating in mainstream western educational systems (Michael McCarthy, personal communication, January 16, 2013). As a result, various workshops and related activities were carried out with participating First Nations communities prior to engaging in the development of community and individual learning plans to respectfully address issues ranging from boundary setting, goal setting, working with others (group dynamics and team building) to cultural safety and self-confidence building;

Lesson learned: Effects of historical trauma

The effect of historical trauma on learning was a reality that the ALES Pilot Project team faced daily. Therefore, it is important to understand these effects and possible solutions to assist First Nations learners in identifying culturally relevant supports and resources.

- **Integrating learners' families and related social support networks.** For many First Nations people, the connection to one's family, including extended family, is important to learning. First Nations learners' families and friends provided social support (at home and in the community) throughout their ALES Pilot Project learning journey (e.g., Adult Basic Education, tutoring, employment/skills development training). Social support was not limited to direct connections by blood and ancestral linkages; support also included actions and attitudes such as acceptance, encouragement, reassurance and

validation from other community members—in particular, community learning champions;

The inclusion of learners' families and social support networks was part of the healing aspect of the community learning plan process. As previously mentioned, historical trauma associated with literacy and learning was evident in the participating First Nations communities. Healthy communities and healthy families can result from the healing process of learning.

- **Empowering First Nations communities to "lead by example."** Many individuals participating in the ALES Pilot Project were faced with unlearning the assumption that others will always make decisions and create activities for them—a dependency viewpoint. Sustainability of the ALES Pilot Project was secured by participating communities and individuals making decisions, identifying their own learning needs, owning their learning activities, and developing strategies in their respective communities;

The initial implementation of learning activities in participating First Nations communities, where ALES Pilot Project team members worked alongside as facilitators or guides with First Nations community leaders and administrators, created the foundation for empowerment in community-based literacy and essential skills development. (J. Sterritt, personal communication, December 11, 2012)

Using an Aboriginal tutor training program, the ALES Pilot Project recruited and trained community-based literacy and essential skills champions who assisted in fostering awareness of literacy and learning opportunities in their respective First Nations communities (Faris, 2013). Also, the community learning champions worked alongside select ALES Pilot Project members to identify and integrate local applications of literacy and essential skills that support healthy community and family life in the WILNEW communities—including assisting in the design and initial implementation of community and individual learning plans. This is how true grassroots sustainability occurs (L. Galway, personal communication, December 9, 2012; J. Sterritt, personal communication, December 11, 2012);

- **Planning at all levels for the future.** In the development of community and individual learning plans, the ALES Pilot Project team determined that planning for the future as it pertains to literacy and essential skills development requires participation at all levels of the community. Therefore to fully engage a given First Nations community, the community learning plan process needed to involve the family (or household) of First Nations adult learners;

- **Incorporating technology and social media into learning activities.** An ALES Pilot Project web portal and accompanying blog were created featuring an online learning repository for sharing project resources. Also, the Project web portal provided opportunities to network and create a virtual community of practice for discussing current and emerging issues on First Nations learning and their implications for southern Vancouver Island and abroad.

  A Smart Board and posting of various First Nations literacy and essential skills resources (in print, audio and visual) format via the ALES Pilot Project provided various media for First Nations adult learners to access resources (including internet services)—connecting individuals, families (households), communities and organizations. The Smart Board played a key role in cultivating lifelong learning by improving access to distance education and essential skills development; and

- **Growing relationships and understanding cultural protocols.** ALES Pilot Project team members worked with local Aboriginal organizations (e.g., CSETS, NIL/TU,O Child and Family Services and the Saanich Adult Education Centre) to incorporate existing First Nations learning resources into the delivery of ALES Pilot Project services throughout the three year initiative. Informal and formal partnerships between the ALES Pilot Project and local Aboriginal organizations fostered collaboration to (i) collectively address common First Nations literacy and essential skills issues on southern Vancouver Island, and (ii) minimize duplication of services and related supports (A. van Hanuse, personal communication, December 7, 2012).

  Another essential part of the initiative was creating trust between ALES Pilot Project team members and participating First Nations communities. Some members of the ALES Pilot Project team were unaware of how much time the community development aspect of the project would require. A project team cannot just go into a First Nations community and immediately implement a given deliverable (e.g., designing a community learning plan) and expect immediate success. An extensive amount of time must be invested in the development and nurturing of relationships with First Nations community leaders and administrators. This included familiarity with collaborative processes and group dynamics (L. Galway, personal communication, December 9, 2012).

  For some members of the ALES Pilot Project, team and individual dialogue sessions were held to unlearn and deconstruct their understanding of change at the community level and to utilizing an asset-based approach to working with others on the team and ultimately with participating First Nations communities. The ALES Pilot Project Team determined that (i) an attitude of openness to dialogue, (ii) collaboration and (iii) flexibility were essential for

dealing with changes and unanticipated activities in participating First Nations communities and overall with the Project's implementation.

In addition, it was important for the ALES Pilot Project team to gain awareness and subsequent understanding of processes and protocols for working with participating First Nations communities—a cultural protocol in one community may differ from another even if the communities are in close geographical proximity. Moreover, many of the individuals in the project were unfamiliar with collaborative processes.

Best practice case study: Collaborating with NIL/TU,O Child and Family Services

The ALES Pilot Project team worked with NIL/TU,O Child and Family Services in preparing and disseminating plain language documents to (i) assist clients and their families in accessing necessary services and resources; and (ii) support literacy and essential skills initiatives that are currently underway in the given community or organization. Plain language revisions to core organizational documents focused on areas that included, but were not limited to, syllables per word, words per sentence, percentage of sentences written in the passive voice, and difficult words.
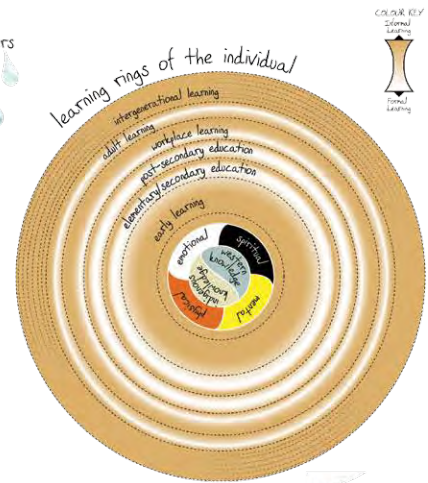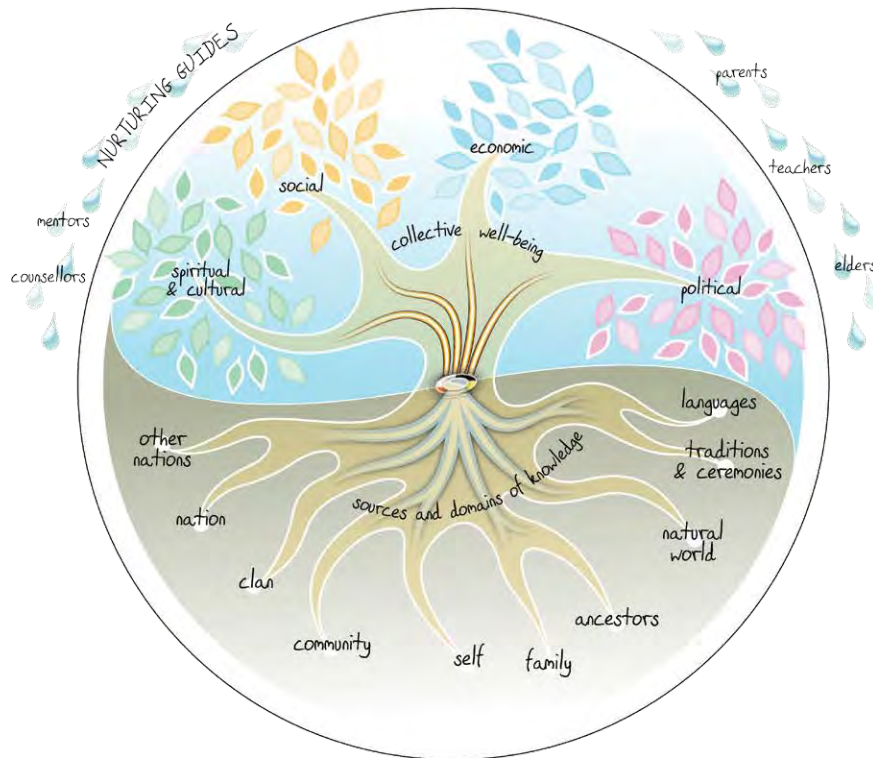
Family literacy at NIL/TU,O Child and Family Services

Photos (including the below photos) courtesy of Literacy Victoria

First Nations Holistic Lifelong Learning Model

Living DRAFT
Last Updated: June 6, 2007

Community engagement checklist for literacy organizations

If your organization would like to work with First Nations communities utilizing the Canadian Council on Learning's *First Nations holistic lifelong learning model* noted above, consider the following factors:

❏ My organization is <u>invited by a First Nations community</u> to facilitate and/or assist in community-driven adult literacy, learning and essential skills development planning, program design or service delivery.

❏ My organization has the <u>necessary human capital (competent and culturally astute team members)</u> to work alongside a First Nations community on their community learning plan process.

❏ My organization or the given First Nations community <u>documented the community's adult literacy and essential skills available resources and needs.</u>

❏ My organization and the given First Nations community <u>discussed and defined what the term "partnership" means</u> in relation to the design and/or delivery of adult literacy and essential skills in the community.

Learning plan development

April 2013

E m p o w e r i n g   A d u l t   L e a r n e r s

Learning plan development

In the development of community and individual learning plans, the ALES Pilot Project documented three distinct phases for learning plan development:

- Pre-planning;

- Planning; and

- Post-Planning/Initial Implementation.

Music was incorporated into the ALES Pilot Project community learning plan process

Lesson learned: Advancing the ALES Pilot Project development process

A gradual, sometimes lengthy, project development process was initiated to increase community involvement and ownership of both the learning plan development process and the products of their communal enterprise. Several factors led to slower progress than initially anticipated, including both the need to build trust in each community before gaining wider participation and the reality of low literacy levels among some participating community members. The use of community meetings in several First Nations was aimed at gaining community participation and involvement in the ALES Pilot Project (Faris, 2013).

The process that ALES Pilot Project members utilized for planning community learning included the use of art, music, talking (sharing) circles and a feast as a means of gathering families and friends to discuss and celebrate literacy, learning and essential skills development in the community.

Did you know?

After opening with a prayer, it is customary during a feast for Elders to be served first.

Pre-Planning Phase

The pre-planning phase consisted of

- **relationship building** between the ALES Pilot Project Team and the given First Nations community. This includes growing relationships, instilling mutual respect and understanding, and identifying and accommodating traditional activities;

Lessons learned

Growing relationships: Investing time in growing relationships with First Nations communities leads to greater opportunities for support, community engagement and sustainability of the given adult literacy and essential skills service delivery and programming.

Instilling mutual respect and understanding: Many of the First Nations community leaders and administrators that the ALES Pilot Project team worked with were initially apprehensive to enter into dialogue with the Project team through print or email as they appeared to be immobilized by the density and volume of documents and related communication that they were faced with in their organizations and communities. Therefore, representatives from the ALES Pilot Project team met with community leaders and administrators to provide verbal updates.

Face-to-face dialogue assisted the ALES Pilot Project members in growing relationships with First Nations community members and leaders while providing status reports in a medium that lessened any uncertainty or apprehension about the Project, its team members and the activities to be delivered in the participating First Nations community.

Identifying and accommodating traditional activities: Some of the ALES Pilot Project First Nations communities participated in annual winter ceremonies typically held at community big houses. The winter ceremonies are viewed as ways to address health issues for individuals, families and the community at large. Therefore, to respect and accommodate participants' involvement in the "Big House" season, ALES Pilot Project activities only continued once the traditional activities came to a close, usually by the end of March.

- **identifying the given community's literacy inventory of assets and gaps.** Specifically, this inventory includes identifying existing literacy resources, barriers to learning and assets related to essential skills development (i.e., human capital, physical infrastructure, financial resources, social capital and cultural resources);

Interesting fact: Songhees Nation Declaration Day

Did you know?

On September 24, 2007, the Songhees Nation leaders signed a *Declaration of Education* committing the Songhees Nation to protecting their future through education and lifelong learning. This declaration is the foundation of all literacy, learning and essential skills work that has been carried out by the Songhees Nation since that date.

- **engaging in a group dynamic process**—this may include facilitating workshops on boundaries, cultural safety and self-esteem to establish a level of trust and comfort in community members prior to initiating the learning plan process.

Best practice case study: Dream boarding

A series of goal setting and "dream boarding" workshops facilitated by members of the ALES Pilot Project team served as introductory sessions to community and individual learning. These workshops also demonstrated the role that Literacy Victoria (via the ALES Pilot Project) can play in working with First Nation communities in adult literacy and essential skills planning and prioritization. "Dream boarding" workshops were part of fostering relationships between Literacy Victoria and Aboriginal communities.

The goal setting and "dream boarding" workshops drew on Moore's (2005) *A dream that walks II: Planning for change.* In this creative process, participants (typically male and female Aboriginal participants between 18–55 years of age) use a strength-based approach to understand who they are and who they want to be (future thinking) as they move forward in their career (e.g., shifting from unemployment to employment) and personal lives (e.g., dealing with historical trauma and violence).

A dream board or vision board is a collage of images created by participants to visualize and connect to their life goals. Typically, participants are asked to take part in a visualization exercise, make their own dream boards, and process the contents of their dream boards to better understand their goals, priorities and motivations. There are no right or wrong outcomes in this learning process.

Dream boarding in action at a participating ALES Pilot Project First Nations community

Photo courtesy of Literacy Victoria

Planning Phase

After reviewing existing learning materials in the community, the ALES Pilot Project team developed templates that represent core components for creating community and individual learning plans. The templates provide opportunities for traditional ways of learning to be incorporated.

The creation of the templates was guided by the Canadian Council on Learning's *First Nations holistic lifelong learning model.*

The learning plan templates are

- **organic (aka. living) documents** that will evolve and are intended to be customized for individual communities, families (households) and learners;

- **circular**, rather than linear; **holistic**, and **cumulative** rather than compartmentalized. Learning plan development reflects these modes and honours this understanding for First Nations communities; and

- **place-based** where First Nations communities serve as the laboratories of new modes of asset- and learning-based community development (Faris, 2013).

ALES Pilot Project community learning plan talking circle

Photo courtesy of Literacy Victoria

Sample Community Learning Plan Template

Literacy Victoria
EMPOWERING ADULT LEARNERS

Purpose: A community learning plan outlines priority learning goals for a First Nations community. The plan maps a vision, values, process, and outcomes and engages current and potential strategic partners who can assist in advancing the community's proposed learning initiatives.

Name of Community

- State the name of the First Nations community

Vision

- What defines your community?

- How do you want your community to play a role in its learning system(s)?

Guiding Values/Principles

- What are the traditional cultural values that influence your everyday life?

Process

- **Rules of engagement:** Clearly identify protocols for facilitators and participants' roles; ensure mutual respect for all learning plan participants—everybody's voice should be heard.

- **Accessibility:** All community members have the opportunity to be part of the learning plan development process. Where feasible, include daycare services and/or welcome the children of staff members and community members in the planning process.

- **Participatory planning— SOAR:** Facilitate guided discussion on the community's strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results as it relates to learning. For example, according to Stavros and Hinrichs (2009),

  - Strengths—What are we doing really well?; What are our greatest assets?; What are we most proud of accomplishing? What do our strengths tell us about our skills?

Sample Community Learning Plan Template (cont'd)

- Opportunities—How do we collectively understand outside threats?; How can we reframe threats to see opportunities?; How can we best partner with others?

- Aspirations—Considering our strengths and opportunities, how do we allow our values to drive our vision?; How can we make a difference for our organization or community and its strategic partners?

- Results—What are our measurable results?; What do we want to be known for?; How do we tangibly translate strengths, opportunities and aspirations?

Learning Goals and Outcomes

- Facilitate guided discussion in response to the following questions…

  - What are the types of learning that are important for your community (e.g., language, employment skills, literacy, early childhood development, culture, post-secondary education, parenting classes, health)?

  - How can you as a community ensure that all members have access to learning opportunities?

  - With respect to learning,

    - Short term—Where do you want to be one year from now as a community?

    - Medium term—Where do you want to be three years from now as a community?

    - Long term—Where do you want to be five years from now as a community?

  - What are some learning challenges for your community (e.g., lack of community based-learning opportunities, isolation, negative experience with education system and lack of funding)?

  - How does culture play a role in your community's current learning system(s)?

What is SOAR?

Based on the work of Stavros and Hinrichs (2009), SOAR is a strategic planning framework that focuses on strengths so that planning discussions center on what an organization or community is doing right, what skills can be enhanced, and what is compelling to those who have a "stake" in the organization's or community's success.

Figures 3 and 4 are examples of SOAR exercises (specifically, Strengths and Opportunities) from the Pauquachin First Nation community learning plan process.

Figure 3. Sample SOAR exercise (Strengths) from Pauquachin First Nation

Figure 4. Sample SOAR exercise (Opportunities) from Pauquachin First Nation

Best practice case study—Pauquachin First Nation community learning plan

In August 2012, ALES Pilot Project team members coordinated and facilitated a community learning plan workshop with Pauquachin First Nation in North Saanich, BC. The workshop consisted of guided conversation on community strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results (SOAR) with approximately 38 community members (including representation from Pauquachin First Nation Council and Administration). Notably, Chief Bruce Underwood participated in the workshop, which signified his commitment to community-based literacy, learning and essential skills for Pauquachin First Nation over the coming years. The workshop was multi-generational: Community members (youth, Elders, adults and families) gathered and reflected on their Nation's cultural-based literacy, learning and essential skills goals and on how they can influence future opportunities for Pauquachin First Nation.

The results from the community learning plan were presented in a visual format (at the request of Pauquachin First Nation) that highlighted key topics that included, but were not limited to,

- integrating traditional language (e.g., Hul'q'umi'num') into adult literacy and learning;

- fostering and implementing literacy strategies with the Pauquachin First Nation parenting group—engaging community members in literacy and essential skills across generations;

- developing career and learning pathways by incorporating pre-employment training and related programming (including literacy assessments and essential skills tutoring) to improve employment and skills development of Pauquachin First Nation community members; and

- positioning community members to better express and communicate their shared goals and plans related to land use and economic development on Pauquachin First Nation traditional territory.

"The learning plan process allowed clarity from community, administration and governance perspective(s), an equal opportunity at all levels for the children and the generations to follow and was sensitive to our cultural needs."
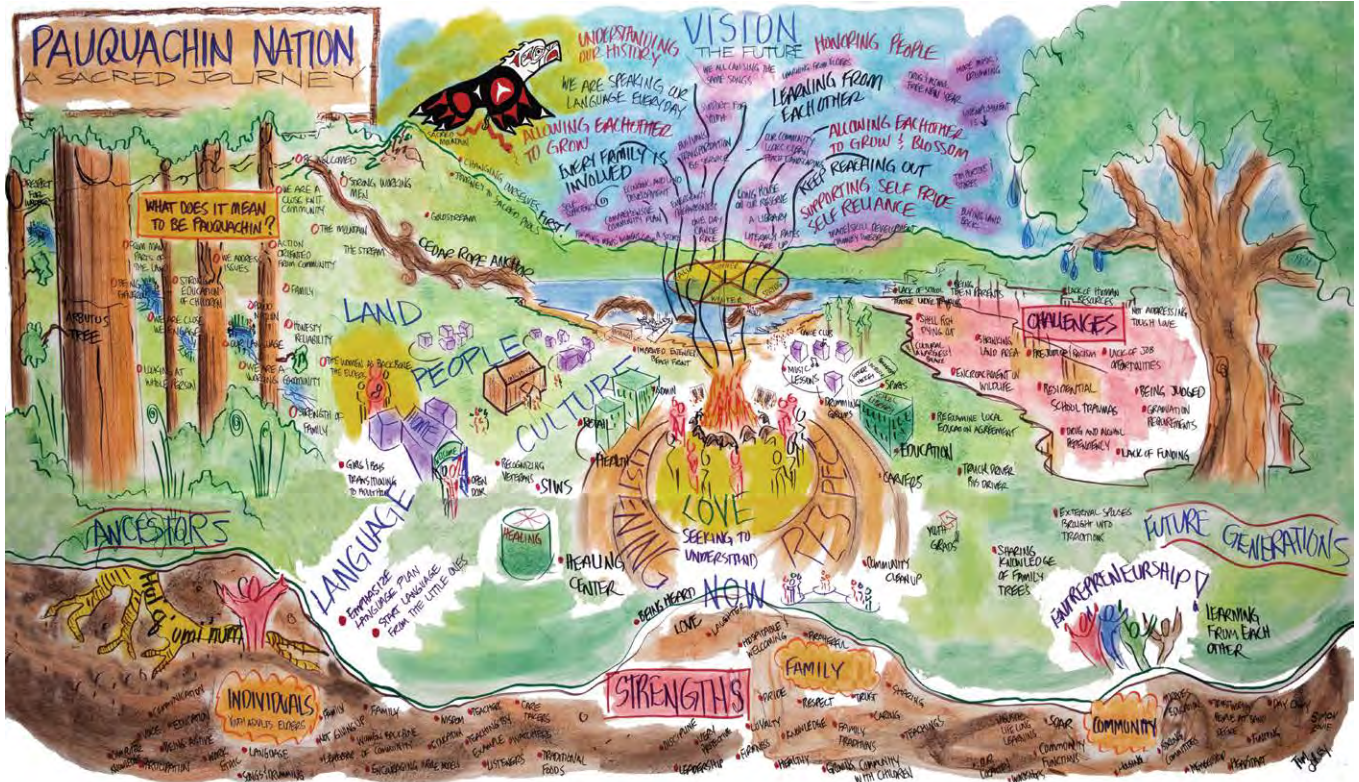
Chief Bruce Underwood, Pauquachin First Nation

Figure 5. Pauquachin First Nation community learning plan mural

Figure 5 is a copy of the Pauquachin Community Learning Plan mural that was developed at the August 2012 workshop and prepared by ALES Pilot Project Graphic Facilitator, Timothy Corey. The original mural is located in the Pauquachin First Nation Band Administration Office.

Sample Individual Learning Plan Template

Purpose: An individual learning plan outlines priority learning goals for First Nations adult learners. The plan maps out short, medium and long term goals and ways for learners to advance their strengths while minimizing any barriers and challenges towards literacy and essential skills development.

Note. Learners can either prepare their own learning plan through self-reflection or work with a family member, friend, community-learning champion or tutor through guided dialogue sessions.

Learner's Name

• State the learner's name

Personal Learning Vision

• What do I want to learn?

• What are the learning opportunities that I would like for my family (or household)?

Guiding Values/Principles

• What are the traditional cultural values that influence my everyday life?

• How does my culture play a role in my personal learning?

Process

• Reflect upon your personal strengths, opportunities, aspirations and challenges as they relate to learning.

Learning Goals and Outcomes

• Short term—Where do you want to be one year from now as a learner?

Sample Individual Learning Plan Template (cont'd)

- Medium term—Where do you want to be three years from now as a learner?

- Long term—Where do you want to be five years from now as a learner?

- What are the types of learning that are important to you (e.g., language, employment skills, literacy, early childhood development, culture, post-secondary education, parenting classes, health)?

- How do I want to learn (e.g., in community, online courses, at the Saanich Adult Education Centre, Camosun College, University of Victoria, learning with Elders)?

- What are ways that you can access learning opportunities?

- What are some of your personal learning challenges (e.g., lack of community based-learning opportunities, isolation, negative experience with education system and lack of funding)?

Post-Planning/Initial Implementation

Initial implementation of community-based learning plans ranged from meeting with the participating community's Chief and Council to prioritize learning goals, participating in cross-cultural awareness between First Nations and non-Aboriginal learning organizations to assisting with the identification of resources for specific community learning needs (e.g., proposal writing and financial literacy resources and related tools).

Best practice case study—Initial implementation of the Songhees Nation community learning plan

As a means of supporting Songhees Nation with the implementation of its inaugural community learning plan (facilitated and coordinated by the ALES Pilot Project Team), the ALES Pilot Project Coordinator assisted Songhees Nation educational representatives in the delivery of a cross-cultural awareness workshop in September 2012. Key activities of the ALES Pilot Project Coordinator included helping with the development of the workshop agenda and creating a workshop evaluation tool to assist Songhees Nation educational personnel in next steps in their "bridge building" process with the local school district.

This professional development session invited educators, Songhees and Esquimalt Nations community members and school administrators from the local school district to gather and learn about Big House protocols and "building bridges" across First Nations and non-First Nations cultures from a learning perspective. Guest speakers talked about personal experiences in public school systems and strategies for moving forward in a collaborative

fashion while recognizing the unique cultural needs, interests and values of Songhees Nation and Esquimalt Nation students in this school district. Cultural awareness and outreach by the Songhees Nation to its strategic learning partners was recognized as one of its key priorities for implementation in its community learning plan.

> *"The involvement of community is a key aspect in the education of Aboriginal peoples. Because of the fact that Aboriginal people understand the world in terms of relationships, the inclusion of community in the learning process of Aboriginal people is fundamental."*
>
> (Dr. Leroy Little Bear, 2009, p. 22)

Culturally relevant First Nations adult literacy benchmarks

April 2013

Empowering Adult Learners

First Nations adult literacy benchmark adaptation

As part of the ALES Pilot Project, a series of culturally relevant First Nations adult literacy benchmarks was needed to inform curriculum, assessment, learning plans, learning programs and services. The ALES Pilot Project team noticed that traditional (mainstream or Western) benchmark frameworks, by virtue of their focus on measurement and progress, tend to draw on a behaviourist theoretical frame. In these frameworks, the emphasis is less on the individual than on discrete and observable behaviours that are measured over time (Gadsby, Middleton & Whitaker, 2007).

Thus, while some Western benchmarks are useful, the ALES Pilot Project team were particularly interested in identifying how to adapt and integrate Aboriginal worldviews. This meant recognizing mainstream (Western) adult literacy benchmarks while honouring Aboriginal ways of knowing for the collective purpose of mapping literacy and essential skills development in a meaningful way for First Nations learners. Table 2 shows a comparison between select Western and First Nations-based adult benchmark models.

Table 2. Comparison of select benchmarking models—First Nations, Government of BC and Government of Canada

Benchmark Core Competencies (aka. Domains) Note. each competency/domain will be referenced in English—SENĆOŦEN—Hul'q'umi'num'	Adapted Culturally-Relevant First Nations Adult Literacy Benchmarks based primarily on The *Circle of Learning*—Saskatchewan Literacy Network and Saskatchewan Advanced Education and Employment (2006)	Community-Based Adult Literacy Benchmarks—BC Ministry of Advanced Education (Decoda Literacy Solutions formerly Literacy BC and Literacy Now, 2008)	Literacy and Essential Skills Indicators—Government of Canada (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2013)
	Notable characteristics... -focus is to assess and monitor learners' development and proficiencies in four domains (aka. core competencies) across two literacy levels (Levels 1–2) -is designed for adults (First Nations) -uses a holistic approach to adult literacy emphasizing connections to family, community and work	Notable characteristics... -focus is to assess and monitor learners' development and proficiencies in six domains (aka. core competencies) across four literacy levels (Levels 1–4) -is designed for adults (whose first language is English) -uses an informal, unstructured, community-based approach to adult literacy	Notable characteristics... -focus is to assess and monitor learners' development and proficiencies in nine domains (aka. core competencies) across three literacy levels (Levels 1–3) -is designed for adults (who are in the workforce or would like to enter the workforce) -uses a workplace approach; learners to manage change(s) independently or in group settings
Reading—STOȽES—Tit'lhasum	✓ e.g., Communications—read with understanding	✓ e.g., Reading—analyze, interpret and monitor	✓ e.g., Reading—reading materials in the form of sentences and paragraphs
Communications includes... Writing—SXELLO—Xulut' Oral communication—ḰÓḴEL—Qwal lhe' Document use—ĆOȻES TŦE PULEȻ—Sxul'um	✓ e.g., Communications—write so others can understand Oral communications—speak so others can understand	✓ e.g., Writing—attend, compose and monitor Oral communications—comprehend, generate, interact and monitor	✓ e.g., Writing—writing text and writing in documents, such as filling in forms and non-paper based writing such as typing on a computer Oral Communication —using speech to give and exchange thoughts and information Document Use—tasks that involve a variety of information displays in which words, numbers, symbols and other visual characteristics are given meaning by their spatial arrangement

Benchmark Core Competencies (aka. Domains) Note. each competency/domain will be referenced in English—SENĆOŦEN—Hul'q'umi'num'	Adapted Culturally-Relevant First Nations Adult Literacy Benchmarks based primarily on The *Circle of Learning*—Saskatchewan Literacy Network and Saskatchewan Advanced Education and Employment (2006)	Community-Based Adult Literacy Benchmarks—BC Ministry of Advanced Education (Decoda Literacy Solutions formerly Literacy BC and Literacy Now, 2008)	Literacy and Essential Skills Indicators—Government of Canada (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2013)
Math—SQ,SEN—Kw'shem also includes... Document use—ĆOȻES TŦE PULEȻ—Sxul'um	✓ e.g., Numeracy—use numeracy skills to solve simple and complex problems	✓ e.g., Math—number sense, patterns and relations, shape and space, and statistics and probability	✓ e.g., Numeracy—using numbers and thinking in quantitative terms to complete tasks Document Use—tasks that involve a variety of information displays in which words, numbers, symbols and other visual characteristics are given meaning by their spatial arrangement
Information technology—ĆOȻES TŦE SXELOI,ŦE,EN—Hakwush tu' kamp-yootu		✓ e.g., Information technology—communicate, find information and monitor	✓ e.g., Computer Use—using different kinds of computer applications and other related technical tools
Lifelong learning—YOŦ OL U TOTEL,N̲EW̲—Tat-tulut Also includes... Thinking skills—K̲EL,KELIWEN—Shqwa'luwan	✓ e.g., Lifelong learning—create, monitor and adjust a Personal Learning Path for oneself Lifelong Learning—create, monitor and adjust a Learning Path for the family (household) and/or for the community [culturally-specific] Interpersonal—establish boundaries for oneself, one's family and for one's community; learn to walk between two worlds (biculturalism) **[culturally-specific]**	✓ e.g., Strategies and participation—set goals, organize, problem solve, reflect and engagement	✓ e.g., Continuous Learning—worker's participation in an ongoing process of acquiring skills and knowledge Thinking Skills—the process of evaluating ideas or information to reach rational decisions
Interpersonal—ĆÁI,NEȻEL—Nustsa,mawt Shqwa'luwan	✓ e.g., Interpersonal—create positive relationships with others		✓ e.g., Working with Others—employees working with others to carry out their tasks

What are literacy levels?

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Statistics Canada (2011), there are five levels of literacy:

Level 1:   Adult has few basic reading, writing and numeracy skills;

Level 2:   Adult has limited skills and can deal with material that is clear and simple;

Level 3:   Adult has minimum skills for daily living and work; and

Level 4/5: Adult has wide range of skills and is able to meet new learning challenges—including processing information that is complex in nature.

After reviewing various culturally relevant adult literacy benchmarks and related source materials, benchmarks were adapted primarily from the *Circle of learning, Saskatchewan adult literacy benchmarks, levels 1 and 2* (Saskatchewan Literacy Network and Saskatchewan Advanced Education and Employment, 2006). Other key points of reference included

- *Aboriginal adult literacy assessment tool* (Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Network Inc., 2011);

- *Alberta reading benchmarks* (Crosby, 2011);

- *An Aboriginal essential skills journey: Planting the seeds for growth* (Douglas College, 2010); and

- *First Nations holistic lifelong learning model* (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).

All of the works referenced above draw on a learner-centered approach, which recognizes that meaningful individual learning is grounded in experiences that embrace both Indigenous and Western knowledge traditions (Canadian Council of Learning, 2007). Furthermore, these sources aligned with the ALES Pilot Project and its interest in (i) contextualized literacy and essential skills learning, (ii) building learning pathways, and (iii) focusing on essential skills.

The adapted culturally relevant benchmarks focused on

- learners applying their knowledge in their respective cultural context, whether in the workplace, family (household) or community on southern Vancouver Island;

- assets of learners rather than learners' test results and/or qualifications;

- self-awareness and self-monitoring of the learning that is taking place (in the mind, body and spirit of learners);

- creation of dialogue sessions between learners and tutors about literacy and essential skills development;

- application of essential skills and knowledge; and

- a lifelong learning approach rather than a deficit model—what learners have and will achieve in their learning pathway as opposed to what they have not achieved.

The adapted benchmarks were peer reviewed by an instructor at the Saanich Adult Education Centre who assisted in providing valuable feedback in making these benchmarks meaningful, relevant and responsive to the First Nations literacy and essential skills development programming on southern Vancouver Island. The adapted benchmarks are intended to assist

- **First Nations adult learners** in understanding their own learning and skills development (from a family/household, community and work perspective), and providing guidance in literacy levels so that their skills can be recognized by others;

- **practitioners** in guiding learners in a manner that is culturally relevant as it relates to learning assessments, training and resources; and

- **strategic partners** in informing and influencing policy and planning on literacy, learning and essential skills development at the local, regional, provincial/territorial and national levels.

An accompanying tutor guide related to First Nations adult literacy benchmarking was prepared and is intended to assist tutors in recording, tracking and maintaining literacy, learning and essential skills results of learners. As part of the tutor guide, case studies were included to illustrate how the First Nations adult literacy benchmarks can be utilized to assess current skill levels and to develop personal learning plans.

For a copy of the adapted First Nations adult literacy benchmarks entitled, "Creating a personal learning path: A benchmark framework for Aboriginal literacy and essential skills" and its accompanying tutor guide, please contact

Literacy Victoria
Telephone: 250.381.3755
Fax: 250.381.3755
Email: info@literacyvictoria.ca

Culturally relevant First Nations literacy curriculum: A "pathways" approach

Empowering Adult Learners

Culturally relevant First Nations literacy curriculum

> *"Learning involves a transformation that unfolds through time and space. Pathway, a structural metaphor, combines with the process of journeying to form an active context for learning about spirit. Pathway is an appropriate metaphor since, in every learning process, we metaphorically travel an internal, and many times external, landscape. In traveling a Pathway, we make stops, encounter and overcome obstacles, recognize and interpret signs, seek answers, and follow the tracks of those entities that have something to teach us. We create ourselves a new. Path denotes a structure; Way implies a process."*

(Dr. Gregory Cajete, 1994, p. 55)

The creation of culturally relevant First Nations literacy curriculum needs to be clear, transparent and relevant to the needs of community members (S. Chandler, personal communication, December 4, 2012). In addition to community learning plan development and First Nations adult literacy benchmark adaptation, the ALES Pilot Project team developed a culturally relevant First Nations literacy curriculum with content focused on food safety and meal preparation on southern Vancouver Island. The food safety and indigenous meal preparation curriculum was peer reviewed by an instructor at the Saanich Adult Education Centre who assisted in providing useful feedback in making the curriculum meaningful, relevant and responsive to First Nations learners on southern Vancouver Island.

The curriculum established a pathway (connection) between

- **local traditional stories** about collecting, cooking and storing foods (indigenous to southern Vancouver Island such as salmon);

- **historical, social and cultural contributions of traditional foods in** relation to the land (interconnectedness between people and place);

- **promotion of healthy living and lifestyles** (as it relates to Canada's *Food Guide*) using **literacy-based activities**—including reading and following recipes; and

- **career development**—identifying workforce resources and occupational descriptions that relate to food safety and meal preparation (e.g., fisher, chef/cook).

Overall, a strength-based approach was used. The curriculum is a living document intended to be customized and adapted by individual First Nations communities reflecting specific cultural protocols, values, customs and needs in relation to meal preparation.

The *Food safety and indigenous food preparation on Vancouver Island* curriculum is for First Nations adult learners who have barriers to literacy and essential skills working with or without a tutor. The curriculum is designed to help people who

- want to safely prepare food for themselves and their families (households);

- want to find local food sources and promote traditional food harvesting;

- want to work in the food industry; and

- want to take the **FOODSAFE™** Level I course.

This curriculum introduces the main learning objectives from each unit of the **FOODSAFE™** Level I course prepared by the British Columbia FOODSAFE Secretariat. It does not replace the **FOODSAFE™** course.

The sections and worksheets of the curriculum can be completed on paper or on a computer. Worksheet activities link to one or more of the nine essential skills:

- Reading
- Document Use
- Numeracy
- Writing
- Oral Communication

- Thinking
- Digital Technology
- Continuous Learning
- Working With Others

> *"Creating an Aboriginal-specific curriculum has meant taking a much more open and multi-perspective approach—the meaning of place, tradition, language, and culture plays a significant role in the development of learning resources. The framework for developing curriculum was based upon an expanding circle of knowledge acquisition starting with self and family, extending to [a First Nations] band and community [incorporating traditional learning pathways], and then reaching out to the regional and provincial resources [institutional and formal learning resources]."*
>
> (Lilaine Galway – ALES Pilot Project Literacy Curriculum Developer, personal communication, December 9, 2012)

For a copy of the First Nations adult literacy curriculum entitled, "Food safety and indigenous food preparation on Vancouver Island," please contact

Literacy Victoria
Telephone: 250.381.3755
Fax: 250.381.3755
Email: info@literacyvictoria.ca

ALES Pilot Project sustainability planning

April 2013

Empowering Adult Learners

ALES Pilot Project sustainability

In the context of First Nations adult literacy and essential skills development on southern Vancouver Island, sustainability is about

- gaining and maintaining support at all levels (i.e., learners, tutors, service delivery providers, communities-at-large, partners and funders);

- evaluating the ALES Pilot Project and its resources (i.e., human, financial, social and cultural capital) to fit aspirations;

- prioritizing choices and focus;

- ensuring ALES Pilot Project-related activities maintain momentum after the Project officially concludes in February 2013; and

- promoting community empowerment and building capacity rather than dependency on Literacy Victoria resources and supports.

Sustainability will maximize the ALES Pilot Project's long term potential for First Nations communities on southern Vancouver Island and will help to ensure that Literacy Victoria and its partners will recognize the value of the Project long into the future.

Figure 6 outlines a visual diagram to aid in the discussion about sustainability for the ALES Pilot Project.

Figure 6. Sustainability framework for Aboriginal adult literacy and essential skills on southern Vancouver Island

The Sustainability Framework (noted in Figure 6) specifies that in order to understand Aboriginal adult learners' and their communities' needs and social and cultural values, a holistic and asset-based perspective is required. This perspective will also support the ALES Pilot Project's legacy and sustainability. In this framework, tutors should identify what roles they can play in supporting Aboriginal adult learners and their communities. From an organizational and financial perspective, Literacy Victoria must determine what processes, resources and related supports it requires to operate financially and deliver on Aboriginal adult learners' and their communities' needs. As a supplementary component to the organizational and financial perspectives, the creation of an Aboriginal Advisory Committee provides an opportunity for advice, guidance and cultural awareness to be shared with Literacy Victoria's Board of Directors. Partnerships with individuals, organizations and/or funders, including new or emerging partners, provide Literacy Victoria with opportunities to

- leverage the ALES Pilot Project's human, technical and other resources in Aboriginal communities on southern Vancouver Island;

- explore collaborations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations committed to literacy and essential skills development; and

- identify and promote funding to enhance Aboriginal adult literacy and essential skills initiatives and related services.

The centerpiece of this sustainability framework is the role of community. Community, in an Aboriginal context, can shape adult learners'

- level of awareness, e.g., acquiring new literacy and essential skills and knowledge;

- engagement, e.g., broadening and deepening of literacy and essential skills and knowledge;

- support from family and friends—including extended family—of literacy and essential skills development in terms of history, e.g., connection to traditional lands, cultures and languages; effects of colonization and related historical trauma; and

- relationships, e.g., connection to friends, tutors, role models and family.

In moving forward, Literacy Victoria will be exploring the following activities as part of its legacy of the ALES Pilot Project:

- **Building Community Capacity.** Literacy Victoria will work with Aboriginal communities to develop and implement customized community-based learning plans for learners and their families to identify assets (i.e., human capital, physical infrastructure, financial

resources, social capital and cultural resources), and needs and gaps in literacy and essential skills. This may include the use of e-learning and workplace essential skills programming;

- **Fostering Cross-Cultural Awareness.** Literacy Victoria will work with strategic partners to facilitate literacy and essential skills in Aboriginal communities on southern Vancouver Island—including carrying out literacy and essential skills training and tutoring (in conjunction with local Knowledge Keepers) in English and traditional (Indigenous) languages. This work includes (i) the development of an Aboriginal Advisory Committee that recommends Aboriginal-centered literacy and essential skills strategies and actions for review and approval by the Literacy Victoria leadership and Board of Directors; and (ii) engaging in ongoing cross-cultural training for Literacy Victoria staff and the Board of Directors;

- **Enhancing Opportunities.** Literacy Victoria will increase professional development in literacy and essential skills—including developing a competency model (and associated position descriptions) for Aboriginal tutors, practitioners and trainers who are engaged in Aboriginal literacy and essential skills development, particularly with Aboriginal communities on southern Vancouver Island.

  Furthermore, Literacy Victoria will facilitate "talking circles" (or "communities of practice") that encourage individuals and organizations who are engaged in Aboriginal literacy and essential skill development to share effective (aka. best) practices and associated stories regarding Aboriginal-centered literacy and essential skills assessment, curricula and instructional strategies. This work will include documenting "success stories" and testimonials via the ALES Pilot Project e-portal; and

- **Facilitating Partnerships.** Literacy Victoria will explore partnerships between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal schools and post-secondary institutions, community learning organizations, government agencies (Aboriginal, provincial, federal) and employers to identify internal and external funding to support ongoing literacy and essential skills programs at both the community and organizational level. Literacy Victoria will facilitate opportunities with schools and post-secondary institutions for Aboriginal youth and students to receive school credit for providing assistance in peer reading and tutoring programs in their home communities.

  Literacy Victoria will coordinate Aboriginal literacy and essential skills programs, services, resources and supports as a "one-stop-shop" for Aboriginal learners on southern Vancouver Island, including establishing an inventory of study aids, books, videos, printed materials and e-learning/web-based materials.

  Ultimately, communities can and do shape Aboriginal learners' identity development and lay the groundwork for socialization and emotional

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support. In particular, communities play a role in improving learners' self-esteem and self-concept, which in turn will influence their ongoing commitment to lifelong literacy and essential skills learning.

"Internal forces within every organization influence its future behaviour, but equally external forces can impact future decisions....an informed and clear commitment by governments, institutions, and the third sector to work with First Nations is central to the needed long-term investment and commitment to foster provision of quality, culturally-sensitive literacy and essential skills programs and services by First Nation people."

(Dr. Ron Faris, ALES Pilot Project Framework Consultant, 2013, p. 19)

Conclusion

Empowering Adult Learners

Concluding remarks

The purpose of the multi-year ALES Pilot Project was to explore new pathways and share lessons learned with other communities and jurisdictions who are interested in advancing a regional Aboriginal adult literacy and essential skills framework.

To sustain culturally relevant literacy and essential skills programming, Aboriginal communities and their strategic partners will need to collaborate in their respective regions of Vancouver Island, British Columbia or Canada to co-design and implement a regional Aboriginal adult literacy and essential skills framework that

- integrates Western and Indigenous ways of knowing and learning;

- develops culturally relevant Aboriginal adult literacy and essential skills benchmarks and assessment tools;

- creates innovative and culturally relevant literacy and essential skills curricula; and

- continues to provide the resources for the creation, implementation and sustainability of both individual and community-based Aboriginal learning plans.

According to Faris (2013), based on the ALES Pilot Project experience, at least three objectives and conditions for future initiatives are apparent. The need to

1. **focus on community capacity building** where Aboriginal learners, their families and their communities proactively participate in partnership with literacy service providers and various levels of government to bring together Western and Indigenous worldviews on literacy and essential skills development. Through harmonizing efforts between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learning organizations, innovation, excellence, and continuous improvement in Aboriginal-centered literacy and essential skills curricula, assessment, and program/service planning, design and delivery can be achieved;

2. **create clear community readiness criteria** to assist in determining a Nation's level of engagement in transformative learning, which is inherent in a learner-based community development model of literacy and essential skills program design and delivery. Based on Literacy Victoria's experience with the ALES Pilot Project and its previous Aboriginal literacy initiatives on southern Vancouver Island, three community pre-conditions and determinants of success are evident:

(i) The Aboriginal community must be prepared to learn how to build partnerships and strategic alliances with other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups;

(ii) The Aboriginal community must be willing to actively foster the participation of all of its members in appropriate, continuous learning opportunities; and

(iii) The Aboriginal community must be prepared to evaluate and self-assess progress in achieving the clear learning goals it has set;

3. **and articulate the core requirements for quality assurance.** Those core requirements are that curricula and learning resources be culturally appropriate and designed for adult learners; and that tutors and literacy practitioners be trained and competent in culturally appropriate ways of learning when working with Aboriginal learners.

In conclusion, the ALES Pilot Project team extends its appreciation to the participating First Nations communities who engaged in this three year learning journey. Literacy Victoria welcomes the opportunity to engage in discussing, sharing and mobilizing knowledge about future community-driven adult literacy planning and partnerships between Aboriginal communities, various levels of government, academia and literacy organizations across Canada.

It is our sincere hope that our results and associated resources add to the growing body of work and experiences related to collaborative learning and community development in Aboriginal communities in Canada. We hope for a common vision that Aboriginal learners and their communities have fundamental literacy competencies and essential skills to achieve a level of literacy to allow for full participation in life.

"The richness of the Aboriginal Literacy and Essential Skills Pilot Project is the journey itself."

-Aboriginal Literacy and Essential Skills (ALES) Pilot Project Team Member

Thank you/Hych'ke/Huy ch q'u.

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Appendix B: Communications of the ALES Pilot Project's results and deliverables

As part of the ALES Pilot Project's commitment to strategic communications, the following organizations were identified as benefiting from the ALES Pilot Project's results and deliverables:

Aboriginal communities and organizations

- Assembly of First Nations
- BC Assembly of First Nations
- Coast Salish Employment and Training Society
- First Nations Summit
- First Nations Technology
- First Peoples' Cultural Council
- NIL/TU,O Child and Family Services Society
- Saanich Adult Education Centre
- Union of BC Indian Chiefs
- WILNEW Committee and its communities

Literacy organizations

- Greater Victoria Public Library
- Decoda Literacy Solutions
- National Adult Literacy Database

Government of British Columbia

- Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
- Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology
- Ministry of Education

Government of Canada

- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada

- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

Academia

- Camosun College

- University of Victoria

Appendix C: Glossary of terms

Aboriginal people. The *Constitution Act, 1982—Section 35* recognizes three distinct groups of Aboriginal people—Indians (commonly referred to as First Nations), Métis and Inuit. Each group has distinct histories, languages, and social, cultural and spiritual beliefs.

Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy. Funded by Service Canada, Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) service providers link training to labour market demand and ensure that Aboriginal people can fully participate in economic opportunities. Under this strategy, designated federal government-funded service providers design and deliver employment, skills and training programs and services best suited to the unique needs of Aboriginal clientele in specific regions all across Canada.

Asset-based approach. The existing strengths, abilities and experiences of employees (in workplaces) or residents (in communities). Also referred to as strength-based approach.

Band council. A Band council includes Band members who have been elected as chief and councillors, either under Section 74 of the *Indian Act* or by Band custom, to govern the Band and administer its affairs.

Band membership. A band member is an individual Indian who is a recognized member of a band and whose name appears on an approved Band List. Where a band has adopted its own membership code, it may define who has a right to membership in the band. Therefore, being a status Indian is not necessarily synonymous with being a band member. Status Indians who are not band members are included in the General List.

Benchmarks. Educational benchmarks are points of reference for evaluation and/or comparison on a broad range of competencies—including knowledge, attitudes and skills (e.g., assessing reading skills). Benchmarks serve as a tool to create shared understanding between learners, literacy practitioners, tutors and strategic partners about learners' current and future skills development.

Biculturalism. From an Aboriginal literacy perspective, biculturalism is how Aboriginal people use their heritage, values and knowledge to inform how they work, live and interpret mainstream (Western) Canadian culture in the context of literacy and essential skills development. For individuals

leading bicultural lifestyles, there is often an ability to hold multiple worldviews and to diversify their knowledge base and associated practices simultaneously.

Canadian Council on Learning (CCL). An independent, not-for-profit corporation (funded through an agreement with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada) to promote and support evidence-based decisions about learning throughout all stages of life. The CCL commenced in 2004 and was terminated by the Government of Canada in 2012. The intellectual property of CCL was transferred to the University of Ottawa. As a result, the CCL website, including reports, concepts, research results, and tools for improving learning located in all five of its virtual Knowledge Centres (including Aboriginal Learning) are maintained at www.ccl-cca.ca.

Capacity building. The process of developing knowledge, skills and abilities to empower Aboriginal people to participate in any or all aspects of decision making in their communities, regions, provinces/territories and country.

Coast Salish Employment & Training Society (CSETS). Founded in 1997, CSETS is a "funding, training delivery and coordination agency supporting Aboriginal individuals and communities by facilitating relationships that lead to opportunities to meeting training employment needs, thereby advancing self-reliance." (CSETS, 2013b). CSETS provides services to Aboriginal people on southern Vancouver Island.

Colonization. The deliberate attempt by Canadian governments to destroy Indigenous institutions of family, religious belief systems, tribal affiliation, customs, and traditional ways of life through enacted and enforced legal sanctions (Garrett & Herring, 2001). Colonization is marked by cultural assimilation and destruction tactics in the form of residential schools, removal of Indigenous groups from ancestral lands, and cultural genocide (Green, 1997).

Community learning champions. These are individuals in a community who are passionate about literacy and essential skills development in both formal and informal settings. The community learning champions' enthusiasm and local credibility aid in promoting the value of learning to friends, relatives, community members and colleagues.

Community of practice. A group that forms to exchange information about a common issue or topic. The group can meet in person, by telephone/conference call or online. The purpose of a community of practice is to extend knowledge between individuals to enhance individuals' and the organization's collective understanding of a topic or issue.

Competencies. Specific and observable knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours associated with effective functioning within a job.

Cultural safety. Protocols when interacting and working with diverse cultural groups—includes respect (e.g., informed consent), personal knowledge (e.g., power), partnerships (e.g., authentic encounters), process (e.g., equity and dignity for all parties) and positive purpose (e.g., build on strengths, ensure confidentiality, do no harm).

Cultural values. Guiding principles, ideals, aspirations and beliefs that are foundational in how Aboriginal people (as individuals and as a group) carry out work in their Nations. Cultural values manifest in local traditions, institutions and protocols that are major pillars defining the given Aboriginal society.

Elder. Any person or persons recognized by the Aboriginal community as having knowledge and understanding of the traditional culture of the community, including spiritual and social practices. Knowledge and wisdom, coupled with the recognition and respect of the people of the Nation, are key characteristics of an Elder.

Essential skills. Skills involved in getting, keeping and doing well in any occupation as well as in everyday life at home and in the community. Examples of essential skills include, but are not limited to, reading text, writing, communicating verbally, problem solving, and computer literacy.

First Nations. The First Peoples of Canada, both Status and non-status. First Nations are recognized as Aboriginal people in the *Constitution Act, 1982.*

Historical trauma. Cumulative and collective trauma experienced over a lifetime and across generations as a result of acts of nature (e.g., oil spills affecting land and people) and acts of cruelty towards others (e.g., oppression, Residential School Experience, racism, genocide). Such trauma leads to dysfunctional coping strategies (e.g., substance abuse, domestic violence), which negatively impact the health and well-being of the individuals, communities and societies that experienced the trauma(s).

Legend. A story or collection of stories based on experience and generations of living a culture on traditional lands from time immemorial. Legends are viewed as teaching tools and knowledge sharing opportunities that center on morality and social understanding of the Nation.

Literacy. Beyond reading and writing, literacy is about individuals' capacity to put their skills to work in shaping the course of their own life. This includes using numbers, understanding information, expressing opinions and ideas, making decisions, and solving problems. From an Aboriginal perspective, literacy is framed by the learner's culture, family and connection to the community (aka. cultural literacy).

Localized knowledge. Local and culturally-specific bodies of knowledge that Indigenous people gained through generations of social, physical and spiritual understanding of the world around them, traditional lands and associated practical experience.

Physical infrastructure. Infrastructure that includes the physical elements (e.g., business facilities, educational centers, open space) of a community. This may also include broadband connectivity.

Reserve. The *Indian Act* describes a reserve as lands set apart for the use and benefit of a band and for which the legal title rests with the Crown in right of Canada. The federal government has primary jurisdiction over these lands and the people living on them.

Strategic partners. Strategic partners include, but are not limited to, individuals and families; schools and training organizations (grade schools, and public and private post-secondary institutions); volunteers; community groups and organizations; government agencies (Aboriginal, provincial and federal); employers; employee and industry associations; neighbouring Aboriginal communities and other Aboriginal collaborating organizations.

Talking (or sharing) circles. A group process whereby individuals gather, form a circle and share their viewpoints and reflections on certain issues or topics. This group process is typically facilitated by an Aboriginal person (i.e., Elder or Knowledge Keeper). It is viewed as a traditional healing method for addressing personal hardships and crises. For Aboriginal youth in particular, Talking Circles aid in language and cultural revitalization, connecting youth directly with Elders and Knowledge Keepers to discuss traditional ways of knowing and related experiences in understanding the world around them.

Tutors. Individuals who volunteer their expertise, knowledge and time to work with learners on literacy and essential skill development. Ideally, tutors' work is based on an attitude of mutual respect and understanding of individual learners' cultures and learning levels.

WILNEW (Victoria) communities. Ten South Island First Nations communities: Beecher Bay First Nation, Esquimalt Nation, Malahat First Nation, Pacheedaht First Nation, Pauquachin First Nation, Songhees Nation, Tsawout First Nation, Tsartlip First Nation, Tseycum First Nation and T'souke Nation.

Appendix D: Literacy Victoria – an organizational profile

Established in 1988 as a not-for-profit society, Literacy Victoria has expanded to foster a diverse community for learners who are 19 years of age or older. Specifically, Literacy Victoria offers learner-centered literacy and essential skills services and programming for adults on southern Vancouver Island free of charge to all participants. Literacy Victoria is governed by a 11 person Board of Directors. The Executive Director and the majority of staff work at the Society's offices located in Victoria, British Columbia (BC). Contractors and related community advisors are retained as needed for specific initiatives to aid the Executive Director and staff with advancing Literacy Victoria's mandate.

In addition to the Aboriginal Literacy and Essential Skills (ALES) Pilot Project, Literacy Victoria has delivered the following Aboriginal-specific initiatives:

- Aboriginal Tutor Training Program (2006–2011)—a train-the-trainer model that built community capacity for tutoring in Aboriginal communities, particularly on-reserve First Nations communities. This program was funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education (Government of British Columbia);

- South Island Learning Community Program (partnered with Camosun College and Songhees Nation; funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada);

- Active Measures—Youth Detention Center—Literacy and Essential Skills (funded by the former Department of Indian Affairs & Northern Development Canada); and

- Active Measures—Saanich Adult Education Center—Literacy and Essential Skills (funded by the former Department of Indian Affairs & Northern Development Canada).
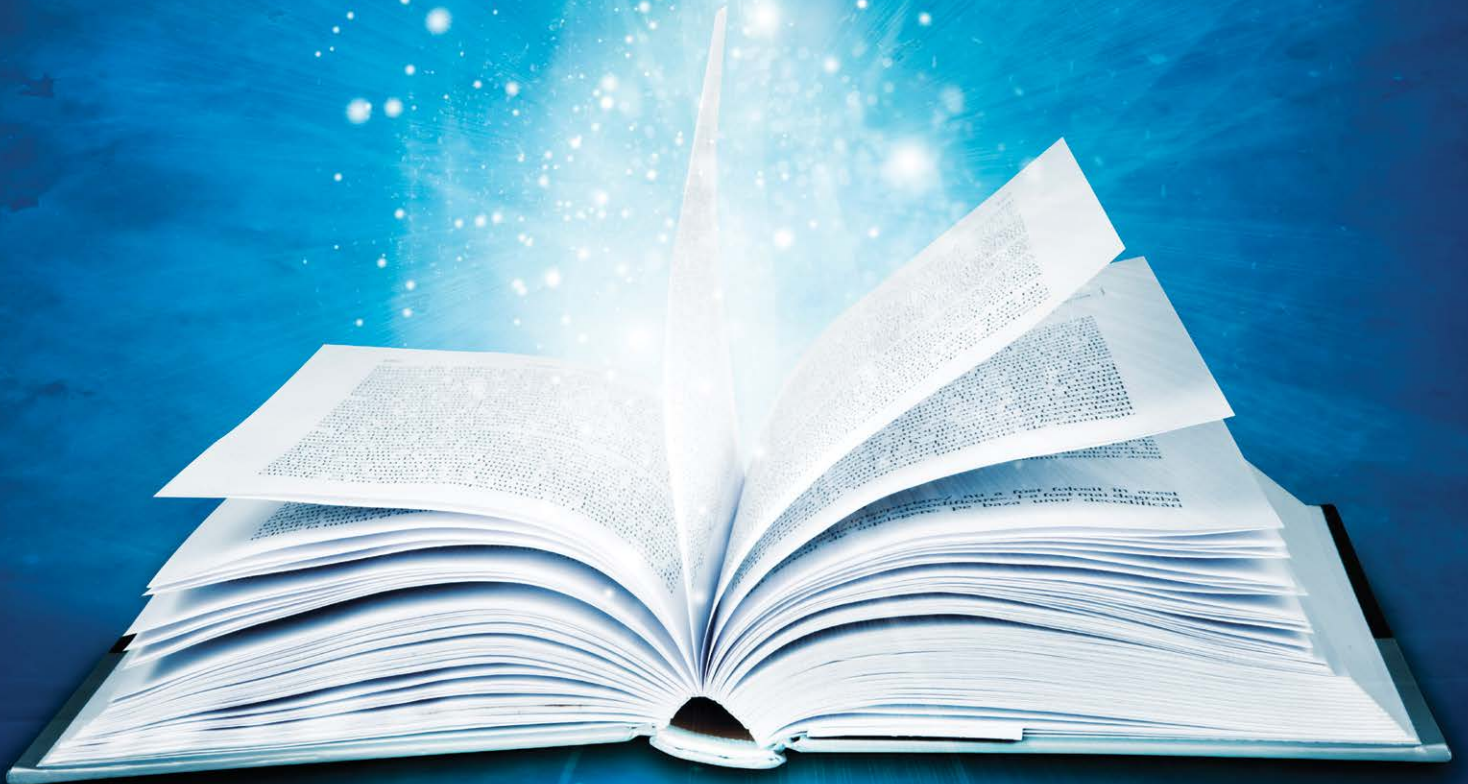
Other Literacy Victoria programming where volunteer tutors work collaboratively with adult learners include

- **Community Outreach**—this program extends beyond the services and programs that are provided at Literacy Victoria's downtown Victoria office by offering off-site customized literacy and essential skills outreach services and associated resources (e.g., supplies,

equipment and trained Outreach volunteers) for adult learners from various community partner agencies on southern Vancouver Island. Community Outreach sites include, but are not limited to, Sandy Merriman House Emergency Shelter for Women (Cool-Aid Society), Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre (Wilkinson Road), Camas Gardens (Pacifica Housing), Mustard Seed Food Bank, Intercultural Association, James Bay Community Project and the Literacy Victoria Bookmobile that provides books for the vulnerable and marginalized in Victoria; and

- **The Learners' Network**—this core program offers adult learners support and resources relating to basic reading, writing, math and computer skills. Trained tutors work with adult learners either one-to-one or in groups to achieve their personal learning goals.

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