

New Teacher Orientation

Jurisdiction: Yukon

Contact: Tina Jules

Level: Adult Learning

Theme: Teacher Training Program

Description of Practice:

New Teacher Orientation is an annual three-day event for teachers who are new to the Yukon. One of the three days is dedicated for teachers to learn about one YFN culture, history and language. The event is co-hosted by the Department of Education and a First Nation community. The First Nation day occurs on the traditional lands of the host First Nation community and all cultural events are delivered by the local First Nation resource people.

Background:

This event provides newly hired teachers and administrators with an introduction to Yukon First Nations culture and languages and helps to set the tone for the upcoming year in terms of teachers developing strong, lasting and meaningful relationships with the FN community they serve.

Aboriginal students comprise 33.3% of the Yukon student population. Aboriginal people comprise 23% of the Yukon population. It is necessary for all Yukon teachers and administrators to understand the unique history of Yukon First Nation people and the unique demographics and political climate of the Yukon (11 of 14 Yukon's First Nations are self-governing with constitutionally protected authority and jurisdiction to govern themselves, their citizens, their lands and their resources in accordance with their Self-Government Agreements). It is a Government of Yukon priority to create a school system that is inclusive of and engages First Nation students.

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

Almost all teachers and administrators new to the Yukon on an annual basis, participate in this event. It is an opportunity to expose the new hires to Yukon First Nation history, cultures and languages. Exposure and awareness are prerequisites to understanding and thus full respect, such qualities in Yukon teachers and administrators will benefit all Yukon students.

Development:

The New Teacher Orientation – First Nations Day was developed due to the need to ensure that all teachers and administrators working in Yukon schools are not only sensitive to, but more importantly respectful towards, Yukon First Nation cultures, practises and perspectives. The full day event was expanded from a short presentation delivered by curriculum consultants in August of 2004. To date, three Yukon First Nation communities (Teslin Tlingit Council, Carcross Tagish First Nation and the Little Salmon

Carmacks First Nation) have co-hosted the day alongside the First Nation Programs and Partnerships unit.

Evidence:

Evaluations completed by the new teachers and administrators, First Nation participants and the Department staff indicate that this day is truly satisfying and informative. Many say that it is the best day of the whole New Teacher's Orientation.

Adaptability:

Suggestions for adapting the practice in other jurisdictions: In terms of logistics and resource reality, the event could be offered on grounds where a natural environment exists with resource people setting up there.

Key lessons learned: All new teachers and administrators should be required to participate in the First Nations day. It is a unique opportunity to engage in the practises of one YFN culture alongside your peers.

Cautions for interested jurisdictions: This event needs to occur in full collaboration with First Nation governments.

Further information:

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