

**ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE**

**QUESTION 620-18(3): INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN**

**February 26, 2019**

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. As I noted in my statement, the science of early childhood development points out a number of tips and best practices, so let's see how these are being followed in our new junior kindergarten programming. First, the science says, "Children learn by copying, so they hear the Indigenous languages." How has JK ensured that Indigenous language teachers and teachers' aides, speak the words children must hear in order to learn? Mahsi.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Early integration or early exposure for children to learn Indigenous language is not a new thing. We do provide funding effective 2018, this year, actually, for junior kindergarten, so they are included in the funding that is given to schools for Indigenous learning, Indigenous teaching. Even before that, I remember operating a daycare and, for many years, actually, looking to bring elders into daycare centres. It's always been promoted to actually utilize people that are from the land, from the speakers, into early childcare programming, remembering that JK is play-based. It is not curriculum based. It's not the same as K to 12. It is a play-based experience. Bringing in elders and using the programming, introducing the children to the language is utilized, but it is a different structure.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you to the Minister for that response. My next question is about materials. We know that children like to hear stories and songs, and I wondered what work was underway or is planned for expanding the library of Indigenous language materials for JK?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** We do have some resources already that we use within our schools. We are always redoing our resources. The same resources that we would use for kindergarten with our Indigenous languages will be used for junior kindergarten. A lot of that is actually having elders come in and speak with them and play with them, so the development of resources isn't always having a book. That is more of a western culture. Within an Indigenous culture, it's more storytelling, having elders coming in and speaking to the children and showing them concrete examples, so we try to incorporate both western culture and Indigenous culture into the practice.

**MS. GREEN:** The last time we reviewed the funding for JK, there was a \$300,000 shortfall in the area of Aboriginal languages operations and maintenance for things like the resources and language assistance. Are these two areas now fully funded?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** I do know that we've received money from the federal government to address Indigenous languages. I can't say if they are fully. I will have to get back to the Member and let her know where we are with that.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Last of all, our JK programming course is fairly new, and I'm wondering how the department is monitoring and evaluating the Indigenous language learning elements of the JK programming and how they are implementing the results of this evaluation. Mahsi.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Again, like I had said -- sorry, we just knocked over a basket -- the Indigenous language programming is offered not only to JK; it's also to all students, so the JK students are actually able to take part in the programming that's already being offered to the kindergarten students. I do want to point out that we have two communities, Fort Providence is one of them, and Behchoko, actually, that have more of an Indigenous immersion. Within Behchoko, it's JK, junior kindergarten, to grade two, full immersion, and then Fort Providence is junior kindergarten to grade three. I think those are fine examples, and I think that we need to promote that more within the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.