



Family Literacy: It's About Who You Are Share Your Culture - Share Your Language!



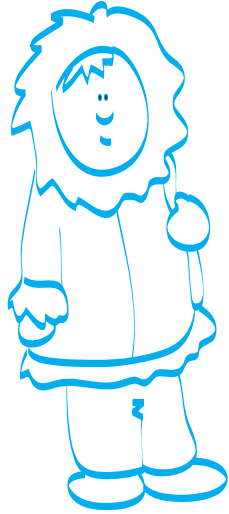
What Is Family Literacy?

Family literacy is the way families learn together at home and in the community. Many people think literacy is just about reading and writing but it is more than words. It's about all the things families do and learn together every day.



Inside This Issue:

- ▶ **Aboriginal Language Is Important**
- ▶ **Aboriginal Language Helps Your Child**
- ▶ **How Do Children Learn Language?**
- ▶ **Lots Of Learning Activities!**



Why Is Family Literacy Important?

Research tells us that children start learning at birth. They need love and support to help them grow and learn. Parents are their children's first and most important teachers.

Talking, singing, reading and playing with your young children will help them develop language and literacy and let them know who they are.



When we use the word 'parents' we mean anyone taking care of children.

What Kinds Of Family Literacy Activities Do You Do At Home?

Family literacy can be:

- √ Singing.
- √ Reading recipes.
- √ Talking and listening.
- √ Telling and reading stories.
- √ Cooking together.
- √ Making a grocery list.
- √ Reading signs and labels.
- √ On the land activities.



More Than Words

Family literacy is more than the printed word. It is about:

- √ Learning together. It is never too early to start.
- √ Who you are. Share your culture; share your stories.
- √ Doing things together – every day and everywhere.

Family Literacy Day

Family Literacy Day is a national awareness initiative held each year on January 27th. This special day promotes reading and other literacy-related activities in families.

Most communities have special Family Literacy Day celebrations such as reading circles and family literacy nights.



What Are You Going To Do To Celebrate?

Family Literacy: It's About Who You Are is a special publication produced by the NWT Literacy Council for National Family Literacy Day, with support from the NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment.



Build Language Skills Through Everyday Activities

Do these family literacy activities in your Aboriginal language.

Go for a walk and talk about what you see, hear and smell.



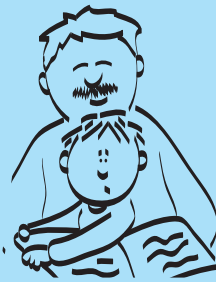
Bake with your children.



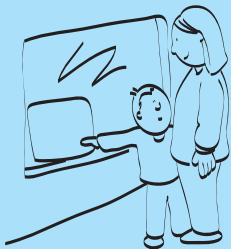
Tell stories to your children about the past.



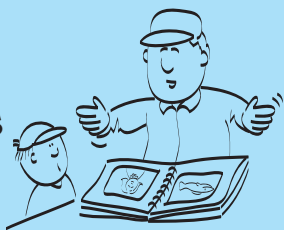
Read Aboriginal language books to your children.



Go shopping with your children.



Look at old photo albums and talk about your family.



You are your child's first and most important teacher!

Aboriginal Language Is Important

The NWT is rich in Aboriginal cultures and languages. Culture and language are important parts of who we are. We use language to pass on our culture from one generation to the next. Through language, we learn about the traditions of our ancestors and we learn our stories.



As a parent, you don't have to be fluent in the language yourself to teach your children your language. Look for opportunities for you and your child to learn together – through family literacy programs, early childhood programs, visits with elders and cultural activities that happen in your community.



Aboriginal Language Helps Your Child

Question

I usually talk and read to my child in my Aboriginal language. Is that okay?

Answer:

Yes! Learning an Aboriginal language from an early age helps your child learn at home and at school. Learning to speak, read and write in an Aboriginal language provides many benefits. Studies tell us that children who are fluent in their first language do well in school. Once they have an understanding of one language they can pick up other languages easily.

Tip

If children are learning more than one language, they need to hear both used as often as possible. Speak one language at a time. Try not to use sentences that are partly in one language and partly in another language.

Children sometimes mix up the languages they are learning. Don't worry. It won't take long for them to sort it out and put the pieces together. It just takes time, practice and encouragement!



How Do Children Learn Language?

Question

How do children learn language?

Answer

Children learn a language by living the language. They need to hear it spoken and see adults use the language as part of their everyday lives. Children will learn the language through lots of repetition. They will want to hear the same stories over and over again.

Tip

Build activities around your culture and traditions and use your Aboriginal language as often as you can. This will give your child a strong foundation for learning – and a strong sense of who they are.

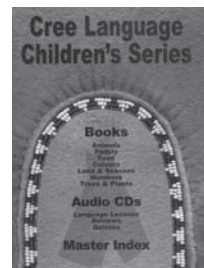


Things You Can Do To Help Your Children Learn Your Language

☀ Speak your language at home – every little bit helps! Even if you aren't fluent, use what you know.



☀ If you can, borrow books, tapes and other Aboriginal language materials from the school or local language resource centre.



☀ Speak and sing to your baby in your language even before they are born.



☀ Label different things around your home in your Aboriginal language and practice saying them each day with your children.

☀ Ask your parents or grandparents to speak the language to your children.

☀ Teach your child one word in your language each day.

☀ Have an "Aboriginal language only" night each week. Turn off the TV, computer, Game Boy, Nintendo etc. Invite friends and family to join you.

☀ Learn the language with your children by going to Aboriginal language programs. You are never too old to learn!

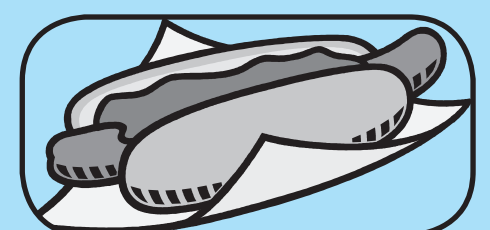
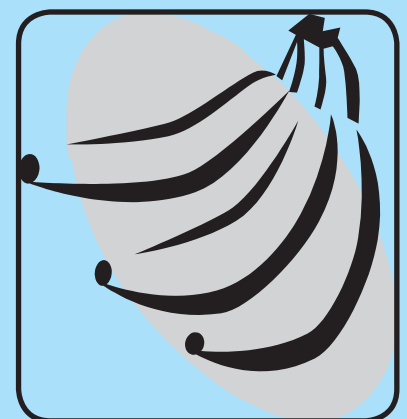


☀ Use your language when you are doing things with your children. For example, when cooking describe the utensils and ingredients in your language.

Activity: Grocery Store Labels

- ☑ Cut out pictures from magazines or draw food items to make labels. Write the name of the item below the picture in your Aboriginal language.
- ☑ Glue the labels onto pieces of cardboard, such as cereal boxes.
- ☑ Give your children the labels when you go grocery shopping and ask them to find the matching items in the store.
- ☑ You can also use these labels as a matching or memory game.
- ☑ Make the labels with your children.

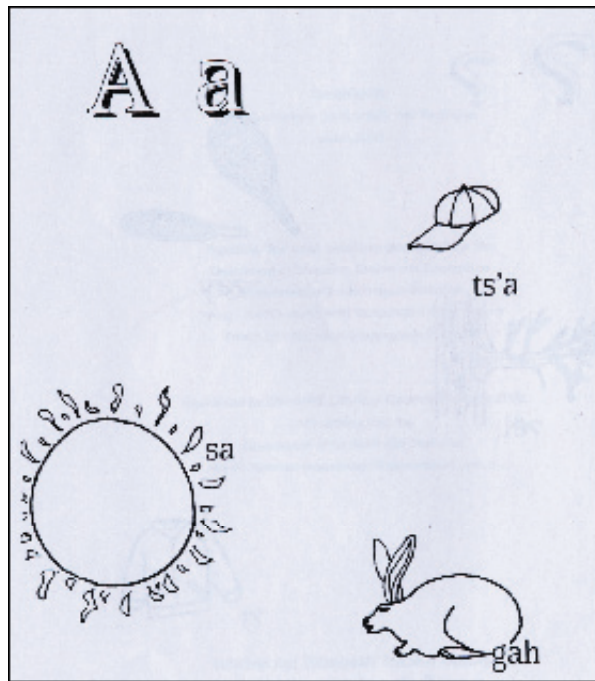
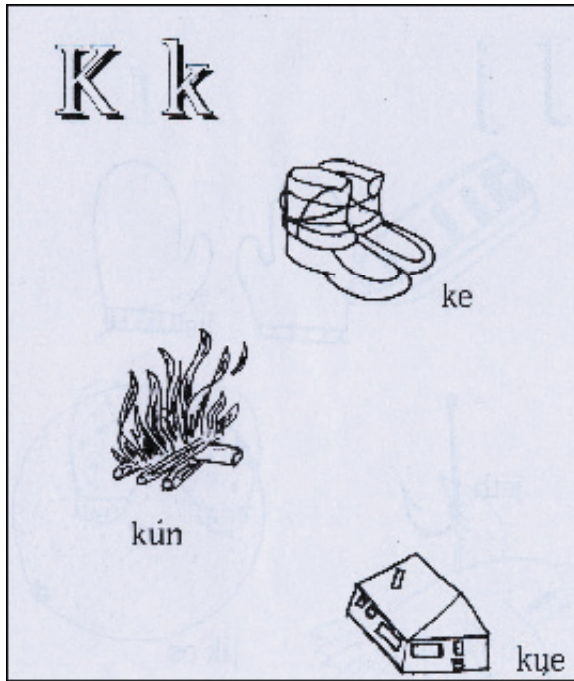
Examples



Word Dictionary

Make a word dictionary in your Aboriginal language. It is easy to do and lots of fun. Have your children decorate the book.

Here is an example of a Chipewyan Dictionary written by Elizabeth Biscaye and illustrated by Geordie Biscaye.



How To Help Your Child Learn

- ✓ **Talk** about what you are doing.
- ✓ **Listen** as your child talks.
- ✓ **Tell** your child a story.
- ✓ **Read** to your child each day.
- ✓ **Talk** about the story.
- ✓ **Praise** your child.
- ✓ **Share** one new word, song, craft or activity every day.
- ✓ **Use** your Aboriginal language.

Let's Make A Storytelling Bag!

Storytelling bags, or language bundles, are fun. Here is how to make one:

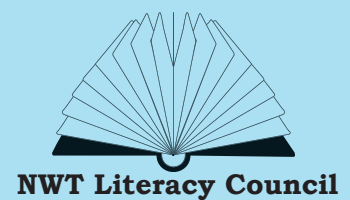
- ▶ Use a piece of tanned hide or other material - a basket or box works too.
- ▶ Put small objects into the bundle that you can use to tell stories in your language. They can be real or you can make miniatures, like dogsleds, animals, canoes, dolls, etc. Use things from the natural world, such as feathers, shells or stones.
- ▶ Let your whole family and community bring something to your family language bundle.
- ▶ Use the things in the storytelling bag to tell stories in your language.



(Adapted from materials prepared through the GNWT's Early Childhood Development Framework for Action by Harnum & Associates.)

Would you like more information about programs for parents and children in your community?

You can call the
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 867-873-9262 or toll free at
 1-866-599-6758.



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