



NWT Literacy Awards

2023 Recipients



Outstanding NWT Educator Award – Staff at Joseph Burr Tyrrell Elementary School

The staff at Joseph Burr Tyrrell Elementary School in Fort Smith have been rigorously researching the science of reading and how the brain learns to read. The staff spent last summer finding resources and tools to help readers grow their skills, which included the University of Florida's Literacy Institute. Using this model as a guide, staff created a systemic, user-friendly, research-based program that has greatly increased the reading levels for students at the school.

Outstanding Support for Literacy Development NWT Business Award – DeBeers Canada

DeBeers Canada has implemented a number of literacy programs to help adults and children in the Northwest Territories increase their literacy levels. DeBeers has also supported other organizations in the co-design and co-creation of these programs. These include the Dene Yati Language Revitalization Program in partnership with the Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation, Books for Babies, which supplies books to newborns in the NWT, as well as the Books in Homes, Dolly Parton Program, and Day Home program, which provide books in local schools and to day homes, and the Aspire Program that, with the Tł'chǫ Government, works to increase adult literacy rates.

Second Language Learner Award – Apprentices in the Mentor Apprentice Program

The Mentor Apprentice Program is a way of learning an Indigenous language where a fluent speaker of the language (a mentor) teaches a language learner (an apprentice) through immersion. The goal of the program is to have apprentices increase their ability to understand and speak their language and strengthen the survival of Indigenous languages in the Northwest Territories.

- Annabelle Tetlichi – Dinjii Zhu Gnjik (Gwich'in) – is a participant in MAP 2023-24. She is learning the language from her mother who, now retired, was a Gwich'in teacher at Inuvik's high school for over 25 years. Annabelle recently took over her mother's classroom and is learning the language to carry the torch and uphold the Gwich'in language in Inuvik.

- Cynthia Pavlovich – Dinjii Zhu Gnjik (Gwich'in) – is a first-year participant in MAP 2023-24 and is learning Gwich'in so that she can pass the language on to her three sons. Due to the impacts of residential school, there is no one in Cynthia's family that is able to teach her the language. Cynthia has been working with her mentor on writing Gwich'in children's books and poetry.
- Dorothy Ruben – Dene Kədə – was a participant in MAP 2022-23 where she was learning her Indigenous language of Dene Kədə. As an apprentice in MAP, Dorothy came to the program not having spoken her language since she was a child; she left the community as a teenager. She completed 200 hours of language learning working with her friend and fellow teacher Edith Mackeinzo.
- Ida Lennie – Dene Kədə – has participated in MAP for two years, 2022-23 and 2023-24. During this time, her confidence in speaking her Dene Kədə language has greatly increased. She has developed a strong connection to the language and culture through working closely with her mentor Cathy Pope. Her ultimate goal is to pass down the language to her grandchildren and to continue with her mini language lessons with Cathy during their lunch breaks.
- Lisa Zoe – Tłı̨chǫ – is a participant in MAP 2023-24. She's working with her husband Daniel to learn her Tłı̨chǫ language. They are sharing their teachings with their children at home and spend time working as a family learning the language. From using Tłı̨chǫ at the grocery store, to learning hockey terms, they are finding ways to incorporate it into their daily lives. Lisa is also incorporating the language into her work as a Vice-Principal at Elizabeth Mackenzie Elementary School in Behchokǫ.
- Rena Chappel – Dene Kədə – has participated in MAP for two years, 2022-23 and 2023-24. Rena has demonstrated a strong commitment to increasing her Dene Kədə language proficiency. Rena entered the program with a good foundation in her language and over the past two years has increased her proficiency and use to the point where she now feels confident enough to apply to the 2024-25 delivery of MAP as a mentor to her sister.
- Violet Biscaye – Dëne Sųłiné – is a participant in MAP 2023-24. She is reconnecting to her sleeping Dëne Sųłiné language by working with her sister and language champion Sabet Biscaye. Through the strong commitment between Violet and Sabet, Violet is awaking her language and developing the confidence to speak it proudly. Violet feels truly fortunate to be learning from her older sister. She feels comfort from speaking Dëne Sųłiné, and wants to learn everything. One day, Violet intends to be speaking like Sabet – with confidence with other fluent speakers. Violet has demonstrated a strong commitment to attending the MAP programming.
- Priscilla Canadien – Dene Zhatié – has completed three years in MAP learning her Dene Zhatié language. Priscilla has embodied the program's approach of living life in the language, spending as much time as she can immersing herself in Dene Zhatié. Priscilla has applied to be a mentor in the 2024-25 delivery of the program.

Supporting Literacy Through Technology Award – Violet Jumbo

Violet Jumbo was born and raised in Sambaa K'e where she was raised speaking Dehcho Dene Zhatie; she is a fluent speaker. While working at Dehcho First Nation as a Language Manager, Violet was instrumental in the development of the Dehcho Dene Zhatie language app, which was made available in 2022 for phones and tablets.

Outstanding Non-Profit Support for Literacy/Language Development – Tree of Peace Friendship Centre

The Tree of Peace created the *Kitchen Talks! Fall 2023 Community Cookbook*. This stemmed from the *Kitchen Talks!* program where youth meet once a week to develop their cooking skills. The cookbook uses plain language to encourage youth to develop their cooking skills while integrating literacy skills.

Department of Education, Culture and Employment

www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/literacy