

# Literacy Quesnel Society: "Driver Education Preparation Program"

## Enhancing Displaced Workers' Literacy and Essential Skills Project

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## The DWLES Project

Literacy Quesnel Society's "Driver Education Preparation Program" (DEPP) beta-test was part of the Enhancing Displaced Workers' Literacy and Essential Skills (DWLES) project, which was a collaborative project that was managed by Decoda Literacy Solutions (Decoda) and supported by the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) and Learning Metrix.

The overall goal of the DWLES project was to better understand how literacy organizations can support hard-to-reach remote and rural communities by integrating literacy and essential skills (LES) and employment services for a range of displaced workers, with a particular focus on equity-deserving groups such as women, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, people with disabilities, and others. The project began in 2019 and beta-testing was done in 2021 and 2022.

The project began with 10 literacy organizations in British Columbia (BC) being selected to be part of the data collection phase of the project. This included a literature review, interviews with the BC literacy organizations, focus groups with key stakeholders, and a survey and interviews with displaced workers in each of the 10 communities.

Following the completion of this background research, 11 literacy organizations across Canada—including 7 from the earlier phase—were selected for the beta-test phase of the project, which included implementing and evaluating projects that integrated LES and employment services targeted for displaced workers in their communities.

The purpose of the beta-test phase was to uncover and disseminate evidence-based LES support, training models, and promising practices to inform development of programs and models to improve the employability of displaced workers across Canada. The beta-test projects can be viewed as trial or experimental interventions, and thus were intended to be small in terms of the numbers of learners, with the potential to be scaled up to a full pilot study if deemed successful.

The following report provides an overview of the DEPP beta test that was implemented in Quesnel, BC.

## Quesnel, BC

Quesnel is a city of about 23,000 in central BC, between Williams Lake and Prince George. The area includes four First Nations: the Lhoosk'uz Dene (Kluskus), Lhtako Dene (Red Bluff), Nazko and Ulkatcho (Anahim). Quesnel was a forest industry town, but with mill closures and industry slow downs, the economy is diversifying.

Literacy Quesnel Society is dedicated to the ideal that literacy is essential to the health of any community and is a part of everything we do. Literacy Quesnel and WorkBC have observed an increasing interest from clients wanting to obtain different levels of driving licenses because the licenses introduce an array of job opportunities, such as working for the City of Quesnel, the local road maintenance company, logging and mining companies, delivery companies, and even School District 28 as the demand for bus drivers increases. The recognition of this opportunity led to the Driver Education Preparation beta test project.

## Driver Education Preparation Program

The DEPP beta test project helped learners understand the content that they would need to successfully complete their driver learners' test. Many adults who are not working, or who have been displaced from industry-based jobs, are interested in earning a Class 3 or a Class 1 driver's license, but their ability to successfully complete the written test is hampered by their low literacy skills, comprehension skills, inexperience with test writing, computer literacy, or a combination of these factors. The project focused on small group learning due to COVID-19 restrictions. This allowed for group work, skill building, discussion, role play, and exploration of the knowledge needed to pass the test.

DEPP was delivered to four cohorts of learners between April 2021 and December 2021. Three cohorts were delivered in-person, and one was delivered virtually using Zoom. Over four or five weeks, learners were in class one evening per week for two hours. Across the four cohorts, 17 learners completed DEPP.



## Highlights from DEPP

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There were several highlights that were identified by learners and staff about DEPP:

\* The beta test helped many of the learners understand **how to approach and navigate their way through multiple-choice driver's tests**. They learned how to examine both the content and the multiple-choice questions, and how to take their time analysing the question and responses in order to choose the most appropriate answer. Learners identified that developing these skills were a valuable part of the beta test.

\* While the overall aim of the beta test was to help learners strengthen their knowledge and confidence with the content of ICBC's Learn to Drive Smart manual, by doing this, learners were also able to **build their literacy skills** in reading, comprehension, working in groups, and problem-solving.

\* Learners appreciated that the beta test had a **very specific focus with a tangible outcome**. They came away from DEPP with the specific knowledge and skills that they need to be successful in taking their driver's license test.

## Promising practices from DEPP

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There were several promising practices that emerged from DEPP that strengthened learner recruitment and engagement while supporting learners in their personal growth and building their LES and job search skills.

### **Being flexible with how DEPP was delivered to suit learners' needs.**

Despite the training being offered during the COVID-19 pandemic, Literacy Quesnel felt that it was important to continue to offer face-to-face facilitation as this format better suited the needs of many of the learners. However, DEPP was also offered virtually by zoom as staff recognized that some learners might also be uncomfortable with in-person learning and that participating from home may be more accessible for some learners. This flexibility in program delivery was key to reaching learners.

### **Using different types of teaching methods and activities to facilitate learning.**

The learning was facilitated in various ways – through discussion, videos, scenarios, animations, games – so that learners could understand the content well. Some examples of specific teaching methods and learning activities included:

- Discussions: Each cohort started with a discussion on learners' motivations for obtaining a driver's license.
- PowerPoint slides: Each chapter of the Learn to Drive Smart manual was developed into slides to break down the content of each chapter.
- Practice scenario questions: The facilitator used content from the manual to develop scenario-based questions in order to guide learners through answering the questions.





## Turning the beta test materials into a self-directed curriculum.

Every aspect of the driver's manual was broken down into explanations using visuals, examples, voice-over, and animated lessons. Each section of the DEPP curriculum covers one chapter of the manual and the content has been adapted using clear language design. The curriculum was designed to be accessible for individuals without regular internet access as it could be downloaded from the Decoda website (when learners have internet access) and saved for later use. This expanded access to the program allowed learners to engage in either the facilitated or self-directed formats, depending on their needs and availability.

## What we learned from DEPP

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### 1 An LES program with a very specific focus, such as Literacy Quesnel Society's DEPP, can be a gateway to increasing learners' job readiness and independence.

Public transportation is limited in Quesnel. There is a bus system, but it is very spread out and inconvenient for riders. As a result, access to a vehicle and being able to drive are important for

working outside of the home, but also for being independent and not relying on others for transportation. Given this reality, having a driver's licence in Quesnel is important for increasing job readiness and independence.

### 2 Building relationships with learners is important to further identify and understand learners' needs.

Taking a test, especially one that is high stakes such as a driver's test, can be very stressful for many people. Staff asked about learners' motivations, previous attempts, and concerns about getting a driver's license, and were also open with learners about their own experiences getting a driver's license. In doing so, staff learned that most participants experienced test-taking anxiety. Learners described how this anxiety was largely responsible for their failed previous attempts at the test or why they had not attempted it at all. As a result of this understanding, staff added in a new section to DEPP on test anxiety. They taught strategies and practical tips that learners could use to identify and manage their test anxiety, both before the test and during it. These skills were not just applicable to taking the driver's test, but also could be applied in the workplace during other types of stressful situations.

## Additional project information

This report is part of a series of 11 individual beta test reports developed for the DWLES project. To learn more about the DWLES project and to access project reports, please visit:

[decoda.ca/our-work/displaced-workers-landing](https://decoda.ca/our-work/displaced-workers-landing).

