



A Compendium of United for Literacy

**Celebrating 125 years of
empowerment through literacy.**



1899-2024

125

United for Literacy
Littératie Ensemble


Working together to bridge the literacy gap.

To help us reach more people and raise awareness, we invited members of our boards to reflect on the importance of literacy and share personal testimonials about its impact on their lives, their work, and their communities.

Here are some of the visuals we shared on social media as part of this effort, but you can find all their testimonials and others here:

<https://www.unitedforliteracy.ca/Literacy/Inspirational-Stories>

**All working together
to bridge the literacy gap.**




“As a dedicated storyteller and mentor to Indigenous youth, I’ve had the privilege of witnessing firsthand how literacy empowers individuals to reclaim their identities, aspirations, and sense of purpose.”

Hañwakañ Blaikie Whitecloud
Co-owner Wakan Productions Inc.
Board Member, United for Literacy

READ HAÑWAKAÑ’S FULL TESTIMONIAL

**All working together
to bridge the literacy gap.**




“Serving on the board of United for Literacy has deepened my understanding of the critical role literacy plays in shaping lives and strengthening communities.”

Rayan Rafay
Co-founder & CFO/COO Fraction
Board Member, United for Literacy

READ RAYAN’S FULL TESTIMONIAL

**All working together
to bridge the literacy gap.**



“Literacy is one of those privileges we often take for granted—the ability to have an enlightened conversation with a medical professional about my health care, to pass a driver’s license test and commute safely, or to progress and excel in a chosen career.”

John Wiltshire (Vice Chair)
Former President and CEO
Canadian Marketing Association
Board Member, United for Literacy
(Vice-Chair)

READ JOHN’S FULL TESTIMONIAL

**All working together
to bridge the literacy gap.**



“Through my work in finance, I have seen how education and literacy are foundational to personal and professional success.”

Lindsay Sauder
Vice President, Liquidity, Funding and Financial Crisis Management,
CIBC.
Board Member, United for Literacy

READ LINDSAY’S FULL TESTIMONIAL

**All working together
to bridge the literacy gap.**



“Literacy is one of those privileges we often take for granted—the ability to have an enlightened conversation with a medical professional about my health care, to pass a driver’s license test and commute safely, or to progress and excel in a chosen career.”

Suzanne Anton
Former Attorney General and
Minister of Justice, BC
Board Member, United for Literacy

READ SUZANNE’S FULL TESTIMONIAL

**All working together
to bridge the literacy gap.**



“I joined United for Literacy’s board to contribute to this vital cause, and my journey has deepened my appreciation for how literacy can bridge gaps and create opportunities for Indigenous youth.”

Kristen Miller
Indigenous High School Graduation
Coach - Edmonton Public Schools
Board Member, United for Literacy

READ KRISTEN’S FULL TESTIMONIAL

As we celebrated **125 years of changing lives through literacy** we remained inspired by the legacy of our founder Alfred Fitzpatrick's vision that "every place is a learning place."

Every summer, thanks to the continued support of TD Bank Group, we host our annual Reading Tents across Canada. To commemorate our 125th anniversary, we partnered with the **Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO)** to host additional tents, where we were joined by community partners, volunteers, government officials, and others who came out to read to children in the great outdoors.

You're invited to look back on the people, places, and events that made 2024 special. Perhaps you'll see some familiar faces!



125 years of empowerment



EST. 1899

United for Literacy
Littératie Ensemble

READING TENT

All welcome



EST. 1899

United for Literacy
Littératie Ensemble

Our 125th Anniversary Gathering in Pictou

We started our celebration by sending out a special invitation for an event in Pictou marking our 125th anniversary. The gathering honoured our history; highlighted the impact of literacy in communities; and created space to connect with supporters, partners, and friends, past and present, who have helped shape our journey.



1899-2024

125

United for Literacy
Littératie Ensemble

You are invited!

Join us in celebration of the **125th anniversary of United for Literacy (formerly Frontier College)** and to honour its founder **Alfred Fitzpatrick**.

Tuesday, May 14, 2024
5:30 – 7:30 PM

**McCulloch House Museum
and Genealogy Centre**
86 Haliburton Rd, Pictou, NS



Light refreshments will be served.

United for Literacy is Canada's oldest informal education organization and Canada's first adult education organization.

Meet Mélanie Valcin, United for Literacy's President and CEO, and learn about Alfred Fitzpatrick's story from Dr. James H. Morrison, official historian and author of *The Right to Read*.

Please RSVP to rmclaughlin@unitedforliteracy.ca by May 7

📍 Pictou, NS

Celebrating at the Birthplace of Alfred Fitzpatrick

United for Literacy staff and board members engaged in Reading Tent and shared founder Alfred Fitzpatrick's legacy of literacy.

We were joined by guests including Pictou Academy Principal Starr Pettipas, teachers, and students, historian Jim Morrison, staff from the McCulloch Education Centre, Principal Guy Aucoin, author Sheree Fitch, and Mayor Jim Ryan. Thank you to everyone who joined us.



📍 Kentville, NS



"A beautiful breezy morning for sitting under the Reading Tent at Oakdene Park.
Thank you United for Literacy!"

- Parent

📍 Thunder Bay, ON



Staff and volunteers meet visitors (175 in total!) at the 125th Anniversary Reading Tent at the Live at the Waterfront concert and event on the shores of Lake Superior.



Visitors enjoy an alphabet scavenger hunt, a story walk, and a nice place to sit down and read while enjoying a Freezie and live music.



Guest **Lise Vaugeois, M.P.P** (Thunder Bay-Superior North) presenting United for Literacy staff Jessica Kamckey and Elizabeth Taylor with a certificate of congratulations.

📍 Fisherman's Cove, NS

A 125th Anniversary Reading Tent held at Fisherman's Cove in Eastern Passage, Nova Scotia, on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean!

United for Literacy's Regional Coordinator Trish Derby, Community Coordinator Rana El-Zoheiry, and historian James Morrison are joined by interns, volunteers, staff, and the Mayor of Halifax, Mike Savage.



Mayor Mike Savage

@MikeSavageHFX

It was a great afternoon at Fishermans Cove today with @UForLiteracy. I took part in reading some fun books to some enthusiastic kids. Thank you United for Literacy for the invitation.

📍 Saskatoon, SK
Samosa Fest



"Had a very hot, windy but lovely visit to see Rachel at the Samosa Fest in Saskatoon. 34 degrees so it was a scorcher but smiles all round!"
Laura Keegan, former regional director, Western Canada



The final day of Reading Tents for summer 2024.

📍 Edmonton, AB

Heritage Fest



Around 80 young festival-goers listen to dynamic stories, reflect on their favourite parts, and try to solve problems through creative inventions.



Community Coordinator Alysse Billings met with MP Ziad Aboultaif and Councillor Karen Principe. We are so grateful to be acknowledged by the city of Edmonton on our 125th Anniversary!

📍 Grande Prairie, AB



Partner groups, families, staff, and volunteers enjoy free literacy activities and books at the 125th Anniversary Reading Tent. Over 300 children participated!



📍 East Preston, NS



United for Literacy's Trish Derby, Chantele Robinson, Kathleen Provost, and Alondrea Johnson join Senator Wanda Thomas-Bernard celebrate Emancipation Day at a Reading Tent.



Senator Thomas-Bernard read *The Time Keepers* by Keisha Cuffie to the young people in attendance.

📍 Lethbridge, AB Literacy Camp



The children were deeply engaged as they completed daily opportunities to express themselves through art and creative crafts.

They looked forward to the variety of crafts and activities that camp provided.



"A family from Alaska stopped at our Reading Tent. The parents were excited to learn about United for Literacy, and the children were thrilled to choose free books and receive a 125th Anniversary bookmark and pin. Their smiles were a joy to see."

United for Literacy volunteer

📍 Winnipeg, MB
Fringe Fest



Having fun and reading books at the Kids Fringe Festival Reading Tent.



125 years of empowerment

📍 Quebec City, QC



Reading Tent at the neighbourhood festival at La Rassembleuse!

CELEBRATING THOSE WHO CELEBRATED WITH US

As we marked 125 years of empowering Canadians through literacy, we were honoured to receive support from incredible individuals and organizations across the country. Whether through partnerships, participation, or words of encouragement, their contributions helped make this milestone year truly special.

Thank you for standing with us in building a more literate, inclusive, and hopeful future.



IM  GINE
CANADA


unesco
Canadian Commission
Commission canadienne

NACY  ANEJ
National Alliance for
Children and Youth
L'alliance nationale pour
l'enfance et la jeunesse

Yassir Berbiche,
Head of Treasury, Desjardins Group,
past United for Literacy board member

"I truly believe that literacy is the key to success in our modern world. It's not just about reading and writing; it's about empowering individuals to fully engage in society, make well-informed decisions, and pursue their aspirations.

I decided to join the United for Literacy Foundation because I wholeheartedly support their mission. As we commemorate 125 years of impactful work, I envision a future where every Canadian has the skills they need to thrive. Together, let's continue to work towards building a more literate and prosperous nation for generations to come."



United for Literacy
President **Mélanie Valcin**
with board member
Yassir Berbiche, Head of
Treasury,
Desjardins Group.

The Honourable Edith Dumont, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

We had the privilege of joining The Honourable Edith Dumont, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, to launch the 2024 Summer Literacy Camps in partnership with Indigenous communities.

With the support of camp counsellors, Elders, parents, and community members, hundreds of campers expanded their vocabularies and deepened their love of reading through storytelling, group reading, arts and crafts, writing, and field trips. The camps also helped strengthen community bonds and encouraged a shared culture of literacy and learning that benefited the whole community.

Running for three or six weeks and offered at no cost to families, the camps aimed to support student success by promoting a love of reading and reducing summer learning loss — a common challenge when children don't use their literacy and numeracy skills during school holidays.



United for Literacy
President **Mélanie Valcin**
with **The Honourable
Edith Dumont**,
Lieutenant Governor of
Ontario.

Literacy plays a critical role in building strong, resilient communities. Honing literacy skills gives individuals the power to be independent, improve their work situation and overall life conditions. Literacy empowers individuals to participate in civic society.

Most of us take literacy skills for granted, yet many across Canadian communities struggle with basic skills such as reading and writing.

In a country like Canada, everyone should have the opportunity to learn these life skills, from reading and writing to financial literacy. Empowering individuals through literacy is empowering communities and contributing to building a society that is more equitable and just for everyone.

IM  GINE
CANADA

The Honourable Ratna Omidvar,
Senator for Ontario,
past United for Literacy Board Member



“Supporting literacy initiatives and organizations like United for Literacy is paramount for Canada's present and future prosperity.

Literacy isn't just about reading and writing; it's about empowerment, opportunity, and inclusion. It's the cornerstone of success in our rapidly evolving, knowledge-driven society.

By supporting literacy, we're investing in a stronger, more equitable Canada where every individual can thrive. However, still today, more than one million children in Canada are not reading at grade level. And almost 1 in 5 adults have literacy skills too low to independently complete daily tasks.

As we commemorate United for Literacy's 125th anniversary, my hope for the future of literacy in Canada is one of optimism and determination. I envision a Canada where literacy is not a barrier but a bridge to opportunity for all. I aspire to see a nation where every child has access to the literacy supports they need to succeed, where every adult has the tools to navigate an increasingly complex world, and where communities flourish because of their collective commitment to literacy. Together, let's continue to champion literacy as a fundamental right and work collaboratively to build a brighter, more inclusive future for all Canadians.”

John Domm,
Justice of the Peace,
past United for Literacy board member



"Throughout my career in law enforcement,
I witnessed firsthand the powerful link between literacy and criminal justice.

It is undeniable that literacy plays a vital role in reducing recidivism rates and breaking the cycle of crime.

By providing individuals with the ability to read and write for the past 125 years, United for Literacy has been empowering people with knowledge and has also offered them a path to a brighter future which has contributed to creating safer and more caring communities across the country."



National Alliance for
Children and Youth

L'alliance nationale pour
l'enfance et la jeunesse

We are joining United for Literacy in celebrating 125 years of empowerment through literacy!

NACY is honoured to have United for Literacy as an active and engaged member of the National Alliance for Children and Youth, a network of children and youth serving and supporting organizations from across Canada committed to empowering the sector and creating a Canada in which all young people can thrive.

For NACY, literacy doesn't just open doors; it empowers young people to be active participants in shaping their futures. It provides them with the skills and confidence they need to persevere and to dream big and has the potential to inspire generations yet to come.

By supporting literacy and numeracy programs for young people across the country, we are giving wings to the next generation.

Join us and United for Literacy in celebrating the power of literacy to build bright futures for youth everywhere!

Laura Kathler

Executive Director – National Alliance
for Children and Youth

Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard, Nova Scotia

In May 2024, Nova Scotia Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard, a long-standing supporter of United for Literacy, delivered a celebratory statement in the Senate to commemorate our 125th Anniversary, which you can watch on the Senate's website.

<https://bit.ly/Senator-Thomas-Bernard>





Canadian Commission for UNESCO | Commission canadienne po...

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4,908 followers

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8 September – International #LiteracyDay

Literacy as a fundamental human right, a driver of sustainable development, an important means to build community health and cohesion, and the foundation for #lifelonglearning. This summer, CCUNESCO was pleased to support United for Literacy's Summer Reading Tents, which offered free books and literacy activities at 12 different locations across the country and provided information to visitors about Canada's community literacy movement and programs.

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8 septembre - Journée internationale de l'alphabétisation

L'alphabétisation est un droit humain fondamental, un moteur du développement durable, un moyen important de renforcer la santé et la cohésion des communautés, et le fondement de l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie. Cet été, la CCUNESCO a eu le plaisir de soutenir les tentes de lecture d'été de Littératie ensemble, qui offrait des livres gratuits et des activités d'alphabétisation dans 12 lieux différents à travers le pays et fournissait des informations aux visiteurs sur le mouvement et les programmes d'alphabétisation communautaires du Canada. #JournéeDeL'Alphabétisation

[United for Literacy formerly Frontier College](#) | [UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning](#)





A Message from the Lieutenant Governor



As Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the 125th anniversary of United for Literacy, formerly Frontier College.

This past year, with the help of thousands of incredible volunteers, United for Literacy has supported learners with free books and learning kits in remote communities through Canada. With such impressive accomplishments over just one year, I can only imagine what United for Literacy has achieved from coast to coast to coast over the course of 125 years.

Bringing literacy to communities across Canada is no small feat. Government House has long recognized the importance of such important work: the Honourable Steven Point, 28th Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, and former Honourary Aide-de-Camp and District Governor of Rotary District 5040 Bob Blacker initiated the ongoing Write to Read project, which aims to increase equitable access to literacy materials for rural, isolated or under-served Indigenous communities.

Like Write to Read, United for Literacy recognizes that supporting learners is not just important for today but for tomorrow as well. To teach someone how to read, write, and apply and understand mathematics is to empower them for a better, brighter future.

On behalf of His Majesty King Charles III, please accept my sincerest congratulations on 125 years of empowering Canadians.

Sincerely,



Message from the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta

As His Majesty the King's representative in Alberta, it is my great pleasure to congratulate United for Literacy on their 125th Anniversary.

United for Literacy has held a longstanding place in our province, and our country, generously providing opportunities for people from all walks of life to improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills. Literacy is integral to our well-being, and our lives are transformed by the ability to comprehend and use printed information successfully at work, at home and in the world. These skills are vital to a prosperous society and building one's confidence through programs and services offered by United for Literacy is a step towards success.

I commend the devoted staff, volunteers and everyone involved at United for Literacy for their tireless contributions to bridging Canada's literacy gap, and extend my heartfelt thanks for their commitment to ensuring that each individual is able to reach their potential and benefit from the power that literacy can offer.

I encourage you all to always keep a special place for learning in your life.
Congratulations again on 125 wonderful years!

Her Honour, the Honourable Salma Lakhani AOE, B.Sc., LLD (hon)
Lieutenant Governor of Alberta



**Message from
The Lieutenant Governor**



It is a pleasure to extend greetings to United for Literacy on the occasion of their 125th anniversary. United for Literacy is the newest name for Frontier College in Ontario, and the organization has been advancing literacy issues for Canadians since 1899.

Literacy is the foundation on which increased knowledge and understanding are built. I thank United for Literacy for promoting literacy, and directly helping people to improve their skills.

Literacy has always been of critical importance, but our increasingly technological and information-rich society introduces new challenges to meet. United for Literacy has a vast network of volunteers helping tens of thousands of Canadians with literacy skills.

I congratulate you on 125 years of making a difference, and wish you many more years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jm Aylward".

Joan Marie J. Aylward, O.N.L.
Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador

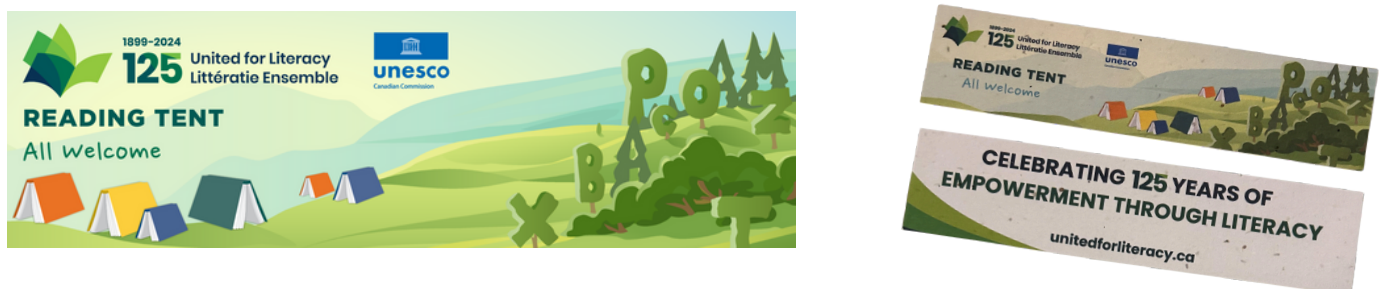
125 anniversary materials

To mark our 125th anniversary, we created a range of promotional materials to help celebrate this milestone and raise awareness about our ongoing commitment to literacy. From digital graphics and social media content to print materials and storytelling assets, these resources were designed to highlight the impact of our work and engage communities across the country in honouring 125 years of advancing literacy in Canada.

Stickers that we distributed.

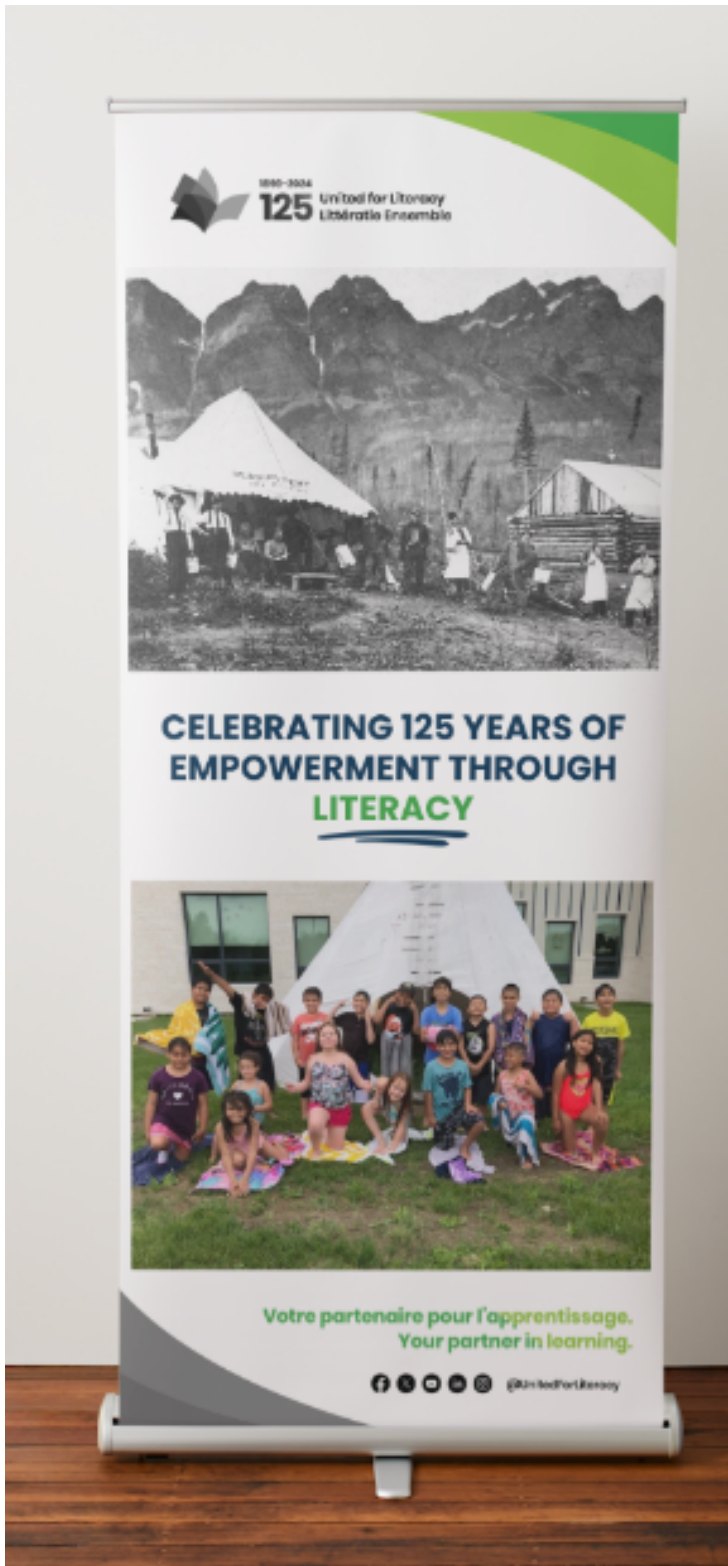


Seed bookmarks created for the occasion.



Enamel Pins

Roll-up banners.



As part of our anniversary celebrations, we designed a customizable flyer that regional teams could adapt and share with their local communities.

United for Literacy,
formerly Frontier College,
125th anniversary

**You are invited to a
Reading Tent**



Wednesday, August 7 2024

16:00PM – 9:00PM



**Marina Park, Live at the
Waterfront**

United for Literacy, formerly Frontier College, is committed to empowering individuals and communities across Canada. Through a network of thousands of trained volunteers, United for Literacy, has taught millions of people in Canada how to read and write since 1899. Our local office has been open in Thunder Bay since 2009.

Come and join us as we embark on the next chapter to enhance literacy across Canada, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Stop by our Reading Tent at Live on the Waterfront to celebrate with us!



1899-2024

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United for Literacy
Littératie Ensemble



Here are some of the links we shared with media outlets interested in learning more about our organization and its work.

Books published about Frontier College

[The Right to Read](#)

[Social Justice, Literacy, and the Creation of Frontier College](#)

[/ The Alfred Fitzpatrick Story](#)

by James H. Morrison

[Camps and Classrooms](#)

[A Pictorial History of Frontier College](#)

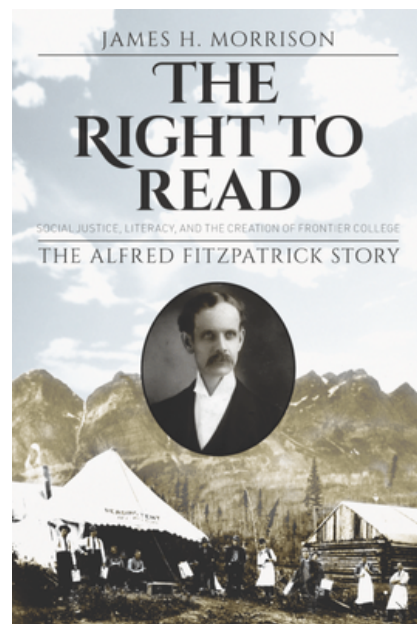
by James H. Morrison

[Frontier College Letters](#)

[One Hundred Years of Teaching, Learning, and Nation](#)

[Building](#)

Compiled by Larry Krotz with Erica Martin and Philip Fernandez



Videos

[Literacy changes everything.](#)

released April 3, 2023

[Our new name is United for Literacy.](#)

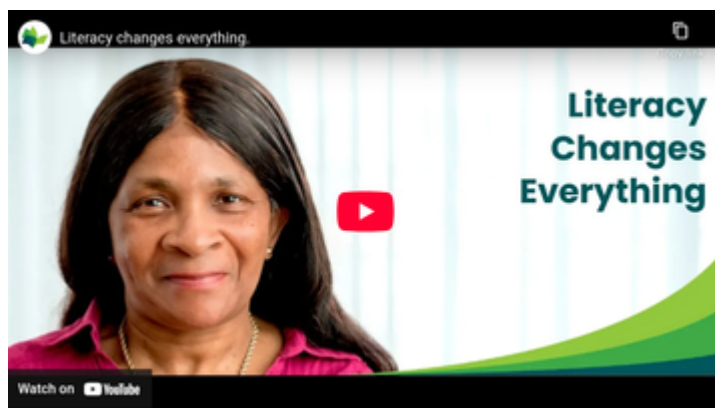
released November 9, 2022

[Barriers to literacy are not easy to see.](#)

released May 1, 2020

[Heritage Minute by Historica Canada](#)

released April 8, 2016





1899–2024

125

United for Literacy
Littérature Ensemble

As we celebrated **125 years of empowering communities through literacy**, we were reminded that this journey is made possible by every learner, volunteer, partner, and supporter who believes in the power of words to change lives.

In 2024 alone, **we supported 39,531 children, youth, and adults nationwide by partnering with 489 community organizations** to deliver quality literacy programs right in their neighbourhoods. Our partners generously provided space, staff time, snacks, and supplies to make these programs accessible.

Thanks to the dedication of **1,365 volunteers who contributed 31,882 hours of service**, people were able to access free, inclusive literacy and numeracy programs, both in person and online.

Together, we built a legacy of hope, opportunity, and growth, and the best is yet to come.

Thank you for being part of this story. Let's continue to write the future of literacy, together.

To see where we're headed next, explore [our 2025–2029 Strategic Plan](#), our bold vision for building stronger literacy skills across Canada.



To be continued...