



# Children's Charter Report 2007

Catch the Dream of  
Life-long Literacy

## Basics of Literacy . . Catch the Dream!

The dream catcher is an Aboriginal gift. It was created by loving family members with various materials, including willow or hoops, sinew, leather, beads and other natural items like feathers, shells, quills and stones. The Great Lake Algonquian, Cree, Ojibwa and Chippewa were known to use dream catchers to help their children believe that night stories or good dreams would travel through the web, while bad nightmares would get entangled in the catcher. Today the dream catcher is very popular and is used in many nations.

The dream catcher resembles the spider's web, which can be seen on early birch bark scrolls and is believed to hold good energy. It is delicately woven and seems very intricate and vulnerable but has great energy when completed. Literacy is both as delicate and strong as a spider's web. It is interconnected and has many parts. It builds upon itself to create strength, but can fall apart if there is a weak link. Literacy is a resource to ensure life-long health. Consider how literacy nurtures physical, emotional, mental and spiritual wellness in family living.

Early literacy skills are the foundation for future learning; experience helps form the way children learn, think, and respond to challenges in their lives. Just as the spider web and the dream catcher are created using small steps to weave a strong support, literacy skills can create good energy and support healthy growth and development for a lifetime.

Meegwetch  
Thank You

### Literacy Definition

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials in daily activities at home, work and in the community. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable a person to achieve his goals, to develop her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society. (UNESCO)

Literacy is an important resource to ensure life-long good health.

Higher literacy levels:

- improve quality of life
- reduce poverty
- lower unemployment
- decrease public assistance
- improve self-confidence
- enhance parenting skills
- increase number of job prospects
- enhance participation in community life in general



## Oral Literacy

It is communicating by listening, speaking or signing. It is the beginning of other literacy skills and helps children to become good communicators.

*“When we teach a child to draw, we teach him to see. When we teach a child to play a musical instrument, we teach her to listen. When we teach a child to dance, we teach him to move through life with grace. When we teach a child to read and write, we teach her how to think. When we nurture imagination, we create a better world, one child at a time.”* (Jane Alexander; [www.prenatalplus.com](http://www.prenatalplus.com))

### Home

- talk to your children in your own language
- listen while your child talks to you
- read books aloud
- have talks around the dinner table
- sing songs, tell nursery rhymes, fairytales, or stories aloud
- play with your child
- turn the tv off at mealtime

### School

- volunteer to read at your local school
- support and attend art and drama programs
- promote conversations in classrooms
- encourage student support programs – students supporting and talking to each other
- support cooperative learning
- support parent workshop and literacy events

### Community

- support literacy programs such as puppet shows and plays and encourage the business community to do the same
- invest in the arts – drama clubs, reading/writing and music festivals
- support adult literacy programs
- become a mentor

## Writing

Writing is a written record of what we say, think and dream.

It is important because it is a symbol of who we are. It helps us connect with our past, present and future and with other people.

### Home

- write a grocery list
- have message boards
- write your child a message and put it in his/her lunch bag
- have your child draw a picture
- encourage scribbling
- write a thank you note with your child
- write a recipe with your child

### School

- promote classroom message boards
- encourage writing for a purpose (e.g. thank you notes, agendas, to-do lists, poetry)
- have writing centres
- encourage diaries, logs and journals
- promote clear language when sending parent letters, information and newsletters

### Community

- encourage businesses to support arts initiatives
- promote clear language in all communication
- understand the need for alternative means of writing such as computers
- support the arts community as well as music and writing festivals

## Reading

The ability to understand all print and recognize symbols.

The gift of reading helps you make sense of the world around you. Reading takes you places you otherwise could not go. It also gives you information.

### Home

- read aloud every day
- read a variety of print: nursery rhymes, fairytales, legends, fiction, and non-fiction
- subscribe to a magazine/newspaper
- read the captions on boxes, nutritional information, road signs, licence plates, cookbooks
- look for familiar words (ie. exit, enter, washrooms)
- visit bookstores
- trade books with friends
- build a home library

### School

- volunteer to read with a child
- help to create inviting classroom libraries
- donate books
- create book corners in schools
- encourage reading music, books and plays
- promote links between elementary and secondary students
- approach businesses to donate books

### Community

- use libraries
- support "Learning Through the Arts" programs
- donate books
- raise funds for literacy projects
- create reading tents at community events
- create reading circles
- volunteer for literacy programs

## Numeracy

Numeric literacy is the ability to understand and use basic mathematical skills. This includes the ability to count, to do basic number operations and to use those skills in everyday activities such as banking, measuring and so on. (Marja Korhonen, Jan'06)

Over 40% of Canadians have difficulty with everyday numeracy tasks (i.e. balancing a chequebook, calculating a tip, measuring distance). This is about 4 in 10 Canadians. (ABC Canada [www.mathliteracy.ca](http://www.mathliteracy.ca))

Numbers are present everywhere in our lives. We need to understand them to function and to help us every day.

### Home

- give your children an allowance
- play games with dice
- include children in budgeting
- make a map
- go shopping
- bake with your children
- count steps

### School

- use specialists
- provide training in new math methods
- have a math night
- enter math contests
- encourage newspaper and math buddies programs
- use "Learning Through the Arts" to teach math

### Community

- point out numbers on signs
- visit the library for free programs and activities
- let your child make his own purchase using money
- count railway cars when a train passes

## Media

Media literacy is being able to tell the difference between what is real and what is fiction. It is interpreting the message and intention of the author.

*“Media literacy is not just important, it’s absolutely critical. It’s going to make the difference between whether kids are a tool of the mass media or whether the mass media is a tool for kids to use.”*  
(Linda Ellerbee, Nick News)

*“We must prepare young people for living in a world of powerful images, words and sounds.”*  
(UNESCO, 1982)

### Home

- watch and read different media with your child and talk about the messages in television, movies, radio, videos, magazines, music, newspapers, internet, advertising
- discuss what is real and what isn't in the media such as reality shows, magazines, game shows
- discuss different media issues: violence, stereotyping, online privacy
- be web/internet aware

### School

- encourage language media awareness campaigns
- talk about different kinds of media
- foster “graffiti” projects
- support local film making, drama and artistic projects
- make your school a commercial/advertising-free zone
- offer teachers professional development workshops on media awareness
- celebrate Canada’s Annual National Media Education Week in your school

### Community

- speak out and support appropriate content in the media
- celebrate Canada’s Annual National Media Education Week in your business/agency



## Facts & Stats

- 4 out of 10 Ontario adults don't have the literacy skills needed to meet the demands of today's knowledge-based society.
- Family literacy occurs naturally during the routines of daily living and refers to any activity where parents, children or the extended family use oral or written language in carrying out daily tasks within the context of their culture and community.
- Family literacy is not just about reading and writing. It is about building stronger relationships between parents and children. It is about getting parents involved in their children's education. It is about building strong families and healthier communities. (Sask. Literacy Network, Family Literacy Fact Sheet)
- Literacy skills are like muscles. They need to be exercised.
- Reading aloud with children helps them learn listening, vocabulary and language skills, and develop their imagination and creativity. (Family Literacy Foundation; 2001)
- People with literacy challenges are more likely to have long-term health problems. (taken from OLC's Literacy & Health Fact Sheet)
- From April 2006 to March 2007, 810 adults accessed literacy services in Northwestern Ontario.
- From April 2006 to March 2007, 914 adults accessed literacy programs in Thunder Bay.
- **January 27 is Family Literacy Day.**
- **September 8 is International Literacy Day.**

For further information and resources about literacy services in your community contact the Lakehead Social Planning Council at 626-9626 or visit [www.lspc.ca](http://www.lspc.ca).



A Message from  
**Thunder Bay Children's Advocate**

I am honoured to work with the Children's Charter Coalition. The people and organizations that make up the coalition are working for a better present and future for our children.

As this report shows, literacy is one of the keys to success for our children and our community.

Reading and writing opens up a world of opportunity. First we learn to read and then, by early grade school, we read to learn. This develops the habit of lifelong learning that is so important these days.

Let's all read toward a brighter future.

**Joe Virdiramo**  
City Councillor



A Message from  
**Co-Chairs of the  
Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition**

The Coalition is pleased to bring you our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual report *Catch the Dream of Life-long Literacy*. Reading affects all parts of our lives. It is our hope that this report will be read by parents, policy makers and members of our community. We hope they will take action to help children become better readers to ensure their life-long good health.

The Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition is made up of people and organizations that care about children and want to put their needs first. The Charter was created based on the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child.

We would like to thank all the community partners that helped with the making of this report.

**Laura Prodanyk**  
Public Health Nurse  
Thunder Bay District Health Unit

**Shaun Peirce**  
Community Health Worker  
Norwest Community Health Centres



# Thunder Bay Children's Charter

All children deserve basic rights and freedoms. A fair share of society's resources must be devoted to ensuring this. Families are responsible for raising their children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that working in partnership with communities, all levels of governments have a duty to assist families to fulfill their responsibilities.\*

## All Thunder Bay children deserve:

- ✓ a quality of life that meets their physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs.
- ✓ to have enough nutritious food every day.
- ✓ to have a safe and comfortable place to live.
- ✓ quality child care and/or early education programs.
- ✓ to have safe places to play, and access to affordable recreational activities.
- ✓ quality primary, secondary, and affordable post secondary education.
- ✓ **the resources to ensure life-long good health.**
- ✓ to be served by governments that put the health and well-being of children first by ensuring enough funding for children's programs.
- ✓ to be protected from neglect and abuse.
- ✓ to be safe from exploitation.\*\*

\* For the purposes of this Charter children are defined as being from birth to eighteen years of age.

\*\* For the purposes of this Charter being exploited means to be used unfairly by someone else to meet their own needs.

## Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition

- Fair Start
- Our Kids Count
- Healthy Early Years Network
- Children's Centre Thunder Bay
- Thunder Bay Public Library
- Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- NorWest Community Health Centres
- Lakehead Elementary Teachers of Ontario
- Children's Advocate, City of Thunder Bay
- Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation
- City of Thunder Bay – Community Services Department
- Communities Together for Children – Ontario Early Years Centre

[www.tbdhu.com](http://www.tbdhu.com)

[www.thunderbay.ca](http://www.thunderbay.ca)