

NWT Seniors' Society



Senior Citizens' Week 2009 – September 20 – 26, 2009

Theme: Youth and Seniors Learning Together

Event Planning Guide for Schools



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1. Introduction

This year, Senior Citizens' Week 2009 will be celebrated during September, commencing on Grandparents Day, Sunday, September 20, 2009. This was felt to be appropriate given the theme chosen by the Society for 2009: ***Youth and Seniors Learning Together.***

Given this theme, we are asking that schools in your community consider planning and carrying out events during Senior Citizens' Week 2009 that will bring together children and youth with seniors. The focus would be on bringing Grandma, Grandpa and all older adults together with young people where they can learn together and from each other. Activities where young people and older citizens learn from each other, and have fun doing it, can go a long way to bridging the generation gap. Activities of this nature will compliment the concept of lifelong learning, a cornerstone of the GNWT'S literacy strategy framework, *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2008-2018.*

This Guide has been sent to you in advance so you have the opportunity to incorporate some of the ideas listed into your planning for the 2009-10 school year. This is an important week of celebration and intergenerational learning.

During an NWT conference sponsored by the Society several years ago, which brought seniors and youth together from across the north, a surprising discovery made was that they have so much in common. Youth and older persons found that they:

- ✚ face age discrimination;
- ✚ are often in conflict with adults;
- ✚ deal with loss;
- ✚ are into the “drug scene”;
- ✚ have changing bodies;
- ✚ have limited income;
- ✚ depend on others;
- ✚ face communication/language barriers;
- ✚ are not taken seriously;
- ✚ are often bored or have nothing to do;
- ✚ sometimes feel alone and unwanted; and,
- ✚ sometimes feel unsafe.





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Considering these diverse issues and concerns shared by those at both ends of the lifespan, creating opportunities for seniors and young people to learn together and from each other makes a lot of sense.

We have created this Guide to help you make this a reality in your schools during Senior Citizens' Week 2009. It provides ideas on what older adults and youth/children might do day-by-day during the week. You may have one or two events that occur each day throughout the week and/or different events for each day. It is up to you. Remember, this is only a guide. Please feel free to be creative and innovative and come up with ideas of your own that best suit the situation for older adults and youth in your communities.

2. About the NWT Seniors' Society

The NWT Seniors' Society was established in 1983 and has been advocating on behalf of all seniors across the NWT since that time. The **vision** of the Society is that **seniors are valued and respected by the community**. Its **mission** is to **ensure that seniors have dignity, independence, participation, fairness and security within the community**. This mission statement contains the five key principles that are outlined in the *National Framework on Aging*. The Society's **mandate** continues to be **dedicated to promoting the independence and wellbeing of older citizens through the provision of programs and services in partnership with responsible government departments and other organizations**.

3. The Purpose of Senior Citizens' Week 2009

Senior Citizens' Week 2009 provides an opportunity for people of all ages to celebrate with our Northwest Territories' seniors their lives, accomplishments, wisdom and knowledge. We want to provide opportunities for them to pass this rich heritage on to our young people and for our youth and children to help seniors learn about what excites and interests them.

The primary purpose of this year's Senior Citizens' Week 2009 is to dedicate time to recognize the contribution seniors make to the quality of life in the NWT and, as the theme chosen would suggest, promoting the young and old learning together. The objectives of the week are to:

- ✚ Recognize, honor, and respect older citizens in the NWT;
- ✚ Promote opportunities through the school system for youth and elders to learn together and from each other;
- ✚ Encourage mutual respect between youth and elders in the community; and,
- ✚ Encourage and promote partnerships and collaborative approaches to addressing issues that are of concern to seniors at the community and territorial levels.



4. Planning Ahead

Over the years, at workshops, conferences and other events, the issue of the generation gap has been raised as an ongoing problem for communities throughout the NWT. Seniors, elders, community and territorial leaders, youth leaders and others have all pointed to this enduring problem.

During a NWT-wide conference entitled, *“Bridging the Gap 2005”*, sponsored by the NWT Seniors' Society, a youth spoke out about this issue saying, *“Young people have significant identity issues and are desperately looking to fit in. They want to know who they are and where they came from. Youth want to learn about cultural and family traditions so they can be proud of whom they are. Older adults can help youth and youth can help older adults.”*

At that same conference Chief Fred Sangris, when talking about the Yellowknives Dene First Nation's four-season's project, noted that it *“gives youth and elders a chance to stand side by side, work together and close the gap in the generations.”* In this project, elders and youth were not only working together but also learning together.

Providing opportunities for older adults and young people to learn together within the school setting is seen as one way to move ahead on bridging the gap.

As noted in the GNWT'S Department of Education, Culture and Employment's document entitled, *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2008-2018*, lifelong learning benefits individuals, communities and societies. It goes on to say that lifelong learning opportunities come in a range of formal and non-formal educational settings. Involving young people and seniors in activities where each can learn from the other, potentially offers lifelong learning opportunities that straddle the life span as well as formal and non-formal educational settings. We hope you will seize this opportunity in September 2009.

Getting Started *

Congratulations! You have made the decision to do something to celebrate Senior Citizens' Week 2009 but the question now is what? We begin with some first-things-first considerations.

Firstly, ask yourself a few simple questions:

- ✚ Have you held similar types of events that worked in the past involving seniors? Would you like to do it again or change it a bit to create something new?
- ✚ Do you have an idea for a theme for your school that is consistent with the theme for Senior Citizens' Week 2009?

*Adapted from *Seniors' Week Event Planning Guide, SACA 2009*



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- ✚ Is there something else going on in your community that creates an opportunity or gives you an idea, like a community clean-up or a community hunt.
- ✚ Is your school known for a specific activity that reaches out into the community on which you can create an event or activity that focuses on that?

Key Questions to Consider *

Secondly, answering the following who, what, where, when and how questions will help your school prepare good plans for your events and activities.

Who:

- ✚ Who do you want to participate in the activity/event? What are their skills or interests? Do they have any characteristics that will affect what you do – such as limited mobility or, in the case of small children, short attention spans?
- ✚ Who do you want to help create or present the events/activities?
- ✚ Will you need volunteers?
- ✚ Who do you need to contact to ensure the events/activities can occur? Do you need to get permits? Do you want to invite special guests?
- ✚ Will you need to invite performers or presenters?
- ✚ Do you need to set up a planning group?

What:

- ✚ What resources do you have? Do you have what you need to create events/activities, or do you need to secure resources from others?
- ✚ What will people who come to your events/activities do, including participants and special guests?

Where:

- ✚ Will the event be inside or outside?
- ✚ Do you need to reserve the venue?
- ✚ Do you have a contingency plan – for example, if you are hosting an outside of the school event or activity, do you have a plan for bad weather?



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- ✚ Does your event/activity venue pose problems for people who have difficulty moving around or use wheelchairs? Does it have good enough acoustics for those who are hard-of-hearing?
- ✚ Is the location (class room/gym/shop/art room/ other/etc) large enough for the number of people you expect? Does the school or other facility/location have adequate services and facilities, such as bathrooms or kitchen space?
- ✚ Are there special considerations – the need for a stage, a kitchen, internet access for example – that will affect where you choose to hold the events/activities?

When:

- ✚ During Senior Citizens' Week 2009, what is the best date and time for the events or activities? Think about who is going to be coming, the availability of special guests or performers, as well as what you plan to do.

How:

- ✚ How will you organize the events for the day/evenings?
- ✚ How will you ensure things get done?
- ✚ How will you publicize and promote events where the general public is invited to your events/activities?

5. Partnerships and Collaboration

Events and activities do not necessarily have to be limited to the school buildings or grounds. They can take place in the most appropriate location in and around your community. Moreover, partnerships and collaborative approaches to planning and carrying out activities and events are to be encouraged. The following is a list of possible individuals, groups and organizations where partnerships and collaborative efforts would be appropriate depending on your community situation. This is not an exhaustive list so do not limit yourself to this sampling of partners and collaborators.

- Youth leaders and groups
- Respected elders/leaders
- Women's groups/societies
- Local historians
- Cultural & linguistic experts
- Local writers and artists





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- Band Councils
- Métis Associations
- Various cultural groups/societies (Dene, Métis, Inuvialuit, French, Scottish, Italian, Irish, etc.)
- Municipal Councils
- RCMP
- Health Centers/Hospitals
- Social Workers
- Nurses
- Teachers
- Adult Education Centers/Teachers/Instructors
- Community Leaders



- MLA'S and Ministers of the NWT Government
- Elders'/Seniors' Societies, committees or groups, NWT Seniors' Society Board Members
- Libraries
- Tourist Information Centers
- Museums
- Cultural groups societies and associations
- GNWT Departments (H&SS; ECE; NWTHC; Justice; etc.)
- Federal agencies and departments
- Other communities/schools (schools may want to do a joint event in a common location, etc.)

All of these and more make up the varied and intricately woven fabric of our communities and territory.

6. Event Ideas for Young and Old – Building on the Theme

This list of ideas for events and activities is by no means exhaustive. The possibilities to bring together youth/children and seniors to have shared learning experiences in schools and in and around the community are almost endless. We do hope, though, that the following will serve as a spring-board for planning events and activities to take place during Seniors Citizens' Week 2009.

Other groups and organizations in your community may also be celebrating Senior Citizens' Week 2009. It will be important to connect with them to coordinate events/activities that are being planned. It might be appropriate to have someone from the school be on any community planning group that is established to coordinate community events and activities. If your community does not have one then perhaps the school could take the lead and organize such a committee of volunteers.



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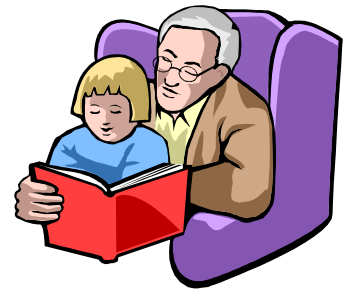
- ❖ **School/community barbeque** – Invite seniors to a community feast to honor them; this could be done as a kick-off or a wind-up of Senior Citizens' Week 2009.



- ❖ **Lunch with Grandma/Grandpa** -- Lunches at the school (could be the whole school or one or several classes) or in a seniors' facility, if there is one in your community. The kids could serve the seniors and selected older citizens could tell stories or demonstrate the preparation of a traditional food dish.
- ❖ **Adopt a Grandparent Day** – Children and youth could invite their grandparents, or adopt an older citizen who may not have grandchildren, to be a part of a shared learning experience in their class. This could be a one-time event or one that occurs every day during Senior Citizens' Week 2009.

- ❖ **Picnic with Grandparents** – This could be a time for older citizens and children/youth to get out of the community and share time and learn some new skills together.

- ❖ **Story time with older citizens** – Kids and older citizens can meet in the school or outside depending on the weather. Kids will learn about their family, local and regional traditions or some other topic that will be a learning experience for the kids.



- ❖ **Creating a family tree** – Children can learn from their parents, grandparents and other older people in the community about their ancestry and how they are connected to each other and their community.

- ❖ **Traditional song and dance day or days** – This sort of activity can be a daily event or one time only activity in a class or in a school. Older adults and others can teach young and old songs and dances from local and other cultures of Canada.

- ❖ **Learn about how to prepare bannock, tea, and other traditional food** – In the school kitchen or outside, kids and older citizens can cook up a storm and treat each other to their creations.

- ❖ **Learn about computers – email, internet, Face Book, Skype, research, down-loading music/movies etc, etc** – Events like this provide kids with an opportunity to give back to their

elders and help them better understand their world. Older citizens will learn how to get connected to cyberspace.



- ❖ **Learning about iPods, mobile phones and their use** – What are these newfangled gizmos all about anyway? This is an opportunity for young people and older citizens to learn about these new communication and information tools from each other and together.



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- ❖ **Learn about ageism, abuse, etc** – Youth and older citizens together learning about attitudes that lead to ageism at both ends of the lifespan – learning that older and younger citizens have much in common. This could take place in the classroom, some other community venue, or outside.
- ❖ **Learn English/Aboriginal language** – Clinics can be set up in classrooms where kids can learn more about their local aboriginal languages and older adults can practice their English. These can be a series of learning experiences with local experts in Aboriginal and English languages being involved to intensify the learning experience of both the youth and the older citizens.
- ❖ **Cultural day camps – drumming, beading, canoeing, hunting and trapping skills, etc.** – This is a great way to learn about traditional skills and to have fun in the process.
- ❖ **Youth/children and older citizens reading together** – A great way to enhance language skills of reading and speaking.
- ❖ **Community feast at the school – organized by youth and older citizens together** – Another super way to either kick-off or close a week of learning, celebration and fun.
- ❖ **Trapper training days** – This is best done out on the land if weather permits. A very good opportunity for older, experienced adults to teach the young important aspects of trapping.
- ❖ **A walk in the bush** – Learning about the plants, trees, animals, insects and birds in the area. Kids and older adults and local experts on wildlife, flora and fauna, learning about with whom we share the local environment, why it is important to protect it, and how can we contribute to this important task.
- ❖ **Canoeing with local guides** – Elders and youth together out on the land learning to paddle and boating safety.



- ❖ **Dene Drum Making** – An opportunity to pass on an important and useful traditional skills.
- ❖ **Traditional sewing workshop** – This is not only for the girls but the guys can learn too!
- ❖ **Trapping, skinning and fur preparation workshop** – The type of animal that will be used will depend on the location and what is available for trapping during September.
- ❖ **Visits to elder's facilities** – Children/youth do something e.g. performance of some kind and the elders tell stories or share knowledge/skill in some area.
- ❖ **Arts and crafts day/morning/hour** – Any type of art or craft can be involved depending on who will come forward to volunteer showing and teaching what they know and love.
- ❖ **Métis fiddling and jigging lessons** – This is not only a joyful way for kids and older citizens can learn and have fun, but it is good for the heart too.



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- ❖ **Sharing Traditional Knowledge – healing, wellness, herbal medicine, etc.** – If there are traditional healers in the community who are willing to pass on a little of their knowledge, then this will be a great boon for young and old alike.
- ❖ **Bridging the Generation Gap sessions** – Youth and older citizens together exploring what they have in common; exploring opportunities to work, play and learn together; explore community issues and develop strategies and actions to address them together.



7. Send us your Pictures and Reports

We will be posting pictures and reports of activities and events held in communities and schools during and after Senior Citizens' Week 2009. We would love to put your pictures and brief descriptions of the events and activities sponsored by your schools on our website. You can send digital pictures as attachments with brief descriptions/explanations to the following email address: nwtSeniors@yk.com. We will post samples of your activities on our website.





8. Contact Information

Should you require more information or need to clarify any points contained in this Guide, you can contact us in the following ways:

- Mailing Address:** Barbara Hood, Executive Director
#102, 4916 – 46th Street
Yellowknife, NT X1A 1L2
- Phone:** (867) 920-7444
1-800-661-0878 (Information Line – no charge from anywhere in the NWT)
- Fax:** (867) 920-7601
- Email:** nwtSeniors@yk.com; seniors@yk.com
- Website:** For information on the Society and updates on Senior Citizens' Week 2009 check out our website: www.nwtSeniorsSociety.ca