



Here is some brief information about learning circles in Indigenous Communities that are not described in the Narratives section.

Nokomis Early Years Literacy Program

Katarokwi Native Friendship Centre

50 Hickson Avenue, Kingston, ON K7K 2N6

- Early Years Literacy is a learning circle aimed at toddlers and includes the participation of young parents. What is unique to this learning circle is the inclusion of both English literature and Indigenous language, predominately Mohawk and Ojibwa.
- Nokomis Early Years Literacy Program.
- 8-10 child and parent participants of Aboriginal heritage.
- 0-3 years of age.
- 4-6 years of age.
- Parents are typically age 18-30 (at risk families).
- Located in an urban centre.
- Funded program.
- Day planning with approximately 10-15% parental input (however there was no forum for collecting their input).
- Typical activities; songs, native languages, the use of drum and shakers, exercises and playtime i.e. Puzzles.
- Comfortable and relaxing atmosphere.
- Offers activities and crafts.
- Focus on children's literacy and socialization.
- Create new aboriginal specific resources for children and parents to promote basic reading skills.
- Use of aboriginal languages, songs, activities and stories to provide a culturally rich child development program, for a fun and exciting learning experience.
- Children build self-esteem, identify with culture and develop community.
- Katarokwi Native Friendship Centre was established in 1992. It is committed to bringing positive changes to the daily lives of the Aboriginal community in the Kingston and surrounding rural area, the centre offers a variety of programs and many additional services such as emergency relief for clients.
- Mission or vision – we are the First Nation peoples who collectively recognize, respect, promote and defend our Native ancestral laws, traditions and culture, we are governed by trust, sharing, strength and kindness which nurture and enrich our organization, we pledge to recognize, respect and honor all our relatives beliefs and customs, strength exists in the collectivity of voice, the KNFC will also assume a leadership role in promoting community awareness, understanding and

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- acceptance of the uniqueness of the First Nation culture, while impacting constructively and positively to enrich the community as a whole.
- Available programs at KNFC are the healing and wellness program, life long care program, aboriginal healthy babies, aboriginal prenatal nutrition program, and children's programming (Nokomis Early Years Literacy Program offering an accessible school readiness program for parents, caregivers and children from 0-6 years, through native language, song, and story telling to enhance early childhood development, to prepare children for lifelong learning, health and well-being.) (Early Parent Support and Mother Earth Play Group.)

Restorative Justice Circle

Mnjikaning First Nations (Chipewa)

- This circle receives some funding for facilitators and regular staff positions.
- Began in 1996 and was called Biidaaban (new dawn or coming of the dawn).
- It involved community members involved in wrong doings that have disrupted the well being and safety of the community.
- This circle provides an alternative to the court system.
- The purpose of the circle is taking responsibility or ownership for wrong doings and behaviour with the support of a caring community. It is about being accountable to oneself, family, and community, making restitution to those who have been harmed, restoring balance or reconciliation with those who have been harmed, their families and the community.
- The circle is open to all community members who are concerned about restoring the balance and safety of the community and its members.
- This circle is about building a strong, healthy and safe community.

Men and Women's Circles

Mnjikaning First Nations (Chipewa)

- These circles work in partnership with the Mnjikaning Social Service Department meaning the circles are facilitated by SSD staff.
- Talking, speaking circles.
- Place for sharing and listening in a confidential setting.
- Circle is held weekly on Friday mornings.
- The men's circle focuses predominately on cultural teachings, sharing and outdoor activities that support the men in building a relationship with the land.
- The women's circle spends their time sharing and listening, offering support and nurturing to one another, they also learn traditional teachings and are involved in outdoor activities such as picking strawberries and gathering other foods for feasts, ceremonies, and celebrations.

Language Circle

Mnjikaning First Nations (Chipewa)

- Informal format for teaching and learning, oral tradition

- Offer during the lunch hour
- Participants are primarily Mnjikaning Band Administration Staff
- The circle has been dwindling and may be discontinued as participants stop coming

Drumming Circle

Hosted by Odawa Native Friendship Centre

12 Stirling Ave., Ottawa, ON K1Y 1P8

- Learning the teachings of the drum, drum song, how to care for the drum, etc.
- ONFC is a non profit organization providing services to Ottawa's Aboriginal community.
- Their mission is to enhance the quality of life for Aboriginal people, to maintain a tradition of community, an ethic of self-help and development as well as to provide traditional teachings from our elders.
- ONFC is committed to reinforcing aboriginal cultural development and creating greater awareness and interaction with other cultures.
- Promoting positive aboriginal images, self-respect and expression through a variety of cultural programs and activities.
- Facilitating the development of skills, knowledge and leadership in aboriginal youth.
- Continue to offer services that meet the special needs of aboriginal people who require assistance in an urban environment.
- Women's Circle.
- Hosted by Odawa Native Friendship Centre.
- Moon ceremony and changing of the seasons ceremony.
- Sharing and learning women's teachings (moon time, full moon ceremonies, women's song, dances, etc.).
- Harvesting sage and other women's medicines.

Men's Circle

Hosted by Odawa Native Friendship Centre

12 Stirling Ave., Ottawa, ON K1Y 1P8

- Sharing and learning the teachings and ceremonies for men
- Harvesting sweet grass and other men's medicines
- Teaching and learning is based on oral sharing, modeling, and doing.

Parent Support Circle

Hosted by Odawa Native Friendship Centre

12 Stirling Ave., Ottawa, ON K1Y 1P8

- This is a sharing circle for parents that are looking for ways to support their children.
- They explore traditional teachings, as well as their own unique experiences.

Sharing Circle

Hosted by the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto

16 Spadina Road, Toronto, ON M5R 2S7

- The NCC of Toronto is a community-based, non profit organization which provides a gathering place to deliver programs and services for Native people while striving to reflect the traditional Native cultural perspective.
- The NCC has provided over thirty years of community service. Their purpose has been to deliver program and services to urban Native people, the strength and beauty of our people lie in our ability and willingness to share with one another as well as with our non-Native members and other interest groups – this is one of the fundamental values embodied in our distinctive culture.
- Over the years they have provided services of social, recreational, cultural and spiritual nature, today with more than 70,000 people of native ancestry living and working in the Greater Toronto Area, the centre is still the focal point for services, a gathering place for traditional functions and a meeting place for other Native agencies, as well they share their location and facilities with many other non-profit and charitable organizations
- Every Wednesday evening from 6 – 8 pm.

Women's Hand Drumming Circle

Hosted by the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto

16 Spadina Road, Toronto, ON M5R 2S7

- Every Monday evening from 6 -8 pm.
- The drum is used to strengthen aboriginal women and give them the courage to stand up and use their voices.
- They learn respect for the drum and its healing power.
- Restoring cultural teachings of the drum.

Iroquois Drumming Circle

Hosted by the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto

16 Spadina Road, Toronto, ON M5R 2S7

- Every Tuesday evening from 6-8 pm.
- Traditional Iroquoian songs and dances are learned by listening, observing and doing.

Women's Drumming Circle

Hosted by Anishnawbe Health Toronto

225 Queen Street East, Toronto, ON M5A 1S4

- Traditional Helper (Osh-ka-be-wis) email: desquimaux@aht.ca.
- Every Wednesday evening beginning at 6 pm.
- The WDC has 6 to 12 regular participants.
- Teaching and learning is based on oral tradition. (The women listen to the songs and when the song is learned, the drum is added.)

- Some songs require translation into English for the participants in the circle to understand the full meaning of the song. (This is usually done by an elder or experienced participant in the circle.)
- AHT mission is to improve the health and well-being of Aboriginal people in spirit, mind, emotion and body by providing traditional healing within a multi-disciplinary health care model. The model of health care at AHT is based on our culture and traditions, direction is provided by a volunteer board made up of community members. Health care providers include traditional healers, elders and medicine people, physicians, nurses, chiropractors, naturopaths, FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder services) workers, massage therapists, traditional counselors, a psychiatrist, chiropodist, and dentist.
- Healing begins with and includes many spiritual ceremonies including sweat lodge, shaking tent, full moon ceremony, naming ceremonies, clan feasts, pipe ceremonies, and visions quests.
- AHT also provides anonymous HIV testing, a prenatal program, a community health worker training program, and Out of the Cold – street patrol programs assisting the homeless with clothing, food, shelter and assistance.
- They offer a refuge for native people by providing services to help them heal, communicate, and learn while fostering community awareness and compassion for the disadvantaged
- They also offer CAP (Community Access Program, it provides support for public computer access to the information highway via the internet, this allows clients to build valuable skills (technological literacy), increase self-esteem. Offering a learning environment to build community communication, literacy and technological skills.

Teaching Circle

Hosted by Anishnawbe Health Toronto

225 Queen Street East, Toronto, ON M5A 1S4

- Every Monday evening beginning at 6 pm.
- Teachings are offered by cultural teachers and traditional elders.
- The teaching circle is directed by the participants and what they would like to learn or hear about.
- The TC is primarily oral teaching and sharing, no print material is used unless initiated by a participant.
- Sometime the TC uses their time for a talking / sharing circle.
- The number of participants vary, although there are a core group of 8 members that attend regularly.
- The group is very diverse and have various literacy levels, some of the participants are professionals, while others are recovering from addictions.
- The focus of the circle is on healing and cultural renewal.

Beading Circle

Hosted by Native Women's Resource Centre

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191 Gerrard Street, East, Toronto, ON M5A 2E5

- Circle is held every Wednesday evening from 6 – 8 pm.
- There are at least four active literacy learners that attend the beading circle, in a circle of 8 to 12 participants.
- Participants learn by being involved.
- Participants experience empowerment by being involved, sharing, addressing barriers and obstacles.

Ojibway Language Circle

Hosted by Native Women's Resource Centre

191 Gerrard Street, East, Toronto, ON M5A 2E5

- The Native Women's Resource Centre in Toronto is host to many programs and services for Native Women.
- This circle is about nurturing our inner circle and learning Ojibway language.
- Based on oral tradition.

Breastfeeding Circle (now Nursing Mother's Group)

Thayendanega Health Centre

1658 York Road, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, ON K0K 1X0

- Second and fourth Friday morning of every month.
- Opportunity to discuss the benefits of breastfeeding for the baby and mother, getting to know your baby, teething, nutritional support, and illness.
- Increase baby – parent bonding.
- Offers friendly mother to mother support.
- Nurses and other health care professional volunteer their time and support.
- Health Information and resource materials.
- Infant and child development.
- Parenting and coping skills.
- Community services and activities.

Diabetes Support Group

Thayendanega Health Centre

1658 York Road, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, ON K0K 1X0

- Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month from 7 pm – 8:30 pm.
- They learn about healthy living with diabetes.
- Guest speakers visit to share on a variety of topics (new products, nutrition tips, etc.).
- Sometimes the group will gather to watch a video.

Gathering of Grandmothers

Thayendanega Health Centre

1658 York Road, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, ON K0K 1X0

- Meets the last Thursday of every month at 7 pm.
- Learn about the traditional role of grandmothers.
- Thinking about and planning for the seven generations.
- Advocating and support youth initiatives.

Moon Ceremony

Red Cedars Shelter

P.O. Box 290, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, ON K0K 3A0

- Celebrating the full moon.
- The ceremony is followed by a feast.
- All women are welcome and asked to wear a skirt, bring water and tobacco if possible.
- The moon ceremony operates like a sharing or healing circle while offering greetings and thanksgiving to creation and Grandmother moon for her support and guidance for all things female.
- The shelter offers support for abused women and their children with safe shelter, one to one counseling, advocacy, referrals, court support, education sessions, circles, traditional teachings, and cultural awareness workshops.

Tsi Kionhnheht Ne Onkwawenna, Language Circle

Hosted by Ka:nhote, Tyendinaga Territory Public Library

1644 York Road, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, ON K0K 1X0

- Established to support the continuation of living language and language revitalization initiatives in the community of Tyendinaga.
- They meet regularly at the library and has organized and been involved in various activities including Aboriginal Languages Day, sponsoring 100 Days of Mohawk, an annual “Language Hero” event that celebrates community members studying the language (honoured for their dedication, commitment, and perseverance in learning Mohawk language), as well as evening language classes, summer immersion programs, National Aboriginal Day planning, and rites of passage workshops.
- The Mohawk language circle consists of approximately 15 participants.

Partners In Education for Quinte Mohawk School

- Monthly meetings at QMS library from 7-9 pm.
- Volunteer parents committee.
- Fundraising and supporting QMS.

Tyendinaga Native Women’s Association

Box 280, Shannonville, ON K0K 3A0

- Monthly meetings are held on the first Monday of every month at 7 pm.
- They are a large group of women who believe in service to women of Tyendinaga community, they have approximately 30 to 50 active members.

- They discuss issues that are relevant to the Native women and their families such as gender inequality in the Indian Act, diabetes, etc.
- They offer craft workshops and are planning a “healing circle”.
- They do fundraising in the community and offer monetary donations to community members and organizations in need.

Tyendinaga Young Women’s Singers

Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, ON K0K 1X0

- 15 to 20 regular participants that gather weekly to learning and share traditional women’s and social songs of Tyendinaga.
- The group also volunteers to perform at various community events to raise money to support their learning and sharing across Haudenosaunee territory.
- Helps young women to strengthen their identity as young Haudenosaunee women
- Builds community and support network.
- Learning is oral, participants learn the songs, dances, drum and rattle by doing, experiencing, listening and feeling.

Ongoing Investigations:

Turning Pages

Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy

1535 – 14th Street, RR#4, Invermere, BC V0A 1K4

- Akikqnuk First Nations Education Coordinator, the Community Literacy Coordinator of the Windermere Valley and the Healthy Community Team at Akikqnuk identified a need to find a way to help and encourage children in grades 4 -7 who were having difficulty with reading to both improve their skills and help them to enjoy reading more.
- The goal of the after school program was to provide some basic instruction to parents in how to best read with and help their children with their reading.
- Few parents came to the training session, instead about 10 band employees attended and became tutors for individual children.
- Training parents to read with and help their children would have made the program much more effective and useful to both the children in the program and any other siblings they may have and to their parents, several of whom have reading difficulties of their own.
- The reserve is rural and the population is not all concentrated together in a way to make transportation an easy matter.
- Many parents work during the day or had no transportation to get to the band hall
- At first they intended to offer the program in the evening but getting children and parents to the band hall at that time was insurmountable.
- This is why we chose to offer the program after school and on Friday when the students would not be too tired after a long day at school.

- The children arrived at the band hall on the school bus about noon on Friday and ate a lunch prepared by the band members.
- They then paired up with their tutors and read for 45 minutes.
- They then had some time to play games such as boggle and chess for a half an hour followed by a sharing circle in which they discussed what everyone had been reading that day.
- The group met once each week and the intention was to read together, that rarely happened however the band employees found it difficult to find the time and the students had many other after-school activities they engaged in including language classes twice each week.
- Both tutors and students evaluated the program by completing a survey.
- The students like the program, although a few stated they did not like the reading circle.
- Tutors felt the students' reading ability had improved.
- In the end the program proved worthwhile in that it encouraged these students to read for pleasure, to think about what they were reading and gave them some basic help where they were running into difficulty.
- The program was too short to have a significant impact on the reading abilities at 15 weeks.
- It was also designed to deal with deep reading difficulties as the tutors had only a short 4 hour training.
- The band employees felt it was too difficult for them to commit such a large amount of their time.

National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO)

56 Spark Street, Suit 400, Ottawa, ON K1P 5A9

- NAHO is designed to influence and advance the health and well-being of Aboriginal peoples through education, promote understanding of health issues affecting Aboriginal peoples, facilitate and promote health research and develop research partnerships, foster the participation of Aboriginal people in the delivery of health care, and affirm and protect Aboriginal traditional healing practices
- NAHO is committed to respecting diversity, bridging Aboriginal traditional and western contemporary healing and wellness approaches, view research as a tool for supporting Aboriginal communities in managing health, and reflect the values and principles contained in traditional knowledge and practices
- Research circle

Auditing Informal Learning in the Workplace

Centre for Education & Work

University of Winnipeg, 515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3B 2E9

- Auditing informal learning in the workplace (specific interest in Aboriginal participants) – bridging the gap between education and the workplace.
- Promote the return and connection of the adult learner to the education system.
- Increase linkages between the workplace and post-secondary education.

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- Facilitate adult learner friendly and focused discussions resulting from daily activities related to work, family, or leisure (not structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time, or learning support).
- Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases is incidental or random.
- Focus on informal learning events that are transferable.
- Discuss emerging patterns relating to essential skills.
- Little activity in literacy – increasing complexity of document use, etc.
- Oral communications as the most important skills.
- What learning is most common and how are individuals learning most often?
- Family values.
- Learning is reactive to problem or situation.
- Learning from experience, trial and error, asking question
- Fear of judgments
- How do I know what I have learned?
- What are they learning and how can this knowledge be shared?

Miawpukek First Nation (Conne River), Newfoundland

- Miawpukek was recognized as an official Indian Act Band in 1984 and is located on the south east shore of Newfoundland.
- The community is guided by traditional Mi'kmaq values.
- Over the past several years the Miawpukek Band has placed increasing emphasis on its culture and traditional heritage.
- Each year the community hosts a Powwow that is characterized by drumming, dancing, chanting, and displays of fine traditional regalia.

OPP Drum Circle, Blue Wolf

Ontario Provincial Police, First Nation Branch

- This circle is composed of First Nation police officers from across Ontario
- The circle comes together to learn and share traditional drums songs
- The circle also travels to various Powwows (throughout the year) sharing their songs and drumming
- The also serve a role models for First Nation youth

CARE Circle

Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory

- Wakwanaronkewa (we have feelings for others).
- The group evolved out of a Suicide Prevention Workshop offered in the community.
- The circle began with 12 participants that met monthly for just over one year.
- Their goal was to create awareness about suicide in the community, as well as offer a core group of community members that willing to assist those in need or at risk of taking their own life.

- Simply they are a circle of caring community members, who are about reaching out to care for each other, with the desire of promoting wellness with each other in the community.
- The circle decided upon some basic gathering principles; confidentiality, speaking the truth without blame or judgement, and thinking of others.
- The circle began with a prayer of thanksgiving and smudge and continued with a few minutes for each person to share how they are doing with emphasis was placed on feelings, emotions, their week, etc.
- The previous week a topic was selected to have a discussion and/or learning, some examples were; culture and healing, fear of strong emotions, sexuality, listening to someone in emotional pain, shame, residential school, providing emotional support.
- The circle also set aside time each week to plan activities in the community that would attract more people to the circle for example; corn soup supper, radio show on suicide prevention education, family BBQ, healing workshop, and some contribution to the Tyendinaga Pow Wow
- Each meeting ended with closing words.
- Circle has stopped meeting due to dwindling participation and no new participants.

Choices Program

315 Fafard Street, Kitigan Zibi, Algonquin Community

- Kitigan Zibi is located near the town of Maniwaki, Quebec.
- Choices is an alternative educational program sponsored by Kitigan Zibi Education Council in partnership with Algonquin College.
- Choices was created in 1992 due to a demand on the Kitigan Zibi reserve of community members who had been out of school, and expressed an interest in upgrading academic skills and preparing for college.
- Distinguishing features are a homelike setting, students work at their own pace.

Arctic Bay (Ikpiarjuk), Baffin Region, Nunavut

- The communities name means “a bag or pocket”.
- Youth Justice Committee.
- Vocational and Continuing Education: Adult education centre (one resident adult educator).
- Major activities – mining oil and gas exploration, trapping, marine mammal harvesting, handicrafts/carving, quarrying.