

# Families and Communities as Resources for Children's Writing and Cultural Learning: Stories from Remote Northern Canadian Communities

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# Locating Ourselves

Poll: Have you ever visited Ontario?

# Northern Oral language and Writing through Play (NOW Play) Project

## Goals:

- To develop, through collaborative action research, culturally appropriate tools and approaches for assessing and supporting young children's oral language and writing in play contexts
- To support professional learning and leadership capacity of teachers and early childhood educators in remote northern communities





# Our Presentation Today

- What the research says – about young children's writing and families and communities as resources
- Community as resource: The Niichii Project
  - Examples from Yvette's kindergarten classroom
  - Examples from Jacinta's kindergarten classroom
- Family as resource: Children's writing at home

# What the Literature Says about Young Children's Writing

- Young children are “experienced makers of signs in any medium that is to hand” (Kress (1997, p. 8).
- Writing and reading are reciprocal literacy practices, as “writing can contribute to the building of almost every kind of inner control of literacy learning that is needed by the successful reader” (Clay, 1988, p. 130).
- Through writing-based interactions with others, children learn:
  - the significance and usefulness of texts
  - ways in which words and images are organized in particular types of texts and many other social understandings about texts (Mackenzie, 2011; Wohlwend, 2013).

Which of the Six Samples Would you Call Writing?



# What the Research Says about Parents and Communities as Resources

- The foundations of children's language, literacy and all learning lie in the rich diversity of interactions they have with family and community members (Cairney, 2003; Compton-Lilly & Greene, 2011; McTavish, 2007).
- Families' involvement in literacy practices with their children - strong predictor of children's later literacy achievement, regardless of socio-economic status and prior education (International Reading Association, 2002).
- Dialogue and a true sense of partnership between home and school are needed to support children's literacy and all learning (Cairney, 2003; Compton-Lilly & Greene, 2011).

## Indigenous Pedagogies (Hare, 2015)

- Intergenerational learning
- Experiential learning
- Oral tradition
- Modeling, listening and watching
- Learning from and about the land
- Spirituality
- Relational





# Community Resources





## Niichii (Friend) Project

- \* Niichii – puppet who accompanies children to their homes and out in the community
- \* Niichii's kokum (grandmother) asked the children to teach Niichii about who she/he is and where she/he comes from
- Children documented what they and Niichii Were learning about Anishnaabemowin and their culture.



Aanii,  
Kokum Niichii n'dow. Wikwemikong Niichii g'doonjiibaa. Sioux Lookout noon goon  
g'bimadiz. Niichii obdek g'keandon Anishnaabemowin Wikwemikong Ski niichquewag  
obdek g'wabmek. Maaziinteschegun g'ziinbiigeh miigo wehnish Niichii g'biizhaa.  
G'ziinbiigeh wehnish giinwe miinwa Niichii g'keandwak.  
Miigwech g'niichquewendaa Niichii.  
Niichii e'Kokum

I am Niichii's kokum. Niichii has been living in Sioux Lookout, but is  
from Wikwemikong First Nation. Niichii would like to learn the language  
and culture of your community and looks forward to making new  
friends. Please take or draw pictures when you bring Niichii with  
you and write about what you and Niichii are learning.  
Miigwech for welcoming Niichii,  
Niichii's Kokum



# Intergenerational, Relational and Spiritual: Medicine Wheel Teachings





# Oral Tradition, Experiential, and Learning From and About the Land



# Relational, Experiential, Learning from and About the Land





# Modeling, listening and watching; Intergenerational Learning



Children wrote and drew about their sugar bush experiences and mailed their texts





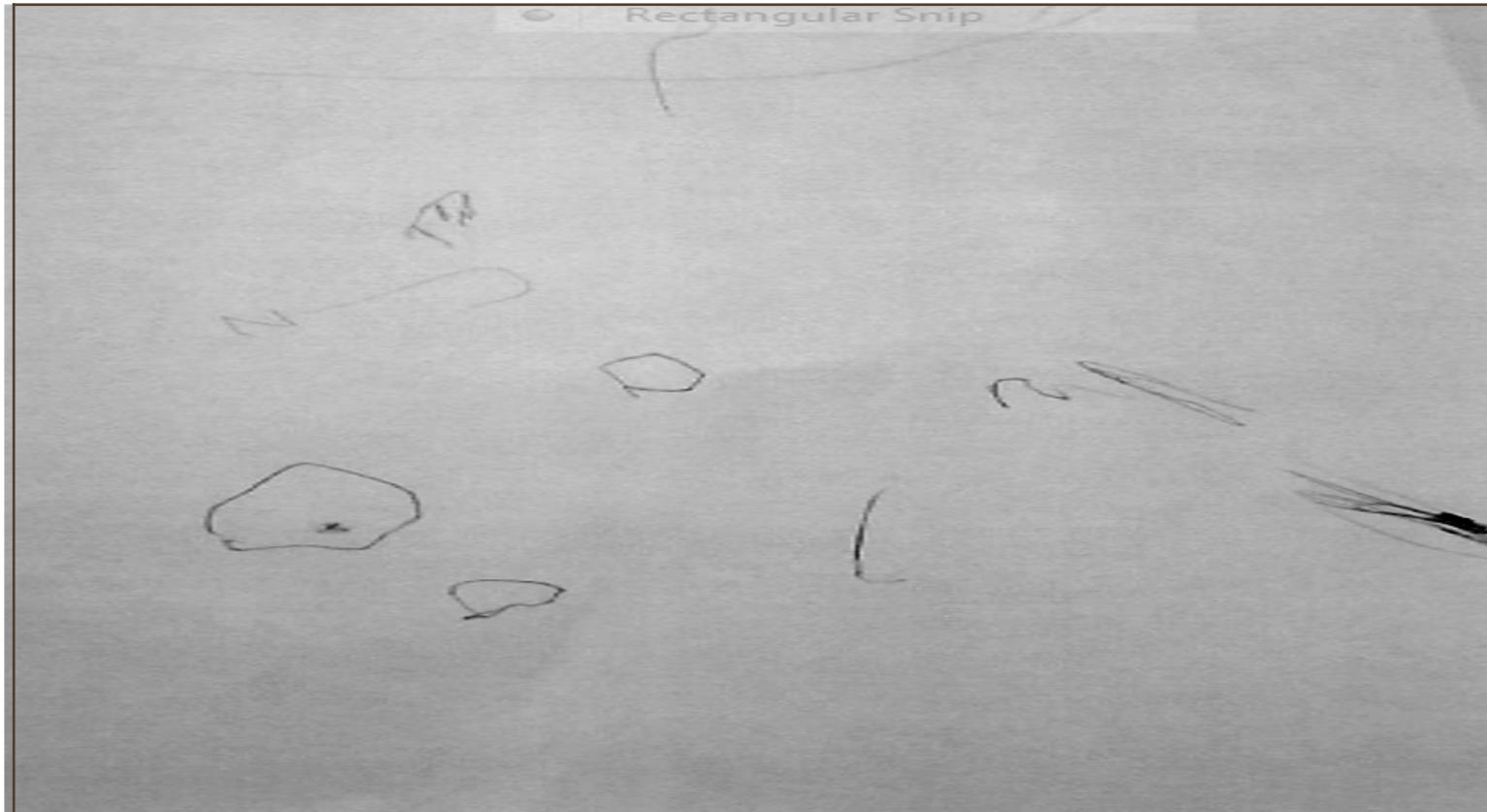


# Families as Resources

Poll: How many texts created by children do you have on your refrigerator?



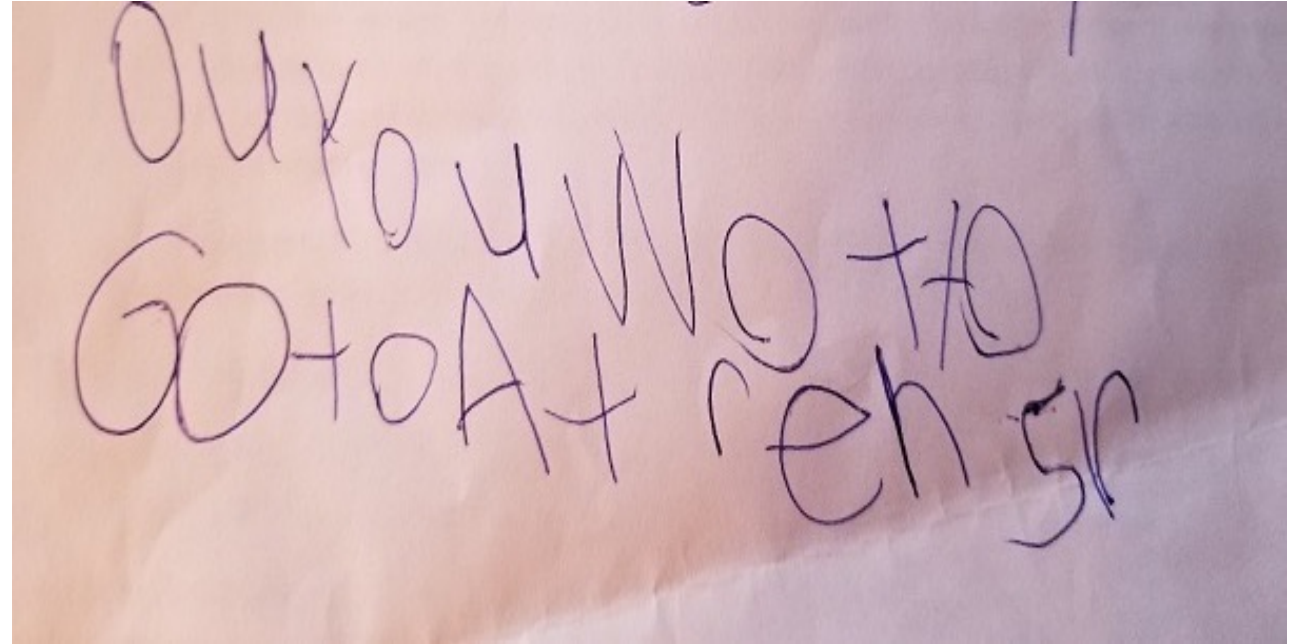
Young children have high expectations for use of written texts created at home



Sebastian's  
Paper Work

# Encourage Family Members to Create Meaningful Contexts

## Santa and Fish Story



## Treasure Hunt

# Families as Resources: Implications for Early Learning Centres/Kindergartens

- Ask parents about children's home writing/scribbling/drawing
- Invite children to bring home writing to school to share in authors' chair
- Provide scrapbook for children's home writing – can be starting point for conversation during parent-teacher conferences.
- Children's home writing provides a window into children's:
  - interests,
  - views of themselves as writers and
  - understandings about print and other modes of communication.





Community and Family Partnerships Support  
Young Children's Language and Writing

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