Meadow Lake Early Literacy Project
Meadow Lake Tribal Council

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Preface

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Project Abstract

Through an Early Years Evaluation (EYE), the Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) determined that the majority of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students in its communities were experiencing literacy difficulties, and would likely continue to experience problems learning to read and write without effective small-group and individual interventions. In January of 2016, the MLTC implemented an Early Years Intiative, called Talk2Learn, in collaboration with the nine Meadow Lake First Nations. Research indicates that future literacy success can be significantly enhanced by identifying students who are struggling with literacy early on and assisting them with a tiered holistic instructional approach during the kindergarten to Grade 3 years. The MLTC Early Learning Team believes that increased success in nursery and kindergarten students is best achieved by building a safe environment and developing authentic relationships. The program's philosophy is that land, language, relationships, and culture must be established before programming can address cognitive and language skills. In addition, research also indicates that caregivers who are engaged in their child's early education are more likely to remain engaged throughout the rest of their child's education. MLTC education targets several key outcomes, with two of the highest priority outcomes being increased parent/caregiver engagement and increasing students' cognition and communication skills to age-appropriate levels by the end of kindergarten.

Project Holder

Meadow Lake Tribal Council

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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) consists of nine First Nations: Birch Narrows Dene Nation; Buffalo River Dene Nation; Canoe Lake Cree First Nation; Clearwater River Dene Nation; English River First Nation; Flying Dust First Nation; Makwa Sahgaiehan First Nation; Ministikwan Lake Cree Nation; and Waterhen Lake First Nation. Each nation has its own K-12 school, with the exception of Birch Narrows, Ministikwan, and Wahterhen, which are K-9, and Flying Dust, which is K-4.

Through an Early Years Evaluation (EYE), the MLTC determined that the majority of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students in its communities were experiencing literacy difficulties, and would likely continue to experience problems learning to read and write without effective small-group and individual interventions. In January of 2016, the MLTC implemented an Early Years Intiative, called Talk2Learn, in collaboration with the nine Meadow Lake First Nations. The MLTC has carefully and innovatively tracked data and employed a unique program design that not only builds local community capacity, but also reaches into the community to develop true collaborative partnerships with families.

The early returns of this innovative approach have included greater holistic awareness and support for early years interventions, as well as increased collaborations, which have led to unique gains. The number of parental engagement opportunities and experiences has rapidly increased through the introduction of family literacy nights and home visitations, which has helped to re-orient the parent-student relationship and parent-school relationship through the lens of literacy and reading. Further to this study, the number of schools participating in the program has increased in each of the last three years. The quantitative data shows that the expansion of this intervention has resulted in a consitent decline in the number of students whose literacy test scores fall within Tier 3 (students experiencing significant difficulty), and a corresponding increase in the number of students whose scores have moved up to Tier 2 and Tier 1 (appropriate development skill levels).

The observational data clearly demonstrates that early literacy interventions can dramatically reduce the percentage of students requiring extra supports (Tier 3 and Tier 2), thus increasing the proportion of students with grade-level literacy skills each year. It must be pointed out that this particular program has been designed to utilize a unique and innovative approach that uses holistic and context-sensitive literacy interventions to meet the needs of indigenous youth, families, and communities.

Meadow Lake Early Literacy Project

Description of the Program

The overall purpose of this initiative is to improve students' literacy skills, to improve parent engagement, and, ultimately, to increase secondary student retention. The project's primary focus is to ensure that children have reached "appropriate development levels" before they leave kindergarten. To this end, the program emphasizes oral language development, as this is a strong indication that they will be able to learn to read without any foreseeable difficulties.

Beyond the timeline for reporting on this project, we examined Fountas and Pinnell Reading Benchmark data for students completing Grade 3 in order to determine whether those who have received this early literacy intervention are reading at grade level as predicted in the EYE (Early Years Evaluation) materials.

Key Aspects

1) Designated Early Literacy Interventionists

The Talk2Learn (T2L) project provides salary, training, and team support for a new position—the Early Literacy Interventionist (ELI). Each First Nation school employs a community-based ELI who works specifically with the teachers and the three to five year olds (Headstart, nursery, and kindergarten) who have been identified by the Early Years Evaluation (EYE) as experiencing "some difficulty" (yellow zone) or "significant difficulty" (red zone). The ELI works directly with these children on their identified areas of need, with a focus on oral language development. The ELI plays a key role in encouraging parents to engage actively in their children's learning, which serves to enhance the relationships between the children's home and school environments.

The new ELI position ensures that essential interventions identified by the MLTC Early Learning Team will be deliverable in each school. The ELI's knowledge of the local language and family environments, as well as their personal relationships with the children's parents and caregivers, are all key assets that they bring to their role. The work of these Interventionists is expected to mobilize each community's capacity to develop its children's language skills and, ultimately, to broaden their educational and employment opportunities.

2) **Parental Engagement**

The combination of Response to Intervention (RTI) and a holistic framework that fosters family engagement is foundational to this approach because it allows staff to focus resources on students' needs before they have faced years of failure. One of the project's main goals is to support meaningful parental engagement in their children's education. Ideally, this engagement begins when children first enter school and is continued seamlessly throughout the elementary years. ELIs strive to ensure that essential interventions identified by the MLTC Early Learning Team will be deliverable in each school, and to enhance the relationships between the home and school environments. Additionally, the ELI plays a key role in encouraging parent participation through home visits and literacy-focused parent and caregiver events, such as monthly Literacy Nights.

3) **Collaborative Teamwork**

The Early Literacy Interventionists (ELIs) in each school are MLTC employees. ELIs accountable to the MLTC Early Learning Team members (SLP, OT, Early Childhood Coordinator, ERI), who are responsible for providing the ELIs with ongoing training and in-school consultation. Interventionists are part of a team of educators who play distinct roles in early learning. This team includes school administrators, classroom teachers, Student Services and Literacy Catalyst teachers, as well as MLTC leaders, specialists, and coordinators. As part of this approach, these roles and their responsibilities are clearly defined so these individuals can be effectively integrated into school-based professional learning teams. These learning teams will be encouraged to maintain a spirit of inquiry as they investigate student progress and adjust their instructional approaches accordingly.

4) **Capacity Building**

ELIs receive a variety of supports, including materials and professional-development opportunities designed to enhance their ability to work intensively with students on their areas of need. ELIs play a key role in engaging parents as active language-development partners in addition to acting as an in-school support for teachers and parents. As part of their in-school support activities, ELIs provide supports and deliverables (ELE, EYE, oral language development, parent engagement, etc.) aimed at enhancing student development—particularly with a focus on oral language development—and nurturing the relationship between the children's home and school environments.

Context

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) consists of nine First Nations: Birch Narrows Dene Nation; Buffalo River Dene Nation; Canoe Lake Cree First Nation; Clearwater River Dene Nation; English River First Nation; Flying Dust First Nation; Makwa Sahgaiehan First Nation; Ministikwan Lake Cree Nation; and Waterhen Lake First Nation. Each nation has its own K-12 school, with the exception of Birch Narrows, Ministikwan, and Wahterhen, which are K-9, and Flying Dust, which is K-4. An Early Years Evaluation revealed that over 85% of MLTC kindergarten students were experiencing literacy difficulties, and that these children would likely continue to struggle with learning to read unless a proper intervention was implemented.
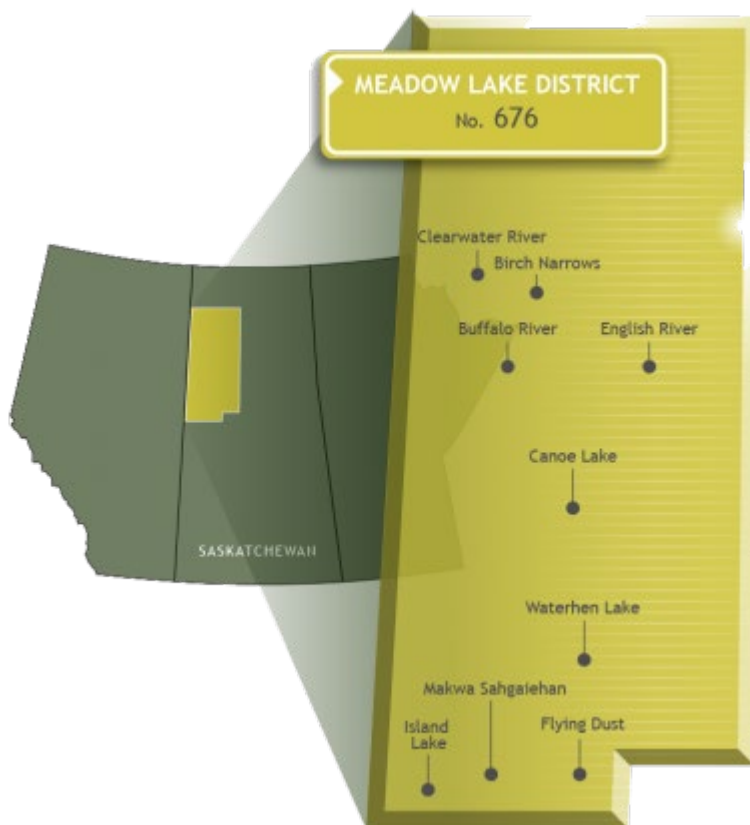
In January of 2016, the MLTC implemented an Early Years Intiative, called Talk2Learn, in collaboration with the nine Meadow Lake First Nations. Research indicates that future literacy success can be significantly enhanced by identifying students who are struggling with literacy early on, and assisting them with a tiered holistic instructional approach during the kindergarten to Grade 3 years. MLTC Early Learning Staff believe that increasing the success of its nursery and kindergarten students can only be achieved by

building a safe learning environment and by developing authentic relationships. However, before cognitive and language skills can be addressed, it is essential to establish the importance of land, language, relationships, and culture. In addition, research also indicates that caregivers who are engaged in their child's early education are more likely to remain engaged throughout the rest of their child's education. Therefore, this initiative has two main goals: to increase parent/caregiver engagement, and to ensure that kindergarten students possess age-appropriate cognition and communication skills by the end of kindergarten.

Brief History of the Project

The results of an Early Years Evaluation (EYE) performed in 2014-2015 revealed that 51.9% of the kindergarten students who were tested required a Tier 3 intervention, with an additional 35% requiring a Tier 2 intervention. In other words, more than 85% of kindergarten students were either experiencing "significant difficulty" (red zone) or "some difficulty" (yellow zone), and would likely continue to have difficulties learning to read unless they received effective small-group and individual interventions. The urgent need for early literacy initiatives was echoed in EYE-DA results for three and four year olds, which showed that more than 50% were "experiencing significant difficulty" in the two domains that most strongly predict literacy success: *cognitive skills* and *language and communication*.

The Early Years Evaluation (EYE) is provincially approved tool for assessing learning domains closely associated with readiness for reading. EYE results can be used to identify students who are experiencing difficulty, and to determine the type and amount of support these students require in order to bring their literacy skills up to a grade-appropriate level. EYE materials cite research showing that students with age-appropriate EYE scores are likely to have stronger scores on reading and writing benchmarks at age eight or nine (end of Grade 3). This is significant, as children who have not learned to read by Grade 3 may never read well, which will have a detrimental effect on future school success and life opportunities.

A focus on oral language development can contribute to reading, as it builds comprehension skills by going beyond simple word identification. Indeed, current early learning research shows that responsive, interactive conversations between adults and children is the most effective way to build a foundation for reading comprehension and writing fluency. Opportunities for these conversations frequently occur during classroom routines, for example, child-adult discussions that focus on fiction and non-fiction picture books, and storytelling in which children's narratives are extended in conversation with an adult. Children's drawings can also be a focal point for storytelling and may involve pre-writing activities such as scribing and labeling. The importance of oral language

development in literacy is also recognized by one of the world's leading providers of professional development for SLPs and early learning specialists, the Hanen Centre, which also provides high-quality materials that help parents engage in interactive conversations with their children.

Professional-development opportunities enable the teams of early learning teachers and ELIs to optimize their oral language development strategies for children with identified needs, both at school and at home. Research indicates that teachers in high-poverty areas may benefit from focusing less on alphabet skills in isolation, and placing greater emphasis on print awareness and helping children develop their oral language skills by engaging them in interactive conversations. Furthermore, professional development is also sorely needed for teachers who do not understand the powerful connection between reading and writing, as these educators often neglect writing instruction until students have mastered reading.

A Case for Contextual Innovation and Design

Indigenous students face immense educational disadvantages in mainstream schooling which leads to a number of negative consequences for them as individuals and for their communities. Therefore, the issue of teaching literacy with principles derived from research informed by Indigenous ways of knowing is of critical importance. **(Banister & Begoray, 2013)**

Literacy practices are rooted in social contexts; that is, the meaning and use of words is largely dependent on the writer or reader's social world. Research shows that early literacy experiences, opportunities to build vocabularies, and literacy rich environments most effectively support the development of the pre-reading and cognitive skills (including grade-level reading) that are critical to children's success in school and other social contexts.

Although single-factor explanations of school failure among Indigenous and minority children are inadequate, many researchers agree that school entails specific forms of academic language or discourse that may disadvantage certain students (Wiltse, 2015). Teachers determine what literacy and identity practices are acceptable in their classrooms, which is largely a product of their own cultural backgrounds (for example, their own school experiences), their position of authority (in charge of the classroom), and the cultural tradition of the Western school system (Banister & Begoray, 2015).
Since Indigenous knowledge is "personal, oral, experiential, holistic and conveyed in narrative and metaphorical language" (Castellano, 2000, p.25) and includes a rainbow of literacy skills, Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators must gain a stronger understanding of the culturally-based literacy practices of Indigenous peoples if they are to reach them successfully. Banister and Begoray (2013) found that Indigenous students respond best to teachers who: establish relationships based on respect and trust with

them; design classroom activities that encourage active involvement; make an effort to include their cultural background; engage in power sharing in the classroom; and use a variety of sign systems—especially oral and visual ones—in order to improve their literacy. These findings are supported by the OECD's (2017) report on promising practices in supporting success for Indigenous students.

Research also indicates that effective partnerships between parents, teachers, and the community play a critical role in the early literacy success of Indigenous students. These partnerships have universally been heralded as being crucial to improving young Indigenous students' participation in early childhood education and their literacy development (Fluckiger et al., 2012).

The strengths of Indigenous parents and their communities are often overlooked or undervalued in many family-school interactions, particularly in the form of inappropriate interventions and inexperienced but well-intentioned practitioners (Shepherd & Walker, 2008). However, relationships between the school community and parents that are built upon trust and mutual respect, coupled with carefully designed frameworks or models that support early literacy opportunities, are valuable components in supporting literacy interventions (Fluckiger et al., 2012; Wiltse, 2015).

Major Objectives of the Project

- ➢ *Identify young students experiencing issues with literacy (nursery to Grade 3, with a focus on kindergarten), as indicated by an Early Years Evaluation (EYE).*
- ➢ *Improve the literacy skills of early learners identified as requiring Tier 3 and Tier 2 intervention, and ensure that students are reading at grade-level by Grade 3.*
- ➢ *Improve parental engagement in student learning and literacy.*
- ➢ *Increase secondary student retention and lifelong learning.*

Connection to Indspire's Principals

- ❖ **Principle 3:** Indigenous knowledges (ways of being, knowing, valuing, and doing), which convey our responsibilities and relationships to all life is a valued and foundational aspect of the learning program for all children and youth.
- ❖ **Principle 4:** Cultural/language communities have the right to define success for their own wellbeing.
- ❖ **Principle 5:** Learning is viewed as lifelong, holistic, and experiential, which is rooted in language and culture, is place-based, spiritually oriented, communal and open to multiple ways of knowing the world.

❖ **Principle 6:** Programs, schools and systems are responsive to both the aspirations and the needs of Indigenous peoples.

Activities Accomplished

- ✓ Parent engagement nights were held eight times per year in various communities.
- ✓ Parent engagement nights structured around predetermined goals and themes were held. Each night included a variety of activities, such as:
  - ○ Exercises that allowed parents to work with students on their skills;
  - ○ Whole-group activities, including physical activities, songs, listening to someone read a book, etc.;
  - ○ Small-group activities, including games, crafts, etc.
- ✓ March Full Circle Conference where ELI staff were able share experiences at professional-development sessions.
- ✓ Full-year professional development supports to enhance capacity building within the program.
- ✓ The collection of quantitative and qualitative data in support of an evidence-based approach to intervention design and administration.
- ✓ Development of core capacity building by hiring Early Language Interventionists from the community and providing them with support.
- ✓ Securing core funding to support the program, ensuring that baseline data is secured, and ensuring that the designed intervention responds to the data.
- ✓ Development of core materials and supports based on gathered intervention data.
- ✓ Collection of longitudinal data in order to provide evidence that the model is working within local community contexts.
- ✓ Increase in parental engagement:
  - ○ Parents increasing their involvement in the planning process;
  - ○ Parents have expressed that they like the communication journals.

Growth of the Program

- ➢ Staff retention has increased.
- ➢ ELIs are encouraged to use their language as much as possible, both at home and at school.
- ➢ ELIs have flexible hours so they can attend meetings with families.
- ➢ ELI retention rate is high.
- ➢ Three ELIs have left the program to pursue their Bachelor of Education degree.
- ➢ Most of the recorded quantitative gains occurred in kindergarten.
- ➢ The ELI's work with the community has increased engagement among parents and other community members (Head Start, day care), all of which is focused on the kids.

- ➢ Including and honouring the work of indigenous artists and authors by providing children and their families with context-based books.
- ➢ Constantly seeking feedback to improve outcomes for kids.
  Community members are being hired as ELIs; once hired, they receive training about what they need to know, which is building necessary capacities in northern communities.

Materials Developed

- ➢ Literacy backpacks/handbags containing literacy resources for all youth and families involved in the program.
- ➢ Home-visit brochures that introduce the Talk2Learn program and explain the role of the Early Literacy Interventionist to parents and/or caregivers.
- ➢ Professional-development resources to support ELIs, including webinars and physical resources. These professional-development resources were developed with the support and input of the MLTC team.
- ➢ Online supports and professional development that is not impeded by long-distance travel and the development of professional learning communities
- ➢ A detailed outline of the ELI's role, responsibilities, and supervisory responsibilities for 2017/18 (see Appendix B).

Project Model
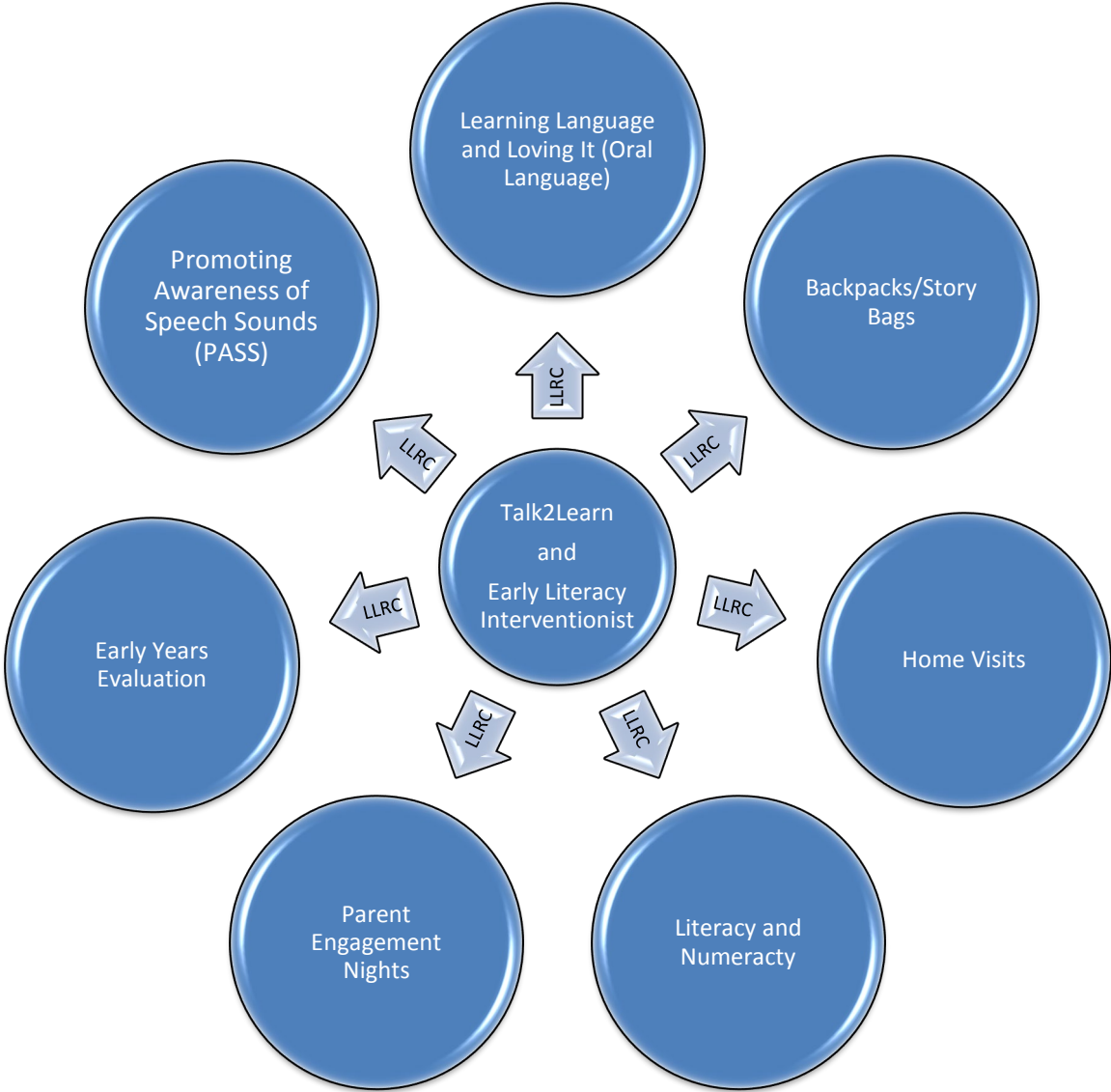
Logic Model Used for the Project

The Meadow Lake Early Literacy Project was designed to increase the success of nursery and kindergarten students who are struggling with literacy. This approach begins by developing a fundamental understanding of the importance of land, language, relationships, and culture (LLRC), and then using this understanding in the development of cognitive and language skills. The Early Literacy Interventionist not only works directly with the students, but they also play a pivotal role in encouraging parental/caregiver engagement. The overall goal of this intervention is to ensure that early students' reading and comprehension skills are at grade level during their formative school years, as this

will help to increase their success throughout their education. The logic model for this project can be seen in Appendix A.

Performance Indicator and Measures

Table 1: Overview of Performance Indicators and Measures

| Goal	Measure	Success Indicators
Improve literacy of early learners (with an emphasis on kindergarten students)	• Early Years Evaluation (EYE) • Fountas and Pinnell Reading Benchmark data	✓ Improved performance on EYE testing ✓ Improved scores on provincial exams ✓ More students reading at grade level by Grade 3
Increase parental engagement	• Number of parents and families participating in parent literacy nights • Participation and engagement in home visits • Interviews and conversations with parents/caregivers • Communication between caregivers and the ELI	✓ More parents/caregivers participating in parent literacy nights ✓ More parents/caregivers engaging in home visits ✓ Increased interest in students' education ✓ Increased long-term outcomes for student retention
Increase secondary student retention	• Leaving rates • Transition rates • Data points (attendance, enrollment, transition rates)	✓ Reduced school leaving rates ✓ Increased student achievement and graduation rates ✓ Increased workforce/post-secondary outcomes

Sustained funding that creates a space for learning, research, development, and innovation	• *Advocacy efforts that include both local and national imprints* • *Partnerships that provide sustainable funding for ELI programming*	✓ *Increased efforts that lead to increased financial support for programming across the program* ✓ *Stable and secure funding models that go beyond year-to-year projections in order to allow flexible planning* ✓ *Increased professional-development opportunities that create enhanced professional networks*
Innovation that supports the development of resources and capacity for programming and community education	• *Development and/or hiring practices that support sustained practices and transitional opportunities for staff within the program* • *Sovereign and contextually-based curriculum and program resources that support the evolution of the program*	✓ *Specific ongoing funding, which may include partnerships that contribute to the development of local courses and a developmental model* ✓ *Increase the amount of developed courses, materials, and opportunities for local and contextual curriculum development* ✓ *Increase in local ELI's transitioning to education pathway programs*

Evaluation

Graph 1: Number of Schools, Teachers, and Classrooms Participating in the Meadow Lakes Literacy Project.
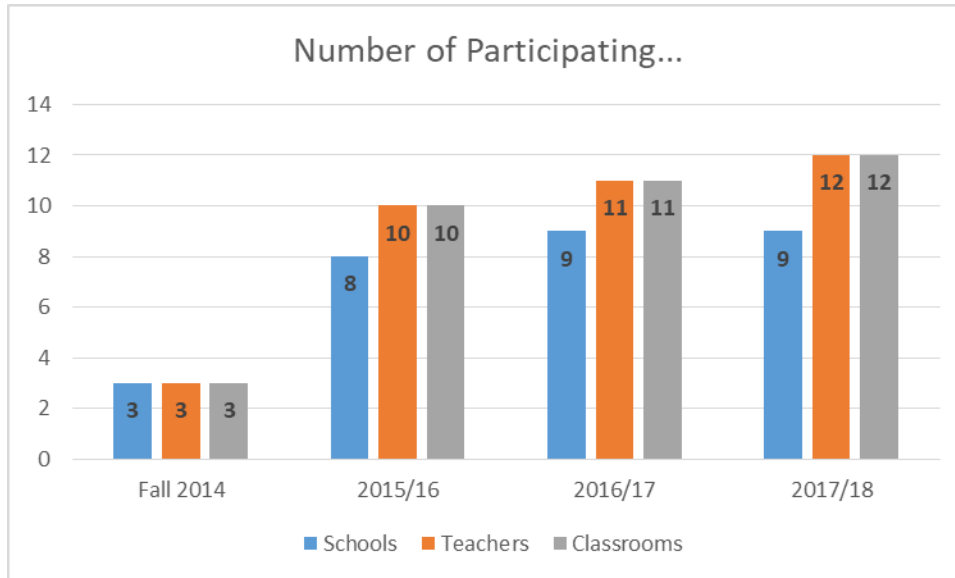
Graph 2: Average Number of Home Visits for Kindergarten Students.
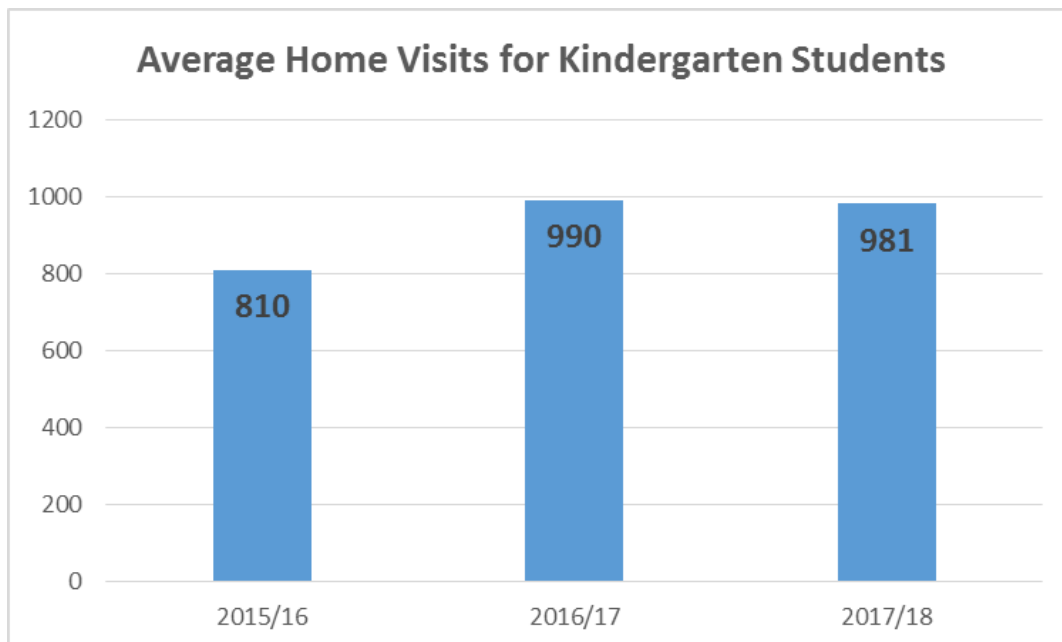
Graph 3: Average Number of Parent Engagement Nights Held for Nursery and Kindergarten Students per School Year.

Average Parent Engagement Nights for Nursery and Kindergarten Students per School Year

School Year	Nights
2015/16	72
2016/17	72
2017/18	72
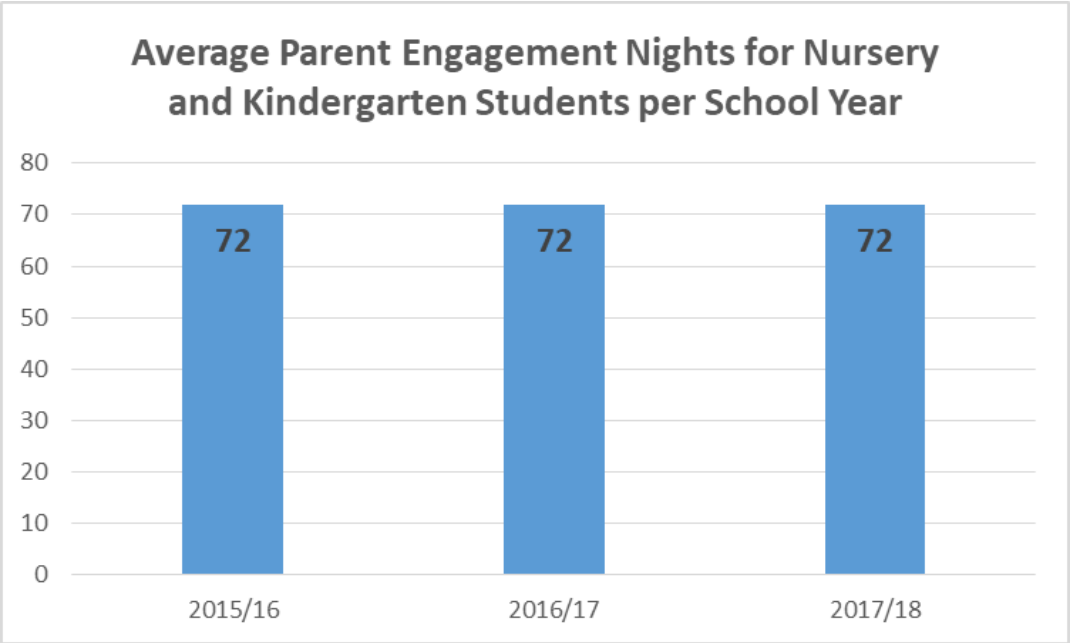
Graph 4: Results of MLTC Kindergarten Student EYE-TA Evaluation for Cognitive Skills.

EYE Results for Cognitive Skills

Tier 3, Tier 2, Tier 1 across Fall 2014, Fall 2015, Spring 2016, Fall 2016, Spring 2017, Fall 2017, Spring 2018
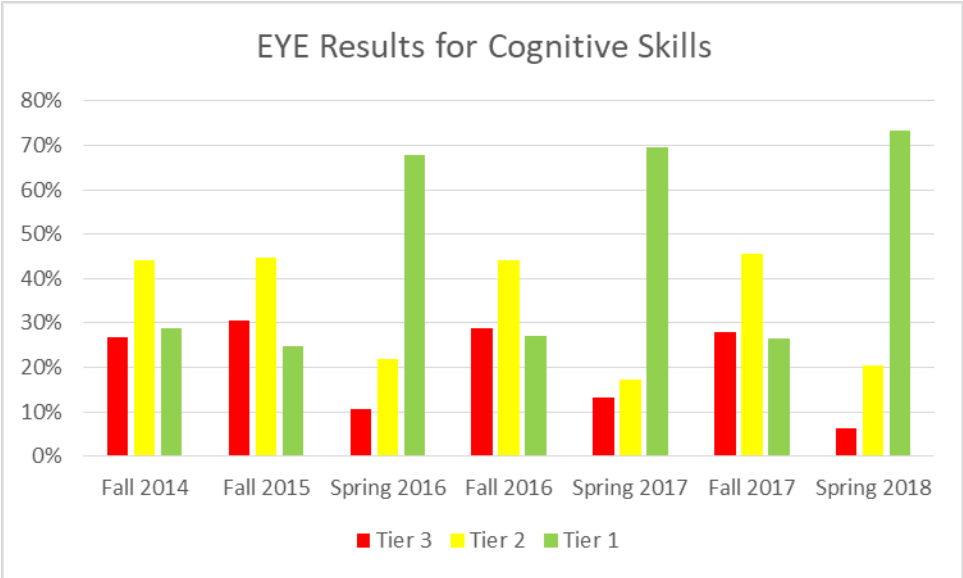
Table 2: Annual Results of EYE Testing and Percent Change of Students in Each Tier for Cognitive Skills.

	Year	Fall	Spring	Change
Tier 3	2015/16	31%	11%	-20%
	2016/17	29%	13%	-16%
	2017/18	28%	6%	-22%
Tier 2	2015/16	45%	22%	-23%
	2016/17	44%	17%	-27%
	2017/18	46%	21%	-25%
Tier 1	2015/16	25%	68%	43%
	2016/17	27%	70%	42%
	2017/18	26%	73%	47%

Graph 5: Results of MLTC Kindergarten Student EYE-TA Evaluation for Language and Communication.
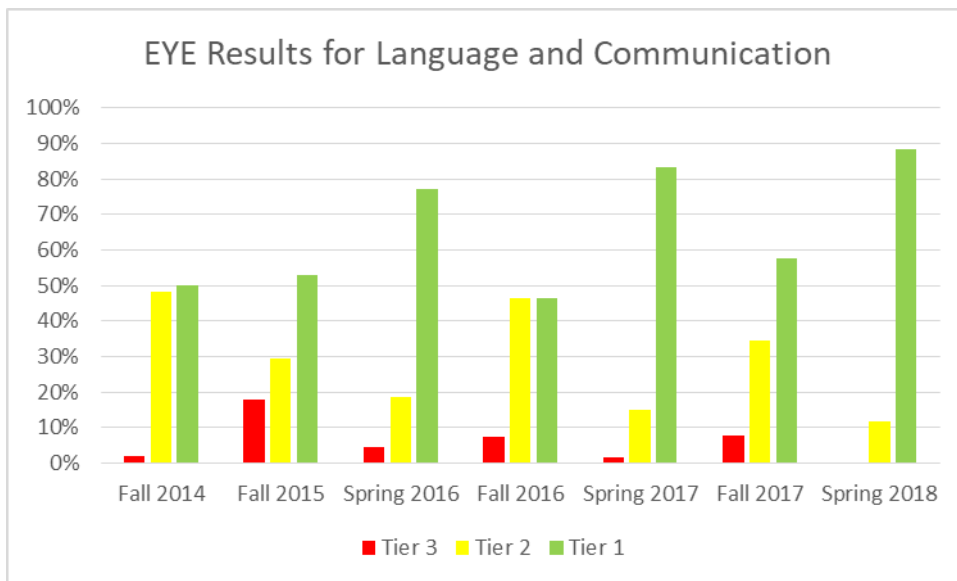
Table 3: Annual Results of EYE Testing and Percent Change of Students in Each Tier for Language and Communication.

	Year	Fall	Spring	Change
Tier 3	2015/16	18%	4%	-14%
	2016/17	7%	2%	-5%
	2017/18	8%	0%	-8%
Tier 2	2015/16	29%	19%	-10%
	2016/17	46%	15%	-31%
	2017/18	35%	12%	-23%
Tier 1	2015/16	53%	77%	24%
	2016/17	46%	83%	37%
	2017/18	58%	88%	30%

Qualitative Interviews

Early Learning Coordinator, Adrienne Durocher

Q1) Can you tell me a little about yourself and how you came to work within the program and co-designing the process?

I am a Lac La Ronge Indian Band member who grew up in the Métis community of Buffalo Narrows. My teaching career began in La Ronge, Saskatchewan, where I taught for Northern Lights School Division #113. I applied for the Early Learning Coordinator position here at MLTC in 2013 and have been here since. In 2015, MLTC was given extra dollars for early years programming. It was told to us that they planned on hiring a local person in each community as extra support for the early years. Our director told me, the speech therapist at the time, and the early literacy coordinator to design what we wanted that program to look like.

We began our open discussions on how [the program] should look and what we wanted it to entail. The main area we wanted to focus on was to bridge the gap between home and school, and to give the students a great experience in their first years within the school system. We believed that this would establish the must needed relationships with the student's family [which would] ensure ongoing support in that student's future [education]. My experiences teaching in La Ronge led to some of the ideas we co-opted and that are still in place today.

Home visit backpack program:

This was something they did in the school I taught at, and my son went through the nursery program where they implemented this program. We decided we would focus on this as well. So, our team ordered eight themed backpacks for each ELI to take into homes and model language, literacy, and math strategies for families. The ELIs would be encouraged to visit each kindergarten classroom once a month to do these home visits. The visits were not bound to the homes, and ELIs were encouraged to offer opportunities to do the visits outside the homes if parents were not comfortable with them doing the visit in their home.

Literacy nights:

Based on schools I've worked with and [those that] Lisa worked with, we decided that each Early Learning Interventionist would be responsible for hosting eight literacy nights, with emphasis on nursery, kindergarten, and Grade 1 students and [their] families. We chose to do this because we witnessed a lot of literacy nights [that had] little to no activities [that] focused on the early years. We eventually decided to call [these events] parent-engagement nights because we realized that the word, "literacy," might be intimidating for some families.

In-class support:

The ELIs were to use all their extra time supporting language by being that person who wasn't bound to lessons and lesson preparations. They would be that adult in the classroom that would have rich conversations with the students [in order] to build their language. This was an area of concern with the early years students [which was] brought to our team's attention from the speech therapist and teachers.

Q2) What would a day and a week look like in your schedule pertaining to the program?

In the beginning, we spent a lot of time planning, developing materials, ordering materials, and designing our professional development to be delivered to the ELIs. As the program moved from year to year, we always collaborated as a group to discuss what we wanted to implement in the following year [in order] to support the needs in our communities and early years classrooms.

We brought the ELIs in monthly the first year and second year. As ELIs stayed, we only had to train new ELIs; however, we continued to bring all ELIs in for two days of orientation in August, and in May for a wrap-up meeting and planning. If time permitted, we would also bring them in mid-year for follow up, planning, and support.

Q3) At what point/s did you begin to recognize that the process and the design of the program were gaining results and impact?

As we went through the years, we started seeing a difference in EYE and PASS results. I also enjoyed all the positive feedback the ELIs were getting from the

homes—feedback such as, "Can we have more than one home visit a month," and, "I wish they had this when my kids were in school, nobody ever visit[ed] me" (from one grandmother).

I also heard a lot of comments from the ELIs about the students being so excited to have them over or asking, "when are you coming over?" I felt that the program was building the students' confidence and empowering them as learners.

Q4) How have you managed to develop the program and if you were to map a timeline of events are their key pivotal moments along the way?

2015-2016 (Mid-year start)	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Home visits.	Home visits.	Home visits.	Home visits.	Home visits.
Class support.	Class support.	Class support.	Class support.	Class support.
Parent-engagement nights.	Parent-engagement nights.	Parent-engagement nights.	Parent-engagement nights.	Parent-engagement nights.
Story bags.	Story bags.	Story bags.	Story bags.	Story bags.
	Learning Language and Loving It training for all ELIs.	Learning Language and Loving It training for all ELIs.	Learning Language and Loving It training for all ELIs.	Learning Language and Loving It training for all ELIs.
	EYE support in the home—working on extending activities into the home to support areas of concern identified in the Early Years Evaluation reports.	EYE support in the home—working on extending activities into the home to support areas of concern identified in the Early Years Evaluation reports.	EYE support in the home—working on extending activities into the home to support areas of concern identified in the Early Years Evaluation reports.	EYE support in the home—working on extending activities into the home to support areas of concern identified in the Early Years Evaluation reports.
		Phonological Awareness Speech and Sound Program: ELIs trained to run	Phonological Awareness Speech and Sound Program: ELIs trained to run this program with small groups in kindergarten	Phonological Awareness Speech and Sound Program: ELIs trained to run this program with small groups in kindergarten

		this program with small groups in the kindergarten classrooms. ELIs trained in traditional games and how to incorporate them into the classrooms and homes.	classrooms. ELIs trained in traditional games and how to incorporate them into the classrooms and homes. Focus on engaging parents in the planning of family nights and incorporating what they want to see at these events (let them plan what the nights look like) Adding communication journals into the backpacks. Begin training ELIs on the difference between parent involvement and engagement. PASS extended into Grade 1 from the ELIs for targeted students. ELIs taught how to make ribbon skirts in hopes that they will pass on their knowledge to the schools and families they work with. Purchased northern animal puppets to add to	classrooms. Focus on engaging parent in the planning of family nights and incorporate what they want to see at these events (let them plan what the nights look like). Adding communication journals into backpacks. Begin training ELIs on the difference between parent involvement and engagement. Continue working towards more authentic parent engagement. ELIs trained in traditional games and how to incorporate them into classrooms and homes. ASLA (Accelerated Second Language Acquisition) training for ELIs to support First Nations languages in the homes. Story bags and backpacks updated with culturally

			the ELIs' materials for supporting language and culture in storytelling.	appropriate and supportive materials.

Q5) In what ways do you support ELIs and what makes a dynamic ELI support in schools? How do you know that? What examples do you have?

ELIs are dynamic in the sense that they are MLTC employees based in the communities, meaning they can't be used for any other job besides the one we outlined for them. They can't be used as subs or for supervision because home visits are their first priorities, and [they] can't be tied down to specific schedules. When we want to train them, they have no choice [in what training they attend], whereas school staff picks and chooses what training they want to attend. I also love the fact that each ELI has to be from the community. That way, they know the dynamics of the community and, in most cases, all the families love the home visits component. I feel like we are building capacity within the communities we work with. One ELI went on to pursue her teaching degree and is now in her second year of schooling.

Q6) What are some challenges to programming? What are the greatest wins for the program? (Successes)

The biggest win is that the ELIs are truly working towards giving the families a great experience in their child's first contact with the schools—the growth within the students and, in some cases, increased attendance with students. ELIs continue to do home visits, even for the students who are non-attenders. Most of our ELIs have been in the positions from when it started.

We are building capacity within the communities by only hiring local people for this position.

Our ELIs are building healthy relationships with the students and families. Our ELIs that have been here from the beginning have developed relationships with 60 families over [their] three years [in the position].

Q7) What wisdom do you have for other communities if they were to engage in a similar process?

I would encourage them to make the position one like ours, where the school cannot use them for other duties. I would also encourage them to hire locally. I would tell them to start smaller like us and add to the program yearly based on their own community's needs. This isn't a one-size-fits-all program. We played and added to it as we went along and gathered data. Most things that were added were done for the following year because I think if we were to make changes mid-year, it would have added unnecessary stress to the ELIs and wouldn't have been as successful. Also, take the time to discuss ideas and changes with ELIs; they are the ones working [on] the front line, and so their suggestions and ideas help drive the program as well.

Q8) Where do you strategically see the program moving in the short, mid, and long-term planning process?

I would love to see the same program being offered [for nursery students]. This means we would have two ELIs in each school. At the moment, they only work within the Kindergarten classrooms, with exceptions for adding home visits for nursery and Grade 1 [students] if their kindergarten numbers are low.

Early Learning Interventionist (ELI), Colleen Janvier

Q1) Where are you from? What is your connection to the program?

I'm from English River First Nation. I speak Dene, politely. I've been an ELI for MLTC for three years.

Q2) What are some of the daily experiences within the program? What does it look like?

Home visits, PASS Lessons, parent-engagement nights are once a month. I work with the kindergarten teacher to develop literacy skills with the students. I work on the letters, sounds, segmenting, blending words with the kids.

Q3) How did you become interested in the program? What has the experience been like? Can you share some success stories?

I've worked in the school system for many years, and I enjoy it. Being an ELI has its ups and downs. Downs are the home visits [when] parents or the kids aren't home and parent-engagement nights [where] parents at times don't show up. Ups: the kids enjoy when I go to their house, and they love it when I take out Goldie for the PASS lessons. A success for me is when a child asks me to come back to their house for another home visit. The parents that do show up for the parent-engagement night enjoy the activities and working with their children.

Q4) What is the most significant learning experience for you within the program?

The LLLI workshop sessions were the most significant learning experience I have had. They taught me more on how to interact with the kids.

Q5) How has the community and parents responded to the program? How have the children responded to this unique program?

The parents like the different backpacks that I bring to their houses [because] they get to see how the kids are learning in school. The children, even the Grade 1's, keep wanting home visits; they are very excited for them, but with the summer it is sometimes hard because they aren't home.

Q6) What have you learned because of the program? Why do you think the program has been so successful?

I want to become a teacher now; I want to go back to school and get my teaching degree. The program has been successful because the MLTC staff have been giving me a lot of support to build the program here at ERFN.

Q7) What are your recommendations for the future programming?

Once a year, a refresher for LLLI to keep the programs fresh in our minds. I'd also ask for more funding for the parent-engagement nights for door prizes and snacks.

Senior Director of Education MLTC, Heather Merasty

Q1) What is your connection to the program? Your title and role?

I am the Senior Director of Education for Meadow Lake Tribal Council. I oversee the MLTC education second-level services programs, staff, and support services that provide education supports to our nine Meadow Lake First Nations.

In July of 2015, ISC called for proposals to support early years education. We submitted a proposal to address the needs of our schools in kindergarten to Grade 3. Where did the ideas to develop such a program come from...

I had previously worked in a public school division in Saskatchewan that utilized a multiagency approach to support the early needs of children, assist in transitioning children into school, and provide students with supports that would give them the best opportunities for learning. Using that experience, the needs in our schools (based on the May 2014 EYE data), and the resources available in our area, the project was born.

Our original proposal description:

EYE-TA (kindergarten) data (Fall, 2014) from three of nine schools revealed that 51.9% of students tested required Tier 3 intervention, compared to the expected 15%. The proposed Talk2Learn (T2L) project provides significant oral language intervention in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, and increases capacity for evidence-based instructional strategies. EYE will expand to all nine schools. The MLTC Early Learning Team will lead the intervention, providing professional development for teachers and administrators, and focused training for school-based, paraprofessional Early Literacy Interventionists. We anticipate a sustainable annual increase in appropriate development on EYE and grade-level reading, particularly comprehension, by age eight.

Our main goals for the project were:

-To have students at "appropriate developmental levels" as indicated on the EYE before they leave kindergarten. This would indicate that children will be able to continue to learn to read without foreseeable difficulty.

- Increase parent/caregiver engagement.

- Build capacity and resources at the school/community level.

Although our focus was on kindergarten initially, the intention was to eventually include Head Start, nursery (pre-K), and Grades 1, 2, and 3.

Q2) Can you share some of the experiences that brought you and your team to think differently in relation to literacy?

It was very clear from the beginning that a team needed to be organized that had different skill sets and backgrounds (SLP, OT, early years educator(s), community members, special education, etc.). It was also clear we had to develop a model that was specific to our students' needs and not replicate an existing model. Rather, [we needed to] pull from their successful strategies and activities and construct our own. The team was arranged and presented with our key goals. The team was then left to pull together what the best practices were in their areas and develop a framework/model to meet our goals. It was this team collaboration that really brought this project to the next level.

Now that we are almost four years into this project, overall we see:

- a greater awareness and support for early years interventions;

- increased parent engagement;

- the "red wave" of our data (students below grade level or "experiencing significant

difficulty") is now a "green wave" of students who are at appropriate development skill levels.

However, the most interesting data we are waiting to see is that of our literacy assessment for Grade 3 students that is about to come out. The current Grade 3 class is the original cohort of this project.

Q3) What were some of the challenges within the designing and implementation of the programming?

- *During the initial set up, time to collaborate and work together as a team while maintaining your individual job responsibilities was a balancing act […] moving from working in silos to a collaborative team approach with people from multiple disciplines also caused it to take some time to come together as a cohesive group. The usual growing pains were experienced when making fundamental changes.*

- *Some staff turnover and the need for recruitment and retraining.*

- *Costs associated with staff turnover and retraining.*

- *Understanding of the role of the ELI in the classrooms, and how their role was different from an EA/Teacher […] and how their flexible schedules did not align with the school days. ELIs have the flexibility of working outside the usual 8:30-4 pm school day, while maintaining a 35 hour work week. This flexibility ensures that they are available to meet with parents/caregivers for home visits, which could include evenings and weekends.*

Q4) Where do you see the programming going from here?

We have an exceptional and established Early Years Team within MLTC, in our kindergarten classrooms, and within our ELI team, and we are now planning to expand supports to include supports for Nursery, Head Start, and Grades 1, 2, and 3.

In addition, our Early Years Team and our Land, Language, Relationships, and Culture (LLRC) team, in collaboration with our nine MLFN Schools, have developed an LLRC kindergarten curriculum that will be rolled out in our schools in the fall. The Early Years Team is working on further incorporating LLRC into the program. I am really looking forward to seeing the results of this work and believe this will take the program to new heights.

Q5) Where would you like to see the programming in the future?

I think we are on the right track and feedback on the program from our communities (schools, parents) has been exceptionally positive and our data is very promising. Our wave of "red zone" students is turning into a "green zone" wave. I believe our project really shows how a multi-agency, multi-discipline, multi-leveled approach can make a difference […] it takes a serious commitment from all stakeholders and patience to build such a project […] results don't come over night, it's a multi-year investment.

The Early Years Team has really taken this project to a whole other level, with the expansion to include further grades and LLRC. I anticipate the project will evolve and grow even further.

This project is the result of many people coming together for a common goal over the last four years […] it is an MLTC/MLFN-built initiative; our goal is to continue to evolve and develop while establishing it as a staple in our service delivery.

Patricia St. Denis, Superintendent of Education

Q1) What is your position in relation to the organization and the program?

I am the Superintendent of Education, and one of my portfolios is early learning. I co-work, co-plan, co-assess, and co-present with the Early Learning Team. I will confess that I am not the brains behind this program—[that] is the Early Learning Team. My senior administrative position also allows the Early Learning Team to have a voice at senior administration meetings. I am to support their work plans, dreams, aspirations, and make sure we have enough money to complete all EL goals year to year.

Q2) How do you support programming in your current position?

I do have a supervisory role within the Early Years Team. I do co-supervise, along with the SBAs (School-based Administration) the Early Learning Interventionists (ELIs). I communicate with the Early Years Team and SBAs [regarding] the roles and responsibilities of all the ELIs. I also work with the ELIs to do yearly PGPs [and] we [also] have good conversation three times per year. I approve and sign off on all time sheets, reimbursements for the home visits, and any leaves that ELIs take.

Q3) At what point did you and your team decide to do something very different? What were some of the lessons along the way?

Early Learning was not my area of extensive knowledge when I started to lead this program in its second year. I relied on the knowledge of the Early Learning team and provided [them with] space and [encouragement] to take risks, and I approved programs that would be launched in progressive years in the Early Learning Team work plan. The Early Learning Team are "big-picture" thinkers and always look at ways to be better than the year before, but still support the continued initiatives that were developed since day one.

The lessons learned along the way with the Early Learning Team were in the area of staffing relationships, being "woke" in our Indigenousness, and creating space for ELIs to build leadership qualities within themselves and their positions.

We know that without framing this program within the Land, Language, Relationships, and Culture of each community, it is impossible for a program like this to flourish. Each goal that the Early Learning Team makes is through LLRC.

Q4) What have you noticed as time has progressed in relation to the program?

Everyone that has participated in this program has been impacted. I have been impacted. I have seen the ELIs be impacted. I have seen pictures of parents in their homes spending time with their children, and that is a positive impact. I have seen the Early Learning Team look for new and innovative ways to make the program better than it was the year before.

I do know that the Early Learning team would not implement something new without being able to support the new idea. Each year gets better and better.

We have been blessed to deal with little staff turnover in all of early learning, not only the ELI staffing. The SBAs in the schools have learned and respected the roles and responsibilities of the ELIs and do not use them as an emergency teacher sub or an educational assistant.

Q5) What would you recommend to other communities if they were to consider implementing a similar model?

Our program was developed as a support to build language and vocabulary development and, in turn, to see an improvement in the EYE data for each kindergarten classroom in our nine MLFNs. We also make sure that our delivery of the program is through the living embodiment of LLRC. The recommendations to other communities are that you select well-balanced community member to be the ELIs and that you use our program as a guide. Each community is different, and we often try to use the already established program as a way to "fix" our students. Communities have the answers and know what they need to do, but maybe this Talk2Learn Program may provide the necessary conversations to create a space for implementing a program like this.

Q6) Where do you see the programming going and what do you think needs to be done to sustain the program?

I feel that this program needs to grow into all early learning classrooms with the staffing of an ELI in each classroom. The sustainability of a program like this means that there is a commitment of dollars and commitment to the longevity of the programming.

Our ELIs are from each community and are selected by their education and work experience, but, most importantly, they are selected because they have the ability to be welcomed by the parents into their homes. The key to this Talk2Learn program is about building relationships with the students and parents/caregivers, and to try to create the best school experiences that are positive and resonate with everyone in a good way.

Common Threads

- **Contextual Knowledge—Knowledge that exists in the community is what sustains the program and provides key sustainable features. The knowledge and the relationship to "place" and "land" shift the ways we can all imagine "literacy."**

- **Reframing Parents as Knowledge Holders—Often in school-based programs, the parent is far on the margins of programming. This particular program increases levels of engagement through hiring, training, program design, community engagement, and a pedagogical approach that deconstructs the notion that students need to be "fixed."**

> **Parents are seen as partners, solution-based, and key knowledge holders within the conversations around school and literacy.**

- **Create Space to Imagine Otherwise—School literacy programs are often prescriptive, data driven, and rarely, if ever, consider the unique contextual realities within Indigenous communities. The space created to move differently in relation to families, the community, and "literacy" opens up spaces for engaging differently between schools and home. Home visits outside of normal school hours, pushing back on traditional roles in schools (substitutes and EA supports), and unique leadership support have created space for all partners to imagine possibilities differently when it comes to literacy and families.**

- **Innovation and Trust—In this case, innovation and trust in the team has allowed them to continue to build a program that does not privilege Western approaches to education, but rather considers it as merely one part of a larger narrative. Thinking about identity in relation to programming and taking a collaborative approach has brought out the best in the team, and has led to significant gains that have qualitatively and quantitatively shaped the experience of communities along the way.**

Outcomes: Most Significant Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council Early Literacy Program has succeeded in developing a functional, community-based program that uses established methods to identify early learners who are struggling with literacy, and then providing them with holistic, tiered interventions to improve their skills. This program's achievements are most clearly seen in the dramatic improvement of EYE scores for both cognitive skills and language and communication skills. Data from EYE testing over three school years showed a significant decline in the number of students requiring Tier 3 and Tier 2 interventions for these skills, which are strongly associated with literacy. Additionally, signs of the program's achievement can further be seen in the increased number of participating schools, teachers, and classrooms.

Next Steps for the Project

MLTC Early Learning 2017-2020 Goals

- 100% of early learning teaching practices incorporate LLRC.
- 80% of students are at grade level by the end of kindergarten each year.

- 80% of kindergarten students and their families participate in home visits and parent/caregiver engagement nights.

To achieve these goals, the MLTC Early Learning Team will need to do the following:

- Support and collaborate with Treaties in nursery and kindergarten classrooms.
- Collaborate with teachers and ELIs to incorporate first-language support in the nursery and kindergarten classrooms through ASLA and TPR in order to better support first language instruction.
- Build capacity within collaborative school-based learning teams through parent engagement in order to co-monitor students, adjust instruction accordingly, and jointly work to maintain a spirit of inquiry in holistic development.
- Develop meaningful and supportive relationships between home and school environments that will enhance student development and build caregiver engagement in their child's learning.
- Build relationships with MLFN teachers to model how teachers can build meaningful relationships with their students;
- Build early learning initiative capacity and sustainability by having early learning staff in all nine MLFNs use programs such as: ASLA/TPR; LLLI; Teacher Talk A B C; ECERS; PASS; Talk2Learn; Handwriting without Tears; ABC and Beyond; and EYE.
- Use EYE scores in nursery and kindergarten to determine which students will require extra skills-development support during their primary school years.
- Focus on improving literacy achievement through oral language development in early learning.
- Provide MLFN teachers and caregivers with culturally appropriate curriculum and resources.
- Meet children's needs using an inclusive "Responsive Tiered Instruction" (RTI) approach.
- Increase student attendance by creating welcoming holistic environments that honour students and family.

Response to Intervention Model

- o Tier 1: regular classroom instruction consisting of research-based, quality instruction that uses universal strategies and a variety of approaches.
- o Tier 2: small-group instruction that can be provided within or outside the classroom.
- o Tier 3: learning that requires intensive additional instruction that is tailored to the child's specific learning needs.

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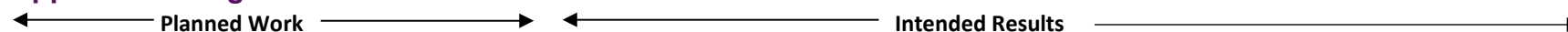
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Appendix A: Logic Model

← —————— **Planned Work** —————— → ← —————————— **Intended Results** —————————— →

Inputs: Resources Human & Financial	Strategies / Major Activities	Outputs or Performance Indicators	Short Term Outcomes or Objectives	Inter-mediate Outcomes or Objectives	Ultimate Goal/ Impact
- Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) - Director of MLTC provides on-site administrative support - Parents and community - Elders and Indigenous Knowledge Holders - MLTC Early Learning Team, including Early Literacy Interventionist, Speech Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, and Early Childhood Coordinator - Federal funding with additional resources from MLTC	- Design and implementation of a synthesized approach to early language intervention - Establish a basis in Land, Language, Relationships, and Culture (LLRC) - Professional development and parental engagement to support early learners - Background and context research - Quantitative data collection - Research compilation and analysis - Qualitative data collection, including interviews with administrators, teachers, students, parents, community members, Elders, and Indigenous Knowledge Holders	- Increased literacy and comprehension for early learners (Head Start, nursery, and kindergarten) - Improved parental engagement - Improved performance on provincial assessments - Improved transition to elementary with appropriate development levels - Increased capacity through training and professional development of ELIs - Improved collaborative team work, including secondary services, MLTC leaders, specialists, and coordinators	- Increased support, both financial and HR, for early literacy development - Development of resource materials and supports - Increased capacity for professional development that supports early literacy - Improve the transition process from early learning to elementary - Increase parental, Elder, and Indigenous Knowledge Holder support - Continue to develop community supports for sustained programming	- Develop sustained professional development to support programming - MOU and education agreements establishing long-term funding models - Increase student results on provincial assessments - Increase student results in literacy and comprehension - Improve of parental and community supports for early learners	- Improve student literacy skills based on provincial assessment (EYES testing) - Improve parental engagement in early literacy development and comprehension - Increase secondary student retention - Increase capacity within the community through hiring local community members and supporting the ELI model - Establish sustained funding that supports early years and the transition to elementary

Early Literacy Interventionist (ELI)
ROLE, RESPONSIBILITIES, SUPERVISION
2017-2018

**Employer: Meadow Lake Tribal Council,
Office of Education**

Location: One ELI position in each MLFN school, with the exception of MSFN and CLCN, due to greater enrolment.

ELI Role: The Early Literacy Interventionist is a paraprofessional who will work in collaboration with parents/caregivers and teachers (Nursery/Kindergarten/Grade 1, with a focus on Kindergarten) to develop children's oral language and learning readiness skills as indicated in EYE results. The ELI's work will extend beyond school hours to allow for collaboration with teachers to meet student needs, time to document student progress and complete other paperwork, and time to study Professional Development materials provided by MLTC. This position includes helping teachers plan and host literacy events for parents and caregivers. The ELI will work directly with parents through home visits that may be scheduled outside of school hours.

Ongoing training and support will be provided for this position by the MLTC Early Learning Team. The ELI will collaborate with teachers and EAs and report to the school principal. Performance evaluation for the position will be the responsibility of MLTC Education, in consultation with school administrators.

ELI Responsibilities:

- Work directly with children in Kindergarten, Pre-K and Grade 1 classrooms, with a focus on Kindergarten (change focus in consultation with MLTC).
- Collaborate with the classroom teacher about children's needs, based on EYE results. Use this information to guide conversations with children and to plan the focus for Home Visits and Literacy Events.
- Continually engage children in conversations as modeled in MLTC training, while the children participate in learning and play activities planned by the classroom teacher or in free time at recess/lunch.
- Document child(ren)'s language development with checklists, iPad audio/video recordings, and photographs (an iPad is supplied to each ELI by MLTC for this purpose).
- Share documentation of student learning with classroom teacher, SST, MLTC Coordinators/Supervisor of Instruction.
- Attend school staff meetings and small group meetings that may include school administrators, Literacy Catalysts, Student Services Teachers, classroom teachers, and Educational Assistants, to discuss student needs.
- Attend all training provided for ELIs by MLTC and follow-up with assigned classroom and community activities, such as Storybags and Backpacks, Home Visits, Literacy Events, and Help Me Tell My Story assessments and learning activities.

- Make and document Home Visits as described in MLTC training.
- Collaborate with school staff and/or Community Coordinator to plan Literacy Events for parents, caregivers and their children (may include Help Me Tell My Story assessments and language development activities). MLTC will provide suggestions.
- Collaborate with classroom teacher and school principal to schedule 35 hours per week of in-school and out-of-school time (reduced by 7 hours per day when school is not in session), with flexibility to allow time for home visits and Literacy Events. ELI breaks and lunch times may be flexible to allow interaction with children during recess or lunch time.
- Submit time sheets regularly to the school administrator for signing. Report lates and absences to the school administrator, in advance if possible, and document lates and absences accurately on time sheets that the school administrator will sign. As a courtesy, also let the classroom teacher know about lates or absences in advance or as soon as possible.
- Follow school policies and procedures. Work with the school administrator to resolve interpersonal conflicts or disciplinary issues. (School administrator may involve MLTC Assistant Superintendent as needed.)

Classroom Teacher Responsibilities:

- Plan instruction/learning activities and assessment <u>for all students</u> (it is NOT the responsibility of the classroom teacher to plan for the ELI).
- Attend MLTC Professional Development/training events with ELI (some training will be for school administrators, teachers and ELIs; others for teachers and ELIS; and more for ELIs only).
- Collaborate with the ELI to include activities and materials presented in MLTC training in lesson/unit/day plans.
- Support the ELI as she/he works with students individually and in small groups within the classroom.
- Encourage the ELI to maximize time spent in stimulating conversation and learning activities with children.
- Collaborate with the ELI to share and discuss his/her student assessments, which will include checklists, audio/video recordings, and photographs.
- Work with ELI to plan and host Literacy Events for Parents/Caregivers.
- Support the ELI as she/he helps with Help Me Tell My Story assessments and learning activities.
- Collaborate with the ELI, school administrator, and MLTC Coordinators to offer suggestions for scheduling ELI time.
- Share any concerns about the ELI's professionalism or performance first with the ELI and then with the school administrator and MLTC Coordinators. Include the ELI in a collaborative problem-solving approach.

Note: The ELI position is designed to provide additional adult interaction for students, within the classroom setting, and to support parent interaction for language/literacy development. <u>The ELI position is not meant to create an extra burden of responsibility for teachers</u>.
Teachers are to maintain professional responsibility for their students, i.e. continue to plan for all students, not leave ELIs alone in the classroom, etc.

SUPERVISION

School Administrator Role:

(Principals may delegate some of these responsibilities to a vice-principal, with notification to MLTC Assistant Superintendent of Education about who is responsible for ELIs.)

- Assist MLTC with the hiring process for the ELI position in your school.
- Review and approve scheduling plans with ELI on a biweekly basis. Consider ELI and teacher suggestions for flexible scheduling that allows ELI to fulfill responsibilities for maximum interaction with children and caregivers.
- Review ELI time sheets biweekly, to correspond to MLTC pay periods. Check for accuracy of recorded lates and absences (ELIs report absences/lates to school administrators, in advance when possible).
- Include ELIs as school staff members, responsible for school policies and procedures and for attending staff meetings as well as small group meetings re: student needs.
- **Do not** include ELIs in your Student Supervision Schedule (ELI time during recess/lunch is better spent interacting with specific children than supervising to keep all children safe. ELI breaks can be flexibly scheduled to facilitate child/caregiver interaction).
- **Do not** assign extra-curricular responsibilities to ELIs: their out-of-school time is dedicated to Home Visits, Literacy Events, documentation and collaborative meetings with teachers as well as studying material provided by MLTC (ELIs may volunteer for extra-curricular programs or events as community members).
- Set and monitor Early Learning goals as part of the School Success Plan. Review EYE data with teachers and ELI.
- Encourage and facilitate collaboration among staff members who work with Pre-K, Kindergarten, and Gr. 1 teachers, to ensure common goals and smooth transitions.
- Facilitate teacher and ELI attendance at MLTC sponsored Professional Development/training. Attend PD events that include school administrators (some PD events are to help build ELI skills for working with children and caregivers; other events focus on School Success Plan teamwork in light of student assessment data).
- Include discussions of ELI role in goal-setting and debriefing with MLTC Coordinators. Share the feedback that you have provided to the ELI (coordinators may share this information with MLTC Assistant Superintendent of Education).
- Reinforce ELI and staff understanding of the profound importance of the ELI role in children's learning. Clarify ELI responsibilities, as needed, with the ELI and with other staff members.
- Encourage ELI accountability for effective time use for maximum engagement with children and caregivers. Provide verbal or written feedback to ELI.
- Address any interpersonal conflicts or other issues related to ELI professionalism or performance. Include or consult with Assistant Superintendent of Education as needed.
- Consult with MLTC Assistant Superintendent regarding ELI performance support/evaluation documents.

Note: An ELI is not to be assigned any duties that prevent her/him from working directly with children in classrooms during the school day. The ELI is not to be used as a substitute teacher

MLTC Coordinators/MLTC Early Learning Team Role:

Coordinators who are currently part of the MLTC Early Learning Team responsible for the *Talk2Learn Project*

include: Early Childhood Education Coordinator, English Language Arts Coordinator, Speech/Language Pathologist, and Student Services Coordinator. The Program Innovation Coordinator (PIC) may provide technical support with iPads and First Nation Language Revitalization Coordinator may join the team as the project progresses. Other Student Services specialists or contractors may be involved as needed.

- Set goals for ELI as part of pre/post visit work with principals. Include work with ELIs in Monthly Reports for each school.
- Provide in-school feedback and support for ELIs individually, with teachers, or with school-based Early Learning Teams.
- In classrooms, model the kind of verbal interaction that is likely to develop children's readiness for learning and literacy.
- Provide strategies, books, learning activities, and play materials that teachers can include in their planning and ELIs can use as a basis for interactions with children.
- Plan and deliver ongoing Professional Development/training sessions for ELIs and for ELIs with teachers and/or administrators. Help ELIs learn how to interact effectively with children during play and learning activities, and with caregivers during Home Visits and Literacy Events. Help ELIs learn to use their iPads to promote and document children's language development.
- Help school administrators, teachers, and ELI interpret EYE results and set shared goals for improvement.
- Help Early Learning Teams continue to monitor EYE results and celebrate improvement.
- Alert school administrators and Supervisor of Instruction to any concerns regarding ELI professionalism or performance.
- Engage in ongoing professional learning related to early learning, language and literacy development, including workshops or conferences and MLTC events for Coordinators as well as professional reading.

MLTC Assistant Superintendent of Education Role:

- Assist MLTC Superintendents with managing and reporting on the *Talk2Learn Project* as part of FNSSP.
- Ensure that clear communication regarding the *Talk2Learn Project* is shared with all those who may participate, including MLTC Superintendents and Coordinators, School Administrators, Literacy Catalysts, Student Services and classroom teachers, and ELIs.
- Participate in the hiring process for ELIs for each school.
- Assist Coordinators with planning and delivering Professional Development/training for the *Talk2Learn Project,* which includes event planning.
- Assist Coordinators with their own Professional Learning related to early learning, language and literacy development and leading change initiatives.
- Review feedback provided to ELIs by MLTC Early Learning Team Coordinators and School Administrators.
- Visit ELIs and observe their work in classrooms and/or with caregivers and provide additional feedback and support or clarify expectations.
- Complete ELI Performance Support documents as scheduled by MLTC Human Resources.
- Recommend continuation of probationary period or termination of ELI contracts, based on Performance Support information.
- Contribute to or assist Superintendents with FNSSP reports.
- Plan for overall program evaluation, which includes gathering relevant data.
- Summarize progress/challenges and invite collaborative problem-solving as the project proceeds.