

Aboriginal Language Teacher Trainee Fund

Jurisdiction: Yukon

Contact: Dave Sloan

Level: Adult Learning

Theme: Teacher Training Programs

Description of Practice:

The Aboriginal Teacher Training program provides funding to train Aboriginal teachers to teach Aboriginal languages to students in the K – 12 system. The formal training is delivered through the Yukon Native Language Center and the trainee is also mentored by a practising Aboriginal language teacher in a real teaching situation. Currently there are 37 teachers assigned to Aboriginal language programming in Yukon schools and since 2003, 18.5 trainee positions have been offered by the Government of Yukon. 12 rural Yukon schools and 7 Whitehorse schools offer Aboriginal Language programming.

Background:

Aboriginal students comprise 33.3% of the Yukon student population. Aboriginal people comprise 23% of the Yukon population. It is necessary for all Yukon students to understand the unique history and culture of Aboriginal people including their languages.

How is the practice integrated with ongoing non-aboriginal programming?

Aboriginal language programming is offered as a 2nd language program in all community schools with the exception of Faro, Yukon. At the high school level Aboriginal language programming is available as an elective course in most Yukon high schools.

Development:

All 8 of Yukon First Nation languages are in a critical state as most fluent speakers are elderly and the sheer number of speakers is very low – in two languages only a handful remain.

Most Aboriginal language teachers are nearing retirement and there is great urgency to prepare a critical mass of Aboriginal teachers that are fluent in their language to replace those nearing retirement.

Evidence:

Aboriginal Language Teacher Trainees have been funded through the Government of Yukon since 2004.

Adaptability:

Suggestions for adapting the practice in other jurisdictions: Offer job placements for graduates. Ensure that a structured plan is in place for the trainee to develop full fluency in spoken language first and once the spoken language is in place provide the trainee

with the grammar and composition. In terms of teaching skills this must also be considered in a structured situation so as to ensure that the trainee accumulates a broad spectrum of 2nd language teaching skills in 2nd language and immersion situations.

Key lessons learned: Advertisement in rural communities is key to ensuring that all First Nations are aware of the opportunity. Prior to advertising a campaign or promotion should occur to encourage younger people to become interested in a career teaching their ancestral language.

Cautions for interested jurisdictions: First Nation communities should be involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of such a trainee program. In this way local needs can be better addressed as each community's unique situation could be reflected.

Further information:

For further information please refer to the Yukon Native Language Center website at: <http://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/ynlc/About.html> or contact the Director of Learning responsible for the hiring of trainees: Mr. Dave Sloan at dave.sloan@gov.yk.ca.