



## BUSINESS PLAN

# National Indigenous Literacy Association

February 26, 2003

Prepared by Doug Anderson for  
the National Aboriginal Design Committee  
and First Nations Technical Institute

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## Table of Contents

I.	Executive Summary -----	3
II.	AgencyDescription -----	8
III.	Field Overview -----	12
IV.	Client Analysis -----	24
V.	Partnerships -----	31
VI.	Strategic Position and Risks -----	40
VII.	Communication Strategy -----	50
VIII.	Operational Plan -----	54
IX.	Technology Plan -----	58
X.	Human Resources -----	59
XI.	Wider Responsibilities -----	63
XII.	Implementation Plan -----	64
XIII.	Financial Plan -----	67
XIV.	Appendices -----	72

# **I. Executive Summary**

## **Concept**

The founders of the National Indigenous Literacy Association (NILA) have done extensive research and networking around Aboriginal literacy and identified significant gaps and issues in strategy, service provision, and research and development for Aboriginal literacy in Canada. NILA has been established to address these issues by facilitating a strong network focused on development and support services for Aboriginal literacy. These services, as well as the organization itself, will be grounded in a traditional Aboriginal cultural base combined with an emerging wealth of Indigenous expertise and professionalism in modern education. NILA will grow quickly but carefully by strategically accessing funds from government and philanthropic agencies and corporate donors. The organization will begin to practically and effectively address some of the key outstanding issues in Aboriginal literacy by the year 2005. By 2009, NILA will be nationally and internationally known for providing excellent strategic literacy development services for Indigenous peoples.

## **Organizational Description**

In February 2002 the National Aboriginal Design Committee (NADC) founded NILA, a national nonprofit corporation based in Canada. NILA provides Aboriginal culture-based services addressing strategic and developmental gaps in Aboriginal literacy. It is the only national organization that addresses this unique area of need, and as such provides leadership in the area of Aboriginal literacy development. NILA will undergo a transition period (2003-04) in preparation for opening a fully operational office in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 2004. Members of the founding committee (NADC) include Aboriginal Elders, learners, and practitioners from across Canada, and have agreed on a board of directors for the transition period that reflects their diverse interests. The organization is expected to grow steadily, quickly gaining a reputation for excellence. During the transition, NILA will be overseen by its volunteer board and managed on a day-to-day basis by a contracted transition team accountable to the board. During the transition and first year of full operations, NILA will evolve a structure that reflects Aboriginal values, with advisory and Elders committees and a unique Aboriginal approach to attracting membership that will help ensure organizational quality.

## **Mission Statement**

The National Indigenous Literacy Association (NILA) is the eyes, ears and voice of Aboriginal literacy in Canada, and reflects the spirit and values of Aboriginal peoples and nations in all of its work. We emphasize Aboriginal culture-based quality in our services and respect in all our relationships. NILA supports the development of holistic approaches to literacy education and partnerships and links with quality Indigenous education initiatives wherever they are found.

## **Background/ Field Analysis**

Aboriginal literacy programs are delivered in dozens of Native communities across Canada, and non-Native agencies are delivering or partnering in many more. However, most of these programs are struggling for survival, and barely scratch the surface of the need. The increasing literacy requirements of the modern world and the rising Aboriginal population point to a worsening crisis in literacy for our communities if a coordinated approach is not taken to address the need. NILA board and staff recognize this high level of unmet need in Aboriginal literacy service provision in Canada, and that this need is both qualitative and quantitative.

In spite of the need, our analysis of trends and issues in literacy education and Aboriginal communities tells us that literacy is still not a priority among Aboriginal stakeholders, and that many Aboriginal people are unlikely to take full advantage of literacy services as they are currently set up. Our experience tells us that Aboriginal communities are much more likely to develop and make effective use of literacy programs if there are strategic partnerships ensuring Aboriginal control and culture-based approaches, as well as quality cross-cultural and cross-sectoral programming. Aboriginal cultures have great potential to contribute to literacy education in all communities, nationally and internationally; however, this potential remains largely untapped, undeveloped and uncoordinated. In order to tap this potential, it is vital to have cross-cultural understanding (of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community contexts and challenges), and to bring these perspectives together using an Aboriginal culture-based model. Until now, no agency has existed to facilitate, coordinate, network or strategize around Aboriginal literacy service development on a national scale.

## **Key Services Strategy**

NILA's main service functions fall into two broad areas:

- Provide a strategic networking and advocacy forum for Aboriginal literacy stakeholders;
- Facilitate research & development projects and other supports for Aboriginal literacy.

NILA services are unique in that they move away from a "deficit model" (which focuses on the troubles in our communities) to a perspective that emphasizes our strengths, which are grounded in Aboriginal cultures. NILA is also developing a distinct culture-based approach to collaborative models and partnerships, and a cutting edge strategy for entering the era of globalization.

Many NILA services, such as networking and training, will be designed so that they can be translated to local contexts and meet a wide variety of stakeholder needs, even internationally. NILA also provides its services at different levels depending on the needs of its stakeholders, who range from learners to post-secondary academic institutions and governments.

NADC has already attended and presented at numerous conferences on education and literacy, as well as coordinating the National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering in 2000. NILA will continue to network extensively to maintain a high profile in the realm of Aboriginal education and literacy, including the hosting of further National Aboriginal Literacy Gatherings. In the next 3 years,

NILA will be established as an innovative leader in Aboriginal education. Initially (years 1 and 2 in this business plan), NILA will establish strong relationships with leaders in Aboriginal literacy and education across Canada. By 2005, we will be in a position to provide significant and effective services to our network of partners and clients. We will also research and consider implementing the following activities between 2004 and 2009:

- The development of distinct Indigenous approaches to literacy training provision based on partnerships with Aboriginal teacher training programs;
- Intertational partnerships in advocacy, cross-cultural training, and other areas with Indigenous educational organizations and leaders; and
- In the longer term, an expansion of our head office, featuring a model culture-based “learning lab” environment, or “Centre of Excellence” for literacy learning.

### **Clients (Population Served)**

NILA’s main clients are Aboriginal literacy learners, practitioners and delivery agencies. Our clients demand alternative educational choices that are not readily available right now, and which continue to be largely neglected by existing education systems. Aboriginal people are concerned about the effects of mainstream education systems on the health of our communities and the survival of our cultures. At the same time, the clients still require literacy training services that prepare them for survival in the modern economy. This means that cross-cultural approaches are required in order to meet the needs of our clients. NILA will address these needs through its services, and will contribute to greater success for Aboriginal people in education, employment, and cultural revitalization.

### **Partnerships**

NILA must work closely with many community partners who specialize in a variety of services, including Aboriginal Educational Institutes, Federal and Provincial governments, and many others. These stakeholders are also clients in that they stand to benefit from the kinds of partnerships that NILA offers. However, their main role in relation to NILA is as partners in the development, coordination and delivery of our services to our main clients: the learners and direct providers of literacy training. NILA will distinguish itself to its partners through its strong Aboriginal culture base, collaborative approach, and efficient operations.

### **Communication Strategy**

NILA’s communication strategy is to present its services as the best solution to the most pressing needs of its stakeholders – our clients and partners. In our transition year, we will develop detailed communication strategies for both of these categories of stakeholder. Since many of our stakeholders are struggling with limited resources, NILA will be positioned as a collaborative provider of Aboriginal literacy development services that provide high value for time invested. NILA will use a variety of marketing approaches and media, including brochures,

papers, conferences, seminars, and internet technology and, above all, traditional means of communication grounded in our ceremonies and cultures. We will focus on inviting collaboration with key stakeholders who share our commitment to culture-based approaches and high quality standards.

Starting in Year 1, outreach and networking for NILA will be handled by a committee led by the Executive Director and including Elders, members, and directors. In Year 2 (2005-06) we will consider hiring a Communications & Partnership Officer to assist with building awareness and generating contacts as our services and partnerships grow.

## **Management and Staffing**

The NILA management team currently consists of the transition board and two contract staff. The current NILA board, members and contract staff include representation from Aboriginal Elders, learners, practitioners and executives with extensive and successful backgrounds in literacy and education. The transition team has many years of experience with large-scale startup operations and organizational management in training and education. Maintaining and improving on this high level of expertise, professionalism, and integrity is top priority for NILA.

During the Transition Phase (spring/03 – fall/04), the board will oversee the hiring of a transition team (contracted project staff). Towards the end of this phase, a committee from the board will hire a permanent Executive Director, who will assist in the hiring of an executive assistant and project staff for Year 1 (fall/04). There will be a gradual expansion of staff in years 2 through 4, as funding permits. During this time, NILA will consider hiring or contracting a Finance & Fundraising Officer, a Training Specialist, and a Communications & Partnership Officer. Addition of staff must always be in keeping with both successful fundraising and practical and improved service levels to stakeholders.

For biographies of current contract staff, see section II and Appendix 1 (Human Resources). For a list of NADC committee and NILA board members, as well as job descriptions for staff, see Appendix 1.

## **Operations**

Phase 1: Transition (2003/04). Operate from offices of contract staff in preparation for year 1. Focus on Communication Strategy (networking and strategic capacity development). NILA managed by project staff and board, which meets quarterly and communicates through email. Establish links and foundation supporting a culture-based organization and project strategy.

Phase 2: Years 1 – 3 of full operations (2004-07). Implement culture-based Elders, learners, and other member committees. Rent Winnipeg office and facilities, and further develop capacity for service provision, technology plan, and holistic infrastructure. Develop and implement project strategy, prioritizing and beginning to effectively address outstanding issues and gaps in Aboriginal Literacy through project activity by the year 2005.

Phase 3: Years 4 – 5 (2007-09). Increase funding significantly and establish reputation as a centre of excellence in the provision of services for Indigenous literacy development, research, partnerships, training and networking. Expand to include international partners. Begin planning to develop and move into an expanded facility designed to reflect the holistic philosophy of the organization and house the Indigenous Learning Laboratory.

## Financial Strategy

NILA will access funds for the transition phase from government funding designated for projects that address strategic issues and gaps in literacy (NLS), as well as through innovative partnerships with other agencies that are not literacy specific but are related to Aboriginal employment, heritage and health. During the transition phase, we will begin to establish relationships with corporate donors and foundations. Over the 5 year plan we will reduce our exclusive dependence on government funds until we have accessed a matching or greater amount of funds from philanthropic agencies and corporate donors, and to a lesser extent, by providing services to our growing network of stakeholders. By achieving its fundraising targets, NILA will position itself for financial sustainability and some self-funded growth. The table below is a brief summary of the NILA Revenue Projection Statement for the years 2003-2009. Capital and operating expenses will be managed to stay within the limits of our revenue.

	<b>Transition (03-04)</b>	<b>Year 1 2004-05</b>	<b>Year 2 2005-06</b>	<b>Year 3 2006-07</b>	<b>Year 4 2007-08</b>	<b>Year 5 2008-09</b>
Literacy Revenue (govt.)	\$ 280,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000
Foundation Revenue	\$ 5,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000
Corporate Donations/partnerships	\$ 5,000	\$ nil	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 500,000
In Kind Services*	\$ 40,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
Non-literacy Revenue (govt)**	\$ 40,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000
Total	\$370,000	\$ 450,000	\$ 600,000	\$ 900,000	\$ 1,100,000	\$ 1,400,000
Expenses	\$ 370,000	\$ 450,000	\$ 600,000	\$ 900,000	\$ 1,100,000	\$ 1,400,000

\* **In kind** services are mainly those provided through voluntary work, such as the expertise offered through expert advisors either serving on committees or through organizations such as CESO.

\*\* **Non-literacy** revenue is an area of the budget that will include sources that can support NILA that do not come from traditional literacy funding sources. An example is Heritage Canada, which will be approached for support on linguistic and culture-based development projects.



## II. Agency Description

### MISSION

The National Indigenous Literacy Association (NILA) is the eyes, ears and voice of Aboriginal literacy in Canada, and reflects the spirit and values of Aboriginal peoples and nations in all of its work. We emphasize Aboriginal culture-based quality in our services and respect in all our relationships. NILA supports the development of holistic approaches to literacy education and partnerships and links with quality Indigenous education initiatives wherever they are found.

### HISTORY/EVOLUTION

#### National Aboriginal Design Committee (NADC)

The seeds of the NILA were nurtured through the founding committee (NADC), which grew out of a national Aboriginal literacy project funded by the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) and conducted by Beverly Anne Sabourin and Associates (BASA). The ambitious long-term goal of the project was to develop a “comprehensive policy framework and strategic approach to the complex issue of literacy within Aboriginal communities and among Aboriginal citizens of Canada.” In 1997, BASA began the first steps in this multi-phased project, sponsored by the Step-by-Step Early Learning Centre of the Kahnawake First Nation. This phase surveyed over 90 literacy programs sponsored and/or initiated by Aboriginal peoples and involving Aboriginal learners as clients. The survey resulted in a document entitled The Language of Literacy: A National Resource Directory of Aboriginal Literacy Programs (see Appendix 2, “Bibliography”). In addition to providing an inventory of programs, this document identified common themes and critical components related to Aboriginal literacy programs. Follow-up activities arising from the BASA project focused on:

- Developing a national network of Aboriginal literacy practitioners;
- Holding a National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering;
- Considering “factors and variables from... inception to evaluation that have contributed to success of Aboriginal literacy programs.”

To continue with these activities, BASA established the National Aboriginal Design Committee (NADC) in 1998. In 1999 NADC assumed responsibility for continuing with the BASA recommendations. Since then, the NADC and staff have been networking and researching Aboriginal literacy (particularly the need for distinct cultural approaches), developing an organizational model for a National literacy organization (NILA), and lining up potential partners. In April 2000 the NADC coordinated the National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering (NALG) in Morley, Alberta. The work of the NADC has increased awareness at a national level of Aboriginal literacy needs and perspectives, and initiated key links with numerous National and international literacy stakeholders and potential partners. In October 2002, NADC presented its Position Paper on Literacy to the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For reports on BASA and NADC activities see Appendix 6, “National Aboriginal Literacy Projects.”

## **National Indigenous Literacy Association (NILA)**

NILA received its letters patent as a national nonprofit corporation from Industry Canada's Corporations Directorate in February, 2003, when the NADC put forward a board for the transition to full operations. The NADC and NILA board will complete the work laid out in the NLS project, "Laying the Foundations for a National Aboriginal Literacy Office" until the end of March, 2003. Part of that work will involve submitting proposals to support the Transition Phase, which will be 18 months starting in the late spring of 2003. During this phase, transitional staff and offices will be used until the Winnipeg staff and offices can be established in the fall of 2004. NILA will reach full operational potential in the fall and early winter of 2004. Some service provision is already underway in the form of networking and support for Aboriginal literacy programs; this activity should be maintained in the Transition Phase and increase significantly in Year 1.

### **A word about the agency name**

We have chosen to use the term "Indigenous" in the name of our organization. The reason for this is that ultimately, NILA will have a focus that includes linkages and partnerships with international "Aboriginal" peoples, and the most common term for these peoples in international circles is "Indigenous." "Indigenous" is perfectly acceptable in Canada; however, we will often use the term "Aboriginal" in this business plan and in our work because our basic and initial focus is in Canada, and the term "Aboriginal" in Canada is the most common one used by our stakeholders in describing our key client base – registered and non-status Indians, and Inuit and Metis peoples.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS**

The goals form the basis for all NILA operations, including staffing, partnerships, and financing. Goal areas have been arrived at by considering other community resources, and the appropriateness of the services for our clients. Time frames, operational strategies and other details related to meeting our goals are outlined the sections to follow.

- 1. To provide a forum on Aboriginal literacy**  
Facilitate networking, communications and liaison for stakeholders in Aboriginal literacy, thereby supporting the development of a strong movement of Aboriginal people and organizations involved with Aboriginal Literacy education.
- 2. To be the voice of Aboriginal literacy**  
Provide leadership for and speak on behalf of Aboriginal literacy interests to inform governments and the public about issues related to Aboriginal literacy in Canada, and establish a presence in the wider national and international community.
- 3. To facilitate literacy development initiatives**  
Manage, coordinate and partner in research and development initiatives addressing Aboriginal learning environments and approaches to literacy education. These initiatives will be grounded in Aboriginal cultures and relate to Aboriginal concerns.

- 4. To promote autonomous Aboriginal learning environments**  
Support literacy education developed by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people, and work with the broader Aboriginal community to advance the development and operation of autonomous Indigenous-controlled learning environments.
- 5. To nourish and develop inclusiveness through strong partnerships**  
Develop partnerships with and remain inclusive of others regardless of nation or race who want to work and learn in Aboriginal environments or who wish to partner in Aboriginal literacy development initiatives.
- 6. To support quality in Aboriginal literacy education**  
Support the work of Aboriginal education agencies in developing and implementing quality literacy programs. Work with partners in developing culture-based and cross-cultural programming, achieving accreditation status, and attaining the necessary resources to deliver Aboriginal literacy programs with pride.
- 7. To support Aboriginal cultural revitalization**  
Support the nourishment and revitalization of Aboriginal societies, economies, languages and cultures through literacy development work.
- 8. To advocate holistic approaches to learning**  
Promote holistic learning at every step of the learning process, thereby contributing to a foundation for the balanced physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development of Aboriginal peoples.
- 9. To respect and involve Elders and learners**  
Work to ensure ongoing consultation with and involvement from Aboriginal Elders and literacy learners in the work of the organization.
- 10. To maintain the highest organizational standards**  
Maintain high standards in organizational and financial management and promote an atmosphere of respect among board, staff, contract employees, members and partners, in an environment that is grounded in Aboriginal values. Receive and manage funds and assets and maximize the use of all resources for the attainment of NILA goals and do all things incidental or conducive to the attainment of these goals.

## **ABORIGINAL CULTURE-BASED APPROACH**

NILA is an Aboriginal culture-based organization. This means it is rooted in and seeks guidance from Indigenous knowledge such as we find in the Medicine Wheel, rather than dominant Canadian structures and processes – although NILA will still meet the accountability requirements of mainstream society. Indeed, we see Aboriginal cultures as adding value rather than being incompatible with general concepts of accountability. A culture-

based approach will pervade every aspect of NILA, such as organizational structure, project management, fundraising approaches, networking and partnerships with stakeholders.

In short, Indigenous cultural knowledge and processes are key assets of the NILA. NILA will take the following steps to ensure that these cultural assets are embedded in the organization and its service delivery process:

- Develop, approve and implement clear operational and human resource plans for Aboriginal culture-based organizational structure and processes (Transition Phase);
- Gradually implement our operational plan to ensure time for healthy reflection and the development of strong relationships *through Aboriginal processes* (ongoing).

## LOCATION AND CONTACT INFORMATION

NILA will open an office in Winnipeg, Manitoba in the fall of 2004, which marks the beginning of Year 1 in our business plan. This location will give us a central location with an international airport, a large urban Aboriginal community, and close proximity to reserve populations. During the transition phase to full operations, contract employees will continue to manage the NILA. The NILA board will hire project staff for the transition phase in the spring and summer of 2003.

Until the late spring of 2003, NILA/NADC business will be run out of the offices of its two contract employees. These are:

Ningwakwe (Priscilla George)  
NADC Coordinator  
26 Carluke Crescent  
Toronto, ON M2L 2J2  
Phone: (416) 250-7428  
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**Ningwakwe (Priscilla George)**, Ojibwe from Saugeen, is the current NADC/NILA coordinator and is responsible to the NADC committee for managing the 2002-03 NLS “Laying the Foundations” project (see Appendix 3, “NLS projects”). Her experience includes 6 years coordinating Aboriginal literacy at the provincial level, fourteen years teaching in the institutional education system and seventeen years teaching/facilitating personal and community development at the local, regional, provincial, national and international level.

**Doug Anderson**, Metis, is the NADC/NILA Business Planner. He has extensive experience as a practitioner in the literacy field, and was the Native Literacy Coordinator with the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for 6 years. Mr. Anderson has also worked to set up an Aboriginal Training organization through an HRDC Regional Bilateral Agreement and has consulted on education and training matters and as a writer and researcher with various Aboriginal organizations.

## III. Field Overview

### INTRODUCTION

#### Defining Literacy

Literacy is defined in different ways, depending on the group or person. Generally, Canadian federal governments and provincial ministries of education see literacy as the ability to read and write and do math at an elementary level (up to an entry level for high school) in one of the official languages of Canada, emphasizing employability and economic competitiveness as core values. One commonly accepted definition describes literacy as “the information processing skills necessary to use the printed material commonly encountered at work, at home, and in the community.” Aboriginal literacy practitioners tend to include Aboriginal languages and holistic cultural literacies that push the envelope of what is usually perceived as literacy. One example of this would be the ability to think and interpret symbolically. However, there are a wide variety of approaches, priorities and ways of defining literacy within Aboriginal communities. As well, there are non-Aboriginal literacy service providers who feel more aligned with some concepts valued in the Aboriginal literacy field than with those promoted by their own governments.

It is not the purpose of this Business Plan to establish a “final” definition of literacy. In its work, NILA will need to consider the many definitions and establish a position that is in keeping with the values and strategy of the organization. It is safe to say that, for NILA, *literacy must be defined from an Aboriginal culture-based perspective while still understanding and maintaining a clear and respectful relationship to other definitions.*

#### The Scope of the Literacy Field

The potential reach of the literacy field is huge. Literacy issues cross into many areas, including employment, health, business, social work, and public and post-secondary education systems. This section is broken into two parts: a brief look at the **broader literacy field**, then at the field of **Aboriginal Education**, and finally a look at the **Aboriginal literacy field** itself. Other systems related to literacy, such as health and employment systems, will be examined in Section V of this plan, **Partnerships**.

The NADC has undertaken numerous activities in determining the trends, needs and possibilities outlined in this section, including:

- Hosting the National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering in 2000 (see Appendix 6);
- Consultations with stakeholders through conferences, focus groups, and numerous interpersonal communications (see Appendix 6); and
- A review of the literature (see Appendix 11 – Bibliography).

## PART 1- THE BROADER LITERACY FIELD

### History of the Field

In the last 20 years there has been a dramatic increase in the level and type of official attention to the issue of adult literacy in Canada. This emergence of a focus on literacy has coincided with an increase in the literacy requirements demanded throughout society, related to increases in technological and other forms of sophistication in the modern world. According to the International Adult Literacy Survey, 38% of Canadians have difficulty with everyday literacy-related tasks. This means that many lack the literacy skills they require to function comfortably in their lives and workplaces, and that some of these may be in danger of chronic unemployment, risks to their health, and other serious problems related at least in part to low literacy levels.

Adult literacy education systems of varying size and sophistication have emerged in every province and territory since the 1980's, whereas in the 1970's most adult literacy activity was conducted through volunteer organizations ("kitchen table" literacy). Today, literacy service providers increasingly include colleges, school boards and community based agencies. Many of these "mainstream" literacy agencies serve Aboriginal clients. Ontario has developed an elaborate literacy delivery system that includes a "Native stream", and other provinces and territories generally have a strong awareness of the high need for literacy training in Aboriginal communities. However, the interpretation of how these needs should be met varies widely.

1988 saw the creation of the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS), an arm of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). NLS has supported over 1400 literacy delivery agencies with funding for thousands of literacy development<sup>2</sup> projects since that time, and has also worked in partnership with the provincial and territorial ministries of education and training to develop strategies for funding literacy development projects.

### Literacy Networks

Canada recognizes the need for strong literacy networks as an essential part of keeping literacy programs healthy and connected. Literacy networking organizations receive funding from the National Literacy Secretariat "to ensure a strong Canada-wide literacy network."

*"Through support to national, provincial/territorial and local literacy organizations, the NLS ensures there is coordination and planning across the country; that literacy practitioners are trained; and that literacy learners have the support they need." (from NLS promotional literature)<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> "Development" in the literacy field generally refers to supports outside of front-line literacy service delivery. This is why NILA is a Literacy development organization.

<sup>3</sup> These networking functions are also primary functions of NILA, and NLS funds are a crucial to our start-up strategy. However, funds for networks are limited and do not support core organizational functions (it is hard to defend network maintenance when delivery agencies are struggling to maintain their services). This is why NLS is only part of the longer term NILA funding strategy (see Financial Plan).

## Adult Education Principles

The Adult literacy field in Canada and abroad has generally moved toward a broad consensus on key principles of adult education (sometimes called “androgogy.”) As we will see further on, these principles are compatible in many ways with principles of Aboriginal education. The principles are ideal, and often difficult to realize in practice. They can be summarized as follows:

- **Learner-centred** - a preference for individualized curriculum based on learners’ needs
- **Goal-directed** - learning program defined by the learner’s short and long-term goals
- **Community-based** - relating to the needs and realities of communities
- **Work with strengths** - rather than focusing on learning barriers
- **Recognize experience** - assessing and even “accrediting” prior learning
- **Lifelong learning** - recognizing that learning continues “from cradle to grave”
- **We are all learners** - teachers and learners all learn from one another

## Current Situation

The whole literacy field in which NILA operates is still new in many ways, but it is also fairly well established. While overall funding levels have not increased significantly since the mid-90’s, they have remained relatively stable. These levels of funding are far from adequate, but the fact that they have not been reduced in an era where significant cuts have been made in parts of the country to mainstream education systems signifies that governments realize the need for literacy services. The awareness of this need is clear in many different places; for example:

- “Knowledge Matters”, an essential part of Canada’s Innovation Strategy, affirms the Adult Education principles of life-long learning found in the literacy field, and acknowledges the need for continued supports to literacy.
- High failure rates (over 60% for vocational students) for the grade 10 literacy test in Ontario, which must be passed before high school diplomas are issued.
- Frequent Literacy Awareness campaigns, such as the family literacy-oriented “raise a reader” day in October 2002.

There is now a strong consensus among literacy organizations in Canada to develop a clear national strategy for both increased funding as well as a more coordinated adult basic education system. Two of Canada’s key national literacy organizations, Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL) and ABC Canada, are both taking steps to address these priorities. MCL is in the midst of consultations and discussions on a National Literacy Action Agenda, which is due to come out in 2003, and coordinates Literacy Action Day, when literacy organizations from across the country meet with senate committees and MP’s on Parliament Hill in Ottawa (NADC was one of the groups lobbying on the Hill in both 2001 and 2002). The literacy field as a whole is poised to take the next step forward.

## PART 2 – ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

A focus on Aboriginal Literacy needs to consider the general direction of Aboriginal education in Canada, since so many of the trends in Aboriginal Education apply to the Aboriginal literacy field. As with the non-Aboriginal education system, the vast bulk of the resources committed to Aboriginal education are not literacy specific, but are focused on primary, secondary, and post-secondary education. However, Aboriginal perspectives on education are unique from those found in general Canadian education systems. Some of the key elements of these perspectives are outlined below.

### Aboriginal Control

The principle of Aboriginal control of Aboriginal education is of primary importance in any Aboriginal education initiative. This principle has always been asserted by Aboriginal societies, and was re-asserted by the National Indian Brotherhood (forerunner of the Assembly of First Nations) in their 1972 report “Indian Control of Indian Education.” Since then, First Nations in Canada have consistently moved forward in asserting this principle. Aboriginal control in education has even been supported over the years by Canadian government inquiries. In 1976, for example, the Task Force on the Educational Needs of Native Peoples reported to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Ontario Minister of Education that “...any educational system will continue to be unsatisfactory, until the responsibility for education and the potential for improvement in that education is in the hands of the Native peoples themselves.”<sup>4</sup> The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) also lends support to the principle of Aboriginal control, stating clearly that, for Aboriginal people, “self-government is a right they never surrendered and that they want to exercise once more.” The RCAP report recommends a Royal Proclamation that affirms, among other things:

“the right of Aboriginal peoples to fashion their own lives and control their own governments and lands - not as a grant from other Canadian governments, but as a right inherent in them as peoples who have occupied these lands from time immemorial.”<sup>5</sup>

The 1998 Assembly of First Nations (AFN) report, “Tradition and Education”<sup>6</sup>, which presents over four years of research and discussions on First Nations education and includes four volumes of recommendations on jurisdiction, resourcing, management and quality, clearly asserts “the right of First Nations to resume jurisdiction over education” and “the need for all governments to recognize that education is an inherent and treaty right that must be under the full jurisdiction of First Nations.”

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<sup>4</sup> Task Force on the Educational Needs of Native Peoples. Presented in 1976 by the Grand Chiefs of Ontario jointly to Minister of Education of Ontario and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

<sup>5</sup> Highlights from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Section 2, “Restructuring the Relationship.”

<sup>6</sup> Assembly of First Nations, 1998. Traditions and Education, Towards a Vision of Our Future (Volumes 1,2,3). Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations.



## Culture-based and Cross-cultural Education

Closely related to the principle of Aboriginal control of Aboriginal education is the need for learning that is based on Aboriginal realities – which means community and culture based learning environments and curricula. From an Aboriginal perspective, education must not come at the expense of assimilating into mainstream society or of endangering Aboriginal languages, customs, and belief systems. This perspective has been well documented in many places. For example, in “Tradition and Education”, The AFN asserts “the need for First Nations communities to develop local education policies that reflect First Nations philosophies, cultural beliefs and practices.” In theory, Canadian governments support this view. For example, the the 2000 Auditor General’s Report, Chapter 4 included the comment:

*We believe that success in providing education to Indian students can be achieved only if their needs and aspirations are appropriately identified and served by an education system that is designed to meet them.<sup>7</sup>*

At the same time, Aboriginal peoples want improved employability and higher education for their communities. As a result, there is an urgent need to find culture-based and cross-cultural ground for developing Aboriginal educational services. Aboriginal leaders consistently refer to the need for quality in education that meets the academic and employment standards of broader society.

The Canadian government supports the assertion by Aboriginal peoples that strong cross-cultural education grounded in Aboriginal cultures is vital to Aboriginal people. According to the Minister’s National Working Group on Education commissioned by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada:

*“We (the Minister’s National Working Group on Education) believe that strong cultural identity and equally strong individual academic performance will create First Nations citizens who walk with ease and confidence in two worlds.<sup>8</sup>”*

## Adequate Resources

Neither Aboriginal control nor culture-based education will be achievable without appropriate resources. The RCAP report strongly recommends increased support for Aboriginal education. It recommends that:

- Canada commit to jurisdictional discussions with First Nations concerning **lifelong education** for First Nations learners on and off reserve. This shall include capacity building at the community and regional level that would encompass a strategy and resources for

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<sup>7</sup> Auditor General, April 2000. Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons. Chapter 4: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada - Elementary and Secondary Education. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

<sup>8</sup> Final report of Minister’s National Working Group on Education, Introduction p. 1, INAC web site

implementation. *Steps should be taken immediately to enhance or develop First Nations organizations that would facilitate this process.* (emphasis added)

- The Minister begin immediately a process to create a First Nations education infrastructure that encompasses decision-making structures, administrative capacity and program design and delivery capability at two levels: First Nations communities and regional education bodies.<sup>9</sup>

AFN also clarifies the need for the government to provide First Nations education systems with “financial, human and material resources equivalent to those allocated to the public school system; and the need to establish education systems that meet the needs of local First Nations communities.” AFN includes the following resources in a quality Aboriginal education system: transportation, staff, adult and Post Secondary Education, early Childhood Programs, Distance Education, Counselling, life skills and Special Education Programs, Facilities, and coordination between local, regional and national governments.<sup>10</sup>

The Canadian government agrees in principle on the need for Aboriginal resources. In 1998 the federal Agenda for Action with First Nations refers to “Investing in Aboriginal education ..... to improve the quality of education....”<sup>11</sup>. In reality, there has been very limited political will so far to implement the changes recommended in the key reports on Aboriginal education. Nonetheless, Aboriginal people across Canada are clearly moving to implement education systems that are build on Aboriginal concepts and principles of quality in education, using the resources that they have.

## **Philosophy and Principles of Aboriginal Education**

It is not easy to summarize common principles of Aboriginal education; however, a few key points need to be made. The broad principles below are good to keep in mind. They were developed by Dr. Eber Hampton (Chickasaw), President of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. While Dr. Hampton proposed them only as “steps toward a theory of Indian education,” it would be hard to improve on them as a concise and thorough statement.<sup>12</sup>

1. Spiritual concerns are an important part of Indian education.
2. There are distinctive Indian styles of thought and communication with educational implications.
3. For most Indians, education has the dual purpose of promoting Indian cultures as well as providing skills and information relevant to the non-Indian society.
4. Indian education cannot be understood apart from a historical analysis.
5. Indian education takes place in a cultural atmosphere that is permeated with both strong group bonds and great individual freedom.
6. Indian education is service oriented.

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<sup>9</sup> RCAP Report.

<sup>10</sup> Assembly of First Nations, 1988. Traditions and Education, Towards a Vision of Our future.

<sup>11</sup> Gathering Strength – Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services. 1997.

<sup>12</sup> The full article is in the Canadian Journal of Native Education, Volume 20, 1993, no. 2.

If NILA loses sight of these kinds of principles, it risks becoming irrelevant to Aboriginal communities. These principles of education are echoed in other documents on Aboriginal education; for example, the AFN report on “Traditions and Education,” includes the following as characteristics of a “general philosophy of First Nations education”:

- focused on the well being of students;
- provide(s) a holistic approach that prepared students for total living;
- incorporate(s) a deep respect for the natural world with the physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual and life skills development of the individual;
- focused on First Nations languages and cultural values;
- develop(s) qualities and values in students that includes respect for Elders and cultural tradition, modesty, leadership, generosity, resourcefulness, integrity, wisdom, courage, compassion for others and living in harmony with the environment;
- Parental and community participation
- Preparation for total living

AFN sees quality education as "based on traditional values which retain and incorporate the principles of wholeness, order, balance and respect for the spiritual and natural world". Quality Aboriginal education is culturally relevant, including Aboriginal languages, and sets clear standards for curriculum.

## **PART 3 - THE ABORIGINAL LITERACY FIELD**

### **Aboriginal Literacy Programs**

The BASA report identified Aboriginal literacy programs in over 90 Native communities across Canada, although there are undoubtedly more Aboriginal literacy and literacy-related programs out there. It is difficult to identify and define the field, because the programs are delivered in a variety of settings, including on-reserve and in urban and rural communities. All of these settings use a variety of delivery systems, including programs that are hosted through various community centres, stand-alone agencies, and partnerships with various education systems. In addition, many of the programs define literacy differently, and their services are sometimes quite different in focus. One of the key things the programs have in common is that most are struggling for survival, and barely scratch the surface of the need. This high level of unmet need in Aboriginal literacy service provision in Canada is both qualitative and quantitative.

### **Other Delivery Systems**

In addition to Aboriginal literacy programs hosted and/ or governed by Aboriginal peoples, there are non-Aboriginal literacy delivery systems that serve significant Aboriginal populations in some parts of the country, including community colleges, community agencies and boards of education. At this time, we have no detailed analysis about this segment of literacy services to Aboriginal people.

## Common Themes

In many ways the Aboriginal literacy field reflects the concerns of both the broader literacy field and Aboriginal education systems described above. This can be seen in a number of common themes that emerged from documents produced by Aboriginal organizations during International Literacy Year in 1990. These themes describe Aboriginal literacy as:

- Ensuring that programs are community-based and learner-centred;
- Using the holistic approach (assisting learners to seek balance in their spiritual, emotional, mental and physical selves);
- Placing literacy into culture, rather than fitting culture into literacy;
- Using the dual forces of language and culture to help Aboriginal communities sustain and maintain a positive cultural identity (offering literacy in the Aboriginal language of origin and the official language in use in that area);
- Developing and using materials and methodologies that are relevant to the learners' lives (they reflect the experiences, needs and aspirations of the Aboriginal learner, and maximize Aboriginal learning styles);
- Empowering the individual in his/her relationship to self, family, community and nation;
- Contributing to community development (economic, social, educational, political and spiritual).<sup>13</sup>

## Program Needs

The best source of information that demonstrates the needs of existing Aboriginal literacy programs in Canada is The Language of Literacy report by BASA.<sup>14</sup> This report identifies the following challenges and opportunity areas based on their survey of Aboriginal literacy practitioners:

- Isolation – programs are often isolated both geographically and from each other
- Onerous work levels – staff have many functions, often due to a lack of supportive infrastructure
- The need for Resources – almost all of the programs are under-resourced
- The need for a Safe environment – many sites are inappropriate for learning
- Lack of Native curriculum (including Aboriginal languages)
- Transportation and daycare – prevents learners from participating
- Motivation – difficulty in bringing committed learners to literacy programs

The following critical program components were identified in the BASA study as a means of addressing these needs:

- A generally reliable and predictable source of ongoing funding
- A safe and welcoming learning environment
- Sympathetic and supportive community leadership
- Trained program staff and access to volunteers

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<sup>13</sup> The Vision Guiding Native Literacy, George, Priscilla, Ningwakwe Clearing House, Owen Sound, Ontario, 1998.

<sup>14</sup> This report is available on the internet at: <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/langlit>.

- A program orientation which focuses on the learner as a whole person, with social, cultural, spiritual and physical abilities, needs and limitations where the curriculum is oriented to the needs of the learner and which progresses solely on the basis of the student's abilities
- A curriculum which is as "culturally appropriate" as is feasible for the learning objectives of the learner, relating to the community and cultural referents of the learner and incorporating materials which reinforce cultural values and identity
- Access to learning aids other than curriculum
- Initiatives which lessen or minimize physical and financial impediments to participation in a literacy program, such as the provision of day-care assistance, transportation to the program site, and counselling.

Most of the observations and recommendations made in The Language of Literacy reflect the same concerns voiced by the stakeholders in the broader Aboriginal education system, including the need for Aboriginal control, culture-based and cross-cultural approaches, stable resources, and Aboriginal principles. The BASA report also confirms that a number of key concerns for the Aboriginal literacy field are held in common with the broader literacy field. NILA will clearly need to find innovative ways to work with other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal literacy and education service providers. This approach to the other systems will be explored in the Partners section of this business plan.

### **National Aboriginal Literacy Initiatives**

National and larger-scale strategic work on Aboriginal literacy has generally been weak (without great effect) and scattered, although in the last few years the NADC and a few other initiatives have begun to address strategic areas. There are currently two other key national Aboriginal literacy initiatives in addition to the NADC/ NILA:

- BASA has built on its "Language of Literacy" report by conducting follow-up interviews with Aboriginal literacy practitioners, and is in the process of analyzing the responses.
- Ecoplan and CODE Inc., Ottawa-based firms, continue to work on a national NLS-funded project sponsored by the Native Brotherhood of B.C.. This project is attempting to address the corporate/workplace literacy focus from an Aboriginal perspective, and will make recommendations regarding a possible Aboriginal Literacy Enhancement Foundation.

NILA will need to work closely with these two key initiatives during the transition phase. It will be important to develop a close working relationship with a National Aboriginal Literacy Foundation. Both NILA and a National Aboriginal Literacy Foundation will probably benefit from combining resources in developing their infrastructures and roles, wherever this is possible and desirable in relation to the goals of each agency.

## Aboriginal Perspectives on Broader Literacy Themes

There are many developments to contend with in the literacy field. Some of the areas that have emerged as key trends or themes are broken down in the table below, along with a few comments that give an indication of Aboriginal perspectives on the area. The analysis is only a rudimentary picture. NILA will need to develop a strategy that analyses, prioritizes and plans how to support Aboriginal approaches to confronting these and other issues and trends.

<b>Trend/ theme</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Aboriginal Issues/ Perspectives</b>
Workplace Literacy	Increasingly emphasized by federal and provincial governments. The most likely way to get private sector investment in literacy training. Literacy requirements for work places are growing (apprenticeship requirements for trades, new technologies, etc.) Some regions are campaigning to raise employer awareness of cost benefits of literacy training for workers.	Aboriginal employment issues are complex, culturally and geographically distinct and diverse. An Aboriginal workplace literacy strategy requires partnerships with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employers, and must be balanced with the need for holistic, culture-based programming.
Computer Literacy	Computer skills are required in workplaces and education/training. Using computers usually implies a need for higher literacy levels. Distance learning, for example, often presumes “functional” literacy and a comfort with technology that doesn’t exist for many.	Not enough is known about the availability or effectiveness of computers in Aboriginal learning environments, or of the preparedness of Aboriginal communities to use the technology.
Family Literacy	Many community literacy delivery agencies recognize the importance of intergenerational literacy. Family literacy campaigns vary between emphasizing literacy for children vs. adults, depending on funding sources, which leads to confusion around “acceptable” age ranges in literacy programming. The “family literacy” theme never goes away, and implies a need for models that address literacy without making the usual distinctions between age groups.	Aboriginal programs are especially interested in the area of family literacy, for many reasons. Traditional Aboriginal education is family-centred. While most programs in the BASA survey focus on adults, many maintain strong links with learners of all ages. Literacy support for children and youth has been a part of many Aboriginal literacy programs.
Numeracy	One of the areas of need that have proven harder to serve in the literacy field. Good basic math teachers are harder to find than literacy instructors, and are one of the biggest gaps in the basic literacy field.	Promising Aboriginal approaches to math and even complete mathematical systems have existed for ages but remain unknown even to most Aboriginal practitioners and unrecognized by Canadian governments.
Accountability	With the growth of literacy services there is a trend to increased accountability through the development of systems with standards and outcomes (although without proportionate increases in funding). Government funders expect literacy programs to meet more stringent requirements. Literacy support and networking services that fail to deliver ways of dealing with this pressure will prove ineffective in providing tangible benefits for their clients.	Systems of standards and accountability developed by non-Aboriginal institutions are likely to be culturally inappropriate. Many Aboriginal programs have enormous difficulty adapting to such systems, sometimes for reasons that parallel their mainstream counterparts, but often for cultural reasons. What is “Aboriginal accountability?”

Lifeskills	Literacy programs everywhere keep re-iterating that basic life skills need to be built into their programs. This is reflected in the fact the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) has been changed to the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (ALLS).	Aboriginal holistic approaches to learning address the whole person and are therefore a strong resource area to draw on for educators seeking to develop more meaningful learning experiences.
Technology	Internet and distance education are increasingly finding their way into learning environments. Distance literacy education models exist, but funding is inadequate.	Could help address the remoteness and wide distribution of Native communities, but an appropriate curriculum framework does not appear to exist.
Globalization	Education@Canada, a web site run by the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC), advertises itself as an "International gateway to education in Canada." In "Marketing Education" they target a huge potential international market for educational approaches created in Canada. <sup>15</sup>	Our initial research shows great interest in Aboriginal approaches to education, especially in those parts of the world where Indigenous and "underdeveloped" populations are struggling to survive. This should be explored.
Low Funding Levels	Overall funding levels are low for literacy, and this is also the case with Aboriginal programs. The BASA report notes that: "For just about all of the programs surveyed, funding was critically low. Government commitment to stable literacy funding is seen as weak. Transportation and childcare for learners was an issue for many."	Aboriginal programs are even more starved for funds because of the need to address "two worlds." However, opportunities exist for Aboriginal communities to supplement literacy program funding through unique partnerships.
Practitioner Training	One of the key areas of development in the literacy field. There is currently no coordinated, systematic training system for literacy practitioners per se.	Need more trained Native practitioners, culture-based and cross-cultural training for Native and non-Native practitioners.
Learner Recruitment/ Retention	Only a small proportion of people who could benefit from literacy training take advantage of it. Preparation for learning is required for many potential learners. This is connected closely with the need for "life skills."	Aboriginal learners have unique learning strengths and barriers which need to be addressed in any learner outreach/ intake model.
Curriculum	Literacy curricula have been/ are being developed in a variety of ways across the country, often directed by needs and priorities related to the provincial ministries of education or federal/ provincial training initiatives.	Aboriginal programs consistently cite poor quality/inappropriate provincial and other curricula that are taken "off the shelf" and which often prove ineffective with Aboriginal contexts.
Academic Levels	Education is a provincial jurisdiction, so defining and measuring literacy varies from one region to the next and the various systems are meaningless in relation to one another. <sup>16</sup>	If Aboriginal programs continue to focus on mainstream systemic requirements, little or no time is left for tending to Aboriginal-specific standards.

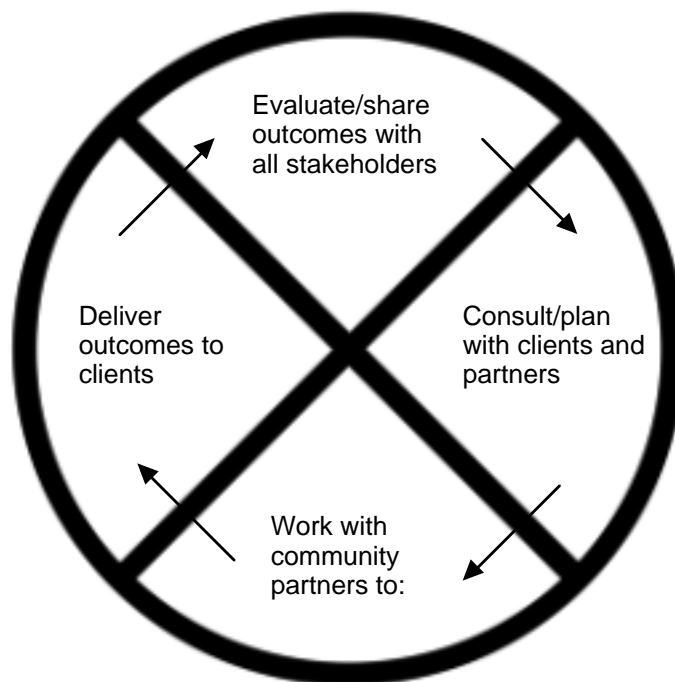
<sup>15</sup> "The 21<sup>st</sup> century promises to be one of increasing globalization and global interaction. The shift to knowledge-based economies is being fueled by the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT). Many emerging market economies are not yet able to meet the training needs this growth requires, and are looking to foreign companies to provide training services. This provides an opportunity to Canadian education and training institutions, organizations, businesses and governments to sell and share their expertise, programs, delivery models, technical assistance, and products abroad. Our reputation for quality education programs, and proven experience in international development, distance education, training programs and technologies, gives Canada much to offer the world." (from the CMEC web site).

<sup>16</sup> For example, Nova Scotia's level 1 is the equivalent of Grades 1 to 5 under the Nova Scotia education system, while in Ontario, level 1 in the Literacy system is roughly equivalent to grades 1 to 3 in the Ontario system. Further, Ontario and Nova Scotia provincial curricula are defined differently, and Ontario has a literacy-specific system of measurement while Nova Scotia does not. In other words, Ontario's system for measuring literacy skills takes the learner up to the high school level, while Nova Scotia's levels move through both primary and secondary equivalency.

## STAKEHOLDERS IN ABORIGINAL LITERACY

Stakeholders include anyone who either stands to benefit from or has some working relationship to Aboriginal literacy. Based on our Field overview, it is clear that NILA has many stakeholders from the broader literacy field, Aboriginal education systems, and other areas. These include learners, practitioners, organizations, communities, and funders, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.<sup>17</sup>

NILA looks at stakeholders from two perspectives: **clients** and **partners**. **Clients** are defined as the population served by NILA: those to whom we are most accountable in our service **outcomes**. **Partners** are those NILA works most closely in **delivering** our services (operations and projects). Another way of thinking about these two kinds of stakeholders is to look at where they tend to fall in relation to the business of NILA:



There is much cross-over between the **clients** and **partners**, and all stakeholders fall into both categories to some extent, depending on the project or service provided. However, most stakeholders are mainly in one or the other category. The next two sections of the Business Plan (Client Analysis and Partnerships) analyse and break down the stakeholders according to these categories and consider their needs in relation to Aboriginal literacy education. These needs are the pressures that will apply on a national Aboriginal literacy organization, and will in turn determine the strategic priorities and overall approach of NILA.

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<sup>17</sup> For detailed stakeholder lists, refer to Appendix 7.



## IV. Client Analysis

### INTRODUCTION

This plan defines **clients** as the population served: those to whom we are most accountable, and who stand to benefit the most from our services. The stakeholders who are most like clients are literacy **learners, practitioners and delivery agencies**.

Because learners are the primary and ultimate beneficiary of our services, NILA will focus mainly on learners in the definition of our services. Even our communication strategies to other stakeholders will be defined by learners' needs. In the Transition Phase we will develop more detailed analysis and strategies for all of our client categories.

### POPULATION DESCRIPTION

NILA will operate in Canada and serve the needs of Aboriginal literacy learners and potential learners, as well as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal literacy service providers (practitioners, administrators) that work with these learners. Eventually, NILA will also have an impact on Indigenous learners and practitioners in different parts of the world, to the extent that they can benefit from Indigenous approaches to literacy learning developed and disseminated through NILA. Initially, however, we will focus on Aboriginal literacy learners in Canada.

#### Population Size & Trends

The Aboriginal population of Canada is hard to determine, due to probable under-representation in the Canada census, and because there are various ways of defining "Aboriginal." However, according to the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, the registered Indian population is projected to increase from 658,000 in 1998 to 790,000 in 2008. In addition, there are Metis and non-status Indians. The 1996 census indicated that overall, there were 1,170,190 Aboriginal people in Canada. The Aboriginal population is increasing at a much faster rate than the non-Aboriginal population; the 2001 census data indicates a 22.2% increase in the Aboriginal population between 1996 and 2001, compared with 3.4% for the rest of Canada.<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, Aboriginal communities suffer from chronic high unemployment (from at least 20% in urban areas to over 60% on-reserve). 7000 youth enter the workforce each year, and this is projected to grow to 11,500 annually by 2010. The overall population is projected to increase by 400,000 before 2020.<sup>19</sup> These estimates are probably conservative, since a

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<sup>18</sup> 2001 Census and Facts from stats, Corporate Information Management Directorate, issue 17, December 2000, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

<sup>19</sup> Aboriginal Labour Force Characteristics from the 1996 Census, Indian and Northern Affairs, 2000, Review of Issues for the National Literacy Secretariat (Aboriginal Literacy Enhancement Initiative Report), CODE.

number of First Nations refuse to participate in the census, and other Aboriginal people may be excluded from the census taking process due to transience and housing issues.

The statistics attest to the often brutal existence still being endured by a disproportionate number of Aboriginal people. Prisons (3% of the population of Canada, but 15% of the prison population), overcrowding, substance abuse, violence, suicide, infant mortality, single parent families, etc., continue to plague us. It is not the intention of this plan to detail these conditions, as they are well documented in many places and are largely known to most of our stakeholders. NILA will address these areas, but by focusing on the strengths inherent to Aboriginal cultures, rather than on a “deficit model” that only sees weaknesses and barriers to learning in Aboriginal communities.

### **Aboriginal Literacy Statistics**

The Aboriginal population was not featured in the Canadian figures for the International Adult Literacy Survey conducted in 1994/96. However, this study revealed that almost 50% of Canadian adults can't work well with words and numbers. The reality is that Canada's Aboriginal peoples have even lower literacy rates. This disadvantage is compounded by the inter-connectedness of literacy to poverty, poor health and high unemployment and crime rates.<sup>20</sup>

The next international literacy survey (ALLS) will include a more in-depth look at Aboriginal peoples. However, the numbers we do have clearly demonstrate an extremely high area of need that is still not being met. The increasing literacy requirements of the modern world and the rising Aboriginal population point to a worsening crisis in literacy for our communities if a coordinated approach is not taken to address the need. This high level of need is generally agreed on from just about any perspective; it is only in the methods recommended for addressing these needs that the many stakeholders differ.

In four years, the Aboriginal workforce will be just shy of one million people, with young men and women under the age of 35 representing the bulk of that number. Success in school and post-secondary institutions means jobs for graduates. However, in 1999-2000, INAC statistics indicate that the high school graduation rate for First Nations students was only 32.1%.<sup>9</sup> The employment prospects for First Nations young people will be nothing short of disastrous, as the Conference Board of Canada in 1998 estimated that for half of the jobs created in Canada a secondary school diploma will become the *bare minimum* for employability. In 1998, “Gathering Strength – Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan” indicates that

[Aboriginal youth] leave the school system without the necessary skills for employment, and without the language and cultural knowledge of their people.

Nationally, this low level of academic achievement underscores the urgency to address literacy issues along with the reform of Aboriginal Education systems and fuels our concerns over the critical state of Aboriginal literacy.

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<sup>20</sup> Movement for Canadian Literacy Fact sheet, 2002.

## **LEARNER PROFILE**

### **Youth**

Aboriginal literacy learners are of all ages, but there is a large and growing youth demographic (the “Indian baby boom”) that is increasingly a priority for many Aboriginal communities. This age group is characterized by a significant percentage of single parents (who often became parents while still in their teens). Many of these youth have dropped out of school, and a large percentage, especially in urban areas, have limited exposure to their traditional Aboriginal language and culture. There is a great sense of urgency in Aboriginal communities around this age group. A deeper literature review, and possibly more research, need to be done on needs and interest levels for this demographic group, although our initial experience tells us that they both demand and respond well to Aboriginal culture-based approaches.

### **All Ages**

If NILA does choose to focus on certain projects and models addressing the needs of younger Aboriginal learners, it should only do so while keeping with holistic principles of Aboriginal education – remembering that the full community circle (all ages) needs to be a part of any development process.

### **Learner Needs**

Aboriginal literacy learners and potential learners represent a huge variety of needs in their learning contexts. One of the problems with labelling learning “Aboriginal” is that so many diverse types of learners are grouped together. For example, the range of literacy and numeracy levels range from very basic (including severely learning disabled and clients with no formal education) to advanced (clients in college and even university who have specific literacy issues that were somehow overlooked as they progressed into post-secondary learning).

However, there are some general areas of need that tend to dominate with Aboriginal literacy learners. Aboriginal literacy learners want both quality education that leads to improved employability, as well as Aboriginal languages and cultural approaches (BASA report). Other key learner needs detailed in the BASA report include:

- A better chance in the job market
- Life skills and building self-esteem
- Aboriginal curricula with strong cultural content based on Aboriginal values
- Going back to school in the home community (gives confidence)
- Safe, familiar non-competitive environments
- Individual paced learning in a group setting
- To be able to help their children with school
- To go to college
- Informal assessment or formal assessments with support
- Family and community-based literacy

One more consistent theme arises in relation to Aboriginal literacy learners: a so-called “lack of motivation.” In spite of the high level of need, many Aboriginal learners and potential learners are not motivated to commit seriously to literacy learning. In reality, this appears to be a result of the lack of resources for literacy programs as well as a lack of specific support for cultural approaches that would encourage learners by identifying strengths and addressing barriers. However, more research needs to be done in the area of Aboriginal literacy learner motivation.

The Vision Guiding Native Literacy and BASA reports both confirm the need for Aboriginal literacy programs to address the following areas in order to meet the needs of Aboriginal literacy learners:

- Ensure that programs are community-based and learner-centred
- Use a holistic approach (through assisting learners to achieve balance among their spiritual, emotional, mental and physical aspects)
- Place literacy into culture, rather than fitting culture into literacy
- Use the dual forces of language and culture to help Aboriginal communities sustain and maintain a positive cultural identity (through offering literacy in the Aboriginal language of origin and/or the official language in use in the area)
- Develop and use materials and methodology that are relevant to the learners’ lives (i.e., they reflect the experiences, needs and aspirations of the Aboriginal learner, and maximize Aboriginal learning styles)
- Empower the individual in his/her relationship to self, family, community and nation
- Contribute to community development (economic, social, educational, political and spiritual)

## **PRACTITIONERS PROFILE**

The typical Aboriginal literacy practitioner is underpaid, overworked, and under-resourced. As a rule, she (it’s usually a she) is so dedicated to her work that her desire for better program resources is a higher priority than her need for better pay – although the turnover rate tends to be high. The one theme that keeps recurring with regard to resourcing is the need for culturally relevant or culture-based materials and methodologies, including training. BASA found that, in most cases, practitioners are supplementing a non-native curriculum with Aboriginal content.

*One teacher, who has many years of experience in working with Aboriginal students...feels that better models for working with Aboriginal adult learners exist, but does not have the resources to significantly modify the existing curriculum. It was felt that there is a pressing need for an exchange of experiences, ideas and curricula between practitioners working in the area of Aboriginal literacy.*

*–Gesgapegiag Program in Quebec, The Language of Literacy*

Aboriginal literacy practitioners tend to feel isolated in their work, often being the only person in the community who has a literacy-specific focus. This isolation is compounded by the fact that most of these practitioners perform many functions in their jobs, including fundraiser, volunteer coordinator, counsellor, driver, and of course, literacy/ numeracy instructor, just to name a few. Many practitioners work in sub standard offices and classrooms, and too many are relegated to the back rooms and corners of their host organizations. Designated learning environments are also sometimes inappropriate for learning, or even non-existent. Practitioners are often frustrated by the lack of support and understanding for Aboriginal language literacy learning. They are consistently faced with the demand to provide services based in and related to Aboriginal languages, without having the resources to do so.

Above all, it is important to remember what it means to be on the “front line”; literacy practitioners work on a daily basis with people whose lives may often be in crisis, and must cope with heartbreaking situations, which adds to their overall level of stress.

Aboriginal literacy practitioners have a wide range of professional credentials, but generally appear to desire opportunities for professional development and networking with each other. NILA is not yet clear what training formats are most appropriate for Aboriginal literacy practitioners. However, the needs of Aboriginal literacy practitioners have been documented in a number of places. NILA will need to do a thorough literature review and consultation, and develop a project strategy to address the short and long term training needs of these clients.

## **DELIVERY AGENCIES PROFILE**

Literacy delivery agencies tend to be both clients and partners. Often these agencies have contradictory needs, because they are so diverse. It is important to remember with agencies that NILA is not in a position to meet all of their diverse needs, since many of these agencies have institutional focuses that are not literacy-specific. While Aboriginal literacy agencies are clients to some extent, they are also partners in the sense that NILA may work with them to provide support to the ultimate client, the learner. We may also partner with some of them on program-based research and development projects that are located in the field.

### **What are Aboriginal Literacy Programs?**

The BASA Aboriginal resource directory in The Language of Literacy, includes programs that met the following conditions:

- Either in its entirety or as a component of it, the program offers basic and/or functional and/or advanced literacy training. It may offer any number of additional programs (job readiness training, life skills, vocational training, etc.)
- The program offers literacy training in either of the two official languages and/or in an Aboriginal language.
- The program is “Aboriginal controlled”, subject to governance and/or policy procedures of an Aboriginal board or institution whose primary purpose is to serve the Aboriginal community.

- The program attracts learners who are “return students,” defined as those students who have left or quit formal educational training and have returned to a program for literacy or “upgrading” training.

Agencies meeting this description will be the primary literacy delivery agency clients, although as time goes on, our agency clientele will expand with the quality of our services. For example, approaches developed through the work of NILA should have some impact/ relationship with Aboriginal children’s education, possibly through family literacy initiatives. Also, at some time in the future, models and approaches developed through NILA may be applicable for non-Aboriginal service providers and non-Aboriginal learners. In the broadest sense, our delivery agency stakeholders can include the following areas:

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Client</b>
Aboriginal – Indian Friendship Centres/ other community agencies, First Nation School Boards, Aboriginal technical institutes, etc.	Aboriginal
Non- Aboriginal – off-reserve school boards, colleges, and community-based literacy programs, etc.	Aboriginal
Aboriginal - Indian Friendship Centres/ other community agencies, First Nation School Boards, Aboriginal technical institutes, etc.	Non-Aboriginal
Non-Aboriginal - off-reserve school boards, colleges, and community-based literacy programs, etc.	Non-Aboriginal

All of these categories do exist, although the first and last are most common, and the third is rare. Partnerships and links between the first two should be strengthened and made more meaningful through the work of NILA, and will have a “trickle-down” effect to the other categories.

## **Delivery Agency Needs**

Delivery agency needs reflect those of practitioners and learners in many ways. Concerns include training for practitioners and culture based curricula. From an agency perspective, some of these needs may be met through a coordinated strategy for sharing training and curricula, since it is not always cost effective (or even possible) to develop these aspects of service locally. Of course, the overriding need is for increased resources and funding, since funding for literacy is so limited. A coordinated literacy funding strategy is also important, since funding sources and potential sources are diverse.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> To this end, NILA will need to maintain a close relationship with the project currently being conducted through CODE Inc. and the B.C. Indian Brotherhood. This project is looking at setting up a National Aboriginal Literacy Enhancement Foundation.

## SUMMARY CHART

The table below breaks down the primary NILA client groups and some of their key needs.

Client	Key Needs
<b>Learners</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic</li> <li>• Intermediate</li> <li>• “Secondary” or upgrading with basic needs</li> <li>• All ages, but with a large proportion of youth (15 – 29)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive literacy programs that address barriers to learning by moving learner to greater holistic health, including but not limited to improved employability</li> <li>• Cross-cultural approach that prepares for both Aboriginal and mainstream environments, but is rooted in Aboriginal languages and cultures</li> <li>• High School Diplomas, entry to further training.</li> <li>• Well-resourced programs, including learner supports like childcare and transportation.</li> </ul>
<b>Practitioners</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-based (1<sup>st</sup> Nation/ urban community centre)</li> <li>• Institution based (college, school board, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Culture based curricula (materials &amp; methodologies)</li> <li>• Better pay/ job security (more for community-based)</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery Agencies</b> Aboriginal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community agencies (e.g., friendship centres)</li> <li>• First Nations (Band Councils)</li> <li>• Aboriginal Education Institutes</li> </ul> Non-Aboriginal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Agencies</li> <li>• Community Colleges</li> <li>• School Boards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved funding levels</li> <li>• Coordinated funding (i.e., with diverse literacy and non-literacy funding sources)</li> <li>• Good, experienced Native teachers with a reputation for standard systemic academic expectations as well as effective cultural approaches</li> <li>• Coordinated partnerships, resource sharing (e.g., training, curricula, etc.)</li> </ul>

## V. Partnerships

NILA works with its partners in **developing and delivering** its services. The literacy field in general, and Aboriginal literacy in particular, is extremely fragmented. During the Transition Phase, NILA will conduct an in-depth assessment of its wide circle of partners before refining its partnership priorities and a longer-term networking strategy. However, we have already researched and networked with existing and potential community partners in the Aboriginal literacy field across Canada and to some extent internationally, and have identified a basic partnership strategy below. This basic strategy will serve as a starting point for the Communications and Networking Strategy project (see “Communication Strategy” Section), which in turn will be refined as NILA evolves in the years to come.

NILA partners fall into five broad categories. Each of these categories includes Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partners, although generally speaking, the main focus is on Aboriginal partners. The exception is funding bodies, where non-Aboriginal governments and other funders play a stronger role. These partners are mainly in Canada, although eventually we aim to widen the focus to international partners as well. The Partner categories are:

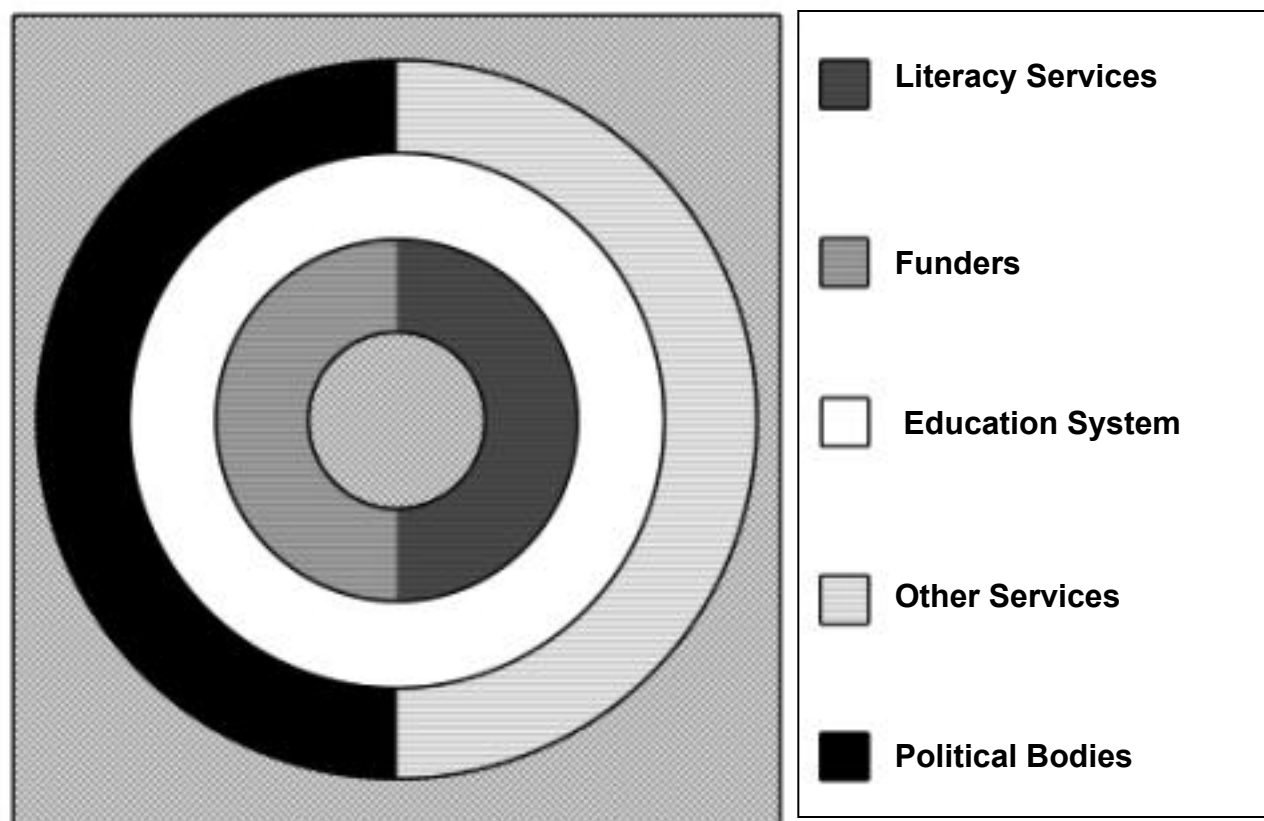
1. **Literacy Systems** - Includes development networks and delivery systems, agencies, practitioners, and learners.
2. **Literacy Funders** – Includes government bodies, corporate donors, foundations, and donations of service and in-kind support for both development and delivery services.
3. **Other Education Systems** -Includes elementary through to post-secondary institutions, systems and Educational networks and consortia.
4. **Other Service Providers** – Includes healing, employment, correctional, social service and other systems not directly related to literacy and education.
5. **Political/Representative Bodies** - Includes national and regional political/ territorial organizations and representative bodies.

The chart on the following page gives a sense of how the five key partner categories relate to NILA, which is at the centre of the circle. Partners closer to the centre of the circle are more **Direct Community Partners**, while those in the more outward circles tend to be more **Indirect Community Partners**.

At this time, NILA considers Aboriginal Literacy systems and certain funders to be the most direct partners in relation to the services we offer, in that they are already placed to cooperate in the development and dissemination of Aboriginal cultural approaches to literacy. After them, we will need to connect with other Aboriginal education systems, and finally with our most indirect partners: other service providers and political bodies, who will require the most preparation and outreach in order to work effectively with NILA towards the development of supports for Aboriginal literacy clients.



## CIRCLE OF PARTNERS



### PARTNER ANALYSIS

The NADC has already networked extensively to identify community assets and initiate relationships with potential partners and collaborations with other community agencies. The networking process to date has been conducted mainly through the Co-ordinator, Business Planner and NADC committee members.<sup>22</sup>

Appendices 4 and 7 give more comprehensive lists of Aboriginal literacy partners and potential partners. In our Transition phase and first year of operations, NILA will affirm and refine our strategy identifying those who will be our priority partners. However, we have already begun to break down the Partner categories. We have also begun to identify the role of each partner, what that partner will expect from NILA in return (partner's interest), and how the relationship will be sustained. This basic breakdown of each partner category is given in the tables on the following pages. These tables are only a beginning, and the partner analysis and strategy tables will need to be refined and expanded during the Networking and Communication Strategy that will take place during NILA's Transition Phase.

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<sup>22</sup> A detailed account of relationships that have already been initiated through the NADC can be found in Appendix 6.

## 1. LITERACY SYSTEMS

Literacy system partners include development networks and delivery systems, agencies, practitioners, and learners. The Focus will be more on Aboriginal partners. Where we work with non-Aboriginal partners, the focus will be to identify where to work together and combine resources in respectful, cross-cultural development initiatives and strategic planning processes – a cultural exchange, of sorts.

<b>Partner(s)</b>	<b>Main Role of Partner</b>	<b>Partner's Key Interest</b>	<b>Relationship<sup>23</sup></b>
Practitioners	Consultation and selected Participation in projects	Support services to literacy practitioners	Practitioner's Advisory Committee
Aboriginal Literacy learners	Consultation and selected participation in projects	Improved literacy service delivery to learners	NILA Learners Advisory Committee
Aboriginal Literacy Delivery Agencies	Consultation and selected participation in projects	Improved supports for literacy delivery services	Receive supportive information/ services from NILA
Provincial/ territorial/ regional Literacy organizations (networks, curriculum developers, etc.)	Strategize and coordinate work with NILA on areas of common interest; Consultation and selected participation in projects	Take advantage of better National Aboriginal literacy network	Work together on strategic approaches (face to face meetings, e-mail, phone correspondence)
National Literacy organizations, coalitions and networks -MCL, ABC, Frontier College, NALD, etc.)	Strategize and coordinate work with NILA on areas of common interest; help Aboriginal literacy to be a distinct and crucial part of the national literacy strategy in Canada	Better informed and able to serve their own members; relief/ shared work load in certain national initiatives/ development areas.	NILA representation in national initiatives and discussions, e.g., conferences, literacy action day; ongoing correspondence
Mainstream Literacy Deliverers (Colleges, school boards, literacy organizations, etc.)	Strategize and coordinate work with NILA on areas of common interest.	Improved ability to deliver services to Aboriginal learners, better and more coordinated relationships with Aboriginal stakeholders	Conferences (networking and presenting ), selected strategic committees.
Various Aboriginal Literacy development projects	Provide information for NILA national Aboriginal literacy project strategy	Better informed about how each project relates to the big picture.	Correspondence through Project strategy

<sup>23</sup> Relationships with all stakeholders will be enhanced through the NILA newsletter and web site; also, all stakeholders are potential members and advisory committee members, and relationships may be enhanced by these means as well.

## 2. LITERACY FUNDERS

This category includes government bodies, corporate donors, foundations, and donations of service and in-kind support. For more detail on our approach to funders, refer to the Financial Plan, Section XIII of this Business Plan. For a more detailed list of funders, see Appendix 4.

Partner	Main Role of Partner	Partner's Key Interest	Relationship
National Literacy Secretariat (NLS)	Project-based support for distinct Aboriginal cultural approaches to literacy development.	Accountability and results in project activity that addresses government priorities	Based on contractual agreements, reports and discussion
Other National government departments (INAC, Canadian Heritage, HRDC, etc.)	Project-based support for Aboriginal literacy links and development in related fields (health, self-government, Aboriginal languages, etc.)	Accountability and results in project activity that addresses government priorities.	Contractual agreements, reports and discussion
Provincial/ territorial education ministries (literacy/ adult education departments)	Project-based support for distinct Aboriginal cultural approaches to literacy development.	Accountability and results in project activity that addresses government literacy priorities	Contractual agreements, reports and discussion
CESO Aboriginal Services	Provide professional volunteers for consultation	Volunteer satisfaction and recognition	Honorary membership for volunteers, NILA volunteer recognition
Foundations <sup>24</sup>	Provide funding for NILA activities.	Fund activities that meet foundation mission/ criteria	Honorary mention, invitation/ representation at special events
Corporate Donors	Provide funding for NILA activities, special sponsorships	Increase Business profile, improve Aboriginal workforce, fund activities that meet criteria.	Honorary mention, invitation/ representation at special events
Individual Donors	Donate funds, goods, services to NILA.	Personal satisfaction, community involvement	Honorary membership, invitation/ representation at special events
Aboriginal businesses	Donation, special sponsorships.	Increase business profile, improve Aboriginal workforce	Honorary membership, invitation/ representation at special events

### Other Potential “funding” Partners

Support can take many forms and reap many different benefits: in-kind contributions of space, hardware, software, furnishing, or renovations; participation by skilled people on special committees; technical advice and assistance, computer maintenance and repair; a complementary program, or an agency that wishes to bring its participants to NILA’s learning lab; and so on.

<sup>24</sup> The concept of a National Aboriginal literacy foundation currently being developed through the Native Brotherhood of B.C. could be one potential funder for NILA activities, although its main focus will probably be to support delivery agencies rather than development services; also the relationship between NILA and such a foundation still needs to be explored. For example, the foundation may be a separate agency that partners with NILA on certain initiatives, or it could share the same board and corporate name while remaining a distinct entity within NILA.

### 3. OTHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS

This category includes elementary through to post-secondary institutions, systems and Educational networks and consortia. For more detail on these stakeholders, see “Aboriginal Education” in the field analysis section, and the list of Aboriginal education stakeholders in the Appendix section.

<b>Partner(s)</b>	<b>Main Role of Partner</b>	<b>Partner’s Key Interest</b>	<b>Relationship</b>
Aboriginal Educational Authorities	Work with NILA to coordinate literacy awareness and services with Aboriginal education systems from basic to university level for all ages	Strategy for Aboriginal drop outs, special projects addressing common interest areas (e.g., projects with holistic learning themes)	Special projects, Aboriginal Education conferences, committees, possible organizational memberships in NILA
Good, experienced Aboriginal “teacher-leaders” with a reputation for effective cultural approaches	Lead and help direct Aboriginal literacy development to higher levels in practical ways, based on experience.	Specialized training in literacy, opportunities for “project sabbaticals” and networking with other educators.	Project participants, members.
Leading Aboriginal post-secondary education Institutes such as FNTI or SIFC	Provide input and support to NILA; work together on cutting edge research partnerships and development projects	Access to meaningful literacy project partnerships, improved systemic accountability in literacy skills	Organizational membership in NILA
Aboriginal Education Institutes Coalitions and Consortia, such as AIC	Provide input and support to NILA; work together on cutting edge research partnerships and development projects	Access to meaningful literacy project partnerships, improved systemic accountability in literacy skills	Organizational membership in NILA
Canadian Universities with Aboriginal Departments	Work together on cutting edge research partnerships and development projects	Access to meaningful research partnerships	Mainly project-based
Aboriginal Teacher Training programs in mainstream universities	Work together on cutting edge literacy practitioner training projects	Access to meaningful field-based research partnerships in Aboriginal literacy training	Mainly project-based

## 4. OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS

There are a number of other regional and national stakeholders with concerns that are similar or parallel to ours, even though they are not directly responsible for literacy or educational service delivery. For example, they desire Aboriginal culture-based services, their clients often need literacy support services, and they often provide services to the same clients in the same environment as literacy services (Friendship Centres, for example). Their services may sometimes be offered in tandem with literacy services, but tend not to be closely coordinated with them. They also tend to be better funded than literacy services, and a higher priority for Aboriginal communities. Examples include:

- Aboriginal Human Resources Development agreement holders (see below);
- Aboriginal Healing Initiatives, such as the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) and National Aboriginal Healing Organization (NAHO);
- Prisons and Aboriginal programs that respond to the correctional system,
- Other community and social service systems.

NILA will develop a position and strategy that seeks to encourage closer links between these programs and literacy delivery in Aboriginal communities. It will be important to address these areas from a literacy perspective because they have been identified as priorities for Aboriginal peoples, while Aboriginal literacy is not generally seen as being as critical as these areas.

### Aboriginal Employment Training

Special note should be made of this area. A great deal of energy and focus has been devoted in recent years to Aboriginal training issues on a national scale. Over the past decade, control of HRDC training dollars and responsibility for skills development and employment initiatives has been devolved to Aboriginal communities through over 50 regional bilateral agreements (AHRDAs). These agreements are based on the recognition that “Aboriginal peoples best understand their own needs and are best able to design and implement effective programs and services.” HRDC also acknowledges that:

*Aboriginal people are in a better position to know what works at the local level in the way of human resources development programs.*<sup>25</sup>

In the year ending March 31, 1999, the government spent \$211.5 million for labour force development programs and services that were established in Aboriginal communities under the regional bilateral agreements, and HRDC continues to support these agreements today. This money supports a wide range activities dealing with human resources development, skills development, employment and income security. While the links between Aboriginal employment initiatives and literacy may seem obvious, there appears to be no coordinated strategy for linking the two areas. NILA is the obvious group to fill this bill.

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<sup>25</sup> HRDC Aboriginal Relations Office web site ([www17.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/ARO-BRA](http://www17.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/ARO-BRA)).

Because the higher Aboriginal priority areas such as healing (AHF)<sup>26</sup> and employment (AHRDAs) have significant dollars attached to them, they are good partners for NILA to target in development projects linking literacy issues to their concerns. For example, we will target HRDC and the AHRDA's to support a project that makes strategic links between Aboriginal employment training programs and literacy development.

This partner chart for working with less direct community partners is only a very basic and partial outline, and will need to be expanded as our Networking strategy unfolds. More detail on some of these partners is in Appendix 7.

## OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS

Partner	Main Role of Partner	Partner's Key Interest	Relationship
Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA) Holders and HRDC Aboriginal Relations Office (ARO)	Co-sponsor projects linking Aboriginal literacy and employment	Improved employability programs, working program models that link literacy and employment training	Project partners, funders
Aboriginal Institutions for Healing (AHF, NAHO, etc)	Co-sponsor projects linking Aboriginal literacy and healing initiatives	Improved healing, especially related to addressing "residential school syndrome" through working program models	Project partners, funders? (such as AHF, provincial Aboriginal healing initiatives)
Correctional and Aboriginal Justice systems	Co-sponsor projects linking Aboriginal literacy and justice issues	Improved linkages and program models for literacy and justice programs	Project partners, funders?
Community and Social Services	Co-sponsor projects linking Aboriginal literacy and social services	Improved linkages and service to Aboriginal social service clients, working program models that link literacy and social services	Project partners, funders?
Other partners to be added...			

<sup>26</sup> While the AHF has recently completed its mandate and is currently dispensing the last of its funding, it is reasonable to expect that some way of continuing to address Aboriginal healing issues will arise to continue the work begun in this area. NILA will need to closely follow developments in the field of Aboriginal healing.

## 5. POLITICAL/REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

This partner category includes national, international and regional political/ territorial organizations and representative bodies. As with the table for “other service providers” the table below is only a very basic and partial outline, and will need to be expanded as NILA’s Networking and Communication strategy unfolds.

<b>Partner</b>	<b>Main Role of Partner</b>	<b>Partner’s Key Interest</b>	<b>Relationship</b>
Regional Aboriginal Political-Territorial Organizations	Fight for funding for Aboriginal literacy delivery at the political level (provincial ministries of Education)	Convenient and strategic information fed to them by NILA, useful for lobbying and program development	Possible organizational membership, conference networking, some direct liaison work
National Aboriginal Political Organizations (e.g., AFN, MNC, etc.)	Fight for funding for Aboriginal literacy delivery at the political level (Federal departments INAC, NLS, etc.)	Convenient and strategic information fed to them by NILA, useful for lobbying and program development	Possible organizational membership, conference networking, some direct liaison work
Canadian provincial governments	Hear and consult with NILA/ Aboriginal govts. on Aboriginal literacy needs, and develop appropriate legislation, policies and supports	Convenient and strategic information fed to them for legislation, planning, policy-making, and government program development.	Consulting through lobbying and advocacy efforts, some “informal” networking.
Canadian federal government	Hear and consult with NILA/ Aboriginal govts. on Aboriginal literacy needs, and develop appropriate legislation, policies and supports	Convenient and strategic information fed to them for legislation, planning, policy-making, and government program development.	Consulting through lobbying and advocacy efforts, some “informal” networking.
World Council of Indigenous People	International lobbying and awareness, project partnerships	Increased international networking and solidarity on Indigenous education, enriched perspectives, improved global strategy	Possible organizational membership, conference networking, some direct liaison work
UNESCO	International lobbying and awareness, project partnerships, potential funder?	Support work on “developing” communities	Project partner/ Funder?
Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC)	Build Aboriginal approaches into a national strategy for marketing/ exporting Canadian education	Increase CMEC credibility in and enriched “products” for the “developing” world.	Project partner/ ?

## SUMMARY

### Cooperative Advantages for our Partners

The following are only a few examples of the benefits NILA will have for our partners:

- The development and sharing of Aboriginal Culture-based methodologies;
- A forum to discuss and network on Aboriginal literacy issues and see how they relate to different sectors of Aboriginal communities;
- Opportunities to participate in/benefit from Aboriginal literacy development projects;
- New and effective ways to make Aboriginal literacy services more community-based and integral to other kinds of Aboriginal service providers.
- A clear strategy for Aboriginal literacy in Canada

### NILA Expectations of Partnerships

In addition to analyzing our partners' needs, NILA will need to be clear with all of its partners about its own needs, which are based on those of its clients. On the plus side, the benefits of NILA activities for our partners are often the same as our organizational expectations. Probably the most important expectation NILA has of its partnerships is that *Aboriginal literacy will become more of a priority with all of our partners* than it has been in the past.

### Working Together to make Aboriginal Literacy a Priority

In spite of the need, our analysis of trends and issues in literacy education and Aboriginal communities tells us that literacy is still not a priority among Aboriginal stakeholders, and that many Aboriginal people are unlikely to take full advantage of literacy services as they are currently set up. We need to respect that other areas are a higher priority for Aboriginal communities while striving to link literacy with these other priority areas. This can only be done by *adding value* to the services that are top priorities.

Our experience tells us that Aboriginal communities are much more likely to develop and make effective use of literacy programs if there are strategic partnerships that link us through our common concerns: Aboriginal control and culture-based approaches, as well as quality cross-cultural programming. NILA is positioned to address these areas as the first and only agency that exists to facilitate, coordinate, network and strategize around Aboriginal literacy service development on a national scale with a wide circle of partners.

Finally, we should never forget how important it is for our ultimate clients, the learners, to ensure that the Aboriginal literacy field relates to the broader contexts and needs of all the stakeholders in our learners' lives. If literacy is not asserted as a vital and complementary element to these other priority areas, then ultimately our learners will suffer.



## VI. Strategic Position and Risks

### INTRODUCTION

NILA has established its strategic position after a careful evaluation of trends, issues and needs in the literacy field, and a consideration of the stakeholders, the collaborative environment, and NILA's strengths and risks. The basis of our strategy is to position NILA as *the* focal point for developers and providers of Aboriginal literacy services in Canada, and for the stakeholders in these services (we will begin to expand on this base to include international stakeholders by year 3 or 4 of operations). NILA will distinguish itself strategically by focusing on:

- Aboriginal Culture-based perspectives
- Cross-cultural facility (Aboriginal/ Euro-Canadian)
- Developing unique and mutually beneficial partnerships
- A focus on networking, research and development
- Accessing and linking untapped resources for literacy
- Addressing stakeholder needs
- Establishing unique operational advantages

### STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

#### Key Organizational Functions

The NILA strategy carefully considers two key organizational functions:

- **NILA Service Functions** (Field Development and Support); and
- **NILA Operational Functions** (Organizational Health and development)

We will need to balance these two areas and *always distinguish between them; organizational growth can never be allowed to outstrip service provision, or NILA will become a bureaucracy existing for its own sake*. However, both strategic areas have to be addressed at the same time; NILA cannot assist the field without establishing a solid operational foundation, nor can we justify our existence without providing clear support to the field. The balance of these two strategic areas will need to always be foremost in the minds and actions of NILA's managers.

#### The Prioritization Process

There are many stakeholders, potential partners, development gaps and other areas of need that can be addressed by NILA, but they must be prioritized. We have begun this process by beginning with a breakdown of our key service and operational functions, and how they will logically need to be addressed in relation to each other along a 6-year timeline. Based on this breakdown, the various partners and themes can be tied in and prioritized accordingly in our strategy. The following page (40 – A) provides an overview of this breakdown of key functions into a schedule.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This explanation of NILA strategic priorities is based on the strategic flowchart on the preceding page. The chart shows how the functions and their various elements break out over time. The chart breaks NILA's main service functions into two broad areas:

### **Networking Services**

Provide a strategic networking and advocacy forum for Aboriginal literacy stakeholders;

### **Research & Development**

Facilitate research & development projects and other supports for Aboriginal literacy.

Initially (during the Transition Phase and year 1) NILA will focus mainly on Networking services. Gradually, the focus will shift to include more Research and Development activities while maintaining the networking functions. We are taking this approach because a strong networking capacity will build a solid foundation for quality research and development projects, and implementing our service functions gradually will help us to avoid overextending NILA early in its development.

Note that all **Operational functions** will also depend on success in our Networking services strategy.

## NETWORKING AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

During the Transition Phase and Year 1 we will focus mainly on prioritizing and establishing strong relationships with stakeholders. Our top priority is to develop and implement a detailed ***NILA Networking and Communication Strategy***<sup>27</sup> that sets the tone and stage for all our networking activities over a five year period. This strategy will be developed during our Transition Phase and implemented in Year 1. During Year 1 we will seek out ways to host another National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering, which we hope will take place in Year 2. By year 2, our Communication Strategy will take more of a back seat to research and development projects, requiring mainly maintenance and periodic review/ revision. The Communication Strategy will address the following stakeholder groups and priorities, roughly in this order:

### **Key Government Funders**

We have already gained significant support and commitment from NLS through several national projects over the past few years. This business plan, for example, was developed as a part of the NLS project entitled "Laying the Foundations for the National Aboriginal Literacy Office." We will continue to develop our relationship with NLS (we have already set up an ongoing electronic conference with them), but will also quickly move to identify additional sources of support, including contacts with Indian Affairs, HRDC, and Canadian Heritage, to cite just a few examples.

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<sup>27</sup> For more detail, see Section VII of this plan, "Communication Strategy."

## **Clients and Partners**

NADC has already attended and presented at numerous conferences on education and literacy, as well as coordinating the National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering in 2000. Also, many of our core clients were identified in The Language of Literacy. This has helped both Aboriginal literacy and the NADC/NILA to gain a higher profile in the last few years. In the Transition Phase, NILA will pick up where NADC and BASA left off, intensify the networking process in a consultation with its broad base of clients and partners, and work out a detailed strategy for maintaining a strong network of these stakeholders. We will also identify and solicit our first members and committees in this process.

## **Other Funding Partners**

Once we have begun to strengthen links with key government funders, clients and partners, and based on our consultations with them, we will focus on other potential funders, including corporate and foundation donors and other government initiatives. We should begin addressing this area in detail by the middle of the Transition Phase. We will design and develop a unique marketing package describing the Aboriginal literacy field and the development work that needs to be done, to ensure the serious consideration of future projects by all potential funders. All work in this area must be coordinated with the progress of the National Aboriginal literacy foundation currently being researched through the Native Brotherhood of B.C.

## **Advocacy**

By year 1, we will begin to develop our advocacy functions, based on the findings and recommendations of our Networking and Communications Strategy. Some examples of advocacy roles for NILA include:

- to Aboriginal Political/territorial organizations – to get them better equipped to advocate for funding at higher levels, and to bring them into a better awareness of literacy needs and issues in the communities, as well as the situations with specific government departments (such as provincial Ministries of Education/NLS).
- to Canadian Federal and Provincial governments for support of specific Aboriginal cultural approaches)
- to funders, to address policy issues that can improve supports for Aboriginal Culture-based approaches to literacy learning
- to Aboriginal educational stakeholders, to work together to develop mutually supportive approaches with Aboriginal literacy deliverers.
- to non-Aboriginal literacy stakeholders – to improve their understanding and respect and the ability to develop cross-cultural partnerships.

## **National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering**

By Year 2 (2005), NILA's networking and fundraising activities will bring it to a point where its reputation as a national Aboriginal literacy forum has begun to be established. By now NILA should aim to support a 2<sup>nd</sup> National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering, 5 years after the one that

took place in 2000. This gathering could be done in conjunction with the NILA AGM and/ or as a part of another National Aboriginal Education Conference.

### **International Partners**

Beginning in Year 3 (2006), NILA will develop a strategy for partnerships in advocacy, cross-cultural training, and other areas with international Indigenous educational organizations and leaders. By Year 5, we hope to have a global strategy and partnerships well under way (see “International Projects” below under the Research and Development Strategy).

## **RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

By the end of the Transition Phase, we hope to be in a position to begin focusing on projects that address themes and issues in Aboriginal literacy. We will begin by developing a NILA Project Strategy during Year 1. By Year 2 (2005) NILA will implement this strategy and begin the process of coordinating research and development projects that provide significant and effective services to our network of partners and clients. All project activity will be based on consultation and networking processes established through the Networking and Communication Strategy project (Transition Year).

### **NILA Project Strategy**

Later in the Transition Phase, NILA will apply for funds to support a Project Strategy, which is targeted to start in Year 1. Based on our networking process and the establishment of a solid membership and committee structure, we will involve key partners in the development and prioritization of project areas. NILA’s project strategy will consider how Aboriginal literacy issues relate to broader themes in the literacy field. NILA cannot address all these themes, although it will need to be aware of them. One way of narrowing the range of issues is to identify them from a cross-cultural perspective – which areas are Aboriginal concerns, which are mainstream, and where they are shared. For example, issues related to confusion around academic levels in relation to literacy will be lower priorities for NILA because they are also issues for non-Native groups, who are in a better position to take the lead in addressing them. This approach will help NILA to prioritize issues, avoid redundancy, and develop effective partnership strategies with the broader literacy field. The NILA Project Strategy will lay the foundations for our Practitioner Training and Research Strategies, which will take place depending on the prioritization process in the Project Strategy, as well as the success of further project proposals

### **Practitioner Training Strategy**

NILA will consult widely on the development of distinct Indigenous approaches to the provision of literacy training. This strategy will conduct a review of literature and previous projects, a consultation (survey/ focus group, or circle) of literacy practitioners, and consider training issues and options (partnerships with Aboriginal teacher training programs, accreditation needs, etc.).

## **Research Strategy**

NILA will be the leader in Aboriginal literacy research and possibly in specific areas of research for the broader literacy field as well. It will seek to define Aboriginal literacy's distinct nature, but still leave room for different approaches from communities.<sup>28</sup> This process will define an Aboriginal culture-based holistic research framework with common terminology, for our own sake as well as for our relationships with other stakeholders, especially research project partners and funders.

The Aboriginal literacy research strategy will be clear and concise and always relate back to the common terminology. It will review and consider Aboriginal-specific literacy and literacy-related research, as well as mainstream literacy research that applies to or can be adapted for us, considering where efforts can be shared (i.e., cross-culturally). It will identify where there are cultural differences and unique needs relating to Aboriginal communities, and research gaps that need to be filled.

## **Curriculum Strategy**

Aboriginal Literacy and education curriculum and materials development and publishing is an area where several strong Aboriginal organizations already exist - notably the Ningwakwe Learning Press in Ontario (advertised as "Canada's Premiere Source for Aboriginal Literacy Materials"). NILA should examine how to partner with these agencies in developing a national Aboriginal Literacy Curriculum strategy. Because this is a highly specialized area where existing agencies already possess expertise, NILA will focus on ways to strengthen partnerships and avoid expensive redundancies (it wouldn't make sense to create another organization doing the same highly specialized work, given the limited resources). NILA will need to develop a networking function linking its project work with work done by curriculum resource agencies.

## **Break out Projects**

By Year 3, a number of NILA projects should be underway, based on the findings and policies derived from the Project Strategies. Potential project areas are many, and include specific practitioner training and research projects, projects linking Aboriginal literacy with employment (workplace literacy), family literacy, numeracy, and so on. Of course, NILA need not exclude working on specific projects in these areas before the completion of broader project strategies, should funding become available; however, any possible projects sponsored through NILA should ultimately relate to the broader strategic priorities of the organization. Below are just a few examples of possible Aboriginal literacy project themes that we can look forward to:

- Using the Medicine Wheel for a literacy education model;
- Aboriginal approaches to addressing learning styles;
- Translating Elders' teaching styles for literacy educators;
- Bringing traditional teachings and wisdom into modern literacy learning contexts;

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<sup>28</sup> This shouldn't be too hard, since most Aboriginal practitioners have a strong intuitive sense of terms like "holistic" – the problems arise when bringing these concepts to a common understanding, especially in relation to a variety of delivery systems and funders. A number of Aboriginal stakeholders in education have already gone through this exercise in defining terms of Aboriginal education, and we could adapt from these.

- Possibilities for Aboriginal distance/ web-based/ interactive literacy learning tools;
- Action-oriented research – e.g., Pilot classrooms that apply and evaluate the methodologies defined through the above areas.

## **International Projects**

Once NILA has established a solid national foundation in through networking and project partnerships in Canada, we will turn our attention to developing and implementing international projects. This is a longer term goal that will only begin to unfold in our 3<sup>rd</sup> year. There are many opportunities for NILA to increase its funding and partnerships at an international level through unique projects and activities that address globalization. For example:

- Develop a proposal to support marketing Aboriginal approaches as an essential element of the “Canadian Knowledge Industry.” Canada Dept. of Foreign Affairs & International Trade has programs designed to “assist the Canadian knowledge industry promote and export its products and services effectively in international markets. This includes the delivery of distance education programs and expertise, the procurement of contracts for education and training, the export of corporate training and educational products, and the recruitment of international students.”
- The Indigenous Peoples Partnership Programme (IPPP) of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is now operational. CIDA is now accepting proposals for funding under this mechanism, focusing on connecting Indigenous peoples in North and South America through creative projects.
- Work to develop effective literacy models for Indigenous populations worldwide in a partnered project with an Aboriginal post-secondary institution (e.g., SIFC), to help it “internationalize”.<sup>29</sup>

There is more detail on this area in the “International initiatives” Appendix (10), which has a list of some of the key initiatives and programs in marketing education at a global level from the federal Government of Canada, national organizations, and business.

## **OPERATIONAL STRATEGY<sup>30</sup>**

### **Basic Organizational Infrastructure**

Based on (and concurrent with) networking, project activity and fundraising done during the Transition Phase, NILA will build the basics of its organizational infrastructure, including board development, recruitment of members and committees, and more detailed networking, communications, and fundraising strategies. By Year 1, basic personnel and operational capacity will be in place.

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<sup>29</sup> The Association of Universities and Colleges attests to the growing trend of Canadian universities to “internationalize” by introducing an international perspective at all levels to maintain continued prominence for Canada in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

<sup>30</sup> For more detail on this area, see Section VIII, “Operational Plan.”

## Planning and Reviewing NILA Outcomes

Essential to any successful organization is the capacity to monitor and review its own performance in relation to clear and measurable goals. NILA will work closely with its stakeholders during the Transition Phase (Networking and Communication Strategy) to refine and clarify performance outcomes that meet their needs. We will have to identify success factors for our clients and partners by asking them, "How will you know we are a successful organization?"

The potential performance outcomes of NILA are too numerous to list here in detail, especially for the long term picture, and will need to be prioritized during the Transition Phase and Year 1; however, the chart below gives an indication of some of the broader service and operational outcomes for the Transition Year and Year 1. As NILA builds its operations, we will break down, assign responsibility for, and review these outcomes in our annual planning and reporting process.

### NILA PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES (TRANSITION and YEAR 1)

Service Functions	Performance Outcomes
<b>Networking</b>	Networking and Communication Strategy Reports complete, distributed to stakeholders
	Partial implementation of communications network and outreach/ marketing initiatives (e.g., 1 <sup>st</sup> quarterly newsletter, web site development plan, etc.)
	Modest initial funding from corporate and foundation donors
	Clear recommendations from stakeholder consultations
	Clearly delineated Advocacy roles negotiated for NILA
	Plan and funding strategy in place for 2 <sup>nd</sup> National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering
<b>Research &amp; Development</b>	Project Strategy developed
	Funding obtained for Practitioner Training and Research Strategies
	Supports for NILA Aboriginal Literacy development projects up by 80% (end of Year 1)
<b>Operations</b>	Policies and procedures developed for all areas of basic operations
	Establishment and maintenance of strong board, membership and committee structure
	Increased funding from key government funders
	NILA office opened and staff hired in Winnipeg (Year 1)

## **Winnipeg Office**

At the beginning of Year 1 (fall 2004), NILA will open a modest office in Winnipeg, staffed by an Executive Director and Administrative Assistant. Contracted project staff are expected to round out the team, and may be based in other locations, or work part-time out of the office. This phase coincides with the development of a detailed Project Strategy, which, along with continued fundraising, will contribute to the next phase of organizational growth and development.

## **Operational Policies**

Once the Winnipeg office is opened and the Project Strategy is well underway, the NILA board and committees will turn their attention to the refinement of organizational functions and development of policies and procedures on project activities (contracting, research, curriculum, practitioner training, etc.) This work of the board and committees will be done as an essential part of developing (and in tandem with) the NILA Project Strategy.

## **Capacity Building**

By Year 2 (2005-06), NILA should be able to turn its attention to a modest increase in service and staffing levels, based on successful project and fundraising activities.

## **Expansion**

In the longer term (towards the end of our 5 year plan), NILA will take steps towards the acquisition of our own building, featuring a model culture-based “learning lab” environment, or “Centre of Excellence” for literacy learning. This step will be taken cautiously, however, and only when we have also established a successful fundraising strategy as well as excellent service levels that are not endangered by a move to expand operational capacity.

## **CONCLUSION: A culture-based, flexible, and far-reaching strategic approach.**

NILA services are unique in that they move away from a “deficit model” (which focuses on the troubles in our communities) to a perspective that emphasizes our strengths, which are grounded in Aboriginal cultures. NILA is also developing a distinct culture-based approach to collaborative models and partnerships, and a cutting edge strategy for entering the era of globalization. We believe that our cultures provide solutions to problems for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples worldwide.

Many NILA services (e.g., research, practitioner training, and culture-based program models) will be designed so that they can be translated to local contexts and meet a wide variety of client needs, even internationally. We will strive to provide services at different levels depending on our stakeholders - who range from learners to post-secondary academic institutions and governments. Combined with our strong Networking and Communication Strategy, this will maximize the beneficial effects of our services for a greater number of stakeholders.



## **KEY STRATEGIC RISKS**

### **RISK #1: Literacy is not currently a priority in Aboriginal communities**

In spite of the need, our analysis of trends and issues in literacy education and Aboriginal communities tells us that literacy is not a top priority among many of our potential Aboriginal partners, as they are largely concerned with issues that are more immediate and pressing, such as treaty rights, better education for the children, housing, unemployment and poverty, and numerous community health issues ranging from violence and suicide to alcohol recovery.

#### **Response: Add value to communities by linking literacy to their priorities**

NILA recognizes that our communities are rightly placing first things first: for Aboriginal peoples, the children do come first, and no one can learn much of anything if their life is in crisis. Our strategy emphasises bringing literacy into the culture and not placing culture into literacy. This means that we must work to make literacy a stronger priority in Aboriginal communities by creatively showing how it can support other more pressing priorities. We will achieve this through strong strategic partnerships that meet our partners' priorities, always supporting common principles such as Aboriginal control and culture-based approaches. We will always strive to ensure that our services add value to broader community programs addressing top Aboriginal priorities.

### **RISK #2: Lack of funding for NILA operations may endanger our capacity**

While Canada supports literacy networking organizations through the National Literacy Secretariat, this support only comes through project-based activities, and, aside from administration fees, NLS money cannot be used for the set-up or ongoing costs related to maintaining an organization (permanent staffing, capital costs, etc.) – and NLS is the only national agency dedicated to funding literacy development on a national scale. This means that there is no designated funding anywhere to support NILA infrastructure.

#### **Response: Keep operational costs at a minimum and diversify funding strategy**

NILA recognizes that it is hard to defend funding to maintain literacy networking and development agencies when front line delivery agencies are struggling to survive. For our own credibility, NLS funding will only be a part of the longer term NILA funding strategy. We will seek out alternative funding sources to ensure upkeep of core organizational functions, increase our project activity (which will bring in more administration dollars), move quickly to solicit donations from the corporate sector and seek other creative fundraising avenues. We will always live within our means and strive to keep operational costs to a minimum, using the services of volunteer organizations like CESO Aboriginal services to develop and support operational capacity. For more detail, see Section XIII - Financial Plan.

### **RISK # 3: “Information overload” for partners**

This risk area is closely related to risk #1. Our partners and potential partners may be reluctant to devote their energy to developing relationships with NILA because of the time and effort involved in networking and developing partnerships. NILA wants the attention of the best the Aboriginal community has to offer, but the best are always busy people, and the work cut out for NILA is complex, challenging, and under-resourced. There is a danger that NILA and the work it does may be just too much additional information with not enough payback for many of our potential partners.

#### **Response: Tailor NILA communications (as well as services) to our partners’ needs**

NILA is a service organization, not a bureaucracy, which means we must never dictate our own complicated operational and strategic concepts to others. NILA will be utterly powerless unless we run our operation like a business, which means “the customer is always right,” and that we must clearly and concisely provide useful information that *sells* our services to our partners. Our Networking and Communication Strategy (see “Communication Strategy” section) will research what our clients need to hear, and how they want to hear it, and develop marketing materials in plain language that affect our partners emotionally as well as intellectually. We will also, where appropriate, use traditional Aboriginal cultural means of communication, approaching our partners in respectful ways and using Aboriginal communication styles, and even ceremonies, for more important initiatives.

### **Other Risks**

The above three risks are only those that loom most obviously on our horizon. Other potential risks related to start-up include:

- Not enough interest – or, too much interest. (What will we do if “nobody comes?”; or, conversely, if they’re beating down the doors, and we don’t even have enough staff to return all the phone calls?)
- Inability to attract, recruit and retain appropriate staff, which could lead to understaffing, or the inability of staff to respond to interest levels and workload (NILA may need to consider a more gradual increase in operational capacity, even extending the 18-month Transition Phase for start-up.
- Technology and other operational start-up costs that aren’t covered by meagre administration fees from initial projects.

A more detailed analysis of our risk strategy should be conducted on a regular basis as part of our planning process to consider other potential risks. This can be done as part of the annual revision of the NILA business plan.

## VII. Communication Strategy

As we have seen in the strategic plan, the Communication Strategy is our first priority and task in setting up NILA during the Transition Phase. Our goal? To reach and consult with stakeholders while developing messages to inform them of our services and persuade them that NILA is a high quality agency. While the Communication Strategy project will be the priority focus during the Transition Phase, the strategy will need to be revisited as we grow. All of our networking functions will rely on an excellent communication strategy in order to be effective. The NILA Networking and Communication Strategy project will serve the following purposes:

### **Develop a Communications Framework**

Develop strong, clear, comprehensive and strategic communication frameworks for:

- Presenting NILA and NILA services (operational function, primarily for partners); establishes organizational profile and conveys an image about who we are, what we stand for, and what we provide.
- Presenting information on Aboriginal Literacy (Service function, primarily for clients); sets up a framework and plan for communicating to and with stakeholders about our services and service outcomes (e.g., posting newsletters, reports, development priorities, interactive media for discussions, etc.)

### **Develop the Foundation for a Network**

The process of consulting with our stakeholders in developing communications frameworks will provide us with the opportunity to network with stakeholders about their needs and priorities (what we should do, how we should do it, who we should do it with, and of course, how it will all be pulled together and shared nationally); this will establish the relationships and foundation for a broad forum on Aboriginal literacy for stakeholders (one of the main functions of NILA), and a strong networking process.

In order to achieve these purposes, the communication strategy will identify and break down the following key areas:

- **Target Stakeholders:** - Who are we communicating with?
- **Key Messages:** - What are we saying to them?
- **Communications process:** - How are we saying it? (tools/media, timing, etc.)

## TARGET STAKEHOLDERS

NILA's Communication Strategy will take a two-pronged approach, for two kinds of stakeholders: **clients** and **partners**. Some messages are common, but there will be distinct messages and approaches tailored for each of these stakeholder groups. As noted above, messages related to NILA operations will probably have a stronger partner focus, while service-related messages will be aimed more at clients, although this is not carved in stone.

### Clients

As outlined in the "Clients" section of this plan (which will serve as the starting point for working with clients on the communication strategy), NILA clients are mainly on the "front line": learners, practitioners, and delivery agencies. In developing our strategy, we will focus on consulting with the learners and practitioners first, and then look at the delivery agencies.

### Partners

As outlined in the "Partners" section of this plan (which will serve as the starting point for working with partners on the communication strategy), potential NILA partners are incredibly diverse, and include regional and national development agencies and coalitions, post-secondary institutions, funders, and many others. The strategy will identify, prioritize, and communicate with a variety of partners.

Our consultation process during the Networking and Communication Strategy project will use the following methods:

- Special gatherings such as a "Learners week."
- Focus groups/ circles
- Surveys/ review of literature
- Establishment of NILA advisory committees
- Personal contact (letters, phone calls, etc.)
- Register and host consultation workshops at conferences
- Offering tobacco (where appropriate)

Through these activities, we will try to gain a strong sense of what will attract valuable stakeholders who can build a strong membership and perhaps sit on NILA advisory committees. In fact, during the process we will begin to build those strong relationships and invite people to join NILA.

## KEY MESSAGES

The Communication Strategy will identify what kind of image appeals to our stakeholders and develop messages that convey the following kinds of information:

- A clear Aboriginal culture-based philosophy on literacy
- A strong and memorable “tag-line” or “marketing slogan” (e.g., McDonalds’ “you deserve a break today”)
- A sense of the quality and high standards of NILA (How we work collaboratively, etc.)
- A breakdown of how our services address community priorities
- A hard-hitting picture of the scope, severity and potential impact of the literacy situation in Aboriginal communities

These messages will be refined for each stakeholder group in a manner that addresses our findings in consulting with them. The intention is to reach our stakeholders with messages that have an emotional impact, attracting quality members and advisors for committees, potential project partners - and above all, ensuring that the widest possible circle of people is aware of, supports, and benefits from our services.

## COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS

Finally, the NILA Networking and Communication Strategy project will identify how we will convey our messages to our stakeholders, considering the costs and benefits of a variety of media, and framing a clear approach. This stage of the project will also develop the NILA image (typeface, logo, colours, etc.) for reproduction on NILA brochures, letterhead, business cards, and so on. NILA will develop its own literature, using the services of Aboriginal artists and an Aboriginal marketing/design firm. These materials will be used at conferences and shared with stakeholders wherever we may encounter them.

It will be important to always distinguish which stakeholders we are addressing, and whether we are promoting NILA or Aboriginal Literacy (both are necessary, although it must never be forgotten that the latter is the reason we exist). NILA will initially focus on how to reach priority stakeholders in the fragmented field, considering, and prioritizing/ discarding the following techniques and setting up a timeframe for delivering them:

- Direct, personal networking at related gatherings and conferences;
- Traditional/ ceremonial Aboriginal Cultural approaches (e.g., tobacco offerings with invitations and info packages – NOT to be taken lightly!)
- Newsletters and “e-mail newsletters”;
- A NILA web site (this will be a must), registered on all major search engines.

- Targeted introductory services announcements sent via mail or e-mail;
- Informational guides for practitioners (these people must know and be excited about our services);
- Soliciting free profiles (vs. paying for ads) in relevant magazines, newspapers and newsletters (e.g., “Aboriginal Voices”, various Native, government, and mainstream media), taking advantage of journalism that looks at education, cultural revitalization, self-government and community healing issues, and taking the approach that *we are news*; this approach could also be taken with television media.
- Presentations at relevant conferences/gatherings with speeches and publicity packages;
- Promotional publicity packages that use high tech approaches (DVD/ CD/ informational videos, etc.);
- Meetings targeted for personal presentations to agencies such as the AFN;
- A newsletter that will evolve into a journal of Aboriginal and holistic methodologies for literacy education;
- Strategic Partnerships: “marketing alliances” with partners for specific initiatives (joint promotions and activities that share costs with other leaders in education with similar philosophies/clients);
- Special conferences/ gatherings: NILA has already realized significant partnership and project development leads through its participation in conferences. NADC has already been represented at numerous conferences and intends to follow up on connections made there and to set up information booths at additional conferences.
- Public Relations events:, e.g., press conferences, corporate charity sponsoring galas: to create a “buzz” about the message and services offered through NILA and solicit support for the services. These are excellent vehicles for building awareness of the issues as well as the public perception of the NILA and its stakeholders.
- Advertising (an expensive prospect to be considered cautiously) in publications that cater to targeted partners. Ads could be run strategically to support and maximize the impact of the positive editorial that is garnered in the publications mentioned above.

## Using the Business Plan

This business plan serves many purposes, one of which is that parts of the plan can serve as a basis for developing messages. The full plan itself is far too dense, dry and detailed for just about anyone outside the organization itself; however, it contains valuable language and key information that can be developed into shorter, “punchier” messages for marketing the agency with a variety of stakeholders. The plan also provides the basis for project managers working on the Networking and Communications Strategy project (e.g. break down of partners, etc.)

## COSTS

For a breakdown of costs associated with the Networking and Communications Strategy (both the project and ongoing costs), see the Appendix Section.

## XIII. Operational Plan

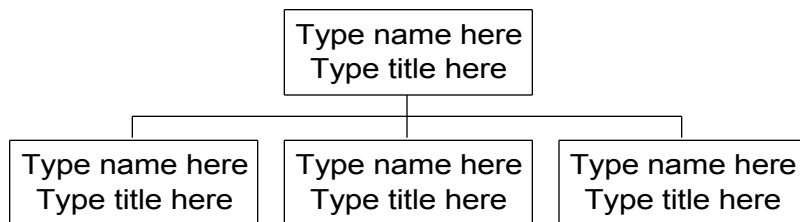
### AN ABORIGINAL APPROACH

The founders of NILA believe in holistic Aboriginal education, and that this philosophy must be matched in the processes and structures of NILA. It will be easier to meet the holistic needs of stakeholders if a holistic approach is taken within the organization. The principle of focusing on learners' strengths rather than a "deficit model" addressing "disabilities" also applies to the work of NILA. NILA will embrace the strengths of First Nations: our traditional cultural perspectives. This does not mean that we will ignore mainstream accountability standards - only that in seeking to address these (and our own) standards, we will look to our own cultural ways and values. In many ways, the NADC already practices holistic Aboriginal processes; this is expected to be carried on and improved by NILA board and staff.

### Medicine Wheel Structure

Any strategy for developing a strong organization addresses two key needs: the need for **structure**, and the need to develop **relationships** (to both people and things), which implies emotional as well as mental understanding. **Accountability** is derived from both of these. The best way to conceive and develop structure and relationship for Aboriginal communities is not a box, a pyramid or straight line - but a circle. This may seem like a contradiction, but only from our modern, institutionalized mind, which tells us structure must be linear. We will strive for Aboriginal governance structures and process, and meet the requirements of linear structures (such as those of funders) from within the circle, or Medicine Wheel. The Wheel gives us a fluid structure, which in turn gives us more flexibility in our operations while still holding us together as a cohesive entity.

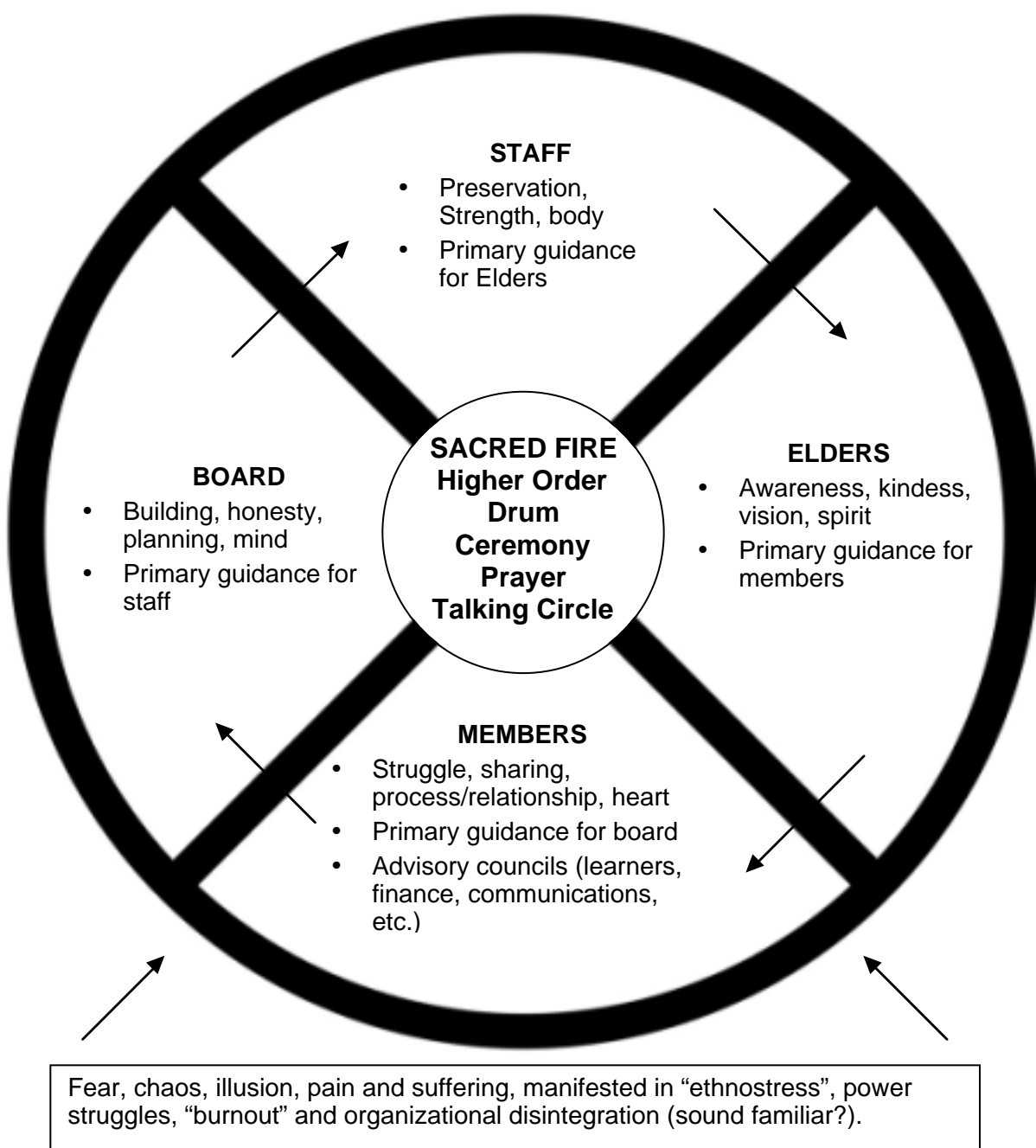
The Transition team will be responsible for setting up NILA structure. Our culture-based approach will differ from the usual way of framing organizational structure. Below is a typical model for an organizational chart.



On the next page is a preliminary Medicine Wheel for the transition team to use in establishing our organizational structure and processes. Descriptions of the work to be done by organizational staff and volunteers are in Section X (Human Resources) and the Appendix section. This Wheel will need refinement and development workshops with board and staff; we are currently researching a partnership project with Canadian Heritage to assist with this goal.

## ILA Organizational Wheel

The Medicine Wheel below suggests an organizational structure for NILA. Generally, the work flows in a clockwise direction, and always refers to the centre of the wheel (sacred fire) for common guidance. After the common guide in the centre, each group refers for guidance to the one preceding it (counterclockwise), and provides guidance to the one following it (clockwise). However, there are no “hard and fast” rules, and from the perspective of the centre, all are each other’s guides and each must listen to and respect the others. Outside of the Wheel at the bottom are the forces that threaten the organization if the centre is ignored.





## **BASIC ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Vision and Philosophy – Elders, Traditional Teachings**

NILA will consult on a regular basis with its Elders committee on matters related to maintenance of our cultural-based and cross-cultural organizational philosophy, and will seek guidance and direction on how this philosophy relates to concepts and issues in NILA's operations as well as its services to clients and partnerships.

### **Organizational Development and Direction – Membership and Committees, Board**

All organizational development, including the prioritization of services and projects and detailed recommendations for specific field priorities, will be based on the planning and strategy of the board of directors guided by the membership and advisory committees. These committees will struggle with the details of particular areas before presenting their conclusions and recommendations to the board. Organizational development must never be at the cost of services to the clients or credibility with partners.

### **Decision-making – Board of Directors, Executive staff**

Key decisions regarding NILA's broader development and service provision will be made by the Board and Executive Director. In keeping with the values of the organization, decision-making will be made by consensus wherever possible (see by-laws in appendix).

### **Daily Operations – Permanent Core Staff**

Day-to-day decisions will be made by the permanent staff (Executive Director and Administrative Assistant). Hours of operation will be flexible for Executive Director and Project Managers, depending on the pace of activity. However, the ILA offices will need to be accessible by phone during business hours (from 9am- 5pm, Monday to Friday), and messages and inquiries will need to be returned promptly.

### **Literacy Development Services – Executive and Contract Staff**

NILA services will be managed and provided by the Executive Director and contracted project managers, guided by the recommendations of the board and member committees.<sup>31</sup> All activity outside of the daily operations will be handled through contracted project positions as well as some services provided by professional volunteers. Project quality and timelines will be overseen by the Executive Director until a Project Manager can be hired.

### **Performance Review Process – Board, Staff, Elders, Membership**

NILA will regularly monitor its own performance. NILA performance Indicators will be based on the goals and timelines outlined in the Strategic Section and Implementation Plan of the Business Plan. The Elders and traditional teachers will be a vital part of this process, reviewing the reports of the staff in light of the culture-based mandate of NILA, and providing guidance, especially to the members and advisory committees, on how to address the continued holistic health and accountability of NILA.

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<sup>31</sup> For example, research and development will be overseen by a dedicated Research committee.

## **LOCATION AND FACILITIES**

### **Phase 1 : Transition Phase (2003-04)**

Contract employees. During this phase, there will be no office costs required. Toward the end of this phase, NILA will research, determine and lease the location of its Winnipeg offices for phase 2.

### **Phase 2 : Years 1 – 3 (2004-07)**

NILA will be located centrally in Winnipeg where access to stakeholders will be convenient. Rent will need to be reasonable, although location should not be compromised as a result. There will be proximity to First Nations Reserves and Aboriginal as well as mainstream educational organizations, with whom we are hoping to explore unique partnerships. The facility will be leased, preferably from an existing Aboriginal organization in Winnipeg, for a total cost in the range of \$1,000 – \$1,500 monthly. The office will accommodate 3 staff: the Executive Director, the Administrative Assistant, and extra space for contract employees working on a project basis (or board members, auditors, CESO volunteers, as the case might be). The office will also have access to an appropriately furnished and large enough room to accommodate the board and small guest delegations for meetings (probably by sharing with its host agency).

### **Phase 3 : Years 4– 5 (2006-09)**

By year 4, NILA will prepare to commence operations for a larger facility in Winnipeg. Depending on the financial health of NILA, options will range from leasing a larger office to moving on purchasing a facility. See Financial Plan for more details on this phase.

## **Equipment**

Beginning in the fall of 2004, ILA will lease/purchase the following office equipment:

- 2 - 3 personal computers
- 2 laptop computers
- 2 printers
- 1 Fax machine
- 3 phones
- Office furniture (desks, chairs, filing cabinets, shelves, etc.) for 3 people
- General office supplies (staplers, paper, pens, file folders, etc.) for 3 people

These items will be supplemented as needed over the course of NILA's evolution. A detailed list of office equipment required for the transition year and five year plan (as well as insurance, utilities, marketing, and other costs) will be costed in the Transition Phase. Estimated costs are reflected in the Financial Plan (section XIII).

## IX. Technology Plan

Technology and effective systems are crucial to successful modern organizations, especially those with a national or international scope. Management of our information systems will be handled on a contract basis by outside consultants (paid and volunteer) for the foreseeable future. This arrangement is in keeping with our need to maintain modest operational costs, and will provide NILA with the flexibility to focus on its business while being able to have its systems continually monitored and upgraded when business requirements dictate. The plan below refers to the first three years of operations.

### Internet

NILA is aiming to launch a web no later than Year 2 (2005), where it will provide information about NILA and its services, as well as:

- On line versions of newsletters and project reports;
- An on line discussion forum;
- Links to other relevant web sites; and
- E-mail contact information for inquiries.

We may also accept orders for reports through a secure on line order form. NILA will develop the message on the site based on our Networking and Communication Strategy project. The hosting of the site will be handled by a third party hosting company to be determined, although it seems likely that the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) will be the host, since the NADC already works with NALD. If we do establish our own domain, we will probably use [www.nila.ca](http://www.nila.ca) (.com and .org are held by “domain salesmen”)

### Hardware Needs

For the first few years of operations, we will lease 2-3 desktop PC systems and 2 laptop computers. In addition, we will lease a network server for internal information processing. Further needs will be reviewed and determined as we go.

### Software Needs

NILA will need to purchase and use the following software systems to manage finances, projects, and operations:

- Simply Accounting/ MYOB, or other accounting software
- Word/ Excel and associated Microsoft Office products

### Telecommunications Needs

By Year 1, NILA will probably be set up with a Meridian or equivalent phone system serviced by Bell, with access to at least two lines. The system may be part of our host organization's system, depending on the arrangements made in the lease. Although adequate for our present needs, our projected growth will spur the need for increased capacity and, in all likelihood, a new system. We will upgrade to a larger system as needs dictate.

## X. Human Resources

“Human Resources” are the most vital component to our success. We believe that people, with their spirit, experience, skills and personalities, are the most important factor in determining the quality and success of our services. The qualities of our staff and volunteers determine the quality of all other aspects of our organization. This section outlines the requirements for the transition team (1<sup>st</sup> 18 months) as well as the permanent staffing of NILA (5 year plan). Job Descriptions for both transition and permanent staff as well as volunteers are in the Appendices. C.V.’s of current contract staff and a full list of NADC committee and NILA board members, as well as job descriptions for the transition team and projected staff positions can also be found in the Appendix Section.

### Cross-Cultural Capacity

The one common denominator that arises in considering the themes in the Aboriginal literacy field is a cross-cultural tension. In the Aboriginal field, there is much concern about the need to address both traditional ways of learning (including Aboriginal languages) and the need to survive and thrive in the dominant culture. This implies the need for a cross-cultural “translation” to ensure good relationships with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders. NILA will need to attract staff that can understand and address both of these areas of need in relation to literacy. This implies a need for higher standards and compensation that at least matches that which would be found in a comparable mainstream agency.

### TRANSITION TEAM

The NADC and NILA board has a capable and experienced group of people who have done much to bring the national Aboriginal literacy focus to a higher profile. The transition period will need to maintain and improve this level of care and quality in preparation for full operations. The following people will take the NILA through its transition period:

**ILA Board:** Responsible for hiring and guiding, discussing and approving the work of the Transition Project Coordinators. Work directly with the lead project coordinator. The transition board will also do some initial work during Transition on committee formation and hiring of permanent staff.

**Transition Project Coordinators:** Responsible for coordinating the transition projects, which will primarily focus on the NLS-funded Networking and Communication Strategy (2-3 contracted employees). There will also be additional smaller projects (e.g., Canadian Heritage) later in the Transition Phase related to agency development and improved networking opportunities which will add more contracted project staff. All coordinators will need experience in the literacy education field, management, Aboriginal communities, and some will require organizational development skills. The lead project coordinator reports to the Board, while the other coordinators will report to the lead. The project coordinators will ensure that the levels of support that have begun to be provided through the work of the NADC continue, and will work to begin addressing support and development needs in the Aboriginal literacy field.

## POST-TRANSITION STAFF

### Years 1 and 2 (2003-05): Establishing Capacity

The NILA board recognizes that it will need to attract an outstanding management team. Specifically, it will be necessary to conduct an extensive search for an Executive Director. By bringing in a seasoned executive with relevant field experience, NILA will be in a better position to achieve its objectives. For the initial 2 years, contract staff will be hired for projects as funding becomes available. All staff positions will be funded out of project administration fees until our funding increases significantly and a fiscal model can be implemented that allows for more stable funding of core staff positions.

We will set up operations with the following staff and advisors until the end of year 2 (F/Y 2004-2005). Each is responsible for a different function, although NILA will create a system of cross-functional training that will keep its business running smoothly despite illness, attrition, or turnover.

- Executive Director      Run day to day operations, guide overall strategy, oversee office management, accounting/bookkeeping, communications, staff training. Delegate and contract work as needed, ensure standards set by board. Maintain clear, cohesive working relationship with staff/contractors in regular meetings, consult with advisors as needed, develop strategies to build a working team atmosphere. Manage external corporate relations.
- Administrative Assistant      Basic bookkeeping, customer service, travel arrangements and conference organizing. Accountable to the Executive Director
- Project Strategy Manager      Develop and implement a project strategy that responds to the needs of the community. Accountable to the Executive Director.
- Other Project Managers      Coordinate specific projects (see Strategic Plan flow chart for examples). Report to Project Strategy Manager/ Executive Director.

Details on qualifications, hours, salary and benefits for staff, and support and recognition of volunteers will be developed during the Transition Phase and added to the Appendices.

## Consultants, Professionals, and other Specialists

The services below are either voluntary or are subcontracted on an as-needed basis. This avoids keeping high wage-earning professionals on the payroll in the early years of operations. We will look for support from organizations like CESO Aboriginal Services in some of these areas. Others will be funded either out of administration fees from projects, or, where possible, as part of the project budget.

- **Auditor (CPA)** – Contracted on an annual basis to conduct the audit for distribution to members
- **Lawyer** – Initial legal consultation done in kind through CESO Aboriginal Services?
- **Accountant** – Initial financial consultation done in kind through CESO Aboriginal Services
- **IT Advisor and Web Site development** – ensures that creative concepts are effectively translated to the web site, and advises and/or refers on all matters relating to information technology. (brought in during 2004)
- **Miscellaneous Training and personal development for staff/board**
- **Graphic Design** – (communications materials)
- **Marketing/design Consultant** – Oversees communications plan and coordinates the design of publicity materials.
- **Bookkeeper** – for the quarterly reconciliation of the books (for the transition period and year 1, in 2005, when we hope to bring in a full time Financial Officer).

NILA will contract work out until there is an obvious need to expand the office space and hire new staff, always carefully considering what will burden organizational costs.

## Board of Directors

The following individuals make up the NILA Board of Directors for the Transition Phase (still need executive):

- Irene Jacques - President
- Rita Buffalo – Vice President
- Nancy Cooper - Treasurer
- Rhonda McCorriston - Secretary
- Edwina Wetzel
- Darrell Gerritts
- Mary Koyina Richardson

The Board of Directors will provide broad direction for NILA staff and take direction from the membership. Board members will be composed of representatives from across Canada. Their responsibilities and processes are described in the “Constitution and By-laws” Appendix. For details on board roles, responsibilities and processes, see the NILA by-laws in the Appendix section.

## **Membership/ Advisory Committees**

In one sense, NILA sees all stakeholders as “members”. However, the core membership will be an active one, in the sense that members will be “headhunted” for their skills, and crucial advisory committees will be drawn from the membership. The members and advisory councils (including a learners’ council) will provide broad direction for the board and will take direction from the Elders’ Committee.

## **Elders Committee**

NILA will also assemble an Elders and Traditional teachers advisory group (ideally at least four Elders) to provide broad direction to the membership and consult with the staff as needed. The Elder advisors will attend all annual members’ meetings, and may also may also attend or be represented on certain committees if they wish.

## **Future Staffing Considerations**

### **2005 – 2007: Increase Capacity**

We expect to hire additional staff in Years 2 – 5, as the work of NILA expands. We will also begin to implement the plan for acquiring and developing a new building, in cooperation with our partners, and may hire students in the summers. In preparation, we will consult in 2004 on policies and procedures for expanded staff, including job descriptions, compensation, a vacation program, training and development plan, and benefits and employee assistance programs. We will research ways to finance more permanent staff positions, always keeping in mind the principle of maintaining service levels that will justify any expansion. Some of the staff to be considered for the expansion period:

- Financial and Fundraising Officer
- Communications and Partnerships Officer
- More permanent research and development team for projects, perhaps with visiting partners from academic institutions or practitioners on sabbatical (in tandem with the development of our “Centre of Excellence”, or “Learning Laboratory”).

Central to the NILA mandate is the commitment to work with enthused, highly qualified, and talented people. As NILA grows, we will support the team with regular meetings, where we will set and track achievement of goals. One of the main objectives of personnel operations will be to recognize achievement as well as the promotion of respect and dignity for all employees and contractors.

## **XI. Wider Responsibilities**

### **NILA Philosophy**

Recognizing the importance of our relationship not only to the literacy field, but also to the community and wider global contexts, NILA will develop a philosophy that considers the following:

- All our relations, working through the self, family, community, nation, and world (including both economic and environmental considerations).
- Our ancestors and descendants, up to the seven generations that will come after ours.

Developing this philosophy will enhance our culture-based perspective and refine and distinguish our position in relation to the world around us. For example, our concepts of “employability” and “development” will need to relate to the needs of those who will come as far ahead as the twenty-second century, while still considering the needs of our own time. Our educational philosophy will need to reflect environmental concerns and the need to preserve traditional Indigenous wisdom and knowledge systems. Of course, all of these things will need to be considered along with the practical needs of our primary current stakeholders.



## XII. Implementation Plan

### Transition Phase

In the Transition phase, NILA will continue development of networking begun through the NADC and the establishment and set-up of the organization in its Winnipeg office. We will achieve this goal mainly through our Networking and Communications Strategy project (MTCU, NLS), along with support from the following additional smaller projects

- Developing Indigenous Organizational Infrastructure – Canadian Heritage
- Making the Links to Employment – HRDC/AHRDAs.
- Making the Links with Aboriginal Education – INAC
- Detailed Financial Plan – CESO Aboriginal Services, corporate/foundation support
- Initiation of any other initiatives arising from our project activity.

The timetable below outlines strategies to achieve transition goals, and explains priorities, especially for strategies that cost a lot, detailing timelines, activities, and responsibilities.

### Transition Plan Summary: 2003-04

Date	Activity	Responsibility
Winter/03	Incorporation; selection of NILA transition board	NADC Coordinator, Business Planner, NADC
Mar/03	Finalize Business Plan and submit proposals to NLS for the following fiscal year (NILA Networking and Communication Strategy).	NADC Coordinator and Business Planner
Late Spring	Hire initial Transition contract staff on confirmation/ receipt of initial funds	NILA hiring committee (board)
	Begin Networking and Communication Strategy; Combine 1 <sup>st</sup> Project and NILA Board meetings	NILA Transition team (Contract staff and board)
Jun	Set networking priorities and strategy, submit additional proposals for Transition Phase	NILA Transition staff
Jul	Begin to contact Stakeholders, beginning with Learners, Practitioners, Elders and funders	Transition project Contract staff
Aug	Additional Transition Project and Year 1 Strategies	Transition project staff
Sep	Begin to Implement fundraising strategy; set up Learners and Elders' circles	Transition project staff Transition team
Oct	Complete Part 1 – Communication strategy (Target Stakeholders)	Transition team
Nov	1 <sup>st</sup> Report/ newsletter to stakeholders, begin developing 1 <sup>st</sup> NILA committees	Project staff
Dec	Begin looking for permanent Executive Director	NILA board, Transition staff

Jan/04	Develop NLS and other funding proposals for projects in late Transition/ Year 1	Transition Staff
	Initiate additional project activities (ongoing from here on in)	
Feb/04	1 <sup>st</sup> AGM; Board and committee meetings, Learners' and members' forums; review & approve project strategy/ other proposals for Year 1	NILA Board, Committees, project staff
Mar	Report/ newsletter to stakeholders; submit proposals for late Transition/ Yr 1	Contract staff
Apr	Approach completion of Part 2, Communication Strategy (Key messages and Process)	Hiring Committee
May	Begin interviews for Executive Director; negotiate office location	Transition Coordinator, 2 board members
	Membership Advisory Committees	
June	Begin hiring process for Executive Director	Hiring Committee (2 board members)
July	Hire Executive Director, sign lease for Winnipeg office	Hiring Committee
Aug	Hire Administrative Assistant	Executive Director, 2 board members
Sep/04	Open Winnipeg Office; prep for 2 <sup>nd</sup> AGM; begin next round of projects, including project strategy	Executive Director, Board

### **Five-Year Plan: 2004 to 2009**

In looking to the future, we realize the need to create a distinct presence that rises to meet the trends in Aboriginal community education. We will do this by constantly revisiting what tomorrow's clients and partners want and need. We will always strive to establish partnerships with Aboriginal communities that are based on traditional Indigenous values and knowledge. These partnerships will primarily benefit Aboriginal communities, but will also provide creative solutions in education and community development for non-Aboriginal peoples, improving our profile and establishing a unique reputation for NILA.

By the end of our 5-year plan, we aim to expand our services significantly, and in the best case scenario, move to our own building. Ultimately, we want to have a space designed to reflect our holistic culture-based philosophy, including a model "Learning Laboratory." We will also begin to position ourselves as a business that offers services to colleges, universities and other education service providers, both in Canada as well as internationally, while maintaining strong connections with Aboriginal literacy learners. The ultimate destination of the NILA is to be an innovative leader in Indigenous education with an international reputation for excellence in the development and support of Indigenous culture-based literacy education. There are many steps to achieving this goal. The timetable below outlines briefly how we will look at intervals along the way during our first five years, noting key milestones and results.

## NILA Milestones (2003 – 09)

Phase	Goal
Transition Phase: January 2003 – September 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain Transition funding</li> <li>• Hire Transition staff</li> <li>• Complete Networking and Communication strategy</li> <li>• Initiate innovative fundraising strategy</li> <li>• Hire Permanent skeleton staff</li> <li>• Open Winnipeg Office</li> </ul>
Year 1: Sept 2004-Apr 05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch Communication Strategy, including basic web site</li> <li>• Develop Project Strategy</li> <li>• Develop and implement networking/advocacy functions</li> <li>• Increase overall funding levels by 40% over transition year (and continue this trend).</li> <li>• Match NLS Revenues with other sources by year end</li> </ul>
Year 2: 2005-06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practitioner Training and Research Strategies</li> <li>• Increased project activity (ongoing)</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> National Aboriginal Literacy Gathering</li> <li>• Launch cutting-edge Web site</li> <li>• Begin to research American, Australian, and other international contacts and develop a global strategy.</li> </ul>
Year 3: 2006-07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More full-time staff hired.</li> <li>• Triple activities from year 1 and maintain to year 5.</li> <li>• Begin to establish international links (e.g., the U.S., Latin America, international institutions).</li> </ul>
Year4: 2007-08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase supports to community and increase international presence.</li> <li>• Research Expansion (New “Centre of Excellence”;</li> <li>• Begin to finance ongoing research and development team with partners (academic institutions, practitioner sabbaticals).</li> </ul>
Year 5: 2008-09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain supports to community and increase international presence; begin expansion (best case: our own building)</li> </ul>

## **XIII. Financial Plan**

### **FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS**

In assembling the financial plan, a number of important assumptions have been made:

**1. That NLS will be a partner from the outset**

National Literacy Secretariat has funded the BASA and NADC projects for several years and has a solid history of funding regional and national networking projects, as well as supporting Aboriginal literacy.

**2. That NILA must reduce its dependency on NLS funds**

NILA cannot function as an organization solely on NLS project funding. Our financial strategy must ensure that during the Transition Phase, we are able to access additional funds, and that by the commencement of Year 1 we will significantly reduce our initial dependence on NLS support by soliciting donations from philanthropic organizations, the corporate sector and other government departments.

**3. That initially no revenue will come from fees**

For at least the first few years of NILA's existence, we will not expect to receive significant fees of any kind, including membership fees and costs for our training services and reports (these will be provided either for free or at cost, depending on the project budget). We will review this practice once our reputation has been established. In the long term, once a building has been acquired, rooms can be rented out for meetings for additional revenue.

### **PRESENTATION AND REVISION**

We recognize that the current financial plan is rudimentary. NILA will use CESO Aboriginal services to review our financial strategy early in our transition phase. CESO is an organization that provides volunteers with professional skills to assist Aboriginal communities, organizations and entrepreneurs with governance and business start-ups, expansion and after-care. A CESO "elder"-accountant will be brought in on a skills-transfer partnership project to help establish a clear and solid financial foundation for NILA.

Near the beginning of the transition phase, the completed draft of the Financial section, (narrative and budget projections) will be given to a CESO accountant familiar with non-profit financial statements for review and feedback, and appropriate changes will be made. When the Executive Director is hired in the latter part of the Transition Phase, NILA will work with CESO to refine the cash flow worksheet (see Appendix 3), which will be used on an ongoing basis to monitor and adjust our projections. This should be done monthly, using actual revenue and expense figures from NILA activities. Examination of the "Budget vs. Actual" statements will be a regular feature of NILA board and management meetings. They will also be invaluable in determining more realistic projections for following years.

## Annual Budget Projections

The revenue/expense sheets in this plan shows broad annual figures. During the Transition Phase and Year 1, NILA will develop more detailed financial plans, including:

- Timetables that coordinate our fiscal year with a variety of grant decision dates identified in our funding research to more accurately place anticipated grant amounts in the months where they are most likely to come in; similarly, if certain expenses are payable annually or quarterly, we will enter the appropriate amount in the month when payment is due.
- A Breakdown of budget categories; including an operational budget (derived mainly from administration fees) and a variety of project budget areas.

These practices will give a sense of reality and accountability to our financial planning.

## REVENUE REQUIREMENTS

NILA projects a requirement of \$370,000 to implement the first 12 months of its 18-month Transition Phase. The table below indicates the sources and uses of the required capital ("Revenue" and "Expenditures") for this period. A more detailed worksheet with a monthly breakdown is in the Financial appendix.

**Transition costs** are those related to activities conducted in preparation for the start up (Communications Strategy project, fundraising, headhunting for personnel, developing a project strategy, etc.) These expenses are related to the Transition phase (Spring 2003 – Fall 2004).

**Start-up needs** include all items, services, and expenses that need to be acquired and/or paid for prior to opening, including space and utilities, staff salaries, equipment/furniture, and supplies. For example, the Transition Team will engage an Executive Director several months in advance of the expected opening. Not only the salary and benefits for that period, but also the costs of that person's workspace, necessary equipment and supplies will be regarded as start-up needs. Start-up needs do not include items, services, and other expenses to be acquired or supported after the NILA has opened and is operational.

**On-going needs** are the on-going needs of NILA - the day-to-day expenses of running the organization. Starting in the fall of 2004, NILA will begin to require support for these needs. Ongoing expenses include:

- Space (rent, utilities, security, insurance, maintenance, trash removal)
- Staff (including salaries, benefits, and perks for volunteers)
- Outreach and promotion
- Equipment and furnishings (repair and replacement)
- Software (acquisition, upgrades, and replacement)
- Computer and office supplies
- On-line services and internet accounts
- Periodicals and reference material

- Special events budget
- A permanent travel budget for core staff.
- Professional fees and honoraria – Elders, accountant, attorney, etc.

Timing and arrangements for acquisitions in all these areas will be arranged with our CESO accountant into a monthly cashflow sheet (the draft is in Appendix 3), which also includes a more detailed list of transition and start-up needs. This sheet is based on itemizations of software, hardware, and supplies as well as necessary furniture and furnishings purchases. It specifies the pre-opening cost of space, utilities, and alterations, and includes any expenses related to outreach, promotion, and, of course, associated fees and salaries.

NILA has the ability to raise sufficient revenue to support expenses. We have a stable and conservative revenue plan with a relatively small expense and asset base. Our forecast of \$900,000 of revenue in our third year of operations is realistic. NILA's books will be maintained regularly by a bookkeeper, and reviewed annually by a certified public accountant. We will initially maintain low overhead and capital needs in order to maintain impressive service levels. Our projected budgets are based on costs for similar organizations, and on research into potential funding sources.

#### **Transition Phase: Financial Year 2003 – 2004**

The Transition phase is an 18-month period, or one and a half fiscal years. However, for the sake of simplicity, this budget forecast is only for the fiscal year ending Mar 31, 2004. The final (6-month) part of the transition phase is considered in the budget forecast for the following fiscal year under Year 1 (ending Mar 31, 2005). We are currently researching partnerships with a variety of funders for the Transition Phase, including:

<b>Partner</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Budget (Revenue)</b>
National Literacy Secretariat	NILA Communication Strategy – Partnerships	\$ 230,000
Heritage Canada	Indigenous culture-based organizational development project	\$20,000
HRDC Aboriginal Relations Office	Aboriginal Literacy and Workplace Preparation – Making the links	\$15,000
AHRDA Holders	Aboriginal Literacy and Workplace Preparation – Making the links	\$5,000
LBS - MTCU Ontario	NILA Communication Strategy – Learners	\$50,000
INAC	Making the links with Aboriginal Education Systems	\$50,000
Volunteer	Operational support from CESO/ volunteer committees	\$40,000
Various Corporate and Foundation Donors		\$20,000

We anticipate ongoing support from NLS for projects that meet their mandate. In the transition phase, this will go towards the Communication Strategy. We also expect to raise funds from Aboriginal Human Resource Development sources and Heritage Canada, as well as from the Ontario government (LBS-MTCU), and a relatively small amount from Corporate donors and foundations. We have also factored in the value of work that we expect will be done for NILA through CESO Aboriginal Services and volunteer committee and board members.

## Budget Forecast for Transition Phase

### Financial Year 2003 – 2004

The following captures two scenarios: Scenario 1 (best case) assumes that all anticipated sources of funding will come through. Scenario 2 (worst case) presents an overview of what resources would be available for the year if only 75% of requested NLS and MTCU funding comes through, and no other funding or support is available other than in-kind contributions.

REVENUE	Scenario 1	Scenario 2
<b>Government Grants and Contracts</b>		
Federal		
National Literacy Secretariat	\$ 230,000	\$ 172,500
Other (e.g., Heritage Canada, HRDC)	\$ 40,000	-
Provincial (e.g., Ontario MTCU)	\$ 50,000	\$ 37,500
Municipal		
<b>Other Grants and Donations</b>		
Foundations	\$ 5,000	-
Individuals	-	-
Corporate Contributions	\$ 5,000	-
National Aboriginal Literacy Foundation	-	-
In-kind contributions (CESO, volunteer)	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000
<b>Publications, Workshops and Consulting Fees</b>	-	-
<b>Fundraising/ Special Events</b>	-	-
<b>Other</b>	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 370,000</b>	<b>\$ 250,000</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Salaries and benefits	see contract services	see contract services
Promotional costs (marketing, publishing)	\$35,000	\$20,000
Board Expenses (no honoraria)	\$20,000	\$15,000
Building Occupancy	-	-
Capital Expenditures (equipment/ furniture, etc.)	-	-
Contract Services	\$130,000	\$100,000
Honoraria, fees and stipends	\$25,000	\$15,000
Insurance	-	-
Interest and bank charges	-	-
Office supplies, telephone and fax	-	-
Professional fees (legal, audit, etc.)	\$10,000	\$5,000
Travel/accommodation (meeting, workshops, conferences)	\$ 100,000	\$60,000
Special Events (fundraising, AGM)	\$50,000	\$35,000
Other		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$370,000</b>	<b>\$250,000</b>

## Longer Term Financial Picture

This table projects the growth of NILA over a 6 year period (Transition year plus 5-year plan).

	<b>Transition (03-04)</b>	<b>Year 1 2004-05</b>	<b>Year 2 2005-06</b>	<b>Year 3 2006-07</b>	<b>Year 4 2007-08</b>	<b>Year 5 2008-09</b>
Literacy Revenue (govt.)	\$ 280,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000
Foundation Revenue	\$ 5,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000
Corporate Donations/partnerships	\$ 5,000	\$ nil	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 500,000
In Kind Services*	\$ 40,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
Non-literacy Revenue (govt)**	\$ 40,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$370,000</b>	<b>\$ 450,000</b>	<b>\$ 700,000</b>	<b>\$ 900,000</b>	<b>\$ 1,100,000</b>	<b>\$ 1,400,000</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 370,000</b>	<b>\$ 450,000</b>	<b>\$ 600,000</b>	<b>\$ 900,000</b>	<b>\$ 1,100,000</b>	<b>\$ 1,400,000</b>

\* **In kind** services are mainly those provided through voluntary work, such as the expertise offered through expert advisors either serving on committees or through organizations such as CESO.

\*\* **Non-literacy** revenue is an area of the budget that will include sources that can support NILA that do not come from traditional literacy funding sources. An example is Heritage Canada, which will be approached for support on linguistic and culture-based development projects.

## Reducing Dependence on Government Funding

Initially, NILA will rely largely on government grants in the provision of its services. However, this will need to change very quickly. In order to achieve its projected levels of growth, NILA must maintain its levels of support from government sources while matching them with income from Foundations and corporate and individual donors. This is not an unrealistic expectation as long as skilled fundraising staff and volunteers are working for NILA. For example, over half of the revenues for Frontier College (a national literacy service provider) come from foundations and corporate donors. None of this is to say that NILA should reduce the levels of government support; indeed, NILA should always strive to support Aboriginal assertions that the government of Canada has a fiduciary responsibility to Aboriginal peoples for their education and that this responsibility includes literacy. However, we must also be realistic, and base our expectations of support from agencies like NLS on existing patterns with similar agencies (our projection of 300,000 is realistic and entirely supportable, as long as we establish and maintain quality services.)



## **XIV.Appendices**

Supporting documents and information. These items confirm, reinforce or elaborate on major ideas and facts already stated in the main plan. They will also form the basis of our organizational filing system. Some of the items, such as the job descriptions and legal and marketing information, will need to be added as they are developed or become available.

### **1. Human Resources**

Resumes/Bios of key people, NADC members and NILA board lists and contact information, job descriptions.

### **2. NILA Constitution, By-laws, and Letters Patent**

### **3. Financial Information**

Budgets, cash flow charts, equipment lists, etc.

### **4. Fundraising Contacts**

Potential government funding sources, foundations, corporate donors, other funding leads.

### **5. Communications**

Communication Strategy proposals, marketing information - logo, dummy ads, packaging

### **6. National Aboriginal Literacy Projects**

National Aboriginal literacy Project Proposals and Reports to NLS (BASA, CODE, NALG, NADC, NILA, etc.)

### **7. Stakeholders**

Detailed list of client and partner lists and contact information, including listing of international initiatives

### **8. Support Letters**

### **9. Bibliography**

Field Research, Supporting media information (newspaper/ journal articles, etc.)

### **10. Legal Information**

Contracts (projects, lease, liability insurance, etc.)



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