

**Workforce and Workplace
Literacy and Essential Skills
Final Report:**

Interests and Prospects in Yukon



**Yukon Literacy
Coalition**

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- Kim Crockatt, Executive Director of Nunavut Literacy Council
- Cayla Chenier, Director of Programs, Nunavut Literacy Council
- Beth Mulloy, Executive Director of Yukon Literacy Coalition

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Andre Gagne was the project lead and authored the report, and is thankful for all the input from all involved.

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A brief explanatory note about workforce and workplace LES

According to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, there are nine literacy and essential skills:

- Reading
- Writing
- Numeracy
- Document Use
- Working with Others
- Computer Skills
- Thinking Skills
- Oral Communication
- Continuous Learning

Workforce LES programming focuses on those essential skills that will help people get employment. Programming may occur in a college or community-based organization.

Workplace LES programming focuses on employed workers and upgrading of those essential skills that will help them excel at their present jobs, or to get better jobs. In this case, programs happen at, or near, the workplace and are customized to the workplace and worker needs.

Workforce and workplace LES programs are intended to benefit people for work and within their broader family and community lives. In both cases, LES may be integrated with vocation or job-related content.

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Yukon Workforce and Workplace LES Final Report

A. Executive Summary

Introduction

With the support of the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), the Yukon Literacy Coalition (YLC) undertook a project that would assess Yukon community stakeholder interests related to workplace and workforce literacy and essential skills (LES). Through consultations, the YLC heard about models and principles that could move the expanding field of workforce and workplace (LES) forward in the territory. A literature review was also carried out, as well as a scan of past and present workforce and workplace LES initiatives in Yukon.

The report presents a snapshot of Yukon community interests, and contributes to the knowledge of adult basic education delivery groups and agencies that support LES. The findings of this report round out a North of 60 workplace and workforce LES discussion, following similar reports from Northwest Territories and Nunavut Literacy Councils.

Ninety-six face-to-face interviews were completed, generating a wealth of Yukon-based perceptions, information and thoughts about best ways to complement existing LES and adult education programming underway in Yukon. Many interviewees were particularly concerned with the number of young adults who had not graduated from high school, and were not engaging with the labour market. This, despite the fact that there are known acute skilled and unskilled labour shortages in and around many Yukon communities. Stakeholders expressed a range of approaches that could benefit not only young adults, but also older adults who may be transitioning into new work areas. These approaches focus on participation in meaningful training and educational opportunities.

Limitations of this project

A limitation of the project is its inability to report on the full range of feedback received from stakeholders. A lot of important information was received that fell outside the boundaries of research. For instance, a report could have been done focusing solely on young adults who did not complete their high school graduation and are unable or unwilling to engage with educational and training opportunities available to them. Another body of work could critically examine the ways inter-generational residential school syndrome manifests itself within young First Nations residents and how it affects their work, community and family life trajectories.

Findings: Workforce and Workplace LES in Yukon

Creative workforce and workplace LES delivery ideas proliferated through the consultation period. Much care was taken by this author to do justice to these ideas later in the report's findings section. Community members were consistently aware of the talent and resiliency that exists in communities, including individuals with no conventional education and/or work experience. These individuals may require informal, or hands-on approaches to learning that have not yet been available to them. Worker-centred and facilitated learning were among the key approaches to learning stressed by interviewees.

Drivers for workforce and workplace LES

There are drivers for workforce and workplace LES in Yukon, even though Yukon was top-ranked nationally on several measures of literacy in the 2003 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). Some Yukoners believe IALS over-sampled well-educated Whitehorse residents in determining its Yukon data. Needs in communities and among First Nation residents are greater, as the lower high school graduation rates indicate.

Mirroring Canadian drivers, the Yukon has a number of factors to consider in assessing the long-term health of its existing and potential workforce. It faces the same major demographic shifts, with imminent retirement of a sizeable baby boomer generation, the arrival of many new immigrants, and a growing proportion of First Nations within the general population. It is also facing an acute skilled labour shortage and has major issues with retention, particularly in the core sectors that drive the overall economy: tourism and mining.

Funding sources

The Yukon has a number of funding sources that could be drawn from to support the development of programs that would address both LES and either job preparedness training or up-skilling within existing workers' jobs. The Labour Market Agreement framework clearly identifies essential skills as a fundable area of training. Other funds are also in place that serve a variety of interests, and have been used to support literacy.

In light of the influx of recent CanNor federal funding that has been invested in Yukon College in support of new approaches to adult basic education (including embedded ones), greater territorial-federal coordination would bolster the college's efforts and could also spawn less structured, complementary programs in the non-profit literacy and education sectors.

Barriers to learning

There are many barriers that keep adults from accessing training and education opportunities. Social issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, residential school effects and family conflicts are factors in each community. Lack of literacy and shame associated with not having high educational attainment are issues for some. Others cannot access training opportunities in the

event they are taking place in Whitehorse. Prohibitive costs, great distances or commitments keep people from taking the time to access opportunities in the capital.

Promising approaches for workforce and workplace LES

There is an interest to see creative, community-based, learner-centred approaches to workforce and workplace LES in the future. Ideas from the consultations included:

- Combining mentorship and LES was seen as a good way to address those who would prefer to have a hands-on learning experience from a trusted mentor. This kind of approach was seen as particularly useful for trades-based learning.
- Within First Nation governments, there are different kinds of interests related to workplace LES. Most informants agreed that targeted programming where there is a specific departmental or individual need was the starting point to designing a program. Some First Nations representatives cited a need for general writing skills and basic accounting skill development. Others stressed that computer-based needs, mainly related to document creation, and use of appropriate templates for external communications were the area of greatest need.
- Some of those interviewed wanted to see the definitions of “workplace” and “workforce” challenged to incorporate traditional elements of aboriginal economies. Hunting, fishing and trapping are important economic elements in a lot of communities, and LES development and traditional language development could gain traction if they are attached to these identity-reinforcing activities. Culture camps or similar venues could be staging places for reinforcing culture, language and essential skills in multiple languages.
- Workforce LES is needed in sectors such as emergency fire fighting and exploration – where technology now plays a pivotal role. In the past these jobs were well paid seasonal positions awarded to people who were in shape and had good bush skills.
- Some of the principles stressed by interviewees included the interest in: impartial needs assessments; worker-centred programming guided by skilled facilitators; and, literacy as a component of overall wellness and self-confidence.

The main job areas that workforce and workplace LES programming could address in communities according to interviewees are: First Nation government jobs, skilled trades and semi-skilled contracting positions, and all positions connected to Yukon’s expanding mining sector.

A range of stakeholders are normally needed to bring about an effective workforce or workplace LES program. Employers, workers, unions (if applicable) and the broader community all stand to gain from a properly designed program. That said, there are some who would like to simply sole-source a consultant to deliver a specific program, and to work without too many project partners that may slow down the pace of training or education deliveries. Some are also interested in pursuing e-learning opportunities, thereby simplifying (in theory) all aspects of

putting together a program, from determining what organization would best deliver it, to eliminating concerns about scheduling and location.

The Yukon Literacy Coalition will have a greater role to play in the mix of workforce and workplace LES in Yukon. Interviewees were asked about this, and many wanted to see the coalition play a coordinating, information-sharing role amongst non-profits who provided complementary services. Several college representatives agreed and would love to see a local body that houses all the latest and greatest information about this expanding field.

Recommendations:

For Yukon Government:

- Develop a communications strategy outlining the main funding opportunities that could be used to support workforce and workplace LES projects, targeting employers, non-profits and First Nation governments.
- Update Literacy Strategy following the symposium and update related policy documents to include specific language about workforce and workplace LES.
- Consider the feasibility of creating a workplace LES coordinator position within Advanced Education's Labour Market Programs and Services Unit.
- Create more mechanisms for creative workplace LES to thrive within First Nation governments.

For non-profits involved in workforce and workplace LES:

- Strike a committee to develop collaborative, multi-organizational strategies related to workforce and workplace LES development in Yukon.
- Work with representatives involved in Yukon College's many new workforce and workplace LES developments to determine where non-profit expertise could compliment or reinforce offerings to students and clients in communities.
- Develop an employer engagement strategy and find new workplace LES opportunities.
- Develop relationships with appropriate First Nation government representatives involved in education, literacy and training.

B. The Yukon Workforce and Workplace LES Project

1. Introduction

a. Purpose of the project

The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), housed in the department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, funded the Yukon Literacy Coalition to complete a workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills project in the territory with an aboriginal and rural community focus.

One of the main project activities was to conduct a Yukon-wide scan of workforce and workplace LES programs. The scan identified a number of organizations that deliver LES – either to prepare people for work, or to train workers within existing jobs.

Community stakeholder consultation was a central aspect of the project. The Yukon Literacy Coalition spoke with a broad range of stakeholders in Yukon communities to become better informed of local LES needs and interests. The consultations focused on employability issues.

The project was beneficial to the Yukon Literacy Coalition (YLC) and fulfills an organizational purpose. The YLC is looking to contribute more to workforce and workplace literacy in the territory. Staff and board members now have current information to inform thinking on how to best serve communities.

b. Report is for all involved in LES

Sharing the findings of this report will increase the knowledge of everyone involved in workforce and workplace LES in Yukon. With many initiatives already underway in the territory providing adults with learning opportunities, this report will expand the knowledge base in this evolving field.

c. Contribution to government's knowledge

The report will provide First Nation, territorial and federal governments with a broad snapshot of workforce and workplace LES projects in Yukon. It highlights some of the major labour market needs in Yukon communities, First Nation workforce and workplace LES delivery interests, and creative approaches to programming that could be undertaken.

d. Contribution to pan-northern discussion

The literacy councils in Nunavut and Northwest Territories have completed similar workforce and workplace LES scans and analyses. As such, this report will add to the northern discussion, and round out the work done by non-profit literacy groups in the three territories.

e. Project goals, objectives, over-arching research questions

The project goals, objectives and overarching questions that guided the research are outlined below. They were developed by project staff with the project advisor and vetted by the advisory committee.

Overall project goal

- To explore and develop the status of Yukon workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills (LES) initiatives through stakeholder engagement and relationship building.

Objectives

- To consult with industry, governments and unions about workforce and workplace LES.
- To work in consultation with First Nation (FN) governments and aboriginal stakeholders to identify workforce and workplace LES needs, interests and current practices.
- To identify best practices and models within the workforce and workplace LES field with potential Yukon applications.
- To identify workforce and workplace LES opportunities and champions in Yukon for future projects.

Overarching Research Questions

- What is a workforce and workplace LES initiative?
- What are the workforce and workplace LES initiatives in Yukon?
- Who is undertaking workforce and workplace LES in Yukon and what are considered benchmarks for success (both internally and externally)?
- What are opportunities for integrated workforce and workplace LES /worker training programs?
- What worker training programs already exist in Yukon?
- What are workforce and workplace LES best practices that could inform the project?
- What are employer needs around supporting and/or delivering workforce and workplace LES training programs?
- Who are workforce and workplace LES partners and champions in First Nation communities?
- Who are workforce and workplace LES partners and champions in non-First Nation communities?
- What partnerships and conditions are most likely to build sustainable workforce and workplace LES programs?

2. Definitions

a. Literacy and Essential Skills

Throughout the study, **LES** refers to the four elements of the classic literacy definition (reading, writing, numeracy and document use) and the five essential skills needed for the workplace (computer use, thinking, working with others, oral communication and continuous learning). In Canada, the federal government, major educational institutions and literacy organizations are agreed on these elements. Internationally, literacy and essential skills definitions vary, but most countries are working towards comprehensive definitions that contextualize literacy in relation to work and the world. LES enhance people's ability to adapt to change at work, at home and in their communities.¹

b. Workforce LES

Workforce LES programs are designed for those who require a targeted set of LES for a particular job. Skills such as reading, document use, numeracy or computer skills may be learned with vocational training, or as a separate course. Pre-apprenticeship training or job readiness programs are good examples of workforce LES as these courses tend to take place at educational institutions. Their goal is to prepare people for work.

An example would be a pre-apprenticeship carpentry course that outlines the skills and demands of the profession (use of saws, setup of scaffolding, framing basics) along with key essential skills needed to undertake these tasks (numeracy knowledge needed to undertake framing tasks, how to complete reports and invoices, etc.)

c. Workplace LES

Workplace LES programs are designed to help employed adults improve their LES, such as writing, document use, math, basic computer skills and working with others. They might need more or new essential skills to effectively carry out their current job or get better jobs. Workplace LES programs can take place during regular working hours or outside work hours. They are ideally designed with input from all relevant stakeholders such as: workers, employers, delivery bodies and union representatives (if applicable). Usually, the context for program learning is rooted in participants' workplaces.

An example would be a public administration employee who is taking on-the-job essential skills training (such as creation of administrative documents, or writing workshops contextualized in a job setting) to complement job-specific training (upkeep of on-site filing systems, learning organizational policies, etc.).

¹ For more information see HRSDC website: <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/index.shtml>. Retrieved August 24, 2012.

d. Workplace training

Workplace training refers to regular job-related training and courses employers offer employees, or employees request of employers. WHMIS, communications and leadership courses are examples. Unlike LES-based programming, workplace-training programs do not explicitly embed strategies to help people improve LES, nor do they teach LES alongside training.

e. Embedded LES

Embedded programs take specific workforce or workplace training and combine it with relevant LES for the vocation, such as reading, document use and math. LES elements can be taught at the same time as the job-related training or as a separate course or unit before or alongside the training. An embedded approach has been carried out successfully in pre-apprenticeship and other trades training contexts. The same instructor might teach both LES training components or the course might be split up and delivered by different instructors based on respective areas of expertise.

According to a leading online British adult literacy resource, “embedded teaching and learning combines the development of literacy, language and numeracy with vocational and other skills.”²

For instance, a forklift-training course might include explicit essential skills elements (reading, math or document use, etc.) as part of job-related training. This could be to prepare people for work or to up skill workers that already hold a job.

f. Adult basic education (ABE)

ABE is designed to help people get their General Education Diploma or obtain pre-requisites needed to pursue post-secondary education. Adult Basic Education in the northern context also extends to LES courses designed to help people participate in the expanding labour market.

3. Project Strengths and Limitations

a. Strengths

Yukon Literacy Coalition was able to meet with a range of stakeholders during the consultation process. Employers, workers, adult educators, First Nations and Yukon government representatives were engaged during the project.

Community visits unfolded in a loosely structured and relatively organic way. A number of enthusiastic champions emerged during visits, particularly within First Nation governments. Among other project successes, a range of workforce and workplace LES delivery ideas came out of these exchanges.

² See the Excellence Gateway and Skills for Life website:
<http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/Embedded%20Learning/>.

Employers and managers from the private sector were candid about some of the challenges they face, particularly in the area of retention. Many were keen to discuss ways workplace literacy might help their businesses and workers. These discussions were illuminating since successful workplace LES programs depend on employer participation.

In short, there is potential for workplace LES to become a viable way for adults to continuously learn.

b. Limitations

For the average person, workforce and workplace LES is a little known field. Key informants contacted for this research generally had an interest or awareness about education, literacy, adult learning and workplace training practices. Locating discussions specifically within the field of workplace and workforce LES was fairly easy for some interviewees. However more typically, clarification was needed from the outset of discussions. In some cases, it was challenging to keep discussions located within research parameters.

On many occasions, conversations drifted into the subject area of the Yukon education system and its role in preparing children and young adults for the work world and post-secondary education. At the centre of this discussion was the difficulty many non-graduating students face when they leave the school system, often without a graduation certificate. Most who decide to eventually pursue post-secondary education in the territory choose Yukon College. It is quite commonplace that students take upgrading courses at the college before they are able to access actual college-level courses. Many of those consulted had concerns about this, along with the high rates of non-graduates or those who depart the system with a 'leaving certificate.' A leaving certificate marks the end of a student's time in the education system without having completed the requirements for a complete graduation certificate. This is a serious issue in Yukon, but analysis of this issue was beyond the scope of this project.

Many interviewees did not see workforce and workplace LES as being a real priority in their respective communities. Its importance paled in comparison to other pressing community needs, such as working through substance abuse issues. While many acknowledge the need for further adult education and literacy initiatives, many others perceive a deficit in overall community wellness to be a more pressing need to address and to focus resources on. Many interviewees suggested that people who would most benefit from workforce and workplace LES might have difficulty actually taking part. With the widespread (inter-generational) residential school impacts, many informants want to see more community healing first and work towards building capacity to deliver workforce and workplace LES at a later time. Similar comments were made about workforce and workplace LES' low priority in relation to the massive challenges brought about by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, substance abuse, alcohol abuse, poor nutritional habits, inadequate housing, etc. These were seen by many to be at a different level of importance.

Again, these issues were beyond the scope of this scan. This project was not trying to explore how workforce and workplace LES fit into community priorities, though a lot of feedback came

out about this. Further investigation into these kinds of community perceptions would be a meaningful project for researchers to explore.

3. Methodology

a. Key informant consultations and interviews

A ten-question interview was developed to generate feedback about workforce and workplace literacy interests and needs.

Project staff invited a range of community stakeholders to share their views about LES and what they believed were the top needs and interests in their respective communities. Staff visited eight communities and representatives from two other communities were interviewed in Whitehorse. Numerous Whitehorse-based stakeholders were also interviewed. In total, 96 key informants shared their views.

Stakeholders Interviewed

Sector	# Stakeholders
Non-Profit Sector	26
First Nation Government	21
Territorial and Federal Government	16
Education (Yukon College and Public Schools)	16
Employers	8
Employees	7
Labour/Union	2
Total:	96

Please see appendix B for the full key informant list.

Project staff decided to use primarily, face-to-face interviews for the consultations. The informal approach proved to be effective in communities. Although a focus group plan was prepared for the project, it was never used. Upon arrival in communities, many key informants did not have us penciled into their calendars, but were briefed on the project and had agreed to participate ahead of time. Most were happy to meet with us later the same day or the following day after meeting with us face-to-face. Once this approach was deemed effective, staff decided not to pursue a focus group process. It was also easier for the project team to keep scheduling loose in communities due to challenging winter driving, distances traveled and some uncertainty of where meetings would take place, etc.

The interview process was positive for the Yukon Literacy Coalition since it led to informal, meaningful exchanges with people interested in workforce and workplace LES in communities. It also raised awareness that a non-profit was interested in getting more involved in this area and developing partnerships.

b. Literature Review

A literature review was carried out, focusing on sources with northern themes, realities, and economic contexts. Reports from the field of workforce and workplace LES, policy documents, and media sources were used. The literature review is interspersed throughout the remainder of the report.

C. Workforce and Workplace LES Drivers

1. International Drivers For Workplace Literacy: Adult Literacy Surveys and Yukon Connection

At the time of the drafting of the 2001 Yukon Literacy Strategy, the jurisdiction of Yukon had not yet been included in an international comparative literacy study. People knew there were various literacy needs in Yukon, and that these needs were greater in communities outside Whitehorse. There was also a sense that lack of literacy was a barrier to obtaining work and taking training to get work. What Yukon did not know at this time was how its population's needs compared on national and international levels. (See Yukon Literacy Strategy in Section D.1.)

a. 1995 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS 1995)

The 1995 International Adult Literacy Skills Survey got the attention of some in Yukon. One of the broad national findings was: "literacy skill deficits are found to affect not just marginalized groups but large portions of the entire adult population."³ The Yukon's exclusion from the comparative study meant the territory's literacy needs were not placed within a spectrum alongside the rest of Canada's provinces and territories.

b. 2003 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS 2003)

One of the major IALS 2003 findings was that nine million working-age Canadians have "literacy skills below the level considered as necessary to live and work in today's society."⁴ This statistic sounded alarm bells with many groups, including those concerned about Canada's economic competitiveness. Following the findings of this survey, statements such as "Canada's workers must improve their literacy skills" became more commonplace.⁵ Many wondered why Ottawa and the provinces were not further along in establishing a coherent national strategy. A report put together by the Canadian Council on Social Development noted that "while there are different opinions on why it is important to increase basic literacy skills, and on how best to do this... most people generally agree that having solid basic literacy skills is socially and economically advantageous."⁶

³Yukon Literacy Strategy, 2001. P. 4.

⁴ Taylor, Maurice, et al. *The Value of Formal and Informal Training for Workers with Low Literacy: Exploring Experiences in Canada and the United Kingdom*. 2008. p.1.

⁵ Roberts, Paul and Gowan, Rebecca. *Canadian Literature Review and Bibliography – Working Paper*. 2007. p.1.

⁶ Ibid.

The literacy definition used for the IALS survey challenged the traditional definition that literacy consisted of reading, writing, mathematics and document use. IALS' working definition was "literacy is using printed and written information to function in society to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential." It brought literacy into the broader context of workplace and world.

The 2003 IALS survey found that Yukon was by some measures the most literate jurisdiction in Canada. The findings came as a surprise to some in the territory as "the survey likely missed pockets where the problem existed, or had somehow excluded those with low literacy... the problem could be more severe in rural communities."⁷ The IALS didn't identify literacy as a major barrier in Yukon, though many key informants participating in focus groups carried out by HRSDC in 2009 found that a "large minority (41%) had a literacy barrier, and most clients hide the fact they have a literacy problem and do not voluntarily self-identify."⁸

c. Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is currently carrying out an international program that assesses adult competencies. The Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) has measured the skills and competencies individuals need to participate in 21st century society and its economy. It will provide an assessment of literacy in the information age (technology-rich environments) by measuring participants' literacy, numeracy, and problem solving abilities.⁹

"The PIAAC survey is operating under a broader definition of literacy than the ones used in earlier surveys. Literacy is, "understanding, evaluating, using and engaging with written text to participate in the society, to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential."¹⁰

At the moment, according to the OECD website, data analysis is underway. Findings from this survey, to be released sometime in 2013, will add significantly to the discussion about workforce and workplace LES.

In Canada, there will be particular emphasis placed on collecting information about specific groups: official-language minority groups, aboriginal populations and recent immigrants.

Twenty percent of the PIAAC survey participants in Canada will be of Aboriginal ancestry, either from urban or northern settings.¹¹

⁷ Strategic Policy and Research Branch, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. Summative Evaluation of the Employment Benefits and Support Measures Delivered Under the Canada-Yukon Labour Market Development Agreement. Sept. 2009. P. 22.

⁸ Ibid. P. 23.

⁹ <http://www.oecd.org/edu/highereducationandadultlearning/piaacprogrammefortheinternationalassessmentofadultcompetencies.htm>. Retrieved Sept 2, 2012.

¹⁰ <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/literacy.asp>. Retrieved Aug 24, 2012.

¹¹ Ibid.

2. National Workforce and Workplace LES Drivers and their Application to Yukon

a. Introduction

There are many drivers for workplace literacy in Canada. New work processes, rapidly changing on-the-job technological demands, compliance with health and safety requirements, an aging population and demographic shifts are some of the factors that have brought workplace LES into sharper focus.

The 2003 IALS finding that nine million Canadians (or 40% of workers nationally) have a functional literacy below level 3 (about the equivalent of high school graduation) got the attention of governments, adult educators, unions and businesses.

b. Canada's economy

Canadian economic competitiveness has come under scrutiny following the 2008 recession, particularly Canada's resiliency compared to other developed countries. As the 21st century workplace undergoes continual change, major players need to keep building capacity to sustain an adaptable workforce that is able to adjust and adapt to a rapidly evolving global economy. Following this rationale, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce writes: "Success in the global value chains requires... more elastic knowledge to facilitate continuous technological upgrading and organizational innovation. In other words, demand for employees that possess a mix of both 'hard' and 'soft' skills is rising as companies respond to intensified global economic competition."¹²

According to Statistics Canada, "investment in education and skills training is three times as important to economic growth as investment in physical capital"¹³ The Canadian Council on Learning states that "Canadian adults need education and training opportunities that will help enhance their skills and improve their employment prospects."

This is relevant to the Yukon context, but not necessarily in the same way. Yukon has a population of only 35,000 with a very high proportion (at least 30%) employed directly or indirectly by territorial, federal or First Nation governments.¹⁴ Public administration, education, health and social services account for roughly 35% of the Yukon's real GDP (gross domestic product).¹⁵ Manufacturing, oil and gas, and high tech industries are all quite small. Mining and tourism have long been Yukon's key private sector economic drivers, but the numbers of people employed in these sectors pales in comparison to government workers. In late 2008, when there was a massive global economic downturn, the Yukon economy did not plummet in the same way as jurisdictions that rely on manufacturing and goods based services. In this sense, Yukon is somewhat insulated from market forces since its economy is driven by public jobs.

¹²Ontario Chamber of Commerce. *Protecting our Most Valuable Resource*. P. 4.

¹³ Salomon, Maria. *Measures of Success: Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills Background Paper*, May 2010. P. 11.

¹⁴ See Nov. 2012 Employment Report. http://www.eco.gov.yk.ca/stats/stats_employment.html.

¹⁵ Yukon Government <http://www.economics.gov.yk.ca/economy08/>

c. Implications of Canada's growing aboriginal population

In 2008, the population of Canadian Aboriginal peoples topped the one million mark.¹⁶ It is growing six times faster than the general population. The number of Aboriginal people living in cities is roughly 54%.¹⁷ Population growth and “educational attainment and employment rates among Aboriginal peoples in Canada lag behind those of the general Canadian population.”¹⁸ These factors explain why there is an acute labour market need with this key group of Canadians. “Nearly 50% of the Aboriginal population in Canada has not completed high school, compared with 30% of the general population.”¹⁹ Workplace LES could be a vehicle to address this disparity.

In Yukon, those who identify as Aboriginal have grown from 6,175 to 7,580 in the ten years spanning 1996-2006, according to Yukon Bureau of Statistics data. The increases in rural Yukon mirror those in Whitehorse. In terms of education, there is a disparity between First Nations achievement and non First Nation. Graduation rates among Aboriginal students hover around 56%, while the non-Aboriginal rate is 74%, according to the Department of Education.²⁰

d. Canada's skilled worker shortage and the role of immigration

The perception of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce may reflect reality. It argues Canada is in dire need of skilled workers, and should attract more skilled workers to the country to fill labour gaps. This is relevant to Yukon where demographic shifts are being felt in businesses, particularly in the tourism sector. Many in the business community have sponsored or are thinking of sponsoring new immigrants to take jobs that are difficult to fill and keep filled through local labour.

According to Honorable Perrin Beatty who spoke on behalf of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce at a May 28, 2012 Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities:

“Chambers [of Commerce] across the country are telling me that they are looking at immigration to solve the labour shortages... over the years, immigration policy has been designed to give Canadians the advantage before immigrants - to avoid disrupting the Canadian workforce... even if we do a better job of training and tapping into domestic workers, our aging society means we must also rely on immigration.”²¹

¹⁶CBC News story quoting Statistics Canada information taken from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2008/01/15/aboriginal-stats.html>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ See p. 32 of the 2010-11 Department of Education Annual Report.

²¹ Perrin Beatty comments retrieved from: <http://www.chamber.ca/index.php/en/media-centre/C61/speech-fixing-the-skills-gap-addressing-existing-labour-shortages-in-high-d> July 17, 2012.

The Canadian Chamber is currently undertaking its largest membership consultation on the issue of training. Beatty says training should not be seen as a cost, but as an investment that brings a return. The Chamber stands by the idea that continuous learning cannot be seen as a novelty – it must become part of everyone’s career.

In the event of a significant spike in Yukon’s mining sector, many wonder how all labour needs will be met. Many suspect local populations will not meet the range of skills needed for a producing mine to function adequately. Several mines (Victoria Gold, Selwyn, Wolverine) are at, or nearing production. They are situated in remote areas, accessible only by plane. This, combined with the fact that the Yukon unemployment rate is relatively low, at 5.5%,²² will, in all likelihood, result in an increase in the number of workers coming from Outside. The Yukon Nominee Program is in place, and it might become more popular should the mining sector’s plans play out.²³

e. Health and safety and the literacy connection

Literacy and essential skills can be a bridge to workplace health and safety. A 2010 Conference Board of Canada study found that clear communication contributed to workplace safety.²⁴ Employers are often obligated to provide health and safety training for their workers in order to be covered under workers compensation. Premiums are reduced for businesses that carry out their due diligence with safety. Workers and employers have a duty to keep themselves and the public safe by establishing safety policies and practices.

Relying strictly on written manuals to ensure workers understand the range of safety concerns in the workplace has not always been a sure-fire way to achieve success. If there is a disconnect in a worker’s ability to comprehend the written health and safety information, risks increase and accidents are more likely to happen. As a result, many workplaces are turning to health & safety training programs that rely more heavily on visuals, videos and hands-on approaches. LES has been applied to health and safety training programs in an attempt to reach more workers with lower literacy.

A culture of health and safety is being promoted in Yukon among youth. The *Work Shouldn’t Hurt* initiative is a health and safety program delivered to high school students, encouraging safe and informed work practices. A major labour market need is for a range of workers in the trades. Ensuring youth are able to understand health and safety in the context of Yukon’s major economic sectors makes sense. LES could be used as a vehicle to promote safety in light of how many Yukon youth will consider mineral extraction and construction as career paths. Youth are being reached through the Young Worker Coordinator at the YWCHSB, but the age-range with the greatest number of injury claims is 45-49 years. Second is the 20-24 year age range.²⁵ One of the greatest uses of LES is in the realm of health and safety.

²² Yukon Bureau of Statistics. Nov, 2012. <http://www.eco.gov.yk.ca/stats/index.html>

²³ To read more about the Yukon Nominee Program visit: <http://www.workingin-canada.com/visa/provincial-nominee-programs/yukon#.UM5QD4Vm05k>

²⁴The Conference Board of Canada. What you Don’t Know Can Hurt You: Literacy’s Impact on Workplace Health and Safety. July 2010. Page 1.

²⁵ Yukon Workers’ Compensation Health and Safety Board 2010 Annual Report. pp. 8,9. <http://www.wcb.yk.ca/Media/documents/AR10newsreleaseMay1711.pdf>

Further, in the 2010 Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board (YWCHSB) Annual Report, accepted worker claim totals are broken down by occupation category. Overall the trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations' category had the highest number of claims at 466. The second greatest occupation area was in the 'sales and service occupations' with 229 claims.²⁶

f. Individual economic prosperity

Adult learning has the potential to positively affect economic prosperity. A 2006 study completed by Zhang and Palmetta shows that those who obtained education credentials later were likely to be promoted, make more money and notice significant returns generally in their lives. Adult learning has the potential to significantly change the economic well-being of those with relatively low educational attainment.²⁷

D. Literacy Policy, Funding and Supports (Yukon and Canada)

1. Yukon Policies, Acts and Funding Sources

a. Yukon Literacy Strategy (2001)

The Yukon Government developed a literacy strategy in 2001. At that time, it adopted a definition of literacy used by the literacy organization ABC Life Literacy Canada: "Literacy is a person's ability to understand and use information and basic technology in daily activities at home, school, work and in the community in an attempt to reach personal goals and develop individual potential."²⁸

The strategy's purpose is to ensure Yukoners have access to the basic education and training opportunities they need to succeed in Yukon. The development of the literacy strategy, since its earlier versions in the 1980's, was to be consistent with the vision developed in the Yukon Training Strategy.

Ten objectives were identified in the strategy:

- To promote the advantages of having effective literacy skills.
- To develop and expand opportunities that allow Yukoners to build on their existing strengths through the development of effective literacy skills.
- To provide creative and appropriate literacy programming that is accessible to all Yukoners.
- To develop partnerships with First Nation governments.
- To develop partnerships with educators, corporations, labour organizations, communities

²⁶ Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board 2010 Annual Report. P. 10.
<http://www.wcb.yk.ca/Media/documents/AR10newsreleaseMay1711.pdf>

²⁷ Taylor, Maurice, et al. *The Value of Formal and Informal Training for Workers with Low Literacy: Exploring Experiences in Canada and the United Kingdom*. 2008. p.2.

²⁸ Yukon Literacy Strategy, 2001, p.1

- and other appropriate stakeholders.
- To cooperate with national and regional partners throughout Canada to reflect better technological advancement and the changing role of literacy in education and work.
 - To be consistent with, and benefit from, the current literacy initiatives developed by our federal and provincial partners.
 - To address more effectively the global needs as identified in the latest literacy research produced in Canada and elsewhere.
 - To understand and address the literacy-based challenges of self- government and land claims both for First Nations and Yukoners.
 - To ensure that literacy programs are developed to address workplace literacy needs.

A community-based approach was emphasized in the strategy – that communities know their needs, but may at times require resources from the government to “become self-sufficient and to building economically and socially viable communities.”²⁹

Building on the 2001 Strategy, a review took place from January to March 2006. On the Yukon government website, it reads: “It was an opportunity for literacy stakeholders to provide input into current and future Government of Yukon literacy programs and services.” No public documents made it to the Yukon government website at the conclusion of this process, however, the same site states that the Literacy Strategy Review is the driving force behind the government's efforts to prepare Yukon people for current and future training and employment opportunities.

In December 2012, a Literacy Symposium is scheduled. There are good odds that the literacy strategy will be updated following its completion.

b. Yukon College Act

A relevant act in Yukon’s adult education and workplace and workforce literacy history is the signing of the Yukon College Act in 1988.³⁰ It gave formal recognition to the college’s role in offering higher education and adult basic education. Before the college came into being in 1983, the Whitehorse Vocational Training Centre had been training adults to obtain the skills they needed to enter into the workforce. The act enshrined the college with the role of preparing people for employment, and it is now the main workforce LES body in Yukon by a wide margin.

Yukon College receives its core operational and capital funding from the Yukon government. It receives federal support for different programs it offers, as well. The college also accesses territorial funding for specific projects.

²⁹ Yukon Literacy Strategy, 2001, p.9.

³⁰See Government of Yukon website: www.gov.yk.ca/legislation/acts/yuco.pdf.

c. Advanced Education Branch of Yukon Government

Workforce and workplace LES programs are supported, or could potentially be supported by the Yukon Government's Advanced Education Branch. It is the main wing of government that supports adult education, training, and employment programs.

Advanced Education has supported workforce LES programming at Yukon College, such as the Targeted Initiatives for Older Workers program. The older workers program integrates LES training into individual students' vocational interests.

It provides core funding to Yukon Learn, a grassroots non-profit literacy organization, which delivers flexible one-on-one tutoring programs. Yukon Learn assists adult learners with computer literacy in groups or individually. Often learners need to improve computer skills in order to obtain a specific job. Yukon Learn also develops tutoring plans for learners using work goals as a basis for LES development.

The Advanced Education Branch is the major territorial contributor to workplace and workforce literacy – both for intentional workplace LES programs and numerous programs that may include essential skills development such as apprenticeship training.

d. Community Training Funds (CTF)

The Advanced Education Branch administers CTFs to address the diverse training needs of workers around the territory. There are training funds in place for the Association of Yukon Communities, Carmacks, Champagne Aishihik / Haines Junction area, Campbell region, Klondike region, Watson Lake and Silver Trail.³¹ A number of community based training and education programs are supported by these CTFs.

CTF funds programs under three main streams: community-based, industry/sector-based or project specific. "The intention of project specific funds is to reduce barriers that limit people's opportunities to access employment and to ensure that Yukon has a skilled workforce that enables individuals to participate in future economic opportunities in their communities." Any of these streams could be applicable to workforce and workplace literacy depending on the type of proposal.

Yukon College's Workplace Essential Skills in Rural Communities and Skills for Employment has received support from the CTF at community campuses. Yukon Colleges' Targeted Initiatives for Older Workers Program – which incorporated LES into vocational training on a student-by-student basis – was also made possible through CTF funds when the program was being offered in communities. In addition, Workplace Education Training – Immigration is a CTF-supported program designed to teach recent immigrants LES needed to function in the Canadian workplace.³²

³¹ See Government of Yukon website:

³² For further details about the CTF please visit <http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/advanceded/ctf/index.html>

e. Community Development Fund (CDF)

Another potential source of funding for workforce and workplace LES is the Yukon Government's Economic Development Department. It oversees the CDF and supports projects that are dedicated to: "creating social benefits such as strengthening social and community networks, building partnerships, managing social, networking and recreational events, conducting historical research, fostering traditions, sharing knowledge, developing useable skills."

Community Services invites and encourages proposals that benefit a community's long-term well-being and/or foster cooperation, partnerships and collaboration amongst groups.

f. Labour Market Agreement (LMA)

The LMA between Canada and Yukon includes LES among eligible programs that will enhance individuals' labour market participation. The Labour Market Programs Unit, also housed in the Advanced Education Branch, works with community groups to promote literacy and deliver relevant training. "Skills training, ranging from training in basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy, to advanced skills training," are central to the program.³³ The explicit mention of literacy and its labour market role makes the LMA an obvious funding source for a community based workforce or workplace literacy program.

An example of a program funded under the LMA is the Skills and Trades Exploration Program at Kwanlin Dun First Nation House of Learning. Twelve participants, interested in pursuing work in the trades, received instruction in construction, welding, electrical, plumbing and small engine repair.³⁴ LES was taught alongside "trades exploration programming" mostly in an *ad hoc* manner outside of a classroom setting.

Another example is the nationally recognized tourism LES curriculum called *Ready to Work*. Yukon Tourism Education Council delivered the program to 42 participants providing them with the "skills, attitudes and knowledge to be successful in the Canadian workplace. The program assists in removing barriers to obtain and retain employment while teaching newcomers to Canada the skills that are necessary for successful integration into the Canadian workplace."³⁵

g. Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA)

Closely related to the LMA, but under the umbrella of Employment Insurance Canada, LMDA's benefits and measures include provisions to provide skills and essential skills training for individuals in the Yukon labour market. Within the scope of Employment Agreement, Section 11, the Canada-Yukon LMDA also addresses workplace LES: "Labour market agreements allow

³³ Canada-Yukon Labour Market Agreement, 2009, p.5.

<http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/advanceded/labour/850.html>.

³⁴ See the Canada-Yukon LMA and LMDA annual report for 2011-12:

www.education.gov.yk.ca/.../lma_and_lmda_annual_report_2011-2012.

³⁵ Ibid.

for training of employed workers with low literacy skills... [and] to support literacy training in the workplace in meaningful ways.”³⁶

2. Federal Funding Sources

a. Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES)

Housed in Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), OLES is the federal body committed to raising the LES of adult Canadians through project funding, research and by providing learning tools. OLES’ website says it helps Canadians to get the skills they need to support their families, get a job, and stay in the job market. As stated at the outset, this report is funded by OLES.

b. Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) and Northern Adult Basic Education Program (NABEP)

In February 2012, CanNor funding was announced to bolster territorial adult basic education through North of 60 colleges. The Northern Adult Basic Education Program (NABEP) includes education activities that assist adults in achieving sufficient levels of literacy, numeracy and other essential skills to obtain a job or benefit from occupational training.³⁷ The funding distributed to the territories was based on labour market need, designed to assist working-age adults to either enter the workforce directly or to take vocational training to benefit from local employment opportunities. Yukon College received proportionately (18.4%) less than its territorial college counterparts. Nunavut received 44.5% while the NWT received 37.1% of the \$27 million earmarked for the next five years.

According to Yukon College acting vice-president Shelagh Rowles, “It’s really a revolution- this is about changing how we do, and what we do,” she says. “This opportunity – to redesign our programs and delivery in Adult Basic Education, in co-operation with our First Nations government partners – allows us to identify needs and address them community by community. These funds allow us the resources to do this. It’s truly very exciting.”³⁸

An example of this is the 15-week Essential Skills for Cultural Arts program taking place in Carmacks. It will address each of the nine essential skills through the creation, instruction and promotion of cultural arts by using various mediums throughout, and by collectively creating a local cultural arts handbook.³⁹

³⁶Canadian Union of Public Employees. <https://cupedocs.cupe.ca/docushare/dsweb/Get/Rendition-93160/unknown>.

³⁷See Government of Canada website: <http://www.north.gc.ca/pr/nabe-eng.asp>.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹See Yukon College website: http://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/news/post/cannor_funding_helps_yukon_communities_address_skills_deficit.

c. ASETS

ASETS is designed to help Aboriginal people prepare for and find high-demand jobs quickly, as well as keep these jobs long-term. Programs and services include skills development, programs for youth and access to childcare.

ASETS also links training needs to labour market demands. The Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) and the Aboriginal Labour Alliance are ASETS agreement holders.⁴⁰

3. Conclusion

There are a number of potential funding sources for workforce and workplace literacy in Yukon. Although there are few specific funds and systems designated exclusively for workplace literacy development, there are some potential ways to apply for support and access funding.

⁴⁰For more information visit: http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/employment/aboriginal_employment/index.shtml.

E. Findings from Consultations

1. Introduction

The next eight sub-sections explore the main themes and ideas that came out of the process of interviewing nearly 100 Yukon informants.

Section two describes some of the most common kinds of workforce and workplace training programs (not LES by design) that people are able to access in their respective communities.

Section three identifies organizations in Yukon that deliver workforce or workplace LES courses, workshops or programs. Some of these organizations are more explicit about intentionally incorporating LES curriculum than others. If LES was implicit or explicit in conjunction with skills development, then the organization was included in this section. This was decided upon in part to acknowledge that the field of workforce and workplace LES is just beginning to become established in the territory. On the one hand, there is Yukon College, the only major educational institution, which has long been the site of vocational learning and adult education initiatives. It has a very conscious and very current approach towards developing workforce LES programs, in light of its recent receipt of CanNor funds and its current organizational shift to modernize its delivery of vocational programs. The rest are organizations listed in section three that are relatively small in scope, and all of them serve the role of helping learners to develop LES outside of Yukon College's dominant sphere. These smaller, mostly, non-profit groups might not be sourcing curriculum that is explicitly LES, though there is still LES learning taking place through whatever services they offer adult learners.

Section four details ways workplace and workforce LES could address community interests and lists potential approaches to workplace LES.

Section five lists the top three job areas that could be filled by local workers if relevant LES training were to be accessed.

Section six explores typical roles of project partners in bringing about a successful workplace or workforce LES program.

Section seven outlines the main benefits of workplace LES for project partners.

Finally, the last section details some of the potential roles for the Yukon Literacy Coalition as it moves forward with workplace LES development.

2. Workplace Training Programs

a. Communities and training

We asked interviewees to name the most common workplace training programs they were aware of, emphasizing their respective fields or job areas of greatest familiarity. There was a very broad range of responses to this question. The question was asked to set up a clear distinction between workplace training and workforce and workplace LES programs. Identifying training programs that were difficult to access were of importance since they served to identify barriers. Project staff members were interested in taking note of these barriers.

The most referenced training programs that transcended sector or working area included: First Aid, Workplace Health and Safety training, obtaining a driver's license, basic computer training, chainsaw safety, firearms safety, Food Safe and truck driver training.

Responses tended to be rooted in interviewees' sectors of knowledge or interest. For instance, people in the mining exploration sector mentioned there are mandatory training courses for newcomers, and refresher training courses for returnees that are centred on health and safety, boarding helicopters, how to use equipment, and technical knowledge related to the job.

Those with desk jobs often take software-training courses, like Excel, Word and Outlook.

b. Barriers to workplace training

We asked interviewees what barriers prevented people from pursuing workplace training. Responses varied, but the following barriers were most commonly cited:

Literacy

For some, lack of literacy is seen to be a big community issue. We heard that elements of some courses such as gun safety, chainsaw safety and First Aid are often taught orally to learners to ensure full participation. Many informants suggested that steps should be made to ensure courses are made more accessible to those with lower literacy – particularly for important and common certifications such as First Aid, firearms safety and chainsaw safety.

Residential Schools

Many interviewees cited residential school syndrome or inter-generational effects or trauma as a major “elephant in the room” that a lot of people do not want to talk about when barriers to training and education are examined. Some older learners in Yukon experienced residential schools and suffered in a variety of negative ways. Some First Nations community members born in the generations afterwards are deeply skeptical of western ways of learning and receiving knowledge. Some were simply unwilling to engage with school, training or anything that seemed connected to the residential school tradition. Examining this issue in the context of skills

and essential skills training would be of enormous benefit to better understand the Yukon's context. Regrettably, it is beyond the scope of this project.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD)

Another common “elephant in the room” that was acknowledged by interviewees is the subjective impact of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder, both on individual members and their families. Those who have been exposed to excessive amounts of alcohol while in-utero may suffer from FASD in mild, moderate or excessive ways. Those afflicted with FASD often require a skilled professional to assist with learning acquisition.

Estimates of community residents suffering from FASD vary widely. However, key informants in most communities noted that they were far higher than national averages. Some suggested FASD afflicts over half of residents in their respective communities in some way or another.

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, FASD affects about 1% of Canada's population and is the leading cause of preventable developmental disability among Canadians.⁴¹ The role of FASD is beyond the scope of this report, but it is a definite factor in Yukon communities and in Whitehorse.

Proximity to education and training opportunities

Many key informants claimed that distance (in kilometres) was a barrier to accessing the right training and educational opportunities. A lot more opportunities are available in Whitehorse (population 23,276) than in communities.⁴² Dawson City and Watson Lake have populations exceeding 1,000 residents. The rest are below that threshold, with many in the vicinity of 350 residents. (See community profiles in appendix C). Whitehorse is very much the Yukon metropolis in the area of education and training offerings. Other barriers include lack of funds to make the trip, inability to find accommodation in Whitehorse and inability to leave the community for a significant period of time.

Substance and Alcohol Abuse

Alcohol and drugs can affect people's lives in various negative ways. They can get in the way of undertaking training and educational opportunities. Substance and alcohol abuse were widely cited by interviewees as obvious barriers to training and education.

Life Skills

Life skills development relates to people's capacity to use communication and literacy to assist in decision-making, problem solving, stress management and generally deal with things that come up in daily life in an orderly way. Key informants said this is a prime area of need in

⁴¹ <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/dca-dea/prog-ini/fasd-etcaf/index-eng.php>. Retrieved August 18, 2012.

⁴² See Statistics Canada. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=6001009&Geo2=PR&Code2=60&Data=Count&SearchText=Whitehorse&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=6001009>.

communities. Yukon College offers *Life and Employment Skills* workshops and courses, addressing some of these areas. Lack of life skills informs many activities and practices in communities. Often, individuals move to their own rhythms, making them likely candidates for poor attendance during scheduled course offerings.

3. Workplace and Workforce LES Organizations

a. Introduction

We asked interviewees about LES programs in their communities that prepared people for work or provided upgrading opportunities within existing jobs. The vast majority of interviews identified Yukon College – either because they knew of such programs or supposed it would most likely be the provider.

Looking beyond the scope of what Yukon College offers in terms of workforce and workplace LES, there are organizations that also offer LES related to work – either explicitly or implicitly. In terms of scale, programming from all other organizations combined is relatively small compared to Yukon College. Some organizations mentioned below deliver LES to their clients without setting out to do so as a primary goal. There is an ambiguity in all of this, acknowledged by several key informants. The questions that resonated most were, “What constitutes ‘actual’ LES delivery” and “Does LES delivery have to be intentional?” Neither question was answered definitively at the time of project completion.

b. Organizations that provide Workforce and Workplace LES

Yukon College

Yukon College is by far the largest educational organization in Yukon with the most workforce and workplace LES offerings. It offers job preparation, pre-employment and pre-apprenticeship training courses that either help people to obtain work, to *up skill* within an existing job or to eventually go on to take college-level diploma courses. The college has long been the educational institution in Yukon creating courses that connect with labour market needs. Expertise in the areas of consultation, needs assessments, curriculum development and delivery demonstrate the college’s primary role in most aspects of LES in Yukon. Through the now-restructured School of Access, adult basic education and many programs and courses infused with LES are offered. Below is a sampling of some of the programs. Programs are proliferating at a rapid rate during the fiscal year 2012-13.

One example is the Heritage and Culture Essential Skills (HACES) program. This program offers participants the skills needed to work for First Nation Heritage and Culture departments including essential skills. LES are incorporated into course curriculum. The Research Skills module covers critical reading, writing assignments, computer skills development and working with others on projects. The Film and Photography module teaches computer software use including document creation. There are 10 modules that make up the “made in Yukon” program. Each module has a targeted set of LES built into the curriculum.

Other Yukon College programs that help people get ready for work include *Targeted Initiatives for Older Workers*. This program gives new skills to workers between the ages of 55 and 64 (according to students' needs), including improving literacy and computer skills needed for a new career direction.

Working and Leading: Youth Preparing for the Future teaches youth (18-25 years) about needed workplace LES such as reading, writing, computer skill development and oral communication. Leadership skills and computer skills are developed through work placements. Youth develop work readiness and gain a greater appreciation of workplace rigours within their fields of interest.

In addition to job preparation, the College has also designed and delivered workplace LES programs. Some have been with businesses such as Tim Horton's and Canadian Tire that employ a number of new Canadians. Employees are taught vocational skills, with a mix of workplace LES and English as Second Language (ESL). Oral communication, reading, and working with others are among the LES elements addressed through the program. These areas provide a stronger footing for translating cultural norms to new Canadians while simultaneously providing a stronger linguistic base. The programs were tailored and carried out following needs assessments with applicable stakeholders.

Yukon Learn

Yukon Learn provides one-on-one tutoring and literacy training according to client/learner needs. If a client has a need related to getting a job, or *up skilling* within a job, then a learning plan is created that addresses these needs. The organization is especially known for providing grass roots volunteer tutoring for learners. The organization often provides computer training, such as word processing, how to use spreadsheets, etc, which enhance learners' document use, writing and numeracy.

One of the most notable past workplace LES programs in Yukon was Yukon Learn's 2006 Yukon First Nation government initiative. In 2006, a Yukon government media release announced \$130,000 in funding for workplace literacy projects for staff of Yukon First Nation governments. This project was funded through Community Development and Community Training Funds and delivered by Yukon Learn. The release notes "workplace literacy activities will be linked and integrated to the participants' roles and responsibilities in their workplace and in their community."⁴³

This pilot project provided training to adults within the context of their actual jobs at First Nation governments. Accounting software programs, other computer skills, computer-based document creation such as spreadsheets and also writing skills were taught throughout the pilot project period.⁴⁴ Though this particular program was relatively brief, its tailored approach to on-the-job needs is not dissimilar to the interests described by interviewees.

⁴³News release #06-031.Government of Yukon. Feb 15, 2006. <http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/06-031.html> - retrieved Nov. 2011.

⁴⁴ Discussion with Yukon Learn's Executive Director Debbie Parent, Feb. 16, 2012.

Yukon Tourism Education Council (YTEC)

YTEC provides education and training to meet the human resources needs of Yukon's tourism sector. Working in conjunction with Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council, YTEC offers the nationally recognized *Ready to Work* program. It is a skills development program designed to help people transition into the workforce. It combines on-the-job training and classroom-based learning, providing people with aptitudes and skills needed to succeed long-term in tourism. Two workbooks developed by *Emerit*, a Tourism Training company, make up the basis for training. *Canadian Workplace Essentials* and *Tourism Essentials* have essential skills elements tailored to the sector's needs, including oral communications skills, numeracy and computer and technology skills.

Challenge Community Vocational Alternatives

This non-profit, in operation since 1976, helps people with disabilities to either obtain employment or to support people to maintain employment. Their mandate is "to assist people with disabilities to become active in their community, by learning real job skills and entering the job market."⁴⁵ The two wings of the organization, Career Industries and Challenge Community Vocational Alternatives accomplish this goal. There are both workforce and workplace skills training programs, with essential skills training (such as numeracy and writing related to carpentry projects) accomplished in a one-on-one *ad hoc* format. Challenge offers opportunities outside of regular classroom settings to provide those who may have difficulty staying focused in regular classroom settings another venue for learning. People learning at Challenge often learn visually and through practice, addressing relevant reading, writing and math skills by learning and doing. Training programs strive to maximize each student's strengths and to create successes resulting in greater self-confidence.

Yukon Mine Training Association (YMTA)

YMTA offers a variety of online courses that clients can complete in the lab, at school or work on from home. Some of these courses have LES infused into the curriculum, with approaches that fit the mining industry's needs and standards. Courses like First Aid and WHMIS have been re-designed in recent years to address the industry need to certify workers with health and safety tickets who may have low literacy. YMTA liaises with Yukon College, Yukon First Nations and Yukon's mining sector ensuring that Yukoners receive appropriate training for jobs as they become available.⁴⁶

YMTA was also a stakeholder in the development of Yukon College's new School of Mining, which incorporates LES into its curriculum.

⁴⁵ See Challenge Website: <http://www.ccva.ca>.

⁴⁶ See: http://www.yukonminetraining.com/about_ymta.

Yukon Council on Disability (YCOD)

YCOD is a proponent for the Yukon Employment Disability Strategy – made up of a variety of partners. YCOD’s active arm attached to the Strategy is the “Where Disability Works” website. “We assist people with disabilities to become *work-ready* through pre-employment education and training, career development sessions while in-employment, and career progression planning.”⁴⁷ By assisting clients to improve their resumes and other services, YCOD provides essential skills development through reading, writing, communication skills and document use. YCOD takes into account where literacy may be a barrier for clients who are looking to enter the workforce through assessments.

Learning Disability Association Yukon (LDAY)

LDAY provides tutoring for people of all ages with learning disabilities. Adults are able to receive tutoring addressing both learning disabilities and a learner’s vocational interests. Although LES and work are not heavily emphasized on the organizational website, both enter into the equation. LDAY offers math and specialized reading tutoring opportunities. If these soft skills are taught in connection with a learner’s interests as they relate to employment, then LES needs are addressed in the context of work.

LDAY will soon launch a HR recruitment, education and staff training resource called AURORA. AURORA is a dynamic learning-to-learn course intended to precede an education or training course, including regular staff training, management development and skill acquisition. It supports improved learning outcomes through a six-part modular approach: acquisition, understanding, retention, organization, relationships and application. The AURORA approach will support education and training provided in Yukon, particularly within mining and tourism sectors. Although it is not a LES program, it could complement the goal of acquiring LES through improved approaches to learning.

⁴⁷<http://www.wheredisabilityworks.ca/individuals/employment/pathwaytosuccess/>

Kwanlin Dun House of Learning

Kwanlin Dun First Nation's *House of Learning* offered a program called "Exploring Trades & Technology Program" in partnership with Yukon College. This four-month pilot program provided participants with hands-on skills and personal skills development related to carpentry, welding, electrical, and plumbing/pipe trades. Through a blend of classroom and shop-based learning, numeracy and writing skills were developed along with vocational training. About a dozen students participated and some are now pursuing their interests in the trades.

The pilot ended in Spring 2012. The future of *Exploring Trades* was not fully defined at the time of writing. Interest in this kind of program is significant in communities – where there is a need for people to fill jobs in trades and for embedding LES in the training.

L'Association franco-yukonnaise (AFY)

Through their SOFA wing (Service d'orientation et de formation des adultes), l'AFY addresses literacy and work needs for Franco-Yukoners on an as-needed basis. Clients can obtain training, education, literacy training, language training, career counseling and professional development through SOFA.⁴⁸

Frontier College

Canada's original literacy organization is currently offering a teacher-labourer program in Whitehorse. Frontier College is currently running a Second Century Labourer-Teacher Project with businesses across the country, focusing on high needs sectors, with particular attention to aboriginal and new immigrant workers. Labourer-teachers will provide tutoring, mentoring and other educational support in the workplace.

In Whitehorse, Frontier is offering customized Labourer-Teacher programming through the Best Western Hotel. About 40 recent immigrants to Yukon learn vocational, LES and English as Second Language (ESL) foci. Two labourer-teachers will be in the workplace for one year, providing one-on-one customized tutoring/training sessions to workers on location for two hours per week during working hours. Workers learn all nine LES throughout the program.

⁴⁸ See l'Association franco-yukonnaise for further details:
<http://www.afy.yk.ca/secteurs/main/fr/index.php?location=m1020>

4. Workforce and Workplace LES Interests in Yukon

a. Introduction

This section details the most frequently cited ideas, as articulated by stakeholders that connect LES to work. Interviewees detailed a wealth of information on LES approaches and delivery that would work in Yukon communities.

Of critical importance is that there are points of convergence and divergence amongst Yukon communities. It is imperative not to make the mistake of homogenizing Yukon community interests or needs. Every community has a specific set of priorities, particular social makeup and a unique set of labour market conditions. Emphasizing the particulars rather than the generalities would better serve the design and implementation of any successful LES work program. This should be done in consultation with each community to determine its interests and priorities.

The purpose of this section is to identify common threads, themes and ideas. What follows are some of the most common interest areas articulated in most or all communities. They are divided into two main areas: principles of LES and work, and stakeholder delivery interests.

b. Principles of LES and work

Needs assessments first

Many key informants indicated the importance of needs assessments to craft a viable workforce or workplace LES program. The immediate needs of an organization or community and its particular context should always be the starting point. Most informants deferred to the concept that a needs analysis, when carried out diligently would address organizational or community interests. It should also identify the ideal delivery organization to deliver a program.

This notion is backed up by the literature. Mary Ellen Belfiore's *Principles of Good Practice* emphasizes that needs assessments should describe the culture of an organization (policies, practices, relationships, tasks, resources, etc.) as well as the needs and interests of employees. An organizational or workplace needs assessment is a necessary step to ensure that all levels of the workforce have a say in determining if and what education/training is appropriate; if it fits the culture and goals of the individuals and the organization, and, if it will be supported by the workforce.

Another good example relating to the importance of needs assessment comes from the 2009 Montreal Workplace LES institute's working paper used by a group of leading literacy professionals. It states "what counts ultimately is not which model is used, but making sure that it suits the learners and their employers in terms of their specific needs and goals... there has to be a fit between the program and the clientele it is supposed to serve."⁴⁹

⁴⁹Centre for Literacy. *Literature Review: Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills – What works and Why?* 2009. Page 11. This paper was used as an anchor for discussions at the 2009 Summer Institute in Montreal.

Literacy as a vehicle for increasing self-confidence

Many community members stated that a discouraging number of people do not believe in their capacity to learn. Some are reeling from past negative educational experiences where a personal failure has been the end-result. Many people choose to isolate themselves to avoid any possibility of another downfall. Key informants said a number of potential learners do not allow themselves to be engaged in part from shame, often borne out of low educational attainment. It is not immediately apparent how to reach this group without their willingness to self-identify. Key informants suggest identifying trusted role models that could gently compel these individuals to engage in learning. They believe if these individuals can be engaged in a safe learning environment, strides could be made.

If getting reluctant learners into a learning environment can be accomplished, Jan Eldred has some ideas about how to do this in her *Catching Confidence* report. She recommends facilitators take active roles giving learners tools to craft their own learning experience. If learners can determine a learning path and the facilitator is willing to support it, a new way of learning can take place. By personalizing learning, participants develop a clear stake and more likely choose to own their learning aspirations.⁵⁰ It is difficult to measure LES improvements in learners with traditional educational benchmarks. It is important that the instructor and learners decide on how to measure confidence at planned intervals. Learners may feel happier about themselves or more confident in their ability to express themselves. One of the ways Eldred suggests LES learning successes should be measured is how learners perceive themselves doing things effectively and contrasting these areas at intervals throughout the learning process.

LES as a component of overall wellness

Some key informants would like to see greater emphasis placed on the connection between wellness and literacy. The basic idea is that barriers to literacy, once removed, can open the door to literacy learning. Interviewees expressed various potential formats, but a common thread is that literacy is part of a bigger parcel of wellness. Other things (such as healing or counseling) would have to happen first or at the same time to allow the education and training goals to take place successfully.

This idea is complex and would likely require different professionals to take part in a highly individualized program. There would need to be at least one for wellness counseling and another for literacy training.

A major point of emphasis would be to offer confidentiality to learners who feel shame about their literacy, following a similar service model to counseling services. If a practitioner could pledge confidentiality, it could make the difference for a reluctant learner, who might be ashamed of having low literacy.

The role of confidentiality is supported in the literature, although in a slightly different context. In no way should a participant's attainment (or lack thereof) be used against them by anyone involved in the program, particularly an employer. "Participants in workplace needs assessments

See Eldred, p.8. \

and program evaluations are assured that all comments remain anonymous and no one will be identified in the reports. Work done during an educational program remains confidential unless participants decide to make it public in any way they choose.”⁵¹

Worker-centred approach

Although LES programs should take all stakeholder interests into account, “at the heart of working with and balancing these interests lies a worker-centred approach: maintaining consistent respect for workers and their needs.”⁵² Further, it is instructive to remember that workplaces are often “contested terrains” with complex relationships and varying interests related to learning outcomes.⁵³

Many interviewees said they would be interested in seeing a workforce or workplace LES learning experience come together that was driven by learners’ needs and guided by a skilled facilitator. According to one educator, adults rarely prefer lecture-based learning. They would prefer to be given the tools to learn, and direct their own development. In this capacity, the facilitator should act as a catalyst for the worker/learner, and be flexible to the learning interests of participants.

In *Breaking the Solitudes: Embedding Literacy and Essential Skills in Workplace Learning*, Jay Derrick outlined reasons for supporting a “situated-expansive model.” The presumption that workers are significant problem-solvers no matter their position inside an organization, aims to include the input of all involved as experts within their respective roles in the workplace.⁵⁴ The situated-expansive model could work well in northern environments where closely tied social circles invite a developmental and positive approach. The model also proposes to validate literacies and to respect what participants bring to the learning experience while favouring informal learning methods over formal ones. Derrick admits this approach is new and has not been used much in the workplace context, but its goal to pursue a learning journey without set goals invites a “critical inquiry,” which invites all participants to communicate ways to improve the workplace.⁵⁵

c. Stakeholder delivery interests

Targeted initiatives for First Nation government employees

One of the most frequently referenced areas of interest was in relation to addressing specific First Nation government employees’ training and education pursuits. Employees within First Nations would like to up skill within their current jobs, and possibly strive for a better job internally. Many interviewees suggested these kinds of endeavours would serve many needs and interests

⁵¹ Mary Ellen Belfiore. *Good Practice In Use*. 2002. p.13.

⁵² Sue Folinsbee. *Workplace Literacy: Ethical Issues Through The Lens of Experience*. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, no. 123, Fall 2009. P.36

⁵³ Ibid. p.41.

⁵⁴ Jay Derrick. “Breaking the solitudes.” p. 26.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 31.

not least of which would be a capacity building function. The spin-off of literacy and well being within the broader community was cited as a likely outcome.

Individuals working a desk job at a First Nation might have fairly onerous communications, writing and public relations demands. For others, policy recommendations, report writing and proposal writing might be key to their work. Some employees are looking to get more confidence within their jobs. For others, it's about getting comfortable interfacing with numerous computer programs, document templates and knowing how to easily use software.

Yukon College already offers comprehensive courses and programs that address these needs, such as its First Nations Community Services Administration courses. There was interest in having more workshops and brief courses that address these kinds of interests as one-time sessions. Interviewees also expressed a need for informal, complimentary training that reaches people who have trouble receiving knowledge in classroom settings.

LES and mentorships: especially in trades

The consultation process proved there is widespread interest in exploring mentorships in conjunction with workforce and workplace literacy and learning. Several interviewees wished industry could do more to create a culture of mentorship and to personalize training processes. Others stated management should consider putting together mentoring programs with entry-level workers working with their more skilled and/or experienced peers.

There are significant amounts of mining sector activities in the Yukon. Mining companies have a duty and a stake to hire locally. Some community members (First Nation and non) are interested in working for local mining outfits. However, they need to obtain additional skills to get entry-level jobs, or higher paying jobs within the mining sector, such as heavy-duty machinery operation, etc.

Some who are textbook and classroom averse prefer to learn through hands-on experiences. If mentorship could remain a priority while incorporating some field-appropriate LES content in creative ways, it would complement existing initiatives underway to address training and education needs in Yukon such as apprenticeship programs, Yukon College's newly-minted School of Mining and other skilled trades courses. The mentorship would include the appropriate LES.

For the mentee, a career development path could crystallize with the input and guidance provided by a trusted colleague that is not strictly a 'boss' figure. Interviewees pointed out the benefits are not all for the mentee. A validating outlet can be developed for the mentor through the ongoing process of sharing technical knowledge. According to the literature, mentorships are often powerful formal and informal workplace-learning tools that benefit employers too. It can encourage retention, create a high performance culture and even improve the bottom line.⁵⁶

Chris Holland examined some of the ways mentorship can work together with LES in the New

Zealand context. One of the most compatible ideas coming out of Yukon is what she outlines as ‘the relational model’: “where the learner is a valued equal who happens to have specific support needs, and where issues of respect and trust play a larger part. This relational model is regarded as the highest quality mentoring state”⁵⁷ – as opposed to other functionalist models that emphasize learning outcomes and maintain a professional distance between mentor and mentee. Holland goes on to offer a variety of mentoring definitions, but one that resonates with what people would like to see in light of the acute labour market needs in Yukon is “mentoring as planned early intervention designed to provide timely instruction to mentees throughout their apprenticeship, to shorten the learning curve, reinforce positive work ethics and attitudes, and provide mentees with role models.”⁵⁸ Specific mentee needs are explained to the mentor and they are respected in the relationship.

The Government of Canada recently invested in an e-mentoring program for northern youth through an organization called *DreamCatcher Mentoring*. “It will allow 400 northern youth to begin a dialogue with mentors, and be given examples of potential career avenues in the rest of Canada while also incorporating local values and local opportunities that reflect Yukon careers, history, and heritage.”⁵⁹

Although interviewees described a more classic kind of hands-on, in-person mentoring, this illustrates the traction that mentorship is beginning to have in the north, and its application could extend to workplace LES. An organization such as Skills Canada Yukon – which, among other activities, coordinates mentorships for young adults considering becoming skilled tradespeople on the ground in Yukon communities – is a good example of an existing organization that could be a partner in bringing further LES benefits to mentees according to vocation.⁶⁰

⁵⁷Chris Holland. *Workplace Learning: A Literature Review*. August, 2009. p. 3.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 13.

⁵⁹See Canadian Heritage: <http://www.pch.gc.ca/eng/1342118290659>.

⁶⁰<http://www.skillsyukon.com/mentor/>

Culture Camps, self-sufficiency, LES and traditional languages

LES was seen as a vehicle for language development – both English and traditional languages – through traditional workplaces and unconventional ones that tie in with remote economic needs. The idea of using LES within culture camps and other community events to strengthen both English and traditional languages was mentioned by a number of interviewees. This idea was most commonly linked to traditional economic life and activities such as fishing, hunting, gathering and activities that contributed or still contribute to present-day economic life.

Several stakeholders underscored the importance of broadening the definition of “economy” beyond those offered in Western culture. Transcending GDP values, many stressed the present-day importance of both traditional aspects of the economy and community self-sufficiency.

For instance, a family that hunts, fishes and traps is amassing wealth in many ways. One practical way is through northern grocery store cost deferral.

Another less visible component of local economies speaks to the need to be self-sufficient in cold, isolated places. In isolated cold climates, having ample wood supplies set up and available is quite important. Keeping furnaces and woodstoves maintained, managing water supplies in areas relying on water delivery, carrying out housing maintenance and repairs and being able to repair snow machines are all ways of thinking about less visible elements in the economy.

These kinds of considerations are most relevant in really isolated communities such as Old Crow. They are economic activities that are not measured entirely in dollars, and they can lay groundwork for more conventional economic activities to take place in an unencumbered way.

Technology and emergency fire fighting, exploration

Workers are having difficulty getting seasonal jobs that had lower essential skills requirements in the past. This is particularly true of two employment areas associated with solid summer wages: emergency wildland fire fighting (EFF) and mining exploration jobs.

The mining exploration sector is incorporating technology into its repertoire at a rapid rate. Soil-sampling exploration work, for instance, now requires that field workers have high essential skills competencies. When in the field, workers are required to enter a range of datasets into hand-held computing devices. The industry is faster, more samples are being collected and data is logged and analyzed much more quickly with the dramatic increase in the use of computerized equipment. According to industry members, the workforce is shifting over to mainly university students working towards undergraduate degrees such as geology and geography. In the past, soil-sampling jobs were typically awarded to workers who were physically fit, adept in the bush, comfortable with transit in helicopters and able to meet prescribed quotas.

Many working as seasonal emergency fire fighters are now expected to spend a lot of time at a computer, and less time on the land. With the centralization of operations to Whitehorse,

coupled with more detailed reporting and data-logging requirements, computers are now a part of many EFF jobs. In the past, respondents said, only some essential skills were needed to be hired and carry out this work.

In order to succeed in either of these fields, one must straddle the two worlds: outdoor smarts, use of machines, physical fitness and now: use of technology.

This finding in our research is echoed in the literature. An October 2011 study completed by Ontario Literacy Coalition called *Menial No More* found that workplaces are changing so fast that jobs once considered ‘menial’ now often involve complex technology-based tasks and relatively advanced essential skills competencies. The study calls for more coordination between employers, government and training communities to align training with recent changes in the jobs.⁶¹

The way goods and services are carried out in jobs that were once considered ‘low-skilled’ are now in fact quite elaborate. According to Dr. Rick Miner, the number of low-skilled jobs is shrinking (due to modernization of traditionally menial jobs) thereby exacerbating the skilled-worker shortage across Canada. “Today’s delivery person confirms orders and shipments of goods using a tablet; the shelf stocker no longer places tickers on products, but rather uses a complex personal digital assistant (PDA).”⁶²

e-learning

Many key informants were interested to know about resources that have already been developed and could be accessed online. The prospect of having flexibility and not having to go through the difficulty of hiring instructors from out of town is appealing. It also could drastically reduce the need for partnership building and applying for funds to deliver programs.

At the same time, success with e-learning presupposes a number of factors. Bandwidth is relatively strong in Yukon communities, so it should not be a serious barrier. Most communities have resource centres set up for people to access computers if they do have a computer or an internet connection. If people need assistance accessing programs or participating in them fully, there is support for this in varying degrees depending on the community. Still, there are challenges in making this kind of learning work. Communications with fellow students and instructors are not always part of the equation, and as such, it’s a different kind of learning and it requires a lot of self-motivation.

5. Top Three Job Areas that Stand to Benefit from LES

Stakeholders were asked what jobs could be filled if people could access the right LES training. In communities, the emphasis was on First Nation government jobs and (semi) skilled trades jobs. In some communities, the First Nation government is the largest employer. As other economic sectors – like mining and tourism – ebb and flow, First Nation governments are often in the best position to offer good work to local residents.

⁶¹ Ontario Literacy Coalition, “Menial No More,” October 2011, p.12.

⁶² Ontario Literacy Coalition, “Menial No More,” October 2011, p.4.

a. First Nation government jobs

Within First Nation governments, managerial positions and administration jobs that require a fairly defined set of essential skills were identified. Key informants suggested that quite often community leaders could fill these kinds of jobs with LES training. They would be apt hires as they would likely increase retention (they already live there and understand the community) and increase local capacity in the process. Many sought-after jobs at First Nation governments are awarded to people from Outside in light of their education levels, despite local preferential hiring policies.

Yukon College offers courses such as “First Nations Community Services Administration” to equip locals with needed skills. Training that combines LES and specific areas within government (such as the Heritage and Culture Essential Skills set of courses) have been well received. People stated they would like to see the college continue to offer these kinds of programs. Others would like to see essential skills’ training that is more informal and less structured.

b. Skilled and semi-skilled trades contracting

One of the more pressing community needs is to access and provide economic opportunities, particularly during the off-season. In each community, there was a similar kind of interest expressed that pertained to the need for more hands-on, semi-skilled trades people. There is also a need for skilled tradespeople in communities, but the emphasis is really with the more basic skills that could lead to certain key tasks getting done in the community instead of having to bring in Whitehorse-based companies.

For instance, in one community a Whitehorse outfit comes up twice a year to service furnaces and woodstoves in First Nation housing. Some interviewees suggested that these visits by skilled tradespeople could lead to positive impacts for all involved if some areas of knowledge were passed on to interested locals. Some of the opportunities are in the domain of basic maintenance and upkeep of furnaces and wood stoves. Along the same lines, a community member wondered why a heavy-duty mechanic based out of Whitehorse that traveled to her community at regular intervals to repair machines and vehicles could not be enticed to pass on some of these skills to the community, paving the way for future sub-contracting opportunities.

Making these kinds of connections requires a number of stakeholders agreeing on the kind of training needed, the format, a funding source, etc. Further, skilled tradespeople are not necessarily able to teach, so other people would likely have to be brought in, thereby increasing the complexity of the program. That said, these are details, and could be sorted out between stakeholders, if a clear interest was articulated within a community. This kind of training opportunity could benefit all involved as willing workers may be standing by the next time those with the skills come to town.

c. Entry-level and skilled trades jobs in mining sector

Key informants mentioned specifically that members in their communities are not trained enough to get jobs in the mining sector. Many stated that community members were not ready or did not have key tickets, such as a driver's license, First Aid or WHMIS training that would allow access to entry level positions. Low educational achievement was mentioned as a key barrier that keeps people from accessing well-paid jobs. Further, many do not have the life skills necessary to participate adequately or personal issues keep them from completing required pre-job training and education.

6. Partnerships

When asked about what kinds of partnerships are needed to have a successful workplace or workforce LES program, interviewees expressed a range of responses.

At one end of the spectrum were those who believed that the more relevant stakeholders involved, the better. This position bolsters the idea that if more stakeholders sign on to an idea the more attractive that pitch can be for funders.

On the other hand, a few community members were partnership-averse. They said their experiences were characterized by bureaucratic red tape, compelling them to pursue bare bones approaches, stripped down to deliverer and client. If a First Nation government has enough money in its coffers and would like to offer a program to a small group, that First Nation may wish to sole-source a consultant or access online workplace LES programs.

The varied responses illustrate the broad range of needs and interests in Yukon communities. Each community has a unique set of labour market needs, and a group of adults with specific interests. It follows that desired partnership structures would vary widely.

7. Main Benefits of Workplace LES for Project Partners

a. Employers

Yukon employers are starting to become aware of the merits of workplace LES. As stated earlier, a few businesses have offered programs to ease the transition for new immigrants into their jobs and improve English proficiency in the context of work. Examples of this include Yukon College working with Canadian Tire, and Frontier College working with hotel staff in Whitehorse.

Many business leaders see that too many adults, particularly younger ones, are not equipped to enter into post-secondary programs or take intensive vocational training. Many will not complete high school with an actual diploma. These rates are higher in Yukon communities and among First Nation students.

Employer buy-in is essential to the success of any workplace LES program. Employers may be supportive of workplace LES for a variety of reasons. One of the best reasons is the business case for workplace LES. Business leaders such as Toronto Dominion Bank's Craig Alexander argue that workplace LES can have the effect of bolstering a company's bottom line, while simultaneously improving worker effectiveness and satisfaction.⁶³

Despite the relatively low level of commitment shown so far by Yukon employers to invest in workplace literacy, they do, however, note that there are literacy and essential skills needs within the businesses they oversee. This is a reflection of the local picture, but is also shown in ABC Life Literacy Canada's research about employers' perceptions of their own employees' literacy and essential skills levels. Several key findings caught the attention of media in Spring 2012. The statistic that 76% of employers believe "literacy is a growing labour force problem... [and] 80% of Canadian businesses have difficulty in finding qualified, skilled employees" was seen as significant.⁶⁴ This research made headlines across the country, bringing workplace literacy into the mainstream, however negatively framed.⁶⁵

Although many employers believe that educating Canada's workforce is the responsibility of individual provinces and territories through elementary and secondary school systems, some are starting to recognize the value of promoting education, continuous learning and literacy on the job.

b. Unions

In many jurisdictions, typically in provinces with a number of large businesses, unions play a pivotal role in leveraging education and training for their members. Yukon has few businesses that could be considered large or even medium-sized, based on national standards. Some deliver or coordinate the delivery of LES programs, tailored to an identified workplace need.

According to the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Yukon is a solid jurisdiction in Canada for adult literacy policy, workplace literacy policy, workplace LES focus and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) strategy with a focus on workers. Government funding is good for community-based programs, workforce literacy programs and workplace literacy programs. However, in Yukon, unions did not appear to play a major role in the coordination of workplace literacy programs.⁶⁶

Many unions like CUPE support the idea that "literacy is a basic right for all" and literacy helps learners and workers to succeed at work as well as in their personal lives and communities.

⁶³See Globe and Mail online. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/commentary/dont-take-literacy-for-granted/article4524704>.

⁶⁴See Literacy News. <http://www.literacynews.com/2012/05/low-literacy-in-the-workplace-affects-canadian-businesses/>.

⁶⁵See Victoria Times Colonist.

<http://www.timescolonist.com/literacy/raiseareader/Poor+literacy+skills+plague+workplaces/6572373/story.html>.

See Vancouver Sun.

<http://www.vancouversun.com/business/mortgages/Inadequate+literacy+skills+plague+Canadian+workplaces/6551565/story.html>.

⁶⁶ CUPE, *Putting Literacy on The Public Agenda: A Briefing Package for CUPE Activists*. p.46

From a union perspective, this core belief might be at the forefront in fighting to leverage opportunities in jurisdictions where there is lack of support, funding or opportunities. The first bullet of the Guiding Principles section in the Yukon Literacy Strategy is “literacy is a right.” CUPE’s finding that the Yukon has good policy and funding supports but little delivery/coordination for unions, meshed with this project’s findings.

Having stated this, there is definitely a future role for unions to play in Yukon. Educating workers and employers about workplace LES and what stakeholder benefits generally flow from workplace LES initiatives would be a valuable task for local unions to undertake. During consultations it became apparent that more work needs to be done to convince employers that money spent on workplace LES should be a solid investment not only in employees but also in the organization’s bottom line.

c. Governments

A majority of adults with low literacy are employed, so it is in the public interest to invest in these people to boost economic productivity, encourage educational attainment and foster a culture of lifelong learning at work. Federal, provincial and territorial governments have increased their support since the 2003 IALS findings. One way is through recent labour market agreements with clear provisions for literacy programs.

According to Ontario’s Chamber of Commerce, “Government policy has an important role to play in creating the incentives for businesses and individuals to invest in continuous learning.” As discussed earlier, Yukon government has several funding supports in place that could support workplace LES development.

8. The Role of the Yukon Literacy Coalition (YLC)

The YLC is looking to play a bigger role in workplace and workforce LES. Interviewees were asked how the YLC could best contribute. What follows are the most common suggestions.

8.1. Umbrella group function

One response related to the organization's role as an umbrella group for other non-profits and institutions that support workforce and workplace LES. In this role, the YLC would compile information, stay up to date on best practices, undertake research, liaise between groups who are involved and take on a kind of coordinating role. This function fits well with what some in government seem to want: a more coordinated approach amongst the non-profits involved in LES delivery, research and planning. Interviewees alluded to lapses in communication, harmony and coherence between groups that, in the end, hampers overall delivery of services and products in the territory. This impacts clients who are the recipients of services. With limited funding and staff members, the potential for redundancy is a disconcerting prospect. It is a possibility without dedicated times for information exchange. A coordinating force amongst groups offering similar services could conceivably advocate for all, coordinating funding efforts and encouraging partnerships in the right places.

8.2. Clearing-house function

Compiling resources, undertaking research, providing an e-archive and providing advice about workforce and workplace LES to practitioners and others in the field are the main areas that a clearing-house would carry out. In this function, YLC could work with other organizations to add depth to workforce and workplace LES endeavours. A workplace LES officer or coordinator would be tasked with building up a knowledge base, and reminding organizations and businesses that support materials exist.

8.3. Community workplace and family literacy centre

The YLC's best-known service at the moment is the Family Literacy Centre, at the Canada Games Centre. Many community members are aware of this site from their visits to Whitehorse and the games centre. They like it for different reasons. If one were set up in their community, it would offer a new informal space for learning. The drop-in model and open scheduling aspects were of interest. Although family literacy centres are not normally workplace based in their orientation, they do, however, provide a basis to make links to workplace needs in communities. In population bases of 400 people (about seven Yukon communities are near this number), people with LES interests related to their workplace could lead to gains both individually and for the community if they were routed through such a centre.

8.4. Workplace LES needs assessments

Some key informants suggested the YLC could take on the role of carrying out LES needs assessments in workplaces. Some said this kind of work makes the most sense for a third party or independent group with no direct stake in how program delivery is carried out.

F. Summary Statement

The Yukon Literacy Coalition (YLC) engaged 96 community stakeholders throughout the territory regarding workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills (LES) interests and needs. Through these consultations, the YLC received a wealth of feedback about how the evolving field of workforce and workplace LES could potentially address different community needs and interests. Given that Yukon community populations range from 50 to 2,000 people, there was widespread interest in seeing more facilitator-driven, small-scale, flexible and creative programming. That said, even though there were common themes across communities, the interests of one community or First Nation did not necessarily correspond to the interests of another. Each community has specific labour market needs and unique socioeconomic realities. As such, community consultations, needs assessments and program customization would be indispensable to the success of any workforce or workplace LES venture.

Tailored workplace LES programs within First Nation governments are of particular interest in communities. These programs would have to be defined by all applicable stakeholders and they would address very specific needs – either internal to the First Nation or in support of employment pursuits for its citizenry. Another major area of need is for further workforce or workplace LES programs that address skilled labour shortages in the trades. The major workforce LES deliverer in the territory – Yukon College – has a number of relevant courses to address the skilled labour shortages in the Yukon. However, there is still a need for organizations to deliver smaller-scale, less formalized learning opportunities for people who: have barriers to learning, have low literacy or have particular learning differences which go undetected all too often.

A literature review was completed to better situate Yukon within the national and international context of LES. Much is written about the value of creating workforce or workplace LES programs using small-scale approaches, employing mentorship and coaching techniques and designing flexible programming – echoing what project staff heard from stakeholders about needs in Yukon communities.

A scan of present and past workforce and workplace LES programs reveals that the field is little known to most, but there is increasing awareness and interest in what workforce and workplace LES could offer adult learners. The scan found that there are funding mechanisms in place – both with direct and indirect tie-ins to the field – to support future tailored programs. However, there needs to be explicit communication and language around funding for workforce and workplace LES. Although the 2001 Yukon Literacy Strategy had become out of date with recent developments in the field of workforce and workplace LES, a revision is likely for 2013

following the late 2012 Yukon Literacy Symposium. Strengthening policy, funding and institutional mechanisms with the Government of Yukon could promote the benefits of lifelong learning and assist in enshrining workforce and workplace LES as a viable alternative for adult learning.

G. Recommendations

On funding: territorial

The Yukon government has several funding sources in place that support workforce and workplace LES, as previously described. The most explicit mention of funding available to access workforce and workplace literacy is contained in the Canada-Yukon Labour Market Agreement under eligible programs: “skills training, ranging from training in basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy, to advanced skills training.”

The Community Development and Community Training Funds are not as explicit in their eligibility criteria for workplace LES, but literacy programs have been funded through these, and depending on the type of workplace LES program, criteria could be met.

Recommendation for YG:

- *Develop a communications strategy outlining the main funding supports that could be used to support workforce and workplace LES projects, targeting employers, non-profits and First Nation governments.*

On policy: territorial

The 2001 Yukon Literacy Strategy outlines a direction for literacy in Yukon. Educators, First Nations, Yukon government members and other stakeholders contributed input, developed a strategy and outlined important principles.

As a strategy document, it is apparent that it is out of date. In 2006, a Yukon Literacy Strategy revision was undertaken, but the government document was not released. The central outcomes and outputs from this process were never publicized. The Yukon government website states that its current thinking about literacy is based on the 2006 revision exercise.

In December 2012, a literacy symposium was held in Whitehorse, Yukon. An updated literacy strategy is one of the probable products from the event. Updating the language to reflect essential skills and the relevance of workforce and workplace would strengthen this document. Policy underpinnings will help the big picture of workforce and workplace LES in Yukon.

Recommendations for Yukon government:

- *Make public all the outcomes of the 2012 Literacy Symposium and make one of the products a new Yukon Literacy Strategy and/or policy document including specific language about workforce and workplace LES.*

On Yukon government workforce and workplace LES infrastructure

If the Yukon government were to lead outreach and education campaigns about the benefits of workforce and workplace LES, its uptake could be sped up with key employers, who in turn could potentially become messengers. Some of the Yukon's major labour market challenges around retention and lack of skilled tradespeople could be supported by a more assertive government role.

Delivery bodies such as Yukon College and non-profits have been tasked with this role, and while it is being well carried out, a government boost would help.

Recommendation for Yukon government:

- *Consider the feasibility of creating a workplace LES coordinator position within Advanced Education's Labour Market Programs and Services Unit.*

On the needs of First Nation citizens

As described in the report, First Nations interests varied widely from community to community.

Some communities were working towards community wellness and saw literacy as a potential tool to complement healing. Others wanted to address barriers that keep people from learning – such as effects from residential schools, drugs and alcohol or development of life skills. Some would like to use literacy to re-connect with languages – English and a traditional language such as Tlingit or Gwichin. These LES scenarios would likely highlight traditional elements in any kind of program design. In these contexts, we heard from respondents that community and family literacy delivery approaches are more likely to gain traction.

On the other hand, members of some communities wanted to develop vocational expertise within their respective First Nation government, calling for LES programs tailored to workplace needs. This finding is one of the clearest of the project. A workplace LES program took place in 2006 through a partnership with First Nation governments, Yukon Learn and Yukon government. This pilot project was an indicator of actual needs. Each First Nation would have a unique way forward with workplace LES. Programs would likely address the needs of a small number of key people. This could be a point of hesitation for some funders who may be mandated to distribute funding benefits to many recipients. However, we heard repeatedly that when a few are bolstered from positive learning experiences in a community, the spin-off is often contagious for families and peers.

Recommendation for Yukon government:

- *Support current, and develop more, mechanisms to support creative workplace LES endeavours within First Nation governments.*

On immigrant populations coming into territory

New Canadians coming to Yukon are likely to continue to increase.

By and large, these people have high literacy levels in their mother tongue, but need to improve their English skills, and LES tailored to the jobs they will hold.

Recommendation for Yukon government, Canada

- *Continue to support the efforts of delivery bodies offering LES and ESL in workplaces.*

On the role of non-profits involved in workplace or workforce LES

Non-profits could play a far bigger role in the overall workplace LES picture. In other Canadian jurisdictions, non-profits are among the biggest drivers in workplace and workforce LES development. In Yukon, there are notable accomplishments but increased education, advocacy, and potentially delivery are all open to further development. Further, increased coordination and more frequent discussions between groups offering workforce and workplace LES services could have the effect of bolstering everyone's effectiveness within the field.

Recommendations for non-profits involved in workforce and workplace LES:

- *Strike a committee to develop collaborative, multi-organizational strategies related to workforce and workplace LES development in Yukon.*
- *Work with representatives involved in Yukon College's many new workforce and workplace LES developments to determine where non-profit expertise could compliment or reinforce offerings to students and clients in communities.*
- *Develop an employer engagement strategy and find new workplace LES opportunities.*
- *Consult meaningfully with appropriate First Nation government representatives involved in education and training promotion in an ongoing way to maintain coherent communication links in agreed upon intervals.*

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H. Appendices

Appendix A: Key informant list

Burwash Landing

Kluane Adamek, Assembly of First Nations, Yukon

Carcross

Cully Robinson, Capacity Development Director, Carcross Tagish FN (CTFN)

Kevin Barr, MLA Southern Lakes-Mt. Lorne

Larry Kiesling, Principal of Ghuch Tla Elementary School

Ann-Marie Smith, Daycare Worker, CTFN

Lyndsay Amato, Daycare Worker, CTFN

Roberta Auston, Transitional Employment Manager, CTFN

Wayne Roberts, Small Business Owner

Carmacks

Dawn Marino, Instructor/Coordinator, Yukon College

George Skookum, Implementation Director, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation

Kenji Welch, Municipal Water Works Officer, Village of Carmacks

Elaine Wyatt, Mayor, Village of Carmacks

Cory Bellmore, Chief Administrative Officer, Village of Carmacks

Dawson City

Wayne Potoroka, Communications Director, Trondek Hwechin FN

Michael Earl, Executive Director, Trondek Hwechin FN

Wendy Cairns, Owner, Bombay Peggy's Victorian Inn

Joe McCann, Ground Truth Exploration Owner

Michael Edwards, Yukon College Instructor, Film Industry Location and Logistics

Colm Cairns, Outreach Coordinator, Learning Disabilities Association Yukon

Eldo Enns, Instructor, Yukon College

Gordon Hardie, Adult Learner, Yukon Literacy Coalition Board Member

Jody Beaumont, Instructor, Yukon College

Lue Maxwell, Coordinator, Yukon College

Peter Menzies, Teacher, Robert Service School, Yukon Government (YG)

Melissa Atkinson, Employment and Training Officer, Trondek Hwechin FN

Anne Mendelsohn, Employment Central

Juanita Nakashima, Employment Central

Fred Osson, Heritage Officer, Government of Canada

Tyson Bourgard, Natural Resources Officer, YG
Mark Verdonk, Mechanical Operations Manager, YG

Haines Junction

Shandell McCarthy, Education Director, Champagne Aishihik First Nation (CAFN)
Anne Tayler, EDP Coordinator and Tutor, CAFN
Les Walker, Councillor, CAFN
Amy McKinnon, Communications Director, CAFN
Vera Owlchild, Employment and Training Officer, CAFN
Cindy Cowie, Daycare Worker and Educational Assistant, Yukon Government

Mayo

Don Hutton, Northern Tutchone Zone Wildland Fire Manager, Yukon Government
John Reid, Yukon College, Community Campus Coordinator
Roberta Hager, Na-cho Ny'ak Dun First Nation (NNDNFN)
Barb Barchen, Treasurer, Village of Mayo
Margaret Wozniak, Chief Administrative Officer, Village of Mayo
Scott Bolton, Mayor, Village of Mayo

Old Crow

Brandon Kyikavichik, Councillor, Vuntut Gwichin First Nation (VGFN)
Peter Marangu, Director, Government Services, VGFN
Loretta Itsi, Employment and Training Officer, VGFN
Tracy Rispin, Education Director, VGFN
Leila Sumi, Resource Management and Public Safety Specialist, Parks Canada
Kenny Tetlich, Owner/Operator Ch'oo Deenjik Accomodations
John McDonald, Instructor, Yukon College

Ross River

Jay Sather, Journeyman, Film Electrics Technician
Marie Skidmore, Ross River Dena Council
Margie Etzel, Hotel Owner
Kitty Sperling, Coordinator/Instructor, Yukon College
Nora Ladue, Selwyn Mine First Nation Liaison Officer

Teslin

Melaina Sheldon, Customer Service, Westjet Air

Watson Lake

Michelle Fraser, Manager, Daycare Centre

Darren Fraser, High School Teacher, Yukon Government Department of Education
Shilo Abreu-Trusz, Watson Lake Community Outreach
Darcy Laverdure, Education Director, Liard First Nation
Larry Bagnell, Watson Lake Economic Revitalization Chair

Whitehorse

Kathryn Alexander, Waste Management Officer, Yukon Government
John Streicker, Yukon Federal Green Candidate, City Councilor
Debbie Parent, Executive Director, Yukon Learn
Jennifer Russell, Training Manager, Yukon Mine Training Association
Shelly McDonald, Training Assistant, Yukon Mine Training Association
Ranj Pillai, Coordinator, Targeted Initiatives for Older Workers, Yukon College
Adam Bacchus, Project Coordinator, Learning Disabilities Association Yukon
Maira Sauer, Communications Director, Yukon Literacy Coalition
Judith van Gulick, Office Manager, Yukon Literacy Coalition
Evelyn Thorogood, Project Manager, Yukon Literacy Coalition
Denise Norman, Yukon Employees' Union
Loralee Kesler, Public Service Alliance of Canada
Michelle Crossfield, Communications Officer, Department of Education, YG
James Miller, Producer, CBC
Anton Solomon, Labour Market Development Officer, YG
Blake Rogers, Executive Director, Tourism Industry Association Yukon
Karen Pearson, Human Resources Director, Air North
Carol Corbet, Executive Director, Employment Central
Rick Karp, President, Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce
Norman Drynock, House of Learning, Kwanlin Dun First Nation
Dan Curtis, Executive Director, Skills Canada Yukon Literacy Coalition
Tanya Silverfox, Youth Employment Coordinator, Skookum Jim Friendship Centre
Susannah Robertson, Employment Coordinator, Skookum Jim Friendship Centre
Sheila Sergy, Executive Director, Yukon Safety Network
Jeremie Matrishon, Shop Manager, Challenge Employment Services
Tim Mills, Tutor Coordinator, Yukon Learn
George Green, Yukon Disability Works, Yukon Council on Disability (YCOD)
Tanis Preete, Education and Employment Services Coordinator, YCOD
Lisa Rawlings Bird, Executive Director, YCOD
Cindy Fleischman, Instructor, Yukon College
Colleen Stevenson, Chair, School of Academic and Skill Development, Yukon College
Patricia Brennan, Adult Ed. Project Manager, Service d'orientation de Formation des adultes (SOFA)
Darlene Doerkson, Executive Director, Yukon Tourism Education Council
Judy Thrower, Director of Training Programs, Department of Ed., Yukon Government
Stephanie Hammond, Executive Director, Learning Disabilities Association Yukon

Appendix B: Program Profiles

1. Yukon College's Heritage and Culture Essential Skills (HACES)

The HACES program is tailored for adults in Yukon communities working in the Heritage and Culture field or intending to work in it. The program is designed to enhance knowledge of First Nation heritage and cultural resources. LES is embedded into the curriculum and it is a program that blurs the lines between workforce and workplace, insofar as many students take time away from their jobs to participate in the program. It is however, more preparatory in its approach to the field of heritage and culture.

In partnership with First Nations and the college, HACES was first piloted in Mayo, then delivered in Pelly Crossing, Ross River, and Dawson City.

The objectives of the HACES program are to:

- Provide First Nations the opportunity to build on their LES and vocational skills needed for heritage and culture employment.
- Give students the tools required to participate in further First Nations cultural and heritage programs.
- Ensure that First Nation governments have an adequate pool of skilled candidates to hire to sustain their heritage and culture mandates.

Through interactive presentations, guest speakers, field trips, and assignments, HACES students work through the program's 10, weeklong modules.

Upon certified completion of the program, HACES students are able to:

- Display through a heritage project increased LES capacity, with specific respect to working well with others and computer use.
- Recognize effective First Nation management practices with respect to language, traditional cultural knowledge, land-based heritage, and oral history within a community.

2. Yukon College's Targeted Initiatives for Older Workers Program

The Targeted Initiatives for Older Workers (TIOW) program focuses on providing older workers in Whitehorse (and in the past, communities) with skills to re-enter the Yukon workforce.

Among the goals of the Targeted Initiatives for Older Workers program is to assist unemployed individuals between 55 and 64 find employment and chart an academic path to reach their respective targets. Learner-centred approaches are at the core of the program. Essential skills, as defined by HRSDC, and other skills (either vocational or soft skills) are addressed, depending on the needs of the learner.

In Whitehorse, this 15-week course engaged students in group discussions, group and individual work, presentations, and lectures. In the communities, the course duration varied depending on attendees' needs. Employment-related computer skills and applying existing skills to workplace

activities were foundational to the course. Students developed techniques to market their abilities through resume building and obtaining references.

At the moment resources are centred on Whitehorse programs. Out of a total of 80 programs nationally, Yukon College's TIOW program was recognized by HRSDC as the most successful. Its success is measured in part by the number of students that were able to continue with their education or find meaningful employment upon completion.⁶⁷

3. Challenge Disability Resource Group

The Challenge Disability Resource Group focuses on assisting adults with cognitive disabilities to develop workplace skills, to become more integrated in their communities and to get employment. Yukon residents that are 16 and over that have experienced barriers to employment as a result of cognitive disabilities or mental health addictions are among the clients. Soft skill development (such as workplace communication), traditional literacy skills (such as reading and writing) and vocational skills (use of carpentry tools) are integrated elements of the program.

Challenge currently offers participants two streams of services. Career Industries Ltd. addresses the needs of the workforce through job coaching, support, and assessments. The workplace programs are fulltime, 12-week, in-house practicums for working in a commercial kitchen, greenhouse, or woodshop. These practicums normally accommodate three students in each. The job coaches teach plain language, writing and numeracy elements as learning opportunities present themselves.

In the afternoon, participants attend their designated practicum. The Challenge Wood Shop Worker program is located within the Challenge office. This program focuses on safety, working with tools, and creating take-home projects. In the Challenge Landscape/Greenhouse Worker program, participants prepare soil, plant, transplant, and care for a garden. Most of the produce grown is shared amongst participants. The Challenge Commercial Kitchen Skills Worker program teaches kitchen safety, baking and cooking a range of dishes.

After completion of the workplace program participants have found employment at businesses such as Wal-Mart, Canadian Tire, the Canada Games Centre, Better Bodies, Raven Recycling, the Dollar Store and the Westmark Hotel. Challenge is also a major employer of participants of this program with 30 to 40 people working for them at any one time.⁶⁸

⁶⁷See Yukon College website for further details:

http://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/programs/info/targeted_initiative_for_older_workers

⁶⁸ Personal interview. Candice Francis, Programs Coordinator, Challenge Disability Resource Group. Sept. 16, 2012.

4. Yukon Tourism Education Council (YTEC)

YTEC provides essential skills training embedded in its nationally recognized *Ready to Work* program. It is a national skills development program designed to assist people transitioning into the workforce. It offers a mix of classroom and on-the-job training that provides participants with the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and experience required for long term, stable employment in tourism.

In Yukon, students use two workbooks as a base for classroom training: Canadian Workplace Essentials, which (among other functions) assists new Canadians to socialize into the work culture found in many fields. Tourism Essentials provides vocational basics and it is also embedded with essential skills training.⁶⁹

Both textbooks are designed to meet the needs of a wide variety of students – from new Canadians to people looking to get firmly situated within the field’s customs, tasks, and public relations elements.

Some of the areas addressed through the training include:

- Continuous learning, communication skills, computer skills, information management, thinking skills and working with others.
- Knowledge of the tourism industry, understanding organizational culture, and promoting the industry.

The course is delivered regularly in Whitehorse, and has been delivered in Watson Lake, Haines Junction and Dawson City. It could be available in other communities via video-conference or another format.

⁶⁹Workbooks developed by private group *emerit*: <http://emerit.ca/en>.

Appendix C: Community profiles⁷⁰



Beaver Creek

⁷⁰ Sources for the community profiles appendix include:
<http://www.hainesjunctionyukon.com/Community/Home.html>
<http://www.gov.yk.ca/aboutyukon/communities.html#Carcross>
<http://www.yukoncommunities.yk.ca/>
<http://travelyukon.com/about-yukon/yukon-communities>
http://www.eco.gov.yk.ca/stats/pdf/populationjun_2012.pdf
<http://travelyukon.com/about-yukon/yukon-communities/>
<http://www.faroyukon.ca/>
<http://www.yukoncommunities.yk.ca/communities/faro/>
<http://www.selkirkfn.com/>

Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay

Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay are located along the western shore of the Yukon's biggest lake – Kluane Lake. These small communities are located on the Alaska Highway. Burwash Landing is about 285 kilometres from Whitehorse and 127 km northwest of Haines Junction. Destruction Bay is also on the highway, 19 km southeast of Burwash Landing and slightly closer to Haines Junction. Burwash Landing is the administrative centre of the Kluane First Nation. Its population is approximately 73. Southern Tutchone people have lived in the Kluane area for many generations. The Kluane First Nation has revitalized its language and culture and offers bilingual street signs in the town. Destruction Bay was established as a centre for construction and maintenance on the Alaska Highway, and that remains its primary role today.

Carcross

Carcross had its beginnings as a village founded along the historical Chilkoot Gold Rush Trail. The community is located 74 km south of Whitehorse, 110 km north of Skagway, and 30 km west of the original village site of Tagish. Carcross's population of 331 (updated to 423 in 2012 census) is predominantly Carcross/Tagish First Nations. The Carcross/Tagish First Nations have not yet signed their land claim and self-government agreements with the Yukon government or the Government of Canada. Top employers in Carcross are tourism, the First Nation government, and transportation and trades. With the White Pass train station stopover, there is an influx of tourists each summer that enjoy the community's bakery, coffee shop, and retail stores.

Carmacks

At the meeting of the Yukon and Nordenskiöld rivers, lies Carmacks, a community known for its past trading post, First Nation community, gateway to recreational activities, and close proximity to rich mineral resources. Carmacks is situated 180 km north of Whitehorse along the Klondike Highway and serves as an obvious service stop for Yukon travellers. Home to about 425 people (updated to 506 in 2012 census), this small community's self-identified aboriginal population make up about 76 percent of its citizens. The Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation signed its land claims and self-government agreements, following the structure of the Umbrella Final Agreement, in 1997. Carmack's major employment sectors include government, tourism, and mining. Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation along with municipal and territorial governments account for roughly 50 per cent of jobs. These positions are largely public service based in health, education, and administration. As a service and recreational stop, tourism provides limited year-round income and seasonal employment mainly from the local hotels, restaurant, and general store. Depending on the status of the mining economy, mining in the area surrounding Carmacks offers the community an important employment source. Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation citizens continue to support their families and economy by participating in traditional hunting and fishing activities.

Dawson City

“You haven’t experienced the Yukon, unless you have been to Dawson City,” reads an ad for the community in *Up Here* magazine. Dawson City was the destination for prospectors during the 1898 gold rush. Since then, the community has preserved the Klondike look, attracting tourists through its well-established arts scene and summer nightlife. Dawson City is fittingly at the end of the Klondike Highway, about 536 km northwest of Whitehorse and sits on the traditional land of the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in. The community boasts a population of 1,325 (updated to 1,912 in 2012 census), of which 390 are citizens of the First Nation. In 1998, the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in signed its land and self-government agreements. The economy of Dawson City is supported mainly through tourism, followed by government, mining, and placer mining. Employment is also shared in small part by agriculture, fishing, trapping and forestry.

Faro

Faro is located in the Pelly River valley in the Anvil Mountains. The community is 356 kilometres northeast of Whitehorse and has approximately 400 residents. Faro came into being in 1969 when a major lead-zinc deposit was developed 22 km away. The population of Faro has risen and fallen according to the fortunes of the mine. The mine operated for many years but is now in receivership. The mine and adjacent lands are in the process of reclamation. The main industry today is tourism. The community now supports a much smaller but more stable population and is developing as a tourism, arts and retirement community. Faro is characterized by its clear blue lakes, winding rivers, mountains and green valleys.

Haines Junction

Haines Junction is located in the Shakwak Valley at the base of some of Canada’s highest mountains. A gateway to Kluane National Park and Haines, AK, this striking community is located 158 km west of Whitehorse making it an easy weekend retreat for many Yukoners. Of the total population of 585 (updated to 815 in 2012 census), about 240 identify as members of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. This First Nations community signed their land and self-government agreements in 1993. Government work makes up the majority of the jobs in Haines Junction, followed by tourism, retail, recreation/arts, and the transportation sector.

Mayo

Near the meeting of the Mayo and Stewart rivers, Mayo has historically been a service centre for the transportation of silver, zinc, and lead ores. Mayo is Yukon’s most central community located about 400km northwest of Whitehorse. Home to about 245 people (updated to 446 in 2012 census), this small community’s self-identified aboriginal population make up about 130 of its citizens. The Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation signed its land and self-government agreements in 1993. Due to the rich mineral resources surrounding the community, Mayo is able to maintain an economic base without government support. As the access point to the Peel watershed, the community’s tourism industry continues to thrive as a recreational hotspot for Yukon’s outfitters and guides.

Old Crow

The only fly-in community in Yukon is home to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. The community is located north of the Arctic Circle at the confluence of the Crow and the Porcupine rivers. According to archaeological evidence, Old Crow may be the location of the earliest human occupation in North America. Records show people were living in the area 15,000 years

ago. The community has a population of approximately 250 people (updated to 239 in 2012 census), with most living in log homes. There is a grocery store, an RCMP detachment, a nursing station, bed and breakfast accommodations, a band office, a skating arena, a youth centre and a community centre. Because Old Crow is in the middle of the migration path of the Porcupine caribou herd, harvesting caribou continues to be central to the Gwich'in people's livelihood. They use the animal meat and hide for everything from food and moccasins to traditional artwork.

Pelly Crossing

The Selkirk First Nation Government and people reside in Pelly Crossing, home to the Northern Tutchone culture. Its population was 291 in 2008. This rural community is located on the Pelly River and is the halfway point between Whitehorse and Dawson City. The Selkirk First Nation signed off on its land claim at Minto Landing in 1997. It's the 7th self-governing First Nation in the Yukon. Hunting, trapping, fishing and guiding are the economic mainstays of Pelly Crossing.

Ross River

Ross River, the home of the Ross River Dene Council, is located 360 kilometers northeast of Whitehorse. The community is known for its hunting and fishing resources, but also benefits from government, industry and tourism. First Nation people originally used the site as a seasonal camp and gathering place. After the Canol Road opened the area to traffic, government offices were built and later the site was moved to its current location close to the Campbell Highway. The population of Ross River is approximately 315 (updated to 367 in the 2012 census). Of the total population, about 80 per cent are Kaska from the Ross River Dene Council.

Tagish

Tagish is the original village of the Tagish First Nation. It is an unincorporated community with a population of close to 231. Tagish means "break up of ice" in the Tagish Athapaskan language. It is located 30km east of Carcross on Tagish Road at the end of Tagish Lake and is 74 km from Whitehorse. Tagish attracts tourists and cottage owners from Whitehorse. In addition, many people live in the community and commute to Carcross or Whitehorse for work.

Teslin

The lakeside community of Teslin is a popular stop for travellers driving north on the Alaska Highway. The community, about halfway between Watson Lake and Whitehorse, is home to the Inland Tlingit, or Dakh-ka Tlingit. The Tlingit came to the area from Alaska in search of furs for trading, and some settled in the Teslin area. The town is bordered by the waters of Nisutlin Bay and Teslin Lake and home to approximately 150 people (updated to 458 in the 2012 census). Although Teslin continues to rely on a traditional and subsistence economy, tourism has also become an important economic driver. Teslin Lake is famous for fishing and its northern pike, while the Nisutlin River Delta National Wildlife Area is known for its bird and wildlife habitat. Teslin is home to several accomplished Tlingit artists, as well as the Teslin Tlingit Heritage Centre and the George Johnson Museum. The Nisutlin Bay Bridge is a seven arch metal span and the longest bridge on the Alaska Highway.

Watson Lake

Watson Lake, only 14 kilometers from where the Alaska Highway and the British Columbia border meet, is often called the “Gateway to the Yukon.” The town consists of Watson Lake itself, as well as the adjoining settlements of the Liard First Nation, including Upper Liard. Watson Lake lies within the traditional territory of the First Nation. The community was established in the late 1930s when the federal government built a series of airports across the north, one being in Watson Lake. The community, which sits at the junction of the Alaska, Robert Campbell, and Stewart-Cassiar Highways, is now a transportation hub for the North. Both forestry and energy exploration are important factors in the region’s economy. The population of Watson Lake sits around 845 (updated to 1,490 in the 2012 census).

Whitehorse

Whitehorse is the capital of the Yukon and the largest community in the territory. The settlement was formed during the Klondike Gold Rush as a transportation hub to gold fields in the North. Since that era, Whitehorse has gone through a series of population boom and busts, most relating to highway and mining construction.

Now, with a population of 20,465 (updated to 27,071 in the 2012 census), the city is a centre for government, business and the arts. Whitehorse lies on the shared traditional territory of the Ta’an Kwach’an Council and the Kwanlin Dun First Nation. Although government provides economic stability, tourism continues to be a strong source of economic growth in the area. Visitors travel up the Alaska Highway from Skagway or fly into the international airport to experience all Yukon’s capital has to offer.