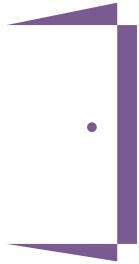


Opening the Door

**An Evaluation Study of Students' Experience in
the ArrowMight *Learning for Life* Program Pilot**

Submitted by **Adele Ritch, MA**

DYAD Projects
Submitted to ArrowMight Canada Ltd.
November 2010



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"Literacy is an instrument for expanding the imagination. Literature sets free anyone who can open a book... Yet literacy isn't only about enriching our inner lives. Language skills are essential to the economic success of individuals, organizations and nations... Average literacy skills determine the long-run well-being of nations... Yet in Canada, in 2006, a survey found that 42% of Canadians had literacy skills that ranked below the minimum acceptable level."

STEPHEN HUME, THE VANCOUVER SUN, SEPTEMBER 7, 2010

Executive Summary

ArrowMight Learning for Life is a home-based adult literacy program in English. The program comprises 170 lessons on HD-DVD and support for students provided by the ArrowMight Community Facilitator who maintains contact with students to offer encouragement during the learning process and to assess their learning progress. A pilot of ArrowMight was conducted in Vancouver, British Columbia, in Winnipeg along with Brokenhead and Black River First Nations in Manitoba, and in Smiths Falls, Ontario, between June 2009 and September 2010. From August to October 2010, Adele Ritch, Principal Consultant with DYAD Projects, conducted a qualitative evaluation study in four of the pilot sites to gain insight into students' own perspective of their learning experiences and their learning outcomes. (At the time of the evaluation, the Winnipeg site was not operational). Such information is intended to inform planners and policy makers about the potential of ArrowMight to increase literacy skills in Canada.

The evaluator visited each of the ArrowMight pilot sites and conducted 37 in-person interviews with students, Community Facilitators, ArrowMight program developers and other informants knowledgeable about literacy education. The evaluator also viewed 12 ArrowMight lessons on HD-DVD, read the program workbooks, and reviewed the ArrowMight Facilitator Manual and some ArrowMight promotional materials.

Findings support the effectiveness of ArrowMight in increasing pilot students' literacy, numeracy and life skills development. For some, these skills were inextricably connected to potential employment and further training. Many more students identified the role ArrowMight played in their burgeoning love of learning and the self-confidence and positive self-esteem that resulted. Students in ArrowMight gained knowledge about Canada and First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures. For some ArrowMight students, the experience was life-changing.

In each of the pilot sites, a Community Facilitator was hired to enroll students and to encourage and support them during their learning process. In Vancouver, the Community Facilitator enrolled 55 mainly new Canadian students. In Brokenhead First Nation, 26 Aboriginal students were enrolled, and in Black River First Nation, 25 Aboriginal students were enrolled. In Smiths Falls, Ontario, 24 mainly Canadian born students of European descent were enrolled.

The availability of the Community Facilitator to maintain ongoing contact and work closely with students was a key factor in student engagement and completion of the program. Another factor that seems to have influenced students to complete the program was the provision of a computer training module and a laptop computer that students could keep when they completed the program.

As a new program, there are many questions about ArrowMight that are worthy of further study. For example, there is much to learn about how ArrowMight influences student's futures including their success in other education and training programs. Also, it is important to better understand how the relationship between the student and the Community Facilitator contributes to student success.

Ten aspects of ArrowMight were identified as important contributors to the students' learning outcomes.

Need for ArrowMight

Community leaders, Facilitators and students identified a considerable need for literacy education in their communities. While people may want to return to school or enrol in training programs, they often lack the basic skills required to be successful in such programs.

Changes in Their Lives Because of ArrowMight

Students experienced changes in their lives that were connected to their experience with ArrowMight. For some, learning to read and write was a profound change that influenced all aspects of their lives. Many students described increased self-confidence. The students who were immigrants to Canada said that their world had opened up because ArrowMight taught them more about Canada and Aboriginal cultures. For some, ArrowMight meant positive changes in their employment situation because they were able to accomplish different and higher level tasks.

Potential for Further Learning

Learning with ArrowMight gave students the possibility to continue learning. Students saw themselves as "learners." While most did not have immediate plans for entry to other educational programs, they said that the potential was there for them now in ways it had not been before ArrowMight.

Program Structure and Materials

ArrowMight provides a systematic learning process that worked well for many students. Students reported that they could see what was expected of them and understood what they had to do to be successful. The ability to learn on their own as they engaged with the HD-DVD TeleTeachers gave students increased confidence in their ability to be successful learners. All of the ArrowMight materials are of very high quality and have a highly professional appearance.

Home-based Delivery

ArrowMight is designed to be used by students in their homes. This approach removed barriers to adult learning such as clashing work schedules, transportation problems, child care and other family responsibilities. Also, some individuals said they were reluctant for various reasons to return to classroom learning. The ArrowMight home-based approach also encouraged use of the program by families, thus promoting learning for several individuals in one home.

Facilitator Support

The ArrowMight Facilitator was a vital component of the program. Regardless of how motivated, most students in this study said they needed someone to encourage them to continue learning through to program completion.

Program Content about Canada and Aboriginal Culture

ArrowMight students were very excited about the program content related to Canada and First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures. All of the students found the content stimulating and interesting but the reasons they liked it varied. The learners from Brokenhead and Black River First Nations were excited to learn more about their own communities. New immigrant students in Vancouver welcomed an opportunity to learn about both Canada and the Aboriginal cultures and said this gave them an appreciation that they did not have before. In Smiths Falls students gained an appreciation for Canada and First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

Program Content Related to Life Skills

ArrowMight students spoke very positively about the program content particularly in the areas of continuous learning, thinking skills and self-confidence. Interestingly, students drew a direct connection between their learning about Canada, their own sense of confidence and their increased interest in continuous learning. For some students, having “knowledge” was the key to increased self-confidence and a change in how they expressed themselves in their families and in their workplaces. This, in turn, made them want to keep learning.

Computer Training Module

The ArrowMight program includes a computer training module. For the pilot, this module was implemented in Manitoba in Brokenhead and Black River First Nations only. It appears that the promise of a computer was a motivator to complete the program but further study is required to confirm this finding.

Suggestions for Program Improvement

Some students and community members thought students would benefit from more opportunities to meet together for peer-to-peer social support. Most other suggestions related to addressing the challenges faced by some students in learning math.

Introduction

ArrowMight Learning for Life is a home-based adult literacy program in English. For the purpose of this report, the program will be referred to as *ArrowMight*. The program comprises 170 lessons on HD-DVD and support for students provided by the ArrowMight Community Facilitator who maintains contact with students to offer encouragement and to assess their learning progress.

This report presents the findings of an evaluation study of the experiences of students in the ArrowMight pilot that operated between June 2009 and September 2010, a period of 14 months. The pilot program was initiated by ArrowMight Canada Ltd. in Vancouver, British Columbia, Smiths Falls, Ontario and in Winnipeg with Brokenhead and Black River First Nations, Manitoba.¹

ArrowMight engaged Adele Ritch, Principal Consultant with DYAD Projects, to conduct a qualitative study to gain insight into students' own perspective of their learning experiences and learning outcomes. Such information is intended to inform planners and policy makers about the potential of ArrowMight to increase literacy skills in Canada. This study was conducted from August to October 2010.

Evaluation Purpose

The evaluation focused on learning about the student's experience with ArrowMight in four main areas:

1. The effectiveness of ArrowMight in addressing students' literacy, numeracy and life skill needs.
2. The potential of ArrowMight to provide a pathway into employment, training and further education.
3. The relevance of the program content to the Canadian context.
4. The identification of potential improvements to the program.

¹ Winnipeg was not included in this evaluation study as this site was not operational at the time of the study.

Evaluation Methodology

To gain a broad perspective on students' experiences, the evaluation gathered information from several sources. In each of the pilot communities, the evaluator conducted in-person interviews with students, Community Facilitators and key informants who understood both the context of literacy education in their community and who were familiar with ArrowMight. Interviews were also conducted with ArrowMight's program development and management staff in their Ottawa office. These interviews provided information about the program content and materials as well as its pedagogical framework. The evaluator also received an orientation to the program's learning management software program (LMS).

A total of 37 interviews were conducted for this study: 17 interviews with students, 4 interviews with Community Facilitators, 10 interviews with ArrowMight program developers and 6 interviews with informants knowledgeable about literacy education. The evaluator also viewed 12 ArrowMight lessons on the DVD, read the workbooks, and reviewed the ArrowMight Facilitator Manual and promotional materials.

The evaluator worked with ArrowMight Facilitators in each location to identify a purposeful sample of students for interviews. Resources for this study allowed interviews with about 10% of students enrolled in ArrowMight. Selection criteria included students with varying literacy needs, students from a range of ages, males and females, parents and non-parents, and both employed and unemployed individuals. While the study involved a relatively small sample, its intent was to provide insights, not to show comparability or generalizability.

The ArrowMight Facilitators in each community arranged the interviews and introduced the evaluator to each of the students. Informed consent protocols in plain language were read aloud and discussed with interviewees to ensure they understood and were comfortable with the evaluation process. In three sites, private interviews were conducted with students. In Black River First Nation the ArrowMight Facilitator remained present as this was more comfortable for interviewees. The evaluator took handwritten notes at each interview.

Standard qualitative analysis methods were used to allow a meaningful description and interpretation of the data. Qualitative studies typically use quotations in reports to illustrate themes, interpretive logic and conclusions. During this evaluation, respondents agreed that their words could be used in the report, but that they would not be identified by name.

Description of ArrowMight

ArrowMight is a home-based literacy program that comprises 170 lessons of tele-teaching on HD-DVD over three modules. Each lesson is about 30 minutes long. The full program is intended to be completed in 40 weeks. There is a workbook for each of the three modules as well as a hard-cover dictionary, a cursive writing booklet and an encyclopedia designed specifically for students with low literacy skills.

Program content provides information about the Canadian provinces and territories and Aboriginal culture as well as topics related to the development of a range of life skills. A full description of ArrowMight's pedagogical roots and framework is available from the ArrowMight Canada Ltd. promotional materials. ArrowMight Canada also published documents describing the relationship between its student learning objectives and those of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALSS) and Human Resources Development Canada's Essential Skills complexity levels.

ArrowMight Program Objectives

The objectives of the ArrowMight Learning for Life Program are:

- To improve the literacy, numeracy and foundation skills of Canadian adults allowing them to build on their existing strengths and abilities.
- To widen students' general knowledge and awareness of culture.
- To develop the Essential Skills of oral communication, thinking, reading and comprehension, writing, document use, working with others, computer use and continuous learning.
- To provide foundational skills in English, math, science and social studies.
- To raise students' self-confidence and self-esteem.
- To prepare students to access further educational opportunities.
- To increase students' employment opportunities.
- To provide sufficient computer skills to function in a computer-based society.

Program Components

This section describes the components of ArrowMight.

Home-Based

ArrowMight is a home-based program meaning that students work through the program in their own homes. Home-based delivery can overcome some of the barriers to study identified by adult students such as clashing work schedules, transportation problems, child care and other family responsibilities. Also, many individuals have experienced little success in formal school settings and are reluctant for various reasons to return to classroom learning.

Community Facilitator

ArrowMight promotional materials describe the Facilitator as a “guide on the side.” This phrase highlights the program’s approach that teaching and learning happen between the student, the workbooks and the ArrowMight DVD shown on the TV screen. The Facilitator’s role is to guide the student through the learning process.

The ArrowMight Facilitator is responsible for supporting student learning. Facilitators visit students in their homes and maintain additional contact with phone calls and, where requested by a student, emails. On the first visit, the Community Facilitator assesses the student’s literacy needs and provides them with the first module.

Typically, the Facilitator watches the introductory lesson on the DVD with the student to establish rapport and orient the student to the program content and requirements.

Every student is contacted at least four times during each module which includes contacts to complete a mid-module and a final assessment. Many students require more than four contacts with the Facilitator. Some students need assistance with program content. Most need regular contact to motivate them to complete the lessons in a timely manner.

Program Materials

ArrowMight comprises three modules, each with a DVD and a workbook that in total provide 170 lessons approximately 30 minutes in duration. Each lesson is presented on one page in the workbook supported on the DVD with a presentation by a TeleTeacher who specializes in a given subject area. The TeleTeachers represent diverse ethnic backgrounds that include three Aboriginal instructors and there are both male and female TeleTeachers. The recorded lessons show interactions between the TeleTeachers and a student who works through the lesson content.

The student workbooks have graphic presentations of the lesson content as well as exercises to be completed by students as they watch the lesson on the DVD. The workbook has written text, photographs, written exercises, tables, and other visual learning tools. There are also Support Pages that cover topics ranging from grammatical content such as verb forms to math related information such as metric units or multiplication tables. These pages can be used both with and separate from the ArrowMight lesson. The program also provides an encyclopedia and dictionary with reference material needed for the lessons. These books can also be used as reference materials without the ArrowMight lessons. The Cursive Writing Booklet provides additional practice for reading comprehension and writing in Module 2.

ArrowMight also includes a 20 week computer skills module that follows completion of Module 3. The computer skills module includes a student workbook and a laptop computer with pre-programmed lessons. With successful completion of the program, students may retain the computers. For the pilot, this module was provided to students in Manitoba only.

ArrowMight promotional materials state that the program addresses the nine Essential Skills identified by the Government of Canada: reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, continuous learning, thinking skills and computer use. The Government of Canada has stated that the Essential Skills are the basic literacy and life skills that enable individuals to efficiently function and progress at work and in society and are also the foundation upon which other training and learning is built.²

Learning Assessment

Assessment of student learning is an integral part of ArrowMight. At the mid-point of each module, students complete a self assessment exercise which they review with the Community Facilitator. This process allows students to track their own progress and see where they may need additional work before completing the mid-module assessment. At the end of each module, students complete an assessment exercise that is first evaluated by the Facilitator and then checked by ArrowMight staff. This multi-level moderation process promotes the reliability and accuracy of assessment criteria and verifies the achievement of student learning objectives. At the end of each module students receive a completion certificate.

Learning Management System

The ArrowMight Learning Management system (LMS) is a custom developed software database that records the progress of students. Facilitators have on-line access to the database where they create an individual entry for each student. Facilitators document all contacts with students. They record student progress as well as students' questions and difficulties. The LMS is designed to assist Facilitators to follow a schedule for maintaining regular contact with students. The LMS also allows ArrowMight to support the work of the Community Facilitator and provides information that is relevant to educational providers and funders.

2 The Essential Skills are described by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential_skills/general/understanding_es.shtml

Findings

The Pilot Sites

This study was conducted in four ArrowMight pilot sites: Vancouver, British Columbia, with Brokenhead and Black River First Nations in Manitoba, and in Smiths Falls, Ontario. This section of the report describes the number of students enrolled in the program, their completion rates for each of the three program modules, and whether students were Aboriginal, new Canadians or Canadian born of European descent. It also explains the situation in each site with respect to the Community Facilitator and the program's computer training module.

To understand the success of ArrowMight with respect to its completion rates, it would be interesting to compare these rates with those of other literacy programs. Unfortunately, in Canada, there is no standard curriculum for literacy or adult education programs. This makes it difficult to assess what students have "completed" and thus most programs do not collect completion rate information. Experienced teachers and administrators estimate that perhaps fewer than 20% of students who enroll at the beginning of a given school year are still there at the end of that year. In that light, the completion rates of ArrowMight students show that given the right situation, this program has considerable potential to both engage and retain students.

Vancouver, British Columbia

The pilot in Vancouver started in January 2009 when ArrowMight Canada partnered with the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre to implement the program and engaged two Facilitators. One of these Facilitators left the position after a short time, leaving ArrowMight unable to provide adequate facilitation because enrolled students lived outside of the Greater Vancouver geographical area. The second Community Facilitator recruited students through presentations at immigrant serving organizations in Vancouver. Fifty-five (55) students who were primarily immigrants to Canada were recruited. By September 30, 2010, 47% of these students had completed Module 3. The computer training module was not offered. The following shows the completion rates for students in Vancouver as of September 30, 2010, the end of the pilot period. (*Figures provided by ArrowMight LMS.*)

Vancouver

Total Enrollment: 55 Mainly Immigrant Students

55 enrolled Module 1	Successful Completion – 51	93%
44 enrolled Module 2	Successful Completion – 38	86%
36 enrolled Module 3	Successful Completion – 26	72%

Brokenhead First Nation, Manitoba

Brokenhead First Nation is located about 65 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg. Like Vancouver, Brokenhead First Nation also experienced Facilitator turnover. The first Facilitator enrolled students and supported them through Module 1 at which point that Facilitator became unable to continue. By the time another Facilitator was engaged, many students had left the program.

The second ArrowMight Facilitator was a full-time teacher in the First Nation Adult Education Program. Some students visited the school location during the daytime and the Facilitator visited students' homes in the evenings and on the weekends. Still, the Facilitator's time with ArrowMight students was limited due to her other teaching commitments. While it is not possible to know for sure, Facilitator turnover and limited Facilitator time available to support ArrowMight work likely resulted in the loss of students who otherwise might have continued. Towards the end of the pilot period, the remaining students learned that they could receive a computer if they completed Module 3 and then enrolled in the computer training module. Students reported that this motivated them to complete Module 3. The following chart shows the completion rates for students in Brokenhead First Nation as of September 30, 2010, the end of the pilot period.³ (*Figures provided by ArrowMight LMS.*)

Brokenhead First Nation

Total Enrollment 26 Aboriginal Students

26 enrolled Module 1	Successful completion – 18	81%
17 enrolled Module 2	Successful completion – 6	35%
6 enrolled Module 3	Successful completion – 3	50%

³ ArrowMight reported that pilot students have been allowed to continue with the program after the completion of the pilot. As recorded in the LMS on November 12, an additional four students in Brokenhead completed Module 2.

Black River First Nation, Manitoba

Black River First Nation is located about 138 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg. This community also experienced Facilitator turnover early in the pilot period. When the first Facilitator left due to a tragedy in the family, another community member was engaged to work full-time with ArrowMight. This person maintained close contact with students throughout the remainder of the pilot.

About the time most of the students were ready to begin Module 3, they learned that they could enrol in the computer training module and receive a computer if they completed Module 3. This promise, along with the ongoing support of the Facilitator, motivated students to complete the program. The following chart shows the completion rates for students in Black River First Nation as of September 30, 2010, the end of the pilot period. (*Figures provided by ArrowMight LMS.*)

Black River First Nation

Total Enrollment 25 Aboriginal Students

25 enrolled Module 1	Successful completion – 18	72%
17 enrolled Module 2	Successful completion – 13	76%
13 enrolled Module 3	Successful completion – 12	92%

Smiths Falls, Ontario

Smiths Falls is located about 50 kilometres south-west of Ottawa. In Smiths Falls a teacher at the Adult Continuing Education Centre was engaged part-time as the ArrowMight Facilitator. Early in the pilot period, this teacher was able to integrate ArrowMight into her position at the Adult Continuing Education Centre. Later on, her school duties changed, and she no longer had as much time to support the ArrowMight students. If more support had been available, it is likely that more students would have completed either Module 2 or Module 3. Students in Smiths Falls were not offered the computer training module so it is impossible to know if this would have motivated more students to complete the program. The following shows the completion rates for students in Smiths Falls as of September 30, 2010, the end of the pilot period. (*Figures provided by ArrowMight LMS.*)

Smiths Falls

Total Enrollment 24 Mainly Canadian born students of European descent

24 enrolled Module1	Successful completion – 24	100%
24 enrolled Module2	Successful completion – 16	66%
15 enrolled Module3	Successful completion – 3	20%

The Student Experience

To fully understand the experience of students who participated in ArrowMight, this study gathered information from several sources including the students themselves, the Facilitators, the program developers and individuals in each site who were knowledgeable about the context for literacy education in their own community.

While the focus of this section is on the students' own descriptions of their experiences, comments from others are also included at times when they provide the reader with a more complete picture.

All of the students interviewed for this study said that they had benefited greatly from their learning with ArrowMight. Students described improvements in their literacy and life skills and linked that learning to positive changes in their lives. Students identified ten aspects of ArrowMight that contributed to a highly effective learning situation. These aspects are discussed using quotations from students to illustrate the findings:

- Need for ArrowMight
- Changes in Their Lives Because Of ArrowMight
- Potential For Further Learning
- Program Structure And Materials
- Home-Based Delivery
- Facilitator Support
- Program Content About Canada and Aboriginal Cultures
- Program Content Related to Life Skills
- Computer Training Module
- Suggestions for Program Improvement

Need for ArrowMight

Both community leaders and students identified a considerable need for literacy education in their communities. Community leaders explained that while people may want to return to school or enrol in training programs, they often lack the basic skills required to be successful. ArrowMight teaches both the content and the skills necessary for student success. These leaders also said that there were no other programs of such high quality and that ArrowMight had filled an important role.

In recent years we're getting people with grade 5-8 at our adult-ed centre. It's impossible for them to do high school without some learning of the basics. They want to graduate grade 12 but when you throw a grade 9 book in front of them, they don't understand it. They can't get anything out of it. So the literacy part is very important. But we've got to get their literacy level up to where they can actually take the academic end of it. So ArrowMight fits right in there. One of the

big benefits with ArrowMight is that you're learning to learn. These guys have been out of school for years and most of them don't realize what it takes to sit down and go through a video or a book and actually concentrate for half an hour. They have to learn all that over again, and they have to learn how to learn.

ArrowMight gives them the opportunity to learn the basics of reading, writing and math and learning to learn and think on their own again. Then they can follow up with other forms of education. They cannot go to other forms of education without that basic foundation. They have to have that and ArrowMight does that.

My focus is to have people be prepared to come into our program, which is a transition program into postsecondary. Students who have been out of school for a long time or who don't have all the skills need to get some foundation.

Intergenerational learning was the key for some students who wanted to help the young people in their families and their communities succeed in school. These students thought that when the adults in the community are educated, the children benefit.

I say to myself, these are the tools, take advantage of it. I give myself a pat on the back to keep going. I say I have to do this to make me feel better about myself. I'm pretty sure this way I can give more to the kids.

Other students were determined to change their own lives by learning to read and write.

I never learned to read or write. I never signed my name. Mail had to be read to me. I couldn't read a measuring tape. I couldn't read packages at the grocery store. I didn't know temperatures. Everything was frustrating from morning to night. But now I can read and write. I want to keep learning and am going back to school. I'm learning computers. I can do emails. When I heard about ArrowMight I said to myself that I should just do it. I had nothing to lose! I want to be a Personal Aid worker so I need to be able to read, especially medications. I know I can do it but it might take me some time.

Changes in Their Lives Because of ArrowMight

Students experienced changes in their lives from their experience with ArrowMight. For some, learning to read and write was a profound change.

I had a secret before and so I was very quiet. I'm starting to speak out now. Now I always have a book on the go. I always loved numbers but I didn't know I was good at it until I did ArrowMight. Now I have a calculator. I really like doing fractions and percentages.

Everything has changed for me. I have confidence in my work, my life, my appearance. I think I can do anything. When I got Module 3 I thought I couldn't do it. But now I know I can. It makes a huge difference for me.

This will give me the strength to continue to learn. It doesn't matter what it is. You're never too old to learn. I've always wanted to learn. When I was five I remember that. I always wanted to learn, but I was sick so I couldn't learn. I had heart problems and thyroid problems. It makes learning difficult. But I have more strength now because of ArrowMight.

For the first time I am equal with my husband. I can say no to him. He sees me differently now, and I am different.

Students described an increase in their self-confidence and said that this change influenced many aspects of their lives.

I have confidence now. The DVD makes you feel confident. I was not very confident about my writing. Now I have confidence it can be understood. The book tells you that you are someone. It gives you self-esteem.

I was very proud of myself. My English writing has changed. I wrote a couple of pages. I have never done that before. My spelling has improved. My writing is now very comfortable. I can't even explain how good this feels.

I now know I can learn and that changes everything for me. I was always in special classes in school and I couldn't grasp any of the math. With ArrowMight I learned to do some math. It's still hard for me but I can do it. I'm too old to go to college but that doesn't matter.

This taught me to search for things. It makes you think and that's how you learn. I wasn't sure I could do it, but I did. I was surprised but now I feel good.

Some students who were immigrants to Canada said that their world had opened up because ArrowMight taught them more about Canada and First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures.

There are many changes in my life. I see things now in a cultural context. The words in the program are in a cultural context. I've noticed that when I go places, the things I see are more meaningful. For example, I now understand about the totem poles and want to tell my family about it. My husband laughs and says that ArrowMight has had a big impact on my life.

For others, ArrowMight meant positive changes in their employment situation because they were able to accomplish different and higher level tasks.

For a long time my boss has wanted me to write letters for her but I couldn't. Now I feel I can do it and have actually written a couple of letters already. My boss was very surprised and happy. I felt amazingly good about this change.

I was working as an assistant with a grade 4 class and could help them with the formulas. Wow! It was fantastic for me. I really looked good in front of the teacher!

For others, learning to write and do mathematical calculations was immediately useful in their lives.

My writing wasn't very good but now my emails are getting longer. My nephew said he thought I was writing a novel in the last email.

Because of ArrowMight I measured the square feet in my living room and then went to the hardware store to get the new flooring. Before, I didn't know how to calculate square feet and would have had to rely on my husband, even though he doesn't know how to do it either. We would have taken a drawing of our room to the store and asked the clerk to do the calculation. I was so proud that I could do it myself and I got it perfect.

Potential for Further Learning

Students in ArrowMight said that their learning with the program had given them the potential to continue learning. Students were excited with their learning and saw a possibility for more. They now saw themselves as "learners." While most did not have immediate plans for entry to other educational programs, they said that the potential was there for them now in ways it hadn't been before ArrowMight.

I think about educating myself but I have no idea how. I never thought I could go to college before ArrowMight but now I see that I'm not as dumb as I thought I was.

ArrowMight has awakened my brain cells. I haven't been in school for many years and I need to find employment now. I am prepared to go into a program at the college. I know it will be challenging but I feel I can do it. ArrowMight helped me get focused.

Learning is knowledge. When you hear what is said in the DVD and then you read it in the workbook, you learn so many things. The more I heard, the more I wanted to play the DVD. I wanted to learn more.

A few students were enrolled in other adult education programs while taking ArrowMight. These students felt that because they were taking both programs, they were progressing faster towards their goals. These students felt that the programs were complementary and that being enrolled in both programs had made them more successful.

I finished my grade 12 while I was taking ArrowMight. Everyone was so happy for me. I felt so good that I had an opportunity to educate myself and that my husband and the teachers at the school were happy for me. This was amazing. It was my first certificate.

Program Structure

ArrowMight provides a systematic learning process that worked well for many students. Students reported that they could see what was expected of them and understood what they had to do to be successful.

ArrowMight is fantastic because on each lesson you are able to get a clear view of the subject and it gives you time to think about what you are supposed to figure out. First you find out what they are talking about and read the paragraph. Then you look for the answer on the subject. And after each lesson you review what you have learned before you start the next lesson.

The program even helps you understand each word, one at a time, and if you forget what it meant, they give you a dictionary to use. All you have to do is go on the screen and go there again.

The DVD was great. I could pause it and listen to the parts I found difficult. I was fine with the reading and the writing but I couldn't do the math. I watched the DVD several times.

With ArrowMight you learn, understand and think. It's set up so you do all these things for each of the lessons. I was able to follow it all the way through. At the end you do research and a presentation. This was hard but I did it.

The ability to learn on their own as they engaged with the TeleTeachers gave students increased confidence in their ability to be successful learners. Students reported that the recorded TeleTeachers and student became their friends. This relationship was instrumental in keeping some students engaged in the learning process.

The actors in the DVD became my best friends. I looked forward to seeing them. When I heard Steve [the student on the DVD] asking questions of the teacher, I thought I can do it too. If Steve could do it, I could do it.

I was really involved. You feel the teachers are there with you. I felt familiar with the people in the DVD. I always felt involved in the learning.

I looked forward to spending time with the teachers. Their voices were believable. They looked happy and that inspired me to keep going when I felt discouraged.

Sometimes I feel so down and then I put on my ArrowMight DVD and it's so positive. I always feel better.

Several students made special mention of the value of the "Support Pages." These pages are part of each workbook and have specific information in the areas of English and math that can be used by students both during and after the program. All of the students considered these pages to be invaluable and thought they would use them again in the future. One student said:

Thank God for these pages. I used them all the time. They were so well put together.

Students and community informants commented on the focus ArrowMight has on assessing student learning in the middle and end of each module using specific assessment tools. Students stated that they appreciated this aspect of the program because they always knew where they stood in their learning. They could look back and look ahead. This gave them a sense of accomplishment and a desire to meet the challenge of doing the subsequent module.

Doing the assessment exercises kept me going. I knew the Facilitator would be calling me to see where I was at and if I was ready to do the assessments. I was nervous sometimes but the Facilitator helped me do it. She always encouraged me. I liked knowing that I could do the assessment exercises.

One can clearly know what the student was required to learn and whether they learned it. This is a big step forward as for the most part in Canada, programs are developed by individual teachers for their own students. Therefore it is rarely possible to know what content was used, and what the student's outcomes were. ArrowMight provides an opportunity to know these things.

Home-based Delivery

ArrowMight is designed to be used by students in their homes. This approach removed the barriers to learning experienced by some individuals such as child care and other family responsibilities. Others who had previously experienced challenges with school-based learning were able to learn at home at their own pace. The ArrowMight home-based approach also encourages use at home by families, thus promoting learning for several individuals at once.

All of the students said they appreciated ArrowMight's home-based approach.

I don't want to go out from home, but I don't want my learning to stop so I will try. I wish ArrowMight had higher levels of English writing and math. I'm always thinking about getting more education.

I'm a single mom at home. I wanted to improve my English for my kids. I was thinking about going to school, but it was hard to do this. In 2006 I tried to go to a local college. It was a self-study program. It didn't work for me because I like someone talking to me. After a month or two I dropped out. ArrowMight was ideal for me.

It was a gift. So when I have free time I can work on it. I'm not rushed. It's my choice of time. I can study any time during the day or evening. It was very good. It's the best program I ever had.

With ArrowMight, I can schedule my time. I could digest the information before I went on to something else. In the classroom at ESL classes I sometimes got so confused that I would get upset and then depressed. I had no control there. With ArrowMight I have all of the control.

With ArrowMight you could cook and dust and watch at the same time. I put on the DVDs while I did housework. Whenever I was at home I put on the DVDs. The DVDs are about 30 minutes. It's not too short. It's not too long. I can concentrate for that period of time. It was really good.

With ArrowMight you learn at your own speed with the DVD. You learn to sit by yourself and work with it. It was good for me. I found it really good to give me more time to think before I write it down and understand what I'm trying to say. I need more time.

Because ArrowMight is home-based, other family members were generally aware that one of the family members was studying with ArrowMight. Most expressed support for their learning.

At first they said, mom it's too low for you. They were embarrassed but after a while they thought it was great. They asked me if I would finish high school. My youngest son didn't know that I hadn't finished high school. So we talked about it. I wasn't hiding that I didn't have an education. My older children knew but the four-year-old didn't know. I want to say to them, you have an opportunity for education, don't waste it.

The children love the music from the video. My daughter asked me why I am studying something so easy. I said it's because I want to study. I want to study math and English.

I wanted my son to do the program with me because he needed to do better in school, especially in English. He wasn't very interested and said it was boring but he encouraged me to continue and helped me with the math section.

My husband put his games aside and gave me the big TV once in a while. My husband looks at the DVDs with me. We were looking at the percentages. He said he forgot how to do it and so he learned that too. It stays with you when you watch it on the DVD.

There was also an opportunity for families to learn together. Those with children said their children were often in the home when they studied and they sometimes were involved in some way in the process. Some of the immigrant families said that they used ArrowMight as an opportunity to learn English and to be together as a family.

We found time for the family to be together. We did about two hours a week to learn English. ArrowMight helped us like English, especially my children. It brought us together. When the kids were doing their homework they refer to the ArrowMight dictionary and encyclopedia.

ArrowMight helped our family stay together. Immigrant families are strong when they come here, but in Canada they separate, they break apart. We all learned English together and we learned about Canada. It was good for us.

My 10-year-old used to sit with me while we were learning. It was nice for us.

Community leaders and adult educators agreed that the home-based delivery approach of ArrowMight provided a welcome opportunity for many learners.

I thought it was a great concept to have people start literacy programming within their own community out of their own home. I have wanted to see a program like this for years. There are so many people who won't come to a classroom. This program can reach them.

When you're somebody whose skills and literacy are low, the hardest thing to do is to come to a centre or any kind of institution, to tell people that you can't read and write. So if there's a program somebody can take in the comfort of their own home, that will assist them in getting rid of the fear of having to go outside and approaching someone and tell them. It's also much easier in your home to fit it into your day. And if you have young children you can fit it around looking after them.

This gives them the ability to do it in a place where they're comfortable and also it's a low-cost because you don't have to put your children in childcare to be able to do this program.

Facilitator Support

The ArrowMight Facilitator is a vital component of the program. Regardless of how motivated, most students in this study said they needed someone to encourage them to continue through to program completion.

Sometimes I needed a jumpstart. I couldn't get myself going. When the Facilitator called and asked me what lesson I am on, I was prompted to get going.

In Module 2 I would've quit. [The original Facilitator] didn't call me. But I would run upstairs to the learning centre and see [the replacement Facilitator] and it was very helpful. Without her I would've stopped. I was really struggling in Module 2.

The Facilitator is friendly, warm and caring. She has my interests at heart and will do anything to help me learn.

Everyone loves [the Facilitator]. She was very helpful. I tell my husband that he has to make time to do the program. But he only did when he knew she was coming. He really needs a coach. I needed her, too.

[The Facilitator] called and pushed. She said: You can do this. I'm very self-directed, but still having her push me was really good.

The Facilitator was very persistent. She kept phoning me and telling me that I could do it. Sometimes I didn't feel very motivated but when she called it got me going.

I knew I had a time frame but I sometimes let it slide. Without the phone calls and the visits, I might not have finished.

At first, a Facilitator just dropped off the stuff. It took me a long time to get to it. I didn't have enough encouragement because he didn't come by. But when [the second Facilitator] started with the program, I got into it. The deadlines she gave me were good. You don't get to it without deadlines and encouragement.

Several students noted that their sense of commitment to the program and the Facilitator kept them going.

I said I would do it and I didn't want to let her down. I'm stubborn that way. When I say I will do something, I do it.

The Facilitator kept telling me I could do it. She kept phoning me and asking me how it was going. I had to finish because she had been so nice to me.

I needed a reminder and a push. If she didn't come here I would put the books aside. So long as she said, you can do this for me, I would do it. If she said, I want this done, I would do it.

Sometimes we got together with the Facilitator. I liked her coming to my house. We watched the DVDs and finished Module 3. We did the Intro to Computers. I didn't know that it was called the monitor and the power source. I liked knowing that.

The ArrowMight Facilitator encourages student learning. When students experienced challenges, Facilitators encouraged them to keep working at the problem, helped students believe that it was possible for them to learn, and frequently watched the lesson on the ArrowMight DVD along with the student. Two of the Facilitators who were trained teachers reported that sometimes they also "taught" students, especially in the math area. Students appreciated all of the support they received from the Facilitators and said that this aspect of ArrowMight allowed them to continue learning even when they felt frustrated or discouraged.

The Facilitator spent a lot of time with me on math. I would think I got it and then the next day I would forget it. I found this very frustrating. The Facilitator came to my house many times and we went over and over it with the DVD. This worked for me. I needed someone to sit with me and help me with the math.

I needed the Facilitator to show me how to do it. I have always been terrible at math. She showed me another way to do the questions and I got it.

Program Content About Canada and Aboriginal Cultures

ArrowMight students were very excited about the program content related to Canada and First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures. All of the students found the content stimulating and interesting but the reasons they liked it varied. The learners from Brokenhead and Black River First Nations said it was unusual to have programs that had content related to their own culture. Some were encouraged to learn more about their own communities and used the final project in Module 3 as an opportunity to conduct research about their family or their community.

I liked the information about Aboriginal respect and honesty. I'd forgotten those things. I liked the stories about the provinces. I didn't know that Saskatchewan was called the bread-basket of Canada. I liked the dictionary and encyclopedia. I read the stories with my grandkids.

When I saw the booklets I was so excited about the First Nations content. My husband is Native, but we don't know much about his family or his heritage. I learned so much about the symbols and the things that are important to the culture. I told my husband about it too.

Immigrant students in Vancouver welcomed an opportunity to learn about both Canada and the Aboriginal peoples. All of the students said they had very little knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures, in particular. ArrowMight opened their eyes to the richness of these cultures and gave them an appreciation that they didn't have before. Vancouver learners said that ArrowMight content was much superior to that of other English as a Second Language classes they had taken.

I have taken a lot of ESL classes. ArrowMight has positive messages and the entire program is practically oriented. I learned a lot about eating healthy things. I think the content is juicy. For example, now I want to go to Newfoundland. I didn't think about that before.

I learned about Aboriginal culture, about the animals, and how they use the animals. I learned what the animals mean to Aboriginal people. The animals are a real asset to the culture, and I didn't realize how much that was true.

I wanted to learn more about Aboriginals. I went to the Anthropology Museum to research about totem poles for my essay in Module 3. I think it's good for immigrants to learn about the Aboriginal people. It lets them know about Canadian culture. Maybe some immigrants have prejudice against Aboriginals. ArrowMight helped me understand their culture and their contribution.

The fact that there's a lot of Aboriginal content is wonderful, especially because a lot of the people who are doing literacy are new immigrants. When they come to Canada they don't have a lot of knowledge of history of Aboriginal people. In this literacy program they learn things that people are going to be proud of, not rumors or hearsay. Real things. It's very positive.

In Smiths Falls, students said they had limited knowledge of Aboriginal culture and of Canada. Students said that they gained an appreciation for First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures and had dispelled some of the stereotypes they had held prior to the program. Some students thought there was an over emphasis on Aboriginal culture, and said they would have preferred a more multicultural approach.

There was too much focus on just First Nations. I'd like more information on other cultures in Canada. I wasn't sure why there was so much about First Nations people.

One suggestion I have is that it should be more general about Canada. Not so much about First Nations. I noticed that it was encouraging the First Nations people, but I also thought it was encouraging me.

Program Content Related to Life Skills

ArrowMight students spoke very positively about the program content particularly in the areas of thinking skills, self-confidence, and continuous learning. Interestingly, students drew a direct connection between their learning about Canada, their own sense of confidence and their increased interest in more learning.

Several students were emphatic that ArrowMight empowered them by virtue of their new knowledge about Canada. For these students, having knowledge was a key to increased self-confidence and their ability to express themselves in their families and in their workplaces. They felt they were now on a more level playing field with other family members.

Having knowledge about Canada made me think I knew something about the world I didn't know before. I can tell my husband things he doesn't know. We talked about Newfoundland and read about it in ArrowMight, and then on the computer. We are planning to go there for a vacation.

I learned a lot that I didn't know. I learned about Canada. I was telling my brother how birds fly to places and then come back with the seasons. I felt really happy to learn this and other things.

I heard that it was about learning English reading. I was especially interested when I saw that it was about Canada and that it had positive messages. When you're an immigrant you need to be reminded that you can reach your goals. You need to hear the positive messages. You need to believe in yourself.

I was so happy to have more knowledge. With each lesson I could hardly wait for the next. I did all of Module 2 in a very short time because I wanted to read all of the paragraphs.

Sometimes I say no to my husband. Before ArrowMight I always said, yes. Now I think I know something and I want to express myself.

Several of the students in Vancouver noted that the life skills component of ArrowMight was relevant to their experience as immigrants to Canada.

I think it was very important to emphasize the life skills. Immigrants have such a shock when we come to Canada, and we lose confidence here. There are so many barriers. Can I do this? Am I a good person? Can I contribute to society? I didn't really expect this section in the program, but I really liked it the most out of the entire program.

Computer Training Module

ArrowMight includes a 20 week computer skills module that follows completion of Module 3. The computer skills module includes a student workbook and a laptop computer with pre-programmed lessons. With successful completion of the program, students may retain the computers.

Initially, this module was planned for each of the pilot sites, but was actually implemented in Manitoba only. The timing of the development by ArrowMight of the computer module meant that students were informed of this module several months into the pilot when many students had already left the program. For those who were working in Module 3, it appears that the promise of a computer was a motivator to complete the program. In Smiths Falls, some students who had expected to enrol in the computer training module expressed disappointment that they did not have this opportunity. However, it is not clear if this influenced students' program completion rates. More study is needed to better understand the degree to which a promise of a computer motivates students to complete the program.

We wanted a laptop. I wanted to finish to get the computer. I knew it would be possible to do in a year if we worked at it.

Program should include the computer module and the computer. These are great motivators and great learning tools. Surely, literacy in our society includes computer literacy and the computer is essential.

Suggestions for Program Improvement

Some students and community members felt that students would benefit from more opportunities to meet together for peer-to-peer social and learning opportunities.

Maybe it would be good to have some sessions for students to drop in to the adult-ed centre to share with their peers or with the teacher. They can create support and pride within their own group. I think that would help them.

I suggest they meet for a field trip to a museum or a cultural event.

I'd like people who are taking the program to get together. We could help each other and give moral support. We could discuss what we have learned.

Most other suggestions were related to the math content of the program. These ideas came from people who had challenges learning the math. These students said they needed more practice exercises than what was provided in the workbook and the complementary exercises.

Conclusions

This study explored four major areas of interest related to the ArrowMight program:

1. The effectiveness of ArrowMight in addressing students' literacy, numeracy and life skills needs.
2. The potential of ArrowMight to provide a pathway into employment, training and further education.
3. The relevance of the program content to the Canadian context.
4. The identification of potential improvements to the program.

Findings unequivocally support that ArrowMight is a literacy program that works. Pilot students and Facilitators attest to the effectiveness of ArrowMight in literacy, numeracy, and life skills development. The program completion rates of ArrowMight students show that given the right situation, this program has considerable potential to both engage and retain students.

Learning with ArrowMight was inextricably connected to potential employment and further training for some students. Many more students identified the role ArrowMight played in their burgeoning love of learning and the self-confidence and positive self-esteem that resulted. For many ArrowMight students, the experience was life-changing.

The beaming face of a middle aged woman as she described her "new life" tells an amazing story. She said that every day of her life had been a struggle before she learned to read and write. Now this woman is expecting to enroll in a training program for home care assistants. Hers is only one dramatic story. Other students interviewed for this evaluation study also expressed similar joy from their experience with ArrowMight.

Students came to enjoy learning and wanted to continue learning. Some identified specific training and employment goals but for most, what the future holds remains to be seen. For now, there is the possibility they will open new doors, simply because they have better reading, writing, math and life skills. Further research will help provide greater understanding of students' long term outcomes from their learning with ArrowMight.

The ArrowMight program combines high quality pedagogy, technology and materials with a Community Facilitator, a "caring" individual who encourages and supports the learning process. While finding and retaining the "right" Facilitator can be a challenge, the ArrowMight Facilitators are a major strength. As the pilot showed, students were much more likely to succeed when the Facilitator was highly engaged with them throughout the program.

Students were very positive about the program content related to Canada and Aboriginal culture. For many students having knowledge about their country and their community was empowering, gave them confidence and motivated them to learn more.

The standardized curriculum that ArrowMight provides allows assessment of student progress and accomplishments. This is in contrast to other Canadian basic adult education programs that rely primarily on curriculum developed by teachers to meet specific student needs. While this individualized approach is laudable, it results in an inability to measure and compare student learning outcomes and accomplishments. ArrowMight effectively addresses this common weakness in adult literacy programs.

In addition, the ArrowMight Learning Management System (LMS), provides ongoing information about students' learning experience that allows ArrowMight to respond to identified student needs and their suggestions for improvement. For example, when students in the pilot identified a need for more practice in math, ArrowMight quickly developed additional exercises and made these available through the LMS.

ArrowMight is a new program and there are many questions worthy of further study. Some of these questions are:

- What are the strengths and challenges of the home-based learning model?
- Does student learning continue after they complete ArrowMight?
- How does ArrowMight influence students' lives?
- What is the relationship between students and Facilitators and how does that influence the learning process?
- Are there communities and populations that are more suited than others to ArrowMight?
- Can ArrowMight students transition to other education and training programs?

Some interviewees said that at first they had wondered if ArrowMight was "too good to be true." The promotional material was more elaborate than is typical for basic adult education programs in Canada. The DVD and workbooks have a highly professional appearance, something quite unusual for literacy program materials. After their ArrowMight experience, students and Facilitators alike concluded that ArrowMight was "that good." They hope that program planners and policy makers will see the value of ArrowMight and find ways to provide it to those seeking adult basic education and literacy programs, especially for those who cannot attend school based programs.

One student expressed her thought about ArrowMight in these words:

I feel very proud that I've done this. It's a big step to keep going with learning even if I don't always understand what I'm trying to accomplish. I feel better to know what the words mean, I feel better inside. I enjoy doing it with the Facilitator. I really appreciate that she was trying to help me try to learn, which I didn't have a chance to do when I was young. I wish everyone could have this chance.

Appendix: Interview Protocols

ArrowMight Evaluation Interview Consent Protocol for Students

This consent protocol is to be read aloud with the student.

The purpose of this interview is to learn about your experience with the ArrowMight program and any ideas or suggestions you have about the Program being offered in the future.

This interview will take about 40 – 60 minutes (time will vary) and will be conducted in a location that is comfortable to you. This interview will not affect your participation with ArrowMight in any way and you can stop the interview at any time.

Your name will not be used in the report I write but the words you say may be quoted. Please think of this interview as “on the record” (not secret) because in a small project like this, it is possible that descriptions of your experience might be recognized in a report even when your name is not used. I will take notes to have a record of our conversation. These notes are confidential and will be destroyed at the end of the evaluation period.

Do you have any questions? Do you agree to participate in the interview?

ArrowMight Evaluation Interview Guide for Students

1. How did you hear about ArrowMight?
2. Tell me about why you enrolled.
3. Given why you enrolled, tell me two or three things you got out of the ArrowMight Program.
4. Let’s talk about the program. How important/useful were the resources provided to you? Tell me about each. If you were telling a friend about (each component) what would you say you liked? Didn’t like? *The DVDs, Workbooks, Support Pages, Dictionary and Encyclopedia*
5. How important/useful was the Facilitator to your learning? Tell me about why you answered that way. If you were telling a friend about the Facilitator, what would you say?
6. What changes have you noticed in your own reading? Your writing? Your math? What about your general knowledge? Other changes?
7. Although students are different levels of need ArrowMight had everyone start in Module 1. What did you think about this?
8. Was there anything about ArrowMight that made a difference to your learning? Tell me about that.
9. How would you compare your experience with ArrowMight to other schooling

or programs?

10. What challenges did you have with ArrowMight? How did you overcome these challenges?
11. What changes to the program would you suggest?
12. Did any of your family members or friends learn with you? Tell me about that. What changes, if any, did you notice about them?
13. What does completing the program or module mean to you?
14. How do you plan to use this learning in the near future?
15. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience with ArrowMight?

ArrowMight Evaluation Interview Guide for Facilitators and Monitoring Team

The purpose of this interview is to learn about your experience with the ArrowMight program including how you think students have benefited from the program and what suggestions you might have for improvements to the program. This interview will take about 60 minutes. Your name will not be used in the report I write but your words may be used. Please think of this interview as “on the record” because in a small project like this, it is possible that descriptions of an individual’s experience might be recognized in a report even when names are not used. I will take notes during this interview to have a record of our conversation. Do you have any questions? Is this ok with you and can we go ahead with the interview?

1. How did you get involved with ArrowMight?
2. What experience have you had with similar programs? How does ArrowMight compare with other programs you know about?
3. In your opinion, what makes ArrowMight “work”?
4. Tell me about what you value in your work as a Facilitator / Monitoring Team member?
5. Please tell me about some of the developments or changes you have seen in individual learners?
6. What made these developments/changes possible?
7. What challenges have you seen in individual learners? How were these overcome?
8. What developments or changes have you observed in families and the community and what made these possible?
9. What changes to the program would you suggest?
10. What are your wishes for ArrowMight’s future?

ArrowMight Evaluation Interview Guide for Community Leaders

The purpose of this interview is to learn about your experience with the ArrowMight program including how you think students and the community have benefited from the program and what suggestions you might have to improve the program. This interview will take about 30 minutes.

Your name will not be used in the report I write but your words may be used. Please think of this interview as "on the record" because in a small project like this, it is possible that descriptions of an individual's experience might be recognized in a report even when names are not used. I will take notes to have a record of our conversation. Do you have any questions? Is this ok with you and can we go ahead with the interview?

1. What is your experience with the ArrowMight Program?
2. Describe how ArrowMight is being used in your community?
3. What experience have you had with similar programs? How does ArrowMight compare with other programs you know about?
4. In your opinion, what makes ArrowMight "work"?
5. What developments have you observed in students, families and the community as a result of ArrowMight?
6. What suggestions do you have for changes to ArrowMight?
7. What are your wishes for ArrowMight's future?



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