From 2022 to 2024, Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program received federal funding to undertake projects in support of Canada's Skills for Success (SFS) framework.

Resource development and/or service delivery pilots were funded under five initiatives:

- **Supporting Underrepresented Groups;**
- **Supporting Apprenticeship Integration;**
- **Supporting Better Jobs Ontario Integration;**
- **Workplace Literacy;** and
- **Expanding and Enhancing Digital Delivery**.

Projects were designed in accordance with the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF).

The goals of SFS initiatives are:

- to support ongoing LBS program development objectives by building capacity across cultural streams and delivery sectors;
- to strengthen LBS employment and apprenticeship outcomes;
- to integrate LBS services into the broader workforce development system; and
- to enhance and expand blended and fully distance learning opportunities.

CASE STUDY OVERVIEW

PROGRAM: DOI2T NORTHERN PROJECT (DISCOVER ONLINE INTEGRATED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, "DO IT"), SIOUX-HUDSON LITERACY COUNCIL
SECTOR: COMMUNITY-BASED   **CULTURAL STREAM:** INDIGENOUS
INITIATIVE: UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

GOALS

Because Sioux Lookout is the educational, healthcare, and employment hub for 30 fly-in First Nation communities north of us in Treaty 9 territory (the people in this region most often have to visit or move to Sioux Lookout for schooling, training, or health services), we connected regularly with a very nomadic population who were only in Sioux Lookout for a short period of time before returning home. During the past 5 years when servicing this unique group of learners, we heard time and time again how well our DOI2T program worked, and that it would be so helpful to have the tech and programming in northern Treaty 9 communities too. Our SFS-funded expansion of DOI2T is an answer to these requests.

LESSONS LEARNED

For learners to engage with the DOI2T tech more often, we need DOI2T staff (either from the First Nations communities, or outsiders dedicated to travelling around

Treaty 9) in these classrooms far more often, preferably 2-8 weeks per year per community.

We also need to petition our provincial ministry for a more realistic registration process. Our DOI2T program receives, because of our long 7-page Ontario LBS Participant Registration Form, only 50% (or less) of the possible registrations we could; if it were shorter, we'd be able to prove our DOI2T program's successes more accurately.

OUTCOMES

As we have expanded DOI2T into Treaty 9 territory, the impact has been incredible. Learners are making unique Indigenous-specific items. Several learners have expressed interest in using the DOI2T tech to start small community-based businesses. The technology brings more people into the KiHS classrooms, who in turn engage in the courses we offer through our GLA online LBS program, or that KiHS offers online.

PROGRAM: **DOI2T NORTHERN PROJECT (DISCOVER ONLINE INTEGRATED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, "DO IT"), SIOUX-HUDSON LITERACY COUNCIL**
SECTOR: **COMMUNITY-BASED** CULTURAL **STREAM:** **INDIGENOUS**
INITIATIVE: **UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS**

SNAPSHOT

PROGRAM TITLE: DOI2T (Discover Online Integrated Information Technology, "DO IT")

DELIVERY LOCATION(S): Six remote First Nations communities in Treaty 9 territory (Mishkeegogamang, Keewaywin, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, Mattagami, Webequie, and Fort Severn)

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 10-20 in each location

TARGET AUDIENCE: First Nations adults looking to improve their tech literacy

PARTNERS INVOLVED: KiHS (Keewaytinook Internet High School), who lets us use their on-reserve classroom to house our DOI2T tech, along with their countless other supports. NAN (Nishnawbe Aski Nation) who allows us onto their land and helps us coordinate with community partners.

NUMBER OF INTAKES PLANNED: 60 total (10 from each community)

DELIVERY STATUS: Ongoing until March 2024

REASON FOR PROJECT

We have facilitated a version of DOI2T in Treaty 3 territory for 5 years. During this time, through other limited funding sources, we were able to contribute DOI2T technologies and training to 8 other regionally-nearby LBS sites (Atikokan, Dryden, Kenora, etc.), as well as host weekly DOI2T training sessions at 7 other community organizations (Supportive Housing, Meno Ya Win Health Centre, Nahnahda-Wee-ee-Waywin Emergency Shelter, etc.), in our home community of Sioux Lookout, Ontario.

Because Sioux Lookout is the educational, healthcare, and employment hub for 30 fly-in First Nation communities north of us in Treaty 9 territory (the people in this region most often have to visit or move to Sioux Lookout for schooling, training, or health services), we connected regularly with a very nomadic population who were only in Sioux Lookout for a short period of time before returning home.

During the past 5 years servicing this unique group of learners, we heard time and time again how well our DOI2T program worked, and that it would be so helpful to have the tech and programming in northern Treaty 9 communities too.

Our SFS-funded expansion of DOI2T is an answer to these requests.

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Learners, as expected, are excited!

DOI2T uses creativity-based technology programs/systems (3D printing, Cricut crafting, and Ozobot robots) to help learners improve their digital technology skills in quick and unintimidating lessons, lessons that are always (and have always, particularly during our development) driven by the energy and desires of our Indigenous learners.

Most of our learners have a negative, and often trauma-filled, relationship with contemporary education systems, and as a result, these learners gravitate towards DOI2T because it operates outside of conventional school system learning models, because it offers a unique personal item or gift at the end of the lesson, and because it teaches learners adaptable hardware and software tech skills.

As we have expanded DOI2T into Treaty 9 territory, **the impact, as we expected, has been incredible**. Learners are making unique Indigenous-specific items that we have never seen before (copper jingles cut by a Cricut machine, hunting animal calls made on a 3D printer, etc.).

There have been several learners who've expressed interest in using the DOI2T tech to start small community-based businesses. The tech has been used to augment parts of beadwork and quillwork. Math, project planning, and problem-solving skills are now being taught with contemporary hardware previously unavailable in these communities. **And the technology brings more people into the KiHS classrooms, people who in turn engage in the courses we offer through our GLA online LBS program, or that KiHS offers online.**

The list of successes is long.

More staff and a quicker, less invasive registration process are vital.

KiHS is a wonderful organization to collaborate with because they have teachers on-site who can maintain and up-keep the DOI2T tech when we are not on-site. But these teachers are not our staff, and they are busy with KiHS work. So they only get the hands-on training from us of 1-2 weeks per year when we are on-site and helping, and that is just not enough for them to remain confident, nor enough for them to regularly encourage learners or community members to engage with our program when we are not on site.

For learners to engage with the DOI2T tech more often, we need DOI2T staff (either from the First Nations communities, or outsiders dedicated to travelling around Treaty 9 for chunks of the year) in these classrooms far more often than we currently are, preferably 2-8 weeks per year per community.

We also need to petition our provincial ministry for a more realistic registration process. Our Ontario LBS Participant Registration Form is 7 pages long at a minimum, and the paperwork asks very invasive questions such as "Number of Dependants," "Marital Status," "Highest Level of Education," and "Source of Income," questions that also naturally deter registration because of their suggestion that certain answers, like "No income," imply a life failure.

And not only are many of the questions insulting, they are also unnecessary and incongruous between Ontario ministries. For instance, KiHS, an accredited Ontario high school, has a registration process that is only 1 page long, and their Ontario ministry considers that registration process valid, yet not ours.

It's also worth stating that **our DOI2T program receives, because of our long 7-page Ontario LBS Participant Registration Form, only 50% (or less) of the possible registrations we could**; if it were shorter, we'd be able to prove our DOI2T program's successes more accurately.

For future years, we'd encourage the SFS funders and the Ontario ministry to consider letting us acquire Indian Status Registration Numbers as a simple one-step registration, because the process of acquiring Indian Status is already intensive and verified.

Buy-in, trust, and face-to-face delivery are essential.

Regardless of our organization's racial/cultural makeup, working on First Nations reserves required invitations and buy-in from the communities. **DOI2T has been a success ethically because the impetus to expand the program into Treaty 9 territory was provided by Indigenous people first, and because we adapted our DOI2T programming to their requests.** Because these communities saw that the energy for this programming came from members of their own community, and our DOI2T programming was only a response to their requests, they were far more willing to buy into what DOI2T offered.

Even with these invitations and this buy-in, we've still had to prove that we listened. **We've had to continually under- line how, based on First Nations advice, our DOI2T program is not a traditional education service, and that our an- dragogy isn't based on problematic colonial grade-school pedagogy.**

We've done this, primarily, through experimentation with lesson plans and technology to find appropriate options. Building this trust, and proving our ability to listen via our lesson plans and facilitation structure, is and remains extra important because, if we aren't trusted, we can quite literally —and rightfully, considering the colonial projects that have been imposed on these communities— be expelled from the communities.

And lastly, **being on-site, face-to-face has proved to be essential to our success**. Yes, we can do much through our TGJ2O course and through video calls, but **so much of our program's success hinges on a lesson's energy, something that is almost impossible to replicate without face-to-face teaching.**

When on-site, we can curate an energy of adaptation, of problem-solving, and of trouble-shooting in a way that doesn't involve learner fear or self-deprecation. We've discovered quickly that, if not on-site, learners are scared of the equipment, scared of breaking something, and scared of making mistakes. When we are on-site, when we can be the first hands on a piece of tech, learners quickly understand the level of manipulation that the tech can handle, and they quickly become less nervous to engage with the tech with their own hands.

FUTURE IMPACT **POTENTIAL**

Every year, different on-reserve learners discover our program and different learners visit the KiHS classrooms. So if our SFS funding continued (which we, and all of Treaty 9, sure hope it does!), we would reach more learners in the 6 current communities, and we would plan to expand into the other Treaty 9 communities who have asked for us.

RESOURCES & **SUPPORTS**

Our DOI2T program was created by formal and informal First Nations community requests. Formally, many organiza- tions such as NAN, KiHS, Shibogama Tribal Council, and IFNA Tribal Council asked for our help with tech literacy, and over the years we've run one-time and ongoing DOI2T-related programming in their desired communities. Informally, and as I stated earlier, we've had years of feedback from Treaty 9-based community members who've requested that our DOI2T program be a permanent program on their reserve.

In another way, previous to applying to the SFS funding initiative in 2023, we looked at the SFS model and we saw that our DOI2T program trained learners in all 9 skills. We also looked through several SFS research reports and found, of course, that remote-living First Nations learners are a population with frighteningly few LBS opportunities.

PARTICIPANT: **CHARMAINE**

DOI2T NORTHERN PROJECT (DISCOVER ONLINE INTEGRATED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, "DO IT"), PROGRAM PILOT

CHARMAINE participated when we brought our DOI2T program to their home community of Fort Severn (the most northern community in Ontario).

She has recently started a small crafting business in her community (*Beadwork By Char* on Facebook), where she makes and sells beadwork.

Her initial goal with DOI2T was simply to make personalized gifts for her partner, but after learning how to use the tech tools, she quickly realized their potential to assist her beading-based art. She hopes that the DOI2T tools will expand the variety of art she can create and that they make certain complex projects (such as beading entire animal shapes) quicker and simpler.

There are many Indigenous artists who use Cricut technology to augment their beading art, but it remains far less common in remote northern communities where this creative technology is harder to acquire, resupply and maintain.
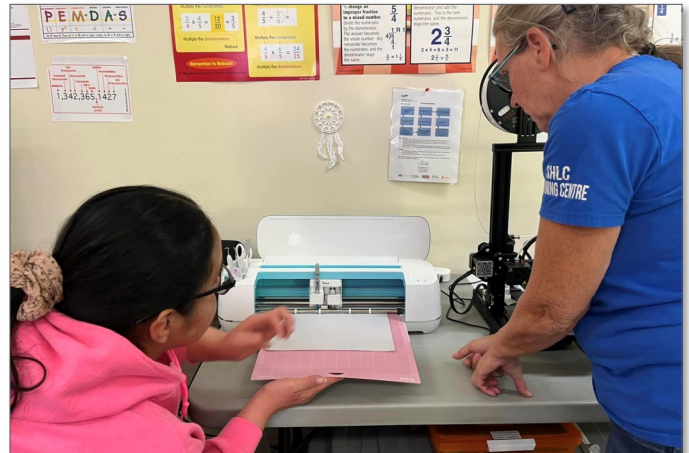
From what we at DOI2T can tell, Charmaine is one of the only people in Treaty 9 territory now using Cricut technology to create beadwork-based art, and she is certainly the most northern person in Ontario doing so.

It's also worth noting that Charmaine does not just do traditional Cree, Anishinaabe, or Oji-Cree-style beadwork, but she adapts her art to the unique culture of her oceanside First Nation.

Her beadwork, consequently, includes things like seal claws, polar bear claws, and clam shells, while simultaneously including Western mainstream cultural references like sports logos and famous cartoon characters.

There are a limited number of on-reserve employment opportunities in northern First Nations and, while Charmaine does already have a part-time job, she is ambitious and creative and is striving to create for herself a secondary source of income through her art.

DOI2T's Cricut-based education has helped her expand the reach of this secondary income endeavour by showing her how certain tech can make artistic processes quicker and easier and we hope that, through our guidance, she can learn to use the 3D printers to help as well.