

# Proceedings of the Northern Health and Learning Symposium

**Canada Games Centre  
Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada**

*A joint effort between:  
The Health & Learning Knowledge Centre*

*Government of Yukon  
Department of Health and Social Services  
Department of Education*

## HEALTH AND LEARNING

Knowledge Centre

September 24-25, 2008

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## **Introduction**

### **The Origins and Development of the Northern Health and Learning Symposium**

The origins of the Northern Health and Learning Symposium (NHLS) can be traced back to the School Health Conference held at the University of British Columbia in May of 2006. This event was attended by a number of Yukon participants from the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Education, Breakfast for Learning-The Canadian Living Foundation, and Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon.

A goal of the School Health conference was to be a generative event, with attending groups expected to create action plans that could be deployed upon return to their home jurisdictions. With this goal in mind, the Yukon delegation met a number of times during the 2.5 day conference to discuss issues of health and learning in the Yukon context. In short, the concept of holding a similar event for northern residents, with a specific focus on the health and learning challenges in the Canadian north, was agreed to be a worthy goal to pursue upon return to the Yukon.

In order to realize this goal, the members of the Yukon delegation agreed to form a group titled the Yukon School Health Advisory Committee (YSHAC). While the name of this group indicates a focus on school health, it was agreed by all members that the issues of health and learning in the north required a broader focus than solely on health in school. That said, Northern schools can be the heart and soul of small communities, providing meeting and activity space for a myriad of community groups after-hours and on weekends, and are often used for potlatches.

Over a period of more than two years, the YSHAC committee met on a regular basis to discuss ways of addressing issues of health and learning in the North. Through these ongoing discussions, the concept of the Northern Health and Learning Symposium emerged. Once a commitment to this event was made and funding was received from the Health and Learning

Knowledge Centre of the Canadian Council on Learning, the YSHAC committee focused its efforts and acted as the planning committee. Input, advice and assistance was solicited from many groups during the planning process: The Canadian Council on Learning, the Health and Learning Knowledge Centre, Joint Consortium of School Health contacts in NWT and Nunavut, Health Canada, and the University of Victoria. Additional funding was provided by Health Canada through a contribution agreement with Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon.

## **Rationale: Why a Northern Health and Learning Symposium?**

Health and education leaders living in the North often benefit from professional development opportunities that take place in Southern Canada. However, the distinct challenges presented by the vast geographical distances, harsh climate, and remote communities (each with unique cultures and governance structures) validated the investment in a health and learning symposium that specifically addresses issues of importance to the North. In effect, the manner in which health and learning issues are identified, examined and addressed in southern regions or urban centers may not fit contextually with Northern residents and communities.

It is well-established that individuals of all ages living in the North have higher rates of many health conditions and risk factors than their counterparts in the South. This includes the use of tobacco and other substances, suicide and unintentional injury rates, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended teen pregnancies. Accessing nutritious snacks, fresh food, and safe physical activities may also be challenging. As a result, young Northerners and their communities face significant challenges and shoulder a considerable burden when it comes to achieving and maintaining their health and safety. Limited services and resources further increase the importance of health literacy on the part of individuals in isolated regions.

The North also lays claim to a high percentage of Aboriginal citizens. First Nations comprise roughly 25%, 55% and 85% of the population of Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, respectively. First Nations students are 2.5 times more likely than non-Aboriginal Canadians to

drop out of high school.\* Because education is a social determinant of health, the high drop-out rate has significant consequences on health across the lifespan.

A health and learning conference focused specifically on school health issues relevant to the North provided an important opportunity for health professionals, educators, and community leaders to come together to *connect* with one another, *converse* about lessons learned in geographically and culturally similar communities and *commit* to working together to improve the health and well-being of Northerners, both today and in the future.

As a result, the NHLS was organized around three main themes:

- Schools as communities and within communities
- Engaging youth
- Using art and culture to promote health and well-being

Given the relationship between health and learning and the need for Northern residents to work together on issues of shared importance, the symposium was intended to be of benefit to school administrators, teachers, counselors, First Nation school or health administrators, medical and health care providers and the community arts, cultural, or recreational organizations that serve Northern residents.

## **The Goals of the Northern Health and Learning Symposium**

The identified goals of the NHLS communicated to attendees and participants were as follows:

- Make connections and build links and partnerships with colleagues and organizations across the North,
- Gain access to northern health and learning experts and relevant research,

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\* State of Learning in Canada: No Time for Complacency report, Learning measures lagging for Aboriginal people, Canadian Council on Learning

- Share knowledge of health and learning programs and promising practices in communities across the North, and
- Develop work plans on health and learning that participants can implement upon return to their communities.

## Symposium Schedule

The symposium was scheduled to span two days. Because the Yukon Teachers' Association Conference overlapped with the second day of the symposium, the schedule was structured to primarily include sessions of interest to teachers on Day One. The speakers and sessions on Day One focused primarily on issues related to school health whereas sessions on Day Two were broader in scope.

Given the focus of the Northern Health and Learning Symposium, the venue and the breaks built into the schedule were important decisions. The Symposium took place at the Canada Games Centre and breaks were organized around a healthy activity led by specialists who engaged participants and got them moving. Further to promoting the goals of the conference, free passes to the Canada Games Centre were included in delegate packages in order to encourage use of the facility and promote health and wellness.

**Northern Health and Learning Symposium  
September 24 and 25, 2008  
Canada Games Centre  
Whitehorse, Yukon**

**Tuesday, September 23, 2008**

**Early Registration** will be available from 3:00 – 6:00pm in the foyer of the Westmark Whitehorse on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Wood Street in downtown Whitehorse.

**Day 1: Wednesday, September 24, 2008**

8:00-8:30      Arrival, check-in, and coffee

8:30-9:00:      Greetings and welcome –*Dave Sloan, Superintendent of Schools, Department of*

*Education, Government of Yukon*

Opening Prayer – Billie Giroux, *Kwanlin Dun First Nation*

Information updates –*Dave Sloan*

Opening remarks – *Christie Whitley, Assistant Deputy Minister, Department of Education, Government of Yukon*

9:00-10:00 Keynote Speaker: Dr. Marie Battiste, Co-director of the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre and Director of the Aboriginal Education Research Centre

10:00-10:15 Question and answer with Dr. Battiste

10:15-10:30 Health/activity Break

10:30-12:30 **Breakout sessions**

**1. Substance Abuse Prevention-Plenary Area, Flexihall**

- Sandy Bowlby, Alcohol and Drug Services, Government of Yukon
- Daniela Meier, Health Promotion Unit, Government of Yukon

**2. Promoting Healthier Eating-Main Floor Concourse**

- Elaine Stewart, Early Childhood and School Services, Government of Northwest Territories
- Lorna Arsenault, Health Promotion Unit, Government of Yukon

**3. Engaging Youth Through the Arts-Exhibit Area, Flexihall**

- Andrew Finton, Sundog Retreat Carving Program, Whitehorse, YT
- Arlin McFarlane, Yukon Educational Theatre
- Susie Ross, Health Promotion Unit, Government of Yukon

**4. Culturally Relevant Approaches to Health Education-2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Concourse**

- Dan Reimer, Individual Learning Centre, Whitehorse, YT
- Jody Butler Walker, Norma Kassi, and Karen Walker, Arctic Health Research Network, YT
- Dr. Sandra Jarvis-Selinger, University of British Columbia; Division of Continuing Professional Development and Knowledge Transfer

12:30-1:15 Lunch on-site

1:15-3:15 **Breakout sessions**

**1. Learning on the Land-Plenary Area, Flexihall**

- Christopher Gishler, Equinox Adventure Learning, Whitehorse, YT
- Jill Potter, Elijah Smith Elementary School, Whitehorse, YT
- Wendy Lahey, NWT Recreation and Parks Association

- Shannon Payne and David Radcliffe, Yellowknife Education District No.1, NWT

**2. Promoting Healthy Lifestyles: Physical Activity and Nutrition-Main Floor Concourse**

- Liz Baile, Weledeh Catholic School, Yellowknife, NWT
- Ted Hupe, Holy Family Elementary School, Whitehorse, YT
- Beverly Avano, Teacher and Yoga Instructor, Whitehorse, YT

3:15-3:45 Health/Activity Break

3:45-4:15 **Day 1 Facilitated Wrap-up session** –*Dave Sloan*

**Day 2: Thursday, September 25, 2008**

8:00-8:30 Arrival, check-in, and coffee

8:30-9:00: Greetings and welcome –*Dave Sloan*

Information updates –*Dave Sloan*

Minister’s opening – *Honorable Glen Hart, Minister of Health and Social Services, Government of Yukon*

9:00-10:00 Keynote speaker: Dr. Brendan Hanley, Medical Health Officer, Yukon Territorial Government

10:00-10:15 Question and answer with Dr. Brendan Hanley

10:15-10:30 Health break

10:30-12:30 **Breakout session**

**1. Using Technology to Promote Health-Exhibit Area, Flexihall**

- Tom Sparrow, Health Information Science, University of Victoria
- Joy Kajiwara, Community Nursing, Government of Yukon

**2. Promoting Health Through Community Partnerships-Plenary Area, Flexihall**

- Beckie Huston, Coordinator, No Fixed Address Outreach Van, Many Rivers Counseling and Support Services, Whitehorse, YT
- Paul Rosebush, Hay River Health and Social Services Authority, NWT
- Joanne Seaman and Anne Aram-Belz, Challenge Vocational Alternatives, Health Promotion Unit, Government of Yukon

**3. Mental Health and Addictions-Main Floor Concourse**

- Annette King, Mental Health Services, Government of Yukon

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Louise Nieder-Heitmann, Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Canada, Edmonton, AB</li> <li>• Tiffany Duncan, University of Waterloo, ON</li> </ul>
	<p>4. <b>Promoting Safer Sex-2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Concourse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Susie Ross, Health Promotion Unit, Government of Yukon</li> <li>• Jessica Yee, Native Youth Sexual Health Network, ON</li> </ul>
12:30-1:15	Lunch on-site
1:15-3:15	<p><b>Breakout session</b></p> <p>1. <b>Early Childhood Development-Plenary Area, Flexihall</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evelyn Thorogood, Royal Roads University, Victoria, BC</li> <li>• Kerry Egan, Occupational Therapy Dept., Stanton Territorial Health Authority, NWT</li> <li>• Linda Bonnefoy, Allen Murray, Gerald Dickson, Sue Herbrick and Eleanor O’Connor, Yukon Best Practice Mentorship Program (AKA “Alligator Pie”), Whitehorse, YT</li> </ul> <p>2. <b>Parents and Kids Learning Together/Ongoing Learning in the North-Main Floor Concourse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judy Whitford, Weledeh Catholic School, Yellowknife, NWT</li> <li>• Crystal Pearl-Hodgins and Barbara Curtis, Whitehorse Elementary School, Whitehorse, YT</li> <li>• Jennifer Archer, Nunavut Arctic College, Iqaluit, NU</li> </ul> <p>3. <b>Chronic Disease Prevention and Management-2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Concourse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michelle Caws, Dawson City Health Center, Government of Yukon</li> <li>• Marie Martin and Christina Sim, Kwanlin Dun Health Center, Kwanlin Dun First Nation, Whitehorse, YT</li> <li>• Lucie Wright, Geoff Zaporinuk and Pat Lincoln, Dept. of Health and Social Services, Government of Yukon</li> </ul>
3:15-3:45	Health/activity break
3:45-4:15	<p><b>Day 2 Final Wrap Up Session –Dave Sloan</b>  <b>Closing prayer – Billie Giroux, Kwanlin Dun First Nation</b></p>
4:15-4:30	Symposium evaluation

## **Keynote Speakers**

Given the attention placed on both health and learning at this symposium, keynote speakers from each of these areas were selected. The Day 1 keynote speaker was Dr. Marie Battiste, co-Director of the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre of the Canadian Council on Learning and Director of the Aboriginal Education Research Centre, located at the University of Saskatchewan. Dr. Battiste is a full professor in the Faculty of Education at this institution and teaches and conducts research in Indigenous studies. Her written work includes the book *First Nations Education In Canada: The Circle Unfolds* (co-authored with Jean Barman from UBC) and *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge* (co-authored with James Youngblood Henderson). Dr. Battiste's presentation illuminated issues related to colonization of Indigenous peoples and the long-term effects of such institutionalized practices on the health and learning of Indigenous peoples. The second part of her presentation focused on the work of the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre to redefine success for Indigenous learners and ensure their optimum well-being.

The keynote speaker on Day 2 was Dr. Brendan Hanley, the Yukon's Chief Medical Officer. Dr. Hanley brought his diverse background to what was an engaging presentation: an Emergency Room physician with Northern Canadian and international experience. Dr. Hanley also holds a Masters degree in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Hanley's keynote speech highlighted global perspectives on the social determinants of health and then brought them back to the Yukon and northern Canadian context.

## **Session Highlights**

### ***Facilitation***

A number of sessions at the Northern Health and Learning Symposium were led by volunteer facilitators. Prior to the symposium, a facilitators' meeting was held to answer any questions, offer tips and coaching, and ensure that facilitators were comfortable with the task. Some

facilitators kept notes on their sessions which were shared afterwards. As a result, the examples provided here are from some sessions written by the facilitators, to give readers a sense of some of the presentations which were offered to participants. It should be noted that all Power Point Presentations were collected by session facilitators. These have been included with this report on the CCL website ([The Proceedings of the Northern Health and Learning Symposium](#)).

### ***NWT Drop the Pop Campaign Session***

In the NWT the Drop the Pop campaign is a partnership with Food First, the nutrition/nourishment program in the schools. They put a good deal of effort into the front end loading of the initiative. They look for partners beyond the school setting because there is a turn-over of staff in the schools. And for schools to be involved there must be a community partnership component. The organizers also put in a small infusion of cash which is a motivator and greatly appreciated. To ensure that they have the reports from the schools on the initiative, they have offered Innovation Awards. Schools produce creative and engaging videos on the project. Water coolers are now in many of the classrooms.

### ***Chronic Disease Prevention and Management Session***

This session was a review of three approaches to chronic disease management. First, there was a presentation on a weight loss support program from Dawson City, Yukon. The presenter discussed their approach to this project as being outside the typical scope because they approached weight loss management on an individual basis when clients were ready, ie. self referral. As well, historically there has been no follow-up for this type of service and now they are building that into their program. Dawson City Health Centre chose weight loss support as a program because it supports other health issues. The program has grown to 30+ participants. Second, was a presentation on the Kwanlin Dun Health Center. This presentation was a review of the programs and services operated by the health centre. The focus of their services is very client-centered and includes all segments of the community – age based and health issue based. Lastly, the Expanded Chronic Care Model was presented with a team approach. This program

did a study that indicated the people get half of the care they should receive. This program is trying to integrate its services throughout the health system, the community and the individual. This program sees interactions and relationships as imperative to improve and provide a comprehensive approach to diabetes management.

### ***Early Childhood Development Session***

In this session, a number of presenters shared their knowledge and experience with a large and interested group of over 25 participants. Evelyn Thorogood shared her action research project, titled *Fostering Children's Joyful and Accurate Self and World Regard*, conducted in the Yukon as part of the completion of her Masters in Leadership at Royal Roads University. Her project was focused on the ECD program at Yukon College. Her project recommends that spiritual and character development is important components of child development. An embarrassing point which Evelyn shared was that Canada ranked last among developed countries in regards to the level of funding for daycare.

Kerry Egan is an Occupational Therapist (OT) with the Stanton Territorial Health Authority in the NWT. Kerry's presentation was titled ABC's Attention, Behaviour, and Classroom Strategies. Kerry's presentation focused on sharing strategies which help to ensure "just the right fit" between student needs in the classroom, social and physical supports in the environment, and the demands of school tasks. Ninety percent of the referrals to the OT service listed behaviour and attention as concerns. High teacher turn-over in the community was also reported as a concern. Therefore it is important to focus on inclusive schooling and the resulting need for inclusive environments.

The Yukon Best Practice Mentorship Program (aka Alligator Pie) is a nationally-recognized preschool mentorship program. It is led by Linda Bonnefoy and supported by Allan Murray, Sue Herbrick, Gerald Dickson, and Eleanor O'Conner. This program is founded on the belief that healthy living needs to be introduced early on in a child's life. This program was visited by the Governor General in the spring of this year. It engages children in many ways: bringing children in contact with nature through active gardening, growing and harvesting their own potatoes and

carrots, and teaching the children how to bake their own food from what they have harvested. The program is based within the Yukon context with Southern Tutchone language and traditions are incorporated into the program.

### ***Promoting Healthy Lifestyles: Physical Activity and Nutrition Session***

Kids love physical activity, kids love good food, and kids like to be leaders. This is the reason for and the rationale of the Weledeh Nutrition Ambassadors as presented by Liz Baile, vice principal of Weledeh Catholic School, Yellowknife - a champion school with students mentoring other students in ways of healthy eating and physical activity. The Ambassadors program draws on many resources to support student successes, such as "Thegreatbigcrunch" an initiative of Food Share (Toronto) whereby every Weledeh student bites into an apple simultaneously, or Mission Nutrition—an initiative of the Dole 5 a Day website suggesting school wide physical activities with a nutrition theme - for example coconut bowling or a veggie toss. Most importantly, these activities enable students to act as leaders with ideas drawn from resources such as Action Schools!BC or other resources similar in nature.

Théodore Hupé, principal of Holy Family Elementary School, Whitehorse, presented a program of minimal costs and requiring very little energy to implement - "Play First, and then eat" or HCNUL (the word lunch spelled backwards) ...and the benefits are great! The reverse lunch hour means exactly that: switch the eating and play components of the school lunch hour around. This has resulted in less garbage on the playground, healthier appetites after 25 to 30 minutes of fresh air and activity following a sedentary morning in class, less lunch room angst, and fewer kids complaining of after-recess stomach cramps or "less trauma and drama on the twirly tires". This program is so flexible that it can be a school initiative, a division initiative and tried as a trial without error and then let the kids decide. This is how Holy Family Elementary School established the reverse lunch- with a week-long pilot to give it a try first. A year later, the program is now embedded in the daily school schedule.

Increased mental activity, confidence, concentration were a few of the concepts presented by Beverly Avano, former Learning Assistant (special education teacher) at Christ the King

Elementary School, Whitehorse, and Yoga Instructor as she shared her love of children and passion for yoga. Resources such as *Twist*, a book of yoga poems by Janet Wong, and *Yogafit's Teacher Training Manual* were a couple of the many useful tools that can make yoga possible.

### ***Using Technology to Promote Health Session***

Many creative uses of technology to promote health and learning were illustrated and or discussed including,

- introducing First Nations elders to computers in Haines Junction,
- using televideo-conferencing to extend the life of a face-to-face spring school on health promotion provided by the Centre for Health Promotion at the University of Toronto,
- accessing Yukon College's Adobe Connect to host Smoke-Out, a Jeopardy-style game focused on tobacco with Grade 5 classes from a rural Yukon community and Whitehorse competing,
- using videoconferencing to follow up with rural Yukoners referred to the Diabetes Education Centre and persons receiving mental health and psychiatric services,
- primary care providers use of personal digital assistants (PDAs) for ready access to clinical guidelines, and
- the Nurse Line, a 24x7 telephone information service run by BC but accessible by Yukoners

During this session, the opportunity for Yukon Learn and the Department of Health and Social Services to collaborate on improving health literacy through televideoconferencing was identified.

### ***Substance Abuse Prevention session***

Yukon health promotion and prevention workers described how they work with youth to prevent substance abuse and tobacco use. Participants were given the chance to participate in some of the hands-on learning exercises these workers use to get youth engaged. We discovered that

these exercises also engage adults, for the competition was fierce! The talks stimulated colleagues from NWT and Nunavut as well as Yukon to share their experiences. We learned about:

- The Whole Child program at two Whitehorse elementary schools which provides an easy, safe way for parents to access needed services,
- Evening programs offered at the Inuvik Youth Centre,
- The Don't Be a Butthead tobacco prevention campaign in NWT which includes commitment cards to cement youth's intentions to remain smoke-free,
- Smoke-free commitments from teams competing in the Arctic Winter Games,
- Nunavut's Floor Masters who use hip hop to engage youth in schools to open up the dialogue on difficult topics, including suicide and
- Yukon Youth Directorates campaign targeted at 10-14 year olds to delay the first drink.

### ***Learning on the Land Session***

This session had presentations from classroom and outdoor educators on the importance of learning on and from the land. Chris Geshler spoke enthusiastically about the skill and self-confidence that can be developed through adventure-based programming with examples of personal achievements that youth have experienced using climbing walls and zip lines.

Educator Jill Potter described engaging a First Nations elder to teach elementary school children the traditional uses of plants found in the greenbelt surrounding their school and a community volunteer (who happens to be a desktop publisher in real life) to document the students' explorations of the greenbelt in a short, engaging booklet. This booklet has become a source of pride for the children of Elijah Smith Elementary School and their parents, many of whom are members of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation in Whitehorse.

Wendy Lahey from NWT demonstrated the important role that non-governmental organizations play in promoting land-based learning. She described how Dene youth and elders come together

on a 16-day canoe trip from Fort Simpson to Tulita. While the focus is on the youth and elders, the parents who are at home also participate via satellite phone.

Finally, participants were envious at the breadth of on the land learning experiences offered at the Yellowknife Education District 1. Shannon Payne and David Radcliffe described how Elders and other local resource persons collaborate with educators to host a variety of activities including camps to teach traditional games, earth medicine, trapping, winter survival, drum dancing, fishing and caribou hunting.

## **Booths and Displays**

There were nine exhibitors and a number of displays set up at the Northern Health and Learning Symposium. It was decided by the planning committee that the booths be available to non-profit organizations. Further, prospective booth users were required to submit a short application in order that the planning committee could evaluate the suitability to the symposium. The majority of applications were selected, though a very small number were respectfully declined. As a result the booths that were set up were highly applicable to the event and provided space for NGOs and non-profit groups to share their products, services and initiatives. Examples of booths included:

- CCL- The Health and Learning Knowledge Centre
- Active Yukon Schools
- Breakfast for Learning- the Canadian Living Foundation
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving
- NWT Recreation and Parks Association
- Recreation and Parks Association Yukon
- Yukon Learn Society

## Who Attended the Northern Health and Learning Symposium?

The participants of the Northern Health and Learning Symposium comprised a diverse group from across Yukon, NWT, and Nunavut. A number of participants with specific interests and expertise in Health and Learning topics and issues relating to Northern contexts also attended from southern locations.

There were 101 delegates at the symposium. While the majority of attendees were from the Yukon, many were from rural Yukon communities. Thus, the symposium was not a Whitehorse-centric event which inadvertently focused on this context. Participants came from as far away as Iqaluit, and represented such diverse contexts ranging from small, isolated communities in the NWT, Nunavut, and Yukon, to the three capital cities of Yellowknife, Whitehorse and Iqaluit.

The list of registered participants indicates a diverse array of professions and expertise attended the symposium. They span health, education, and not-for-profit sectors. Within these sectors participants listed their positions, occupations, or duties as:

- Dietician
- Teacher
- Assistant Professor
- Academic Director
- Physiotherapist
- Elders' Program Coordinator
- Communications and marketing analyst
- Outreach worker
- Occupational Therapist
- Masters' student
- Superintendent of Schools
- Assistant Deputy Minister
- Addiction prevention consultant

- Medical officer of health
- Nurse practitioner in charge
- Principal
- Artistic Director
- Mental Health Nurse
- Director of Curriculum and School Services
- School counselor
- Aboriginal Education Coordinator
- Consultant
- Art therapist

Specific information on participants who agreed to have their names and information published can be found in the delegates' contact list located at the end of this report.

## **Northern Health and Learning Symposium Report Summary**

The Northern Health and Learning Symposium represents the culmination of two years of devoted thought and hundreds of hours of planning by a diverse group of people from a wide range of sectors. Designing and executing an event of this magnitude in a remote Canadian location called not only for organizational commitment but also for a high level of commitment and dedication to the belief that health and learning in the north requires contextualized and relevant approaches to be effective. Further, when working electronically on a project which spans the country and involves national, provincial, and territorial entities, a high level of trust and collaboration is required among dedicated individuals- many of whom have never met each other.

Was the Northern Health and Learning Symposium a successful event? Based upon the evaluations completed by participants, the symposium was deemed, in their opinion, to have met its objectives and was a worthwhile event to attend. Northern Canadian participants predominantly felt that the information was useful, the speakers were relevant and engaging, and that the symposium was an effective knowledge exchange event. Perhaps most indicative of the

success of the event (however participants would define this for themselves) is that 91% indicated that they would attend another Northern Health and Learning Symposium in the future. This offers a very strong endorsement on the part of attendees that, from their perspective, the event was worthy of their time and expense to attend.

This notwithstanding, there were points of learning and areas for improvement that were identified in the returned evaluation forms. These (and other) items could be taken into consideration should a similar event be held in the future. First, choosing a venue that meets the needs of a symposium is important. While the organizing committee endeavoured to choose a venue which was conducive to healthy living, in retrospect the location was less suited to the delivery of a symposium than the organizing committee would have liked. Second, while the organizing committee strove to include Aboriginal participants wherever possible, attendees called for a broader participation, including Justice Departments. Third, thought and planning is required when designing facilitated wrap-up sessions at the end of a busy day, should this time be effective for participants and of value to them. Alternative methods of facilitating such wrap-up sessions could be explored.

## **Next Steps and Follow-up Activities**

Throughout the planning of this event, it was a hope of the Yukon School Health Advisory Committee (YSHAC) that the Northern Health and Learning Symposium not end up as a “one-off” occurrence that will only be remembered in the minds of those involved, or as a report on a shelf. Just as the Northern Health and Learning Symposium was a concept generated from the School Health Conference held at UBC in 2006, it is hoped that this event is also generative in nature. Therefore, at present it is difficult to clearly know what conversations this symposium has fostered, and what will emerge as a result of them. In light of the positive evaluation and comments of participants that they would wish to attend another Northern Health and Learning Symposium, much the same as the 2006 School Health Conference, it is entirely likely that this event has initiated health and learning conversations which will generate future learning and sharing opportunities in the North.

This point accepted, there are steps which can be taken to help continue the health and learning conversation in the Canadian North. In order to do this, the following post-symposium steps are being taken:

- 1) The YSHAC planning committee continues to meet regarding health and learning issues in the North.
- 2) A conference proceedings document has been drafted and will be posted on the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) website.
- 3) Conference presentations will be posted on the CCL website to serve as a resource.
- 4) The delegates contact list is included in the proceedings report in order to facilitate communication and follow-up between all attendees.

## **Symposium Evaluation: Summary of responses**

An evaluation form was given to participants in their delegate bags. At the end of both Day 1 and Day 2, David Sloan, Master of Ceremonies, reminded participants to complete the evaluation form and deposit it in the receptacle provided. In order to encourage maximum feedback, a small draw prize was offered.

The following summary provides an evaluation at a glance in terms of the responses by participants.

### **EVALUATION - SUMMARY**

	<b>Number and percentage of delegates who “strongly agree” or “agree”</b>
<b>Facilities</b>	
The plenary area worked well for large group presentations and discussion	23/36 = 64%
The breakout session meeting areas worked well for smaller group presentations and discussion	13/35 = 37%

The sound and visual equipment made it easy to see, hear and participate in the symposium	12/37 = 32%
<b>Symposium in general</b>	
<b>1. In your opinion, did the symposium meet the following objectives...</b>	
It provided me with an opportunity to make connections and built linkages and partnerships with colleagues and organizations across the North.	30/36 = 83%
It provided me with useful information on health and learning programs and promising practices in communities across the North.	32/35 = 91%
It helped me gain knowledge that can be used to enhance the work I do in my community.	29/35 = 83%
<b>2. In your opinion, did attending the symposium enhance your understanding of...</b>	
Schools as communities and their role within larger communities	19/32 = 59%
Engaging youth	23/34 = 68%
Using art and culture to promote health and well-being	28/33 = 85%
The connections between health and learning	28/32 = 88%

<b>Keynotes and Facilitated Wrap-Up Discussions</b>	
<b>1. Keynotes</b>	
The keynote speakers were excellent choices for the symposium and presentations provided a good introduction or overview to the presentations that followed.	28/34 = 82%
The question and answer time with the keynote presenters was useful in gaining further knowledge and insights.	23/33 = 70%
<b>2. Facilitated Wrap-Up Discussions</b>	
The facilitated wrap-up discussions helped expand on	15/28 = 54%

important themes introduced at the symposium.	
The facilitated wrap-up discussions helped me make linkages with others who are working in similar fields.	15/28 = 54%
<b>Breakout Sessions</b>	
<b>1. Topics</b>	
The breakout session presentations were relevant to my areas of interest and provided me with insight to important health and learning issues in the North.	29/34 = 85%
<b>2. Format</b>	
The time allotted to each breakout session (2 hours) was appropriate	27/34 = 79%
The time allotted to each presentation within the breakout sessions was appropriate (15-25 minutes)	23/33 = 70%
The time for question and answer during the breakout sessions allowed for deeper exploration of the topics addressed.	27/32 = 84%
The facilitators helped me think about how the presentation was relevant to the work that I do.	26/34 = 76%
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
The timing and length of the health breaks worked well and allowed me to get refreshed and recharged for the next session.	32/34 = 94%
The food and beverages served during health breaks and lunches were healthy and satisfyin.	31/33 = 94%
The exhibitors' area was well-organized and interesting.	20/32 = 63%
Booths in the exhibitors' area were relevant to the symposium and contributed to overall learning .	24/33 = 73%
This symposium was worthwhile attending, and I would attend another Northern Health and Learning Symposium in the future.	30/33 = 91%

## Registered Delegates Contact List

The following list contains the names and contact information of 76 participants of the Northern Health and Learning Symposium. This list is not to be considered the complete list of all participants. During the registration phase, to protect the privacy of attendees, participants were given the option to include their contact information.

Aram	Anne	Pl. Com.	Health Promotion Yukon Government
Archer	Jennifer		Nunavut Arctic College
Arsenault	Lorna		Government of Yukon - Health Promotion Unit
Avano	Beverley		Government of Yukon, Department of Education
Baile	Liz		Weledeh Catholic School
Battiste	Marie	Dr.	University of Saskatchewan
Beatty	Phaedra		Yukon Education
Blair	Darlene		Champagne & Aishihik First Nations
Blakesley	Simon	Pl. Com.	CCL-HLKC/Yukon Department of Education
Boleen	Michelle	Pl. Com.	Yukon Government, Health & Social Services
Bonnefoy	Linda		Yukon Best Practice Mentorship Program
Bowlby	Sandy		Alcohol and Drug Services
Butler Walker	Jody		Arctic Health Research Network-Yukon
Carter	Emma		Canadian Council on Learning
Caws	Michelle		Community Nursing, Dawson City Health Center
Coote	Carol		Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards & Committees
Curtis	Barbara		Whole Child Program
Duncan	Lori		Council of Yukon First Nations
Duncan	Tiffany		University of Waterloo
Egan	Kerry		Stanton Territorial Health Authority, GNWT
Finton	Andrew		Sundog Retreat
Geikie	Peter		Department of Education - Nunavut

Gishler	Christopher		Equinox Adventure Learning
Gregson	Carol		Health & Social Services
Gushue	Lorne		Government of the Northwest Territories
Hanley	Brendan	Dr.	Dept of Health & Social Services
Heide	Dana		GNWT
Jarvis-Selinger	Sandra	Dr.	University of British Columbia
Kane	Tracy		Champagne Aishihik First Nation
Kassi	Norma		Arctic Health Research Network-Yukon
Kent	Scott		Canadian Cancer Society
King	Annette		Mental Health Services - YTG
Kurzynski	Gord		Government of Yukon, Executive Council Office, Youth Directorate
Lahey	Wendy		NWT Recreation & Parks Association
Leaf	Wanda		Leaf Solutions
Lincoln	Pat		Health & Social Services, YG
Mahnic	Roman		Samuel Hearne Secondary School
Martin	Marie		Kwanlin Dun Health Center
Martin	Patricia		Ta'an Kwachan Council
McCall	Doug		CASH (Aboriginal Community of Practice)
McFarlane	Arlin		Yukon Educational Theatre
McGregor	Cathy		Department of Education, Government of Nunavut

McLean	Jacqueline		GNWT: Education, Culture & Employment
Meier	Daniela		Government of Yukon
Meister	Brianne	Pl. Com.	Health Promotion Unit
Milmine	Melissa		Alcohol & Drug Services
Nassiopoulos	Mark		Yukon Government
Nieder-Heitmann	Louise		Mental Health First Aid Canada
Orviss	Laura		Selkirk Elementary
Parent	Debbie		Yukon Learn Society
Parker	Ian	Pl. Com.	Health Promotion, Yukon Health and Social Services
Payne	Shannon		Yellowknife Education District No.1

Pearl-Hodgins	Crystal		Whole Child Program
Pepa	Yasmina		Government of Nunavut, Health and Social Services
Piuze	Madeleine		Alcohol & Drug Services
Potter	Jill		Elijah Smith Elementary
Primozić	Marion		Champagne~Aishihik First Nations
Pronovost	Kim-Mia		Health Canada
Radcliffe	David		Yellowknife Education District No.1
Randell	Onalee		Health Canada, First Nations & Inuit Health Branch
Reid	Elizabeth		Department of Education
Rose	Sheila	Dr.	YSHAC
Rosebush	Paul		Hay River Health & Social Services Authority
Ross	Susie		Health Promotion Unit, Yukon Government
Ryan-Hachey	Sheila		South Slave Healthy Communities Partnership
Sidney	Teresa		Council Yukon First Nations
Sparrow	Tom		University of Victoria & Yukon Operations PWGSC - Pacific Region
Stewart	Elaine		Department of Education, Gov't of the NWT
Svec	Karin		CAFN
Thorogood	Evelyn		Evelyn Thorogood Project Consulting
Vivas	Aura		Yukon Learn Society
Walker	Karen		Workers Compensation Health & Safety Board
Whitford	Judy		Weledeh Catholic School, Yellowknife Catholic Schools
Wright	Lucie		Health & Social Services, Yukon Government
Yee	Jessica		Native Youth Sexual Health Network
Zaparinuk	Geoff		Diabetes Education Centre, Whitehorse General Hospital

## Appendix 1: Delegates workbook

Attendees of the Northern Health and Learning Symposium were supplied with a Delegates Workbook in their registration package. The purpose of this workbook was to assist delegates with the recording of their thoughts, ideas, personal reflections or aha moments. The workbook was also designed to be a resource which attendees could take back with to their respective communities of practice or workplace.

### NORTHERN HEALTH AND LEARNING SYMPOSIUM DELEGATE WORKBOOK

#### ***“WHAT? SO, WHAT? NOW WHAT?”***

We have provided this workbook for you to record your thoughts and insights as you listen to the presentation and talk with other delegates. Often, when we attend events and listen to speakers we have “aha” moments and think “what a great idea”, or “that would work great in my organization/community.” Our hope is that this workbook can be your personal record of thoughts, comments and contacts that you can share with others in your workplace and community to guide the work that you do.

#### **DAY ONE**

**Wednesday, September 24**

**Keynote Speaker:** Dr. Marie Battiste, Co-director of the [Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre](#) and Director of the Aboriginal Education Research Centre

#### **NOTES**

**Which of Dr. Battiste’s points are most relevant to you and the work that you do?**

**Based on this presentation, what are three steps you could take to apply this information to your work?**

1.

2.

3.

**BREAKOUT 1**

**Session Attended:**

- Substance Abuse Prevention**
- Promoting Healthier Eating**
- Engaging Youth through the Arts**
- Culturally Relevant Approaches to Health Education**

**NOTES**

Use this space to jot down ideas, connections, contact info, or any “aha’s” that were sparked by this breakout session

**BREAKOUT 2**

**Session Attended:**

- Learning on the Land
- Promoting Healthy Lifestyles: Physical Activity and Nutrition

**NOTES**

Use this space to jot down ideas, connections, contact info, or any “aha’s” that were sparked by this breakout session

**WRAP-UP SESSION FOR DAY ONE**

These questions will be used to shape small and large-group summative discussions at the end of the day.

Based on today’s discussions and presentations...

**WHAT?**

What is the most important insight you had today?

**SO WHAT?**

How is it relevant to your work or your region?

**NOW WHAT?**

How will you apply this insight to your work?

**DAY TWO**

**Thursday, September 25**

**Keynote Speaker:** Dr. Brendan Hanley, Medical Officer of Health for Yukon

**NOTES**

**Which of Dr. Hanley's points are most relevant to you and the work that you do?**

**Based on this presentation, what are three steps you could take to apply this information to your work?**

1.

2.

3.

**BREAKOUT 3**

**Session Attended:**

- Using Technology to Promote Health
- Promoting Health through Community Partnerships
- Mental Health and Addictions
- Promoting Safer Sex

**NOTES**

Use this space to jot down ideas, connections, contact info, or any “aha’s” that were sparked by this breakout session

**BREAKOUT 4**

**Session Attended:**

- Early Childhood Development
- Parents and Kids Learning together/Ongoing Learning in the North
- Chronic Disease Prevention and Management

**NOTES**

Use this space to jot down ideas, connections, contact info, or any “aha’s” that were sparked by this breakout session

## **WRAP-UP SESSION FOR DAY ONE**

These questions will be used to shape small and large-group summative discussions at the end of the day.

Based on today's discussions and presentations...

### **WHAT?**

What is the most important insight you had today?

### **SO WHAT?**

How is it relevant to your work or your region?

**NOW WHAT?**  
How will you apply this insight to your work?

**EXHIBIT AREA**

**NOTES**

Use this space to record any contact information, notes of interest or other items for follow-up that were sparked by your visit/s to the exhibit area.

**Appendix 2: YSHAC member list**

The Yukon School Health Advisory Committee served as the planning committee for the Northern Health and Learning Symposium. While the membership was fluid over the two years of planning, the following list forms the core members of the committee. Thanks go to all who, at one time or another, assisted in the development of this symposium.

- ⦿ Dr. Paula Pasquali, Director of Community Health Programs with the Yukon Government's Department of Health and Social Services.
- ⦿ David Sloan, Yukon's former Minister of Health. His current position is with the Department of Education as a Superintendent of Schools.
- ⦿ Dr. Sheila Rose, Vice Chair of Yukon Food for Learning, Vice Chair of the National Advisory Committee for Child Nutrition ( a committee representing over 35,000 volunteers in all Provinces and Territories).
- ⦿ Brianne Meister, Health Promotion Coordinator, Yukon Department of Health and Social Services. (Stepping in for Mr. Ian Parker, School Health Coordinator, Brianne was instrumental as an organizer of this event).
- ⦿ Michelle Boleen, Communications Specialist with the Yukon Government's Department of Health and Social Services
- ⦿ Dennis Darling, veteran teacher and administrator, seconded as consultant for the Yukon Department of Education as a Health, Career Education and Community Resources specialist.
- ⦿ Jeanne Burke, Active Schools Coordinator with the Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon (RPAY), a non-profit, non government organization with a mandate to work with Yukon agencies, groups and/or individuals in promoting and supporting healthy and active lifestyles.
- ⦿ Bob Walker and Dee Balsam: School Council Liaison with the Yukon Government's Department of Education.
- ⦿ Simon Blakesley, northern coordinator for CCL-HLKC. On secondment from his school administrator position, he provides a link between the HLKC and the Yukon Department of Education. He is a UBC PhD candidate with 19 years experience in rural, northern settings.