

# The courage to do the right things in challenging times

Indigenous educational practices for a better future

**Devin Roberts**

Beaufort Delta Divisional Education Council

**Souhail Soujah**

South Slave Divisional Education Council



# Compass Points

1. E = Excited - **What excites you about this idea or propositions? What's the upside?**
2. W = Worrisome - **What do you find worrisome about this idea or proposition? What's the downside?**
3. N = Need to Know - **What else do you need to know or find out about this idea or proposition? What additional information would help you to evaluate things?**
4. S = Stance or Suggestion for Moving Forward - **What is your current stance or opinion on the idea or proposition? How might you move forward in your evaluation of this idea or proposition?**

# East /West- Excited/Worried

- **What excites you about this idea or proposition? What's the upside?**
  - Share with the audience what excites you about this topic. What aspects of it make you stand up and cheer?
- **What do you find worrisome about this idea or proposition? What's the downside?**
  - Share with the audience what challenges you anticipate or have questions about. What keeps you up at night?

# North- Need to know

- **What else do you need to know or find out about this idea or proposition? What additional information would help you to evaluate things?**
  - A short presentation to provide context to the topic of Indigenous Education and an overview of what we are doing in the North.

# Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action for Education

“Education got us into this mess, and education will get us out of it”

~ Honorable Murray Sinclair

# Calls to Action

- Most significant to us:
- 10. We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles:
  - **Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation.**
  - Improving education attainment levels and success rates.
  - **Developing culturally appropriate curricula.**
  - Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses.
  - **Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems.**
  - Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children.
  - **Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships.**

# Calls to Action

- 62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:
  - **Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.**
  - Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.
  - **Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.**
  - Establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education.
- 63. We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:
  - **Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.**
  - Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.
  - **Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.**
  - Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above.

# A little about the NWT

- Beaufort Delta Divisional Education Council
  - <https://beaufortdeltadec.ca/>
  - <https://beaufortdeltadec.ca/bddec-schools>
- South Slave Divisional Education Council
  - 5 communities in the South Slave Region
  - 8 schools ranging from 64 to 360 students
  - Indigenous student population as low as 40% (Regional Centers) to as high as 100% (Communities)
  - 3 indigenous languages of instruction: Cree, Chipewyan and Dene Yat'ie (South Slavey)
  - Total student population 1200 students (3<sup>rd</sup> largest in the NWT)





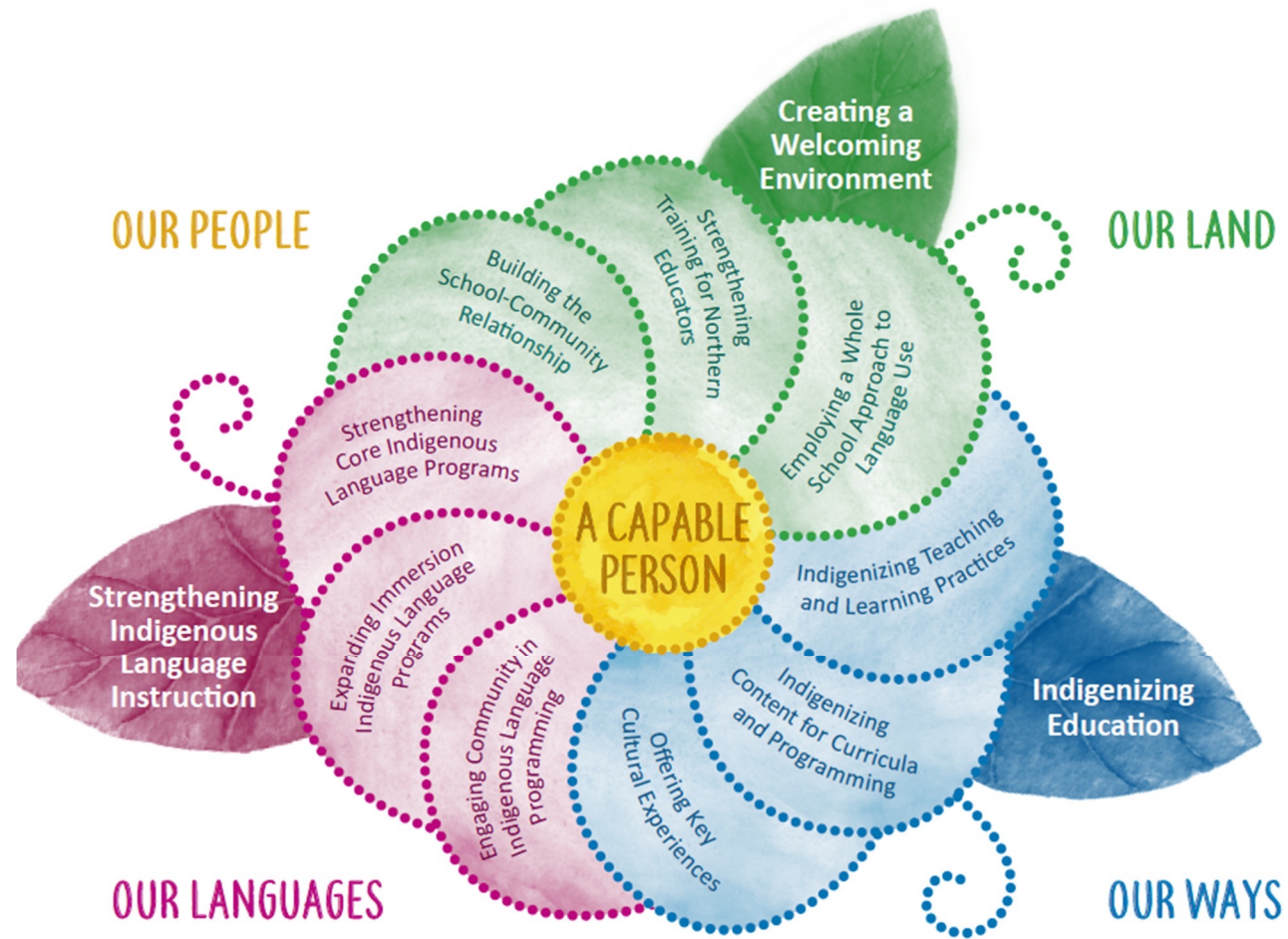
What is a capable person...

A Capable Person is ....

Is there a difference between traditional and Western ways of seeing a capable person?

How has the concept evolved historically?

# Philosophical framework



# A capable person...

**A Capable Person** is a concept that originated from the **Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit** curriculum documents in the mid-1990s, sometimes with different wording yet always with similar meanings. *A capable person is one who has integrity in relationships that honour the self, others, the land, and the spiritual world.* Through these relationships, a capable person grows and develops a more expansive understanding of the essential physical, mental, emotional and spiritual growth involved in the four parts of human development.

Podcast Dr. Angela James [https://voiced.ca/podcast\\_episode\\_post/becoming-a-capable-child-ft-angela-james/](https://voiced.ca/podcast_episode_post/becoming-a-capable-child-ft-angela-james/)

# Policy

- As part of GNWT's commitment to reconciliation and the 18th Legislative Assembly mandate to renew the former Aboriginal Language and Culture Based (ALCBE) (2004) Directive, ECE finalized the new [NWT Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 \(JK-12\) Indigenous Languages and Education \(ILE\) Policy](#) by ensuring Indigenous language instruction and culture-based school programs are supported and adequately resourced. The Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat oversees the implementation of the ILE Policy.
- **The ILE policy provides a more effective way to support education bodies in the delivery of Indigenous languages and education programming by outlining improved program guidelines, training, funding, and accountability measures.** It also supports language and culture-based learning by focusing on promoting Indigenous worldviews, cultures, and languages of communities in which schools are located.
- How many of your districts have a policy dedicated to guaranteeing the inclusion of indigenous values in your pedagogy?
- <https://schools.bd-dec.ca/vision27/>

# Indigenous Language Policy

1. Schools **must actively implement [Dene Kede \(K-9\) and Inuuqatigiit \(K-12\)](#) to bring forward, in all instruction, the Indigenous worldviews, cultures, and languages of the community in which the school is located.**
2. Schools should welcome all students within learning environments that centre, **respect and promote the Indigenous worldviews, cultures, and languages of the community in which the school is located, through building the school-community relationship, offering educator training and employing a whole school approach to Indigenous language use.**
3. **Schools should work toward Indigenizing teaching and learning practices, Indigenizing the content of curricula and programming, and providing opportunities for all JK-12 students to engage in authentic and relevant key cultural experiences throughout the school year.**
4. Schools that provide Indigenous language instruction **must offer dedicated time for Indigenous language instruction** within the regular education program and actively implement the *Our Languages* curriculum.



# Human Resources





# Governance DEA / DEC

- Regional education authorities are accountable to elected (and appointed) councils and authorities (DEA and DEC).
- The District Education Authorities (DEAs) are composed of elected and/or appointed individuals who represent their community's interests in the planning and delivery of educational programming in their school(s).
- Designated seats in these governing bodies are occupied by Indigenous representatives to provide plurality and fidelity in the representation of the Indigenous demographic in the community.

# Priority Hiring

Hiring staff is perhaps the most significant job a Principal has as the manager of the organization; as such, it's the first step in meeting the Calls to Action at its very foundational intent... change.

- **Prioritize the hiring of Indigenous people to better reflect and authentically indigenize the system from its core:**

Senior Management or Non traditional occupations	
<i>Priority 1:</i>	a) Indigenous Aboriginal Persons - Females b) Indigenous Aboriginal Persons - Males
<i>Priority 2:</i>	Resident Women
<i>Priority 3:</i>	Indigenous non-Aboriginal Persons or Resident Disabled Persons
<i>No Priority</i>	All Other Applicants

All other occupations	
<i>Priority 1:</i>	Indigenous Aboriginal Persons
<i>Priority 2:</i>	Indigenous non-Aboriginal Persons or Resident Disabled Persons
<i>No Priority:</i>	All Other Applicants



# Indigenous Employment Plan

- GNWT required strategic plan to map out hiring to increase indigenous staffing



	OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	MILESTONES		
				Immediate	2023/2024	2024/2025
GOAL 1: Indigenous Representation	Address bias, racism, and discrimination throughout the staffing process, resulting in improved cultural competency in the public service.	<p><b>Action 1.1:</b> Modify and redesign job ads to better reflect inclusivity and remove systemic barriers that may deter Indigenous applicants from applying.</p> <p>Review all job descriptions to remove systemic barriers and reflect appropriate non-inflated education and experience requirements.</p>	<p><i># of ads put out with recommended changes</i></p> <p><i>job descriptions reviewed (JDS)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 249 JDS for reviewed (based on # of filled positions)</li> </ul> <p><i># of applications on job postings</i></p>	<p>100% of ads redesigned to meet criteria</p> <p>20% (50) of JDS reviewed</p>	<p>100% of ads redesigned to meet criteria</p> <p>40% (100) of JDS reviewed</p>	<p>100% of ads redesigned to meet criteria</p> <p>65% (161) of JDS reviewed</p>
		<p><b>Action 1.2:</b> Hiring managers complete training on the staffing process, recruitment programs and understanding systemic and unconscious racism and bias within the hiring process.</p>	<p><i># of hiring managers who complete the training</i></p>	<p>Training Launched</p>	<p>25% of hiring managers have completed the training</p>	<p>40% of hiring managers have completed the training</p>
		<p><b>Action 1.3:</b> Review Indigenous eligibility lists for pre-qualified candidates prior to initiating a job competition.</p> <p>Promote positions with SSDEC in a manner that is flexible and fluid to meet the needs of potential Indigenous applicants. This includes flexible timelines, interview process, and the vetting of qualifications</p>	<p><i># of positions filled without a competition</i></p> <p><i>Increase of Indigenous hires within department</i></p> <p><i>Increased number of candidates added to database</i></p> <p><i># of ads that deviate from the expected timelines and traditional expectations</i></p>	<p>Launch of eligibility database</p> <p>100% of ads will be fluid and flexible in expectations from applicants</p>	<p>2 positions are filled with eligibility lists</p>	<p>2 positions are filled with eligibility lists</p>

<https://www.viu.ca/programs/education/bachelor-education>

<https://www.auroracollege.nt.ca/programs/>

# Indigenous Development and Training program

- The Indigenous Development and Training Program (IDTP) supports the professional development of Indigenous Aboriginal employees within the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) by providing the necessary skills training and/or work experience for career advancement.
- Under this program, the Department of Finance will provide up to \$10,000 to current employees who identify as Indigenous Aboriginal individuals under the [GNWT Affirmative Action Policy](#) who:
  - require skills training in order to obtain and maintain sustainable employment with potential for career or professional advancement;
  - have demonstrated the desire for developmental opportunities to support career advancement; and
  - have identified the learning goal within their learning plan.

# Indigenous Career Gateway Program

- Indigenous Career Gateway Program targets Indigenous Aboriginal candidates for entry-level and trainee opportunities with the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT).
- Through this program, GNWT departments, boards and agencies have access to additional financial support to establish employment opportunities for Indigenous Aboriginal residents of the NWT:
  - **Entry-level positions:** Where candidates meet the qualifications of the position, the Department will be provided with a prorated payment of \$40,000 per year to be put towards the employee's salary and or training needs
  - **Trainee positions:** Where candidates do not meet the qualifications of the position, they will be hired under the trainee MOU and their rate of pay will be based on a percentage of step one under the training program. The Department will be provided with a prorated payment of \$40,000 per year up to a maximum of two years. The Department will provide their Client Service Representative with a comprehensive training plan as outlined in the MOU. The funding provided to the Department will be put towards the trainer allowance (\$6000 a year), direct training costs outlined in the training plan and the employee's salary.

# Mentor-Apprentice Program

- The Mentor-Apprentice Program is a way of learning an Indigenous language where a fluent speaker of the language (a mentor) teaches a committed language learner (an apprentice) by doing everyday activities using only their Indigenous language.
- The program aims to increase apprentices' ability to understand and speak their language by *“living life in the language.”*
- The pair must agree to spend a lot of time together, usually about 7-10 hours per week during the program. Mentor-apprentice pairs complete 200 hours of language immersion over approximately nine months starting in May. Pairs must submit regular reporting logs demonstrating their Indigenous language learning.
- Pairs are paid for their time in the program with funding from the Government of the Northwest Territories and their Indigenous Government. Ten pairs from each Indigenous Government will be selected to participate.
- **Training Languages:**
- Dene Kədá, Dēne Sųłíné, Dene Zhatié, Dinjii Zhu’ Ginjik, Inuinnaqtun, Inuvialuktun, nēhiyawēwin, Tłıchq

# Regional Indigenous Languages and Education Coordinators (RILE)

Position within Education bodies that provide a regional leadership role for Indigenous language Instruction

- Providing regional leadership in the implementation of the OLC (Our Language Curriculum)
- Working with Indigenous language teachers to provide pedagogic support and resources
- Support Indigenous Language teachers with the teach/model/practice philosophy of pedagogy
- Develop Indigenous Language Inquiry-based Instructional programming for schools.
- Provide resources as needed.

Funded by a dedicated budget to support local and regional initiatives

# Indigenous Language Teachers

In following with policy regarding Indigenous language instructions, schools offer a suite of Indigenous language instruction from K-12

The instructors are drawn from the school communities and receive pedagogic training so that they can share their knowledge with students in the classrooms.

Throughout the year, the instructors' teaching skills are honed with the support of the RILE and ECE, ensuring a continuous development process

Similarly, mentors and continued practice with assigned elders further support their language abilities.

They, in turn, support trainees to follow in their footsteps as language instructors.

In the South Slave, we offer Chipewyan, Bush Cree and Dene Yatıe (South Slavey)

Indigenous language instructors play a pivotal role in preserving and promoting Indigenous culture. They lead school-wide activities and events honouring Indigenous heritage, making them the true advocates of indigenizing education.

# IL Positions

- <https://www.fin.gov.nt.ca/en/services/position-and-salary-information/departments/beaufort-delta-divisional-education-council?page=2>

# Elders in the Classroom and at Camp

- Elders are community members who, by their experience and status in the community, are role models for students to emulate.
- The presence of elders in our schools is not a mere exception but a fundamental expectation. We recognize their vital role in supporting instruction and fostering a rich learning environment.
- Their function in the schools is not limited to language instruction but also acts as a conduit for authentic cultural experiences and social and emotional well-being. They are the fulcrum of culture camps and authentic indigenous experiences for students and teachers.
- They take an active role in helping support the design and implementation of Indigenous education across all subjects.



# Elders in the Classroom





# Material Support





# Language Curriculum (OLC)

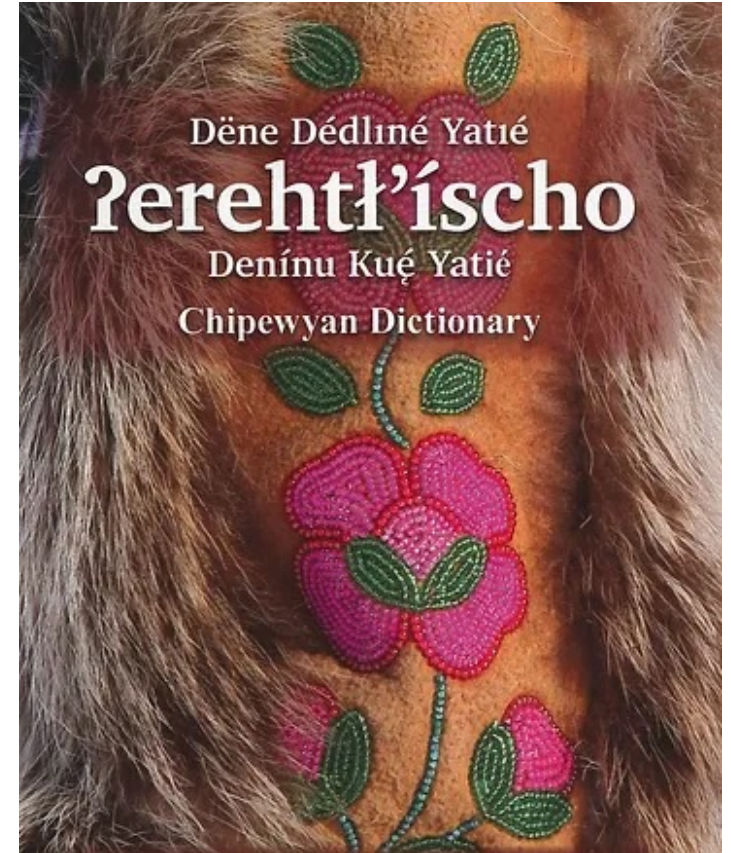
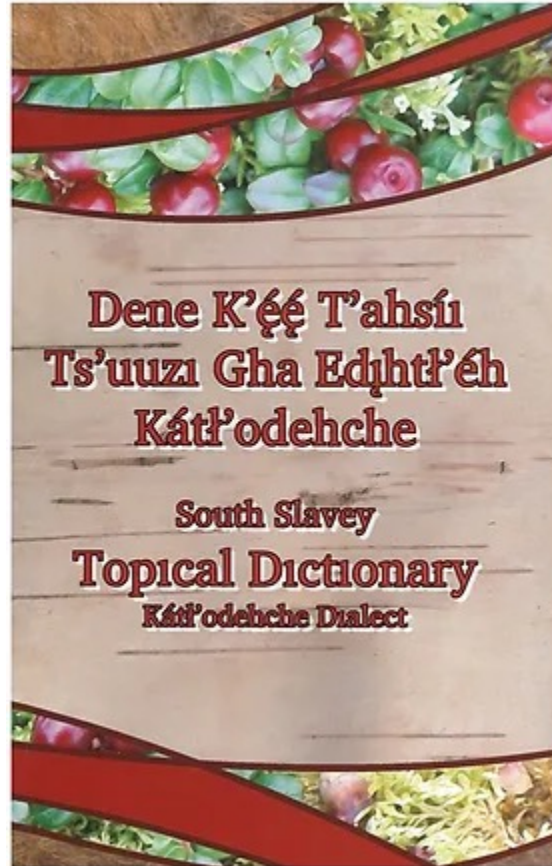
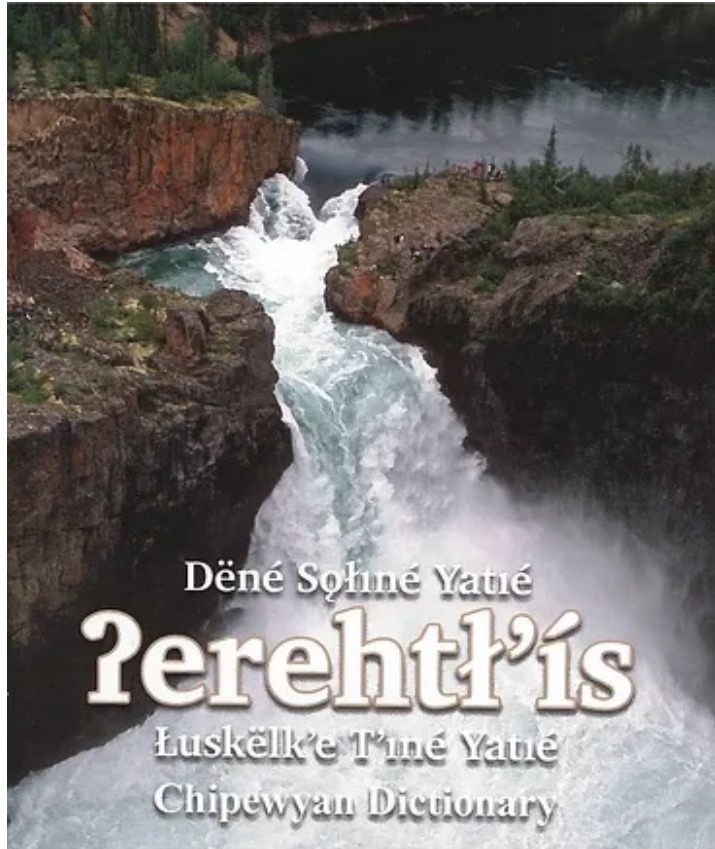
The [Our Languages Curriculum](#) is a competency based curriculum that provides NWT Indigenous language instructors with the curricular outcomes, instructional strategies, and assessment tools to foster language growth in NWT core Indigenous language classrooms.

- The curriculum follows lessons learned from both the Intensive French programming and from a Neurolinguistics approach piloted in the Dehcho region during the 2015/16 and 2016/17 school years.
- The curriculum promotes a whole-school approach to language learning to ensure that Indigenous languages are heard and spoken throughout the schools, assemblies, during routines, and in all NWT classrooms.
- The curriculum is aligned with the two foundational curricula, **Dene Kede** and **Inuuqatigiit**, which grounds the teaching and learning in NWT Indigenous traditions, culture, and place.
- The curriculum focuses on students' attainment of five language learning levels: **Emergent**, **Beginner**, **Intermediate**, **Advanced**, and **Capable** by the end of grade 12. For a student to be fluent they will also need to use their Indigenous language at home.
- Children from each of the schools were assessed using a draft **Oral Proficiency Scale** by a fluent speaker who is not their teacher. These baseline data results will be used to set goals for increasing language proficiency.
- The curriculum was written with language educators and leaders from all NWT regions – ECE will continue to work directly with education authorities to ensure the new curriculum is implemented across the NWT.

# Language Revitalization Initiatives

- Language is not just a tool of communication, it is the very essence of culture. Culture and language are intertwined, each one breathing life into the other. Our efforts in language revitalization are not just about words, they are about preserving and nurturing our shared cultural heritage.
- Language revitalization initiatives focus on creating rich resources to support the work of teachers, elders, and families in promoting thinking, speaking, and writing in the language.
- Our in-house resources, available in a multitude of Indigenous languages, are diverse and accessible. They include films like 'The Three Feathers ', dictionaries, video games, literature in the form of children's stories and books, and visual representations that celebrate the richness of culture and language.

# Resources developed by NWT divisions



# Support for language at all levels

- Territorial

- <https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/indigenous-language-resources/indigenous-languages-words-and-phrases>

- Regional

- Chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/http://www.ssdec.nt.ca/ablang/ablanguag/chiptionary/Chipewyan%20Dictionary.pdf



# Partnerships

- Intimate relationships between Indigenous community and schools/Boards to create partnerships and collaborations on initiatives of common interest
- Partner in funding applications to Federal and Territorial agencies to support school initiatives i.e. Partnership with FS Metis Council and Physical Education Canada to support Wellness Camp (Mental and Emotional Health) and AIP (Arctic Inspiration Prize)
- Access to support is much greater when partnering with indigenous community organizations with common interests.



# Culture Camp (Winter/Spring)

- Annual multi-day immersive Culture camps (Winter/Spring)
- On the land (K-12 students), hands-on experience
- Led by Elders and Knowledge Keepers
- Complemented throughout the year by school-based Culture camps and classroom experiences
- Opportunity to learn from traditional Indigenous wisdom and knowledge.
- Opportunity for supporting Language revitalization – key to cultural wealth and health.



# Culture Camps



# Jordan Principle Funding

- Federal support to provide funding for initiatives directly targeting Indigenous student needs (Social, Educational, Health)
- A significant percentage of board funding is through JP, including materials, student support (psych reviews, SA, program materials), programming, and support for home (transportation, food, etc...)
- SSDEC (10% of Total Budget -\$3M)
- BDEC (29% of total budget - \$14 M)
  
- **How many are aware of Jordan's Principle?**
- **Positive experiences? Challenges? i.e. capacity, resources, etc...**



# In service presentations

- Carolyn Carroll – Indigenizing Education SSDEC In service 2024/25
  - Not just as macro charismatic events but also programs with sustainable intent and overlapping applications with current practice.
  - Long-lasting partnerships that go beyond a single event.

# Cultural presentations in schools

- Cultural presentations and celebrations as part of the curriculum and *the way we do business*, not as “add ons”.
- Diversity and plurality of cultural experiences celebrating Metis, Cree and Dene heritage and identity (SSDEC)
- Jigging, moccasin and mitt making, dance, beading, ribbon skirts, etc... These activities are included in the fabric of the classroom and are used in the context of indigenous identity.

# Indigenous High School Diplomas



## SECONDARY SCHOOL DIPLOMA

## DIPLÔME D'ÉTUDES SECONDAIRES

## ᐅEREHTŁ'IS KUÉ ᐅEREHTŁ'IS DÉNE BE TŁ'ÁCHUTH

This Diploma is granted to

Ce diplôme est décerné à

Diri Ɂerehtł'is bezié horélyq bela

who has fulfilled the requirements for the Northwest Territories Secondary School Diploma in accordance with the provisions of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

qui a satisfait aux exigences d'obtention du diplôme d'études secondaires des Territoires du Nord-Ouest établies par le ministère de l'Éducation, de la Culture et de la Formation.

nát'e Ɂedza nén K'éya Ɂerehtł'is kué. Diri Déne Honeitén-u, Déne Ch'áni-u, La-u, 7eyi Ts'j 7j'ágh Harela beghare la chu déne ch'áneí chu xél Ɂeghálada.

Honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment  
L'honorable ministre de l'Éducation, de la Culture et de la Formation  
Diri déne ch'áneí chu la chu Déne Honeitén-u, Déne Ch'áni-u, La-u, 7eyi Ts'j 7j'ágh Harela ts'én K'aldhér

Tó sii

Issue Date  
Date de délivrance

Government of  
Northwest Territories

Gouvernement des  
Territoires du Nord-Ouest

Jadízj Nén  
ts'j níé ts'én K'aldhér





# South/Suggestions for moving forward

- **How might you move forward? What ideas come to mind that are unique to your region/needs? How do we help each other through a network of learners to increase our collective capacity?**

Thank you

