



EST. 1899

United for Literacy  
Littératie Ensemble

# Summer Literacy Camps

In Partnership with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Communities

2025 Report

Northern Ontario

Prepared by United for Literacy



Celebrating 20 Years of Camp!



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

United for Literacy would like to thank our 21 community partners for another great summer of literacy and learning with our Summer Literacy Camps. We are honoured to be warmly welcomed in communities from Central Ontario to the Hudson Bay coast! We are grateful to the campers, counsellors, families, Elders, and community members who participated in camp activities. You make it all possible! The 2025 Summer Literacy Camps created lasting memories for every participant.

United for Literacy's Summer Literacy Camps were made possible through the generous support of our partners and funders:

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario  
First Book Canada  
Let's Talk Science  
North Star Air  
Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association  
Ontario Power Generation  
Ontario Teachers' Federation  
Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP)  
Scholastic Classrooms Care  
Tachane Foundation Inc.  
TD Bank Group  
Wasaya Airways

**SCHOLASTIC  
EDUCATION**

**FIRST BOOK CANADA**   
Eliminating Barriers. Inspiring Young Minds.



**TD READY  
COMMITMENT**

United for Literacy recognizes TD Bank Group as lead national sponsor of this program.

# The Lieutenant Governor of Ontario



THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF ONTARIO  
LA LIEUTENANTE-GOUVERNEURE DE L'ONTARIO

November 1, 2025

It is my pleasure to extend heartfelt congratulations to United for Literacy as you celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Lieutenant Governor's Indigenous Reading Camps. This remarkable milestone represents two decades of dedicated service to Indigenous communities across Northern Ontario.

Literacy has the power to change everything. Thanks to your support, young people are experiencing the joy of reading while also celebrating their heritage and identity. By working in genuine partnership with Indigenous communities, you have created safe and inspiring spaces where children can build confidence, nurture their curiosity, and gain the tools for lifelong learning.

À titre de représentante de la Couronne en Ontario, je tiens à souligner l'impact exceptionnel de votre programme auprès des jeunes des communautés autochtones du nord de l'Ontario. En favorisant la littératie, la revitalisation des langues traditionnelles et en célébrant les cultures locales, vous contribuez à bâtir un avenir plus juste et plus inclusif. Je vous félicite pour ces vingt années de service exemplaire. Que votre mission continue d'ouvrir des chemins d'espoir et de réussite.

Salutations chaleureuses,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edith Dumont".

Edith Dumont



# Evolution of Summer Literacy Camps

2025 marks the 20th anniversary of our Summer Literacy Camps! In 2005 the late Honorable James Bartleman asked United for Literacy to run the first camps. These took place in five fly-in First Nations communities. Since then, United for Literacy has worked with Indigenous communities across the country to keep kids learning and reading through the summer.

Summer Literacy Camps aim to keep learners aged 5–12 interested in reading, writing, and math. Camps also help build campers' confidence with learning and get them outside. It's also a great place for campers to build lasting friendships. In 20 years of delivering Summer Literacy Camps, our vision and goals have remained straightforward:

- Promote a love of reading and learning
- Bring Indigenous knowledge, language, and traditions into literacy learning
- Increase the size of home libraries through the distribution of free books
- Reduce skill and knowledge loss, also known as Summer Learning Loss, during school closures




*Campers enjoying reading,  
Webequie FN*

Learners often enjoy taking a break from school in the summer. Unfortunately, this break can negatively impact their learning. The average student can lose up to three months of what they learned in the previous year[i] if they are not kept engaged in learning. This effect is more severe for children from low-income or underserved families[ii]. Camp activities get campers to use, not lose, what they learned during the previous school year.

A key part of the evolution of camps this year was the hiring of exclusively local counsellors. By hiring people from within the community to run camps, we are not only ensuring that counsellors have a strong understanding of community needs but supporting local capacity building by training counsellors in their roles. Local counsellors also serve as strong role models to the campers.

United for Literacy understands that education and learning play a vital role in the Reconciliation process. As such, we have made it a priority in our new Strategic Plan. As an education-focused organization, we aim to learn from our shared history, recognizing that we have a lot to learn about Indigenous education practices.



We are literacy experts but not experts in Indigenous literacies. Our partners have been willing to teach us and innovate with us. For that we are grateful. These partnerships have given us many opportunities to learn from both our successes and challenges. Thanks to feedback, we are able to appropriately incorporate intergenerational learning and teaching, local knowledge, stories, and histories into our literacy programs and activities.

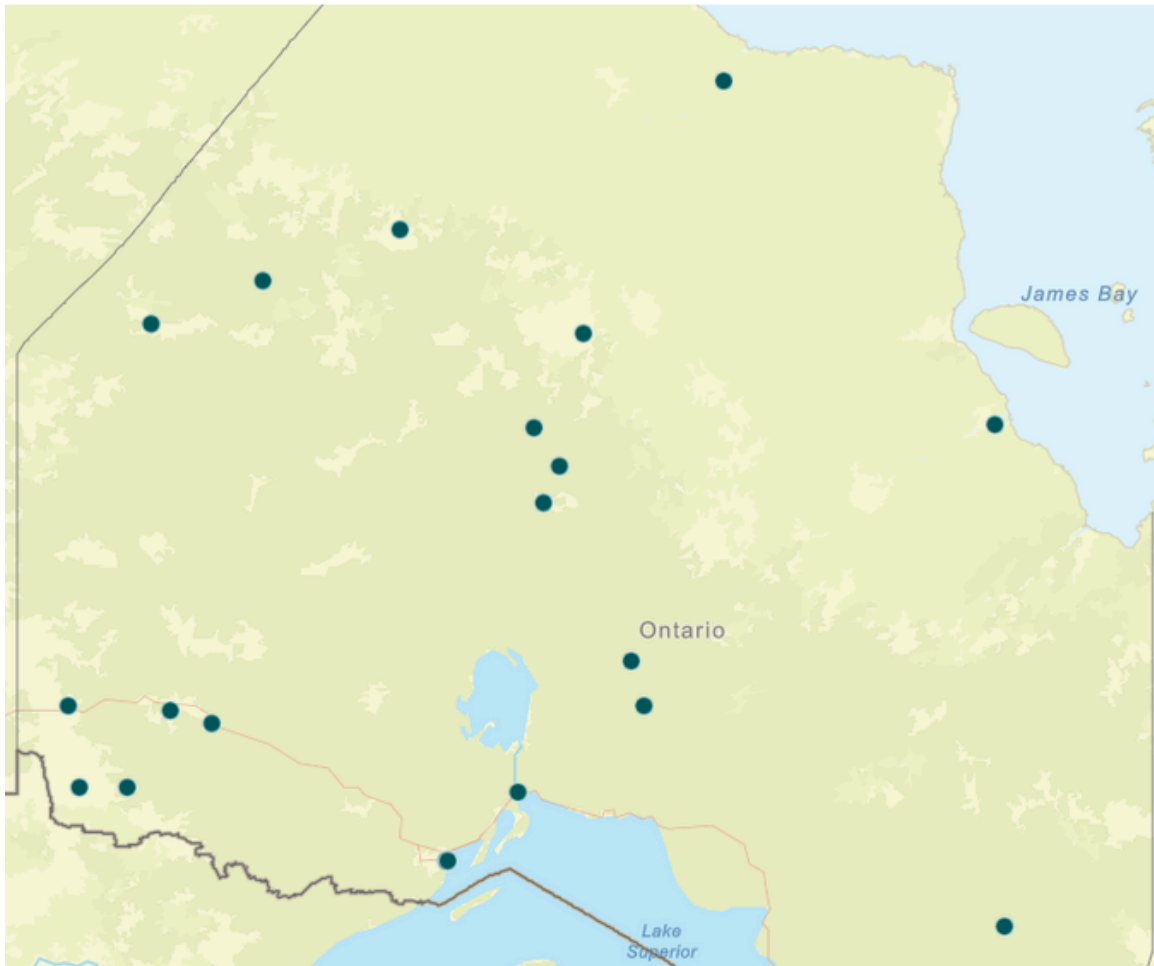
This year's devastating wildfires in Ontario meant not all camps could run as planned. We are thankful that many of our camp communities were safe from the wildfires. In these communities, camp continued as planned with in-person activities.

Some communities, including Sandy Lake First Nations in Ontario, had to evacuate for their safety. In these areas, in-person camp could not go as planned. Instead, United for Literacy worked with our partners to find different options. These included offering free books and literacy kits to evacuated participants or rescheduling in-person programs to a better time. These solutions align both with community needs and with our philosophy—every place is a learning place.

As part of our work to better serve Indigenous communities, United for Literacy has partnered with the Indigenous Evaluation Network (IEN) for a three-year project to assess our camp evaluation framework. IEN is an organization that works to connect Indigenous program evaluators across Canada and internationally, to expand the field of Indigenous evaluation for the benefit of Indigenous communities and service providers working with Indigenous partners. We want to learn what First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) communities think about the way we gather feedback. Some of our work over this first year of the project included consultations with Elders, youth, and knowledge keepers within the FNMI communities that we partner with. These consultations included interviews with members of Wabshkaa First Nation. A committee was formed—made up of Elders, youth, members of the IEN, and United for Literacy staff—to help inform and shape our assessment process and to conduct further community needs assessments. These assessments will form the basis of a culturally relevant evaluation tool in the coming years.

# Camp Highlights

Across Northern Ontario, United for Literacy proudly partnered with 21 First Nations communities and urban community partners to offer campers dynamic, fun learning activities. Activities are tailored to each camp community's needs and interests. This year camps were held in:



**Big Grassy First Nation**  
**Boys and Girls Club Summer Program**  
**Eabametoong First Nation\***  
**Eagle Lake First Nation\***  
**Evergreen Summer Program**  
**Fort Albany First Nation**  
**Kenora\***  
**Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig (KI)\***  
**Longlac**  
**Marten Falls First Nation**  
**Mattagami First Nation\***

**Muskrat Dam First Nation\***  
**Nakina**  
**Neskantaga First Nation\***  
**Onigaming First Nation**  
**Peawanuck First Nation\***  
**Sandy Lake First Nation\***  
**Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation**  
**Wabshkaa Animkii Benesii Program**  
**Webequie First Nation**  
**Whitesand First Nation**

\*Community was served through learning kits

# Camp Highlights

Through collaboration with these communities, camp

- Reached **473 campers** aged 5-12
- Supported community-led summer learning initiatives by providing materials and training to **17 counsellors** hired within the community
- Distributed **740 literacy kits** to learners at home. Each learning kit comes with a workbook as well as brand-new children's books and craft supplies for the whole family to enjoy!
- Distributed **2,303 high-quality, brand-new books**, including books by Indigenous authors, to help build home libraries and bring the fun of reading into campers' homes
- Hosted **43 guest presenters, 138 family members, and 82 community members** who engaged in meaningful intergenerational learning and sharing with campers
- Participated in **28 special events and field trips**
- Shared **72 Let's Talk Science and STEM activities**



*Making hand puppets in Onigaming FN*



# Activity Spotlight

Each day, campers and counsellors explored learning with a variety of fun, hands-on activities! Activities included daily reading, cooking, science experiments, literacy projects, and many more. Elders and community members were frequent visitors. They shared their unique experiences and encouraged campers to build their learning and literacy skills.



*Author and former Chief discussing the power of literacy in Fort Albany FN*

## **The Power of Literacy**

In Fort Albany, author and Former Chief of Fort Albany spent time with our older campers discussing the importance of reading and writing. Getting to spend time with a community member and role model highlighted the power of literacy for campers, encouraging them to use their skills to pursue their dreams.

*My kids like cooking and doing activities at camp.  
-Parent, Big Grassy First Nation*

## **Building Connections**

Nishnawbe-Aski Police visited the Nakina camp. Campers enjoyed seeing the variety of equipment in the police truck and learning about how it works from real police officers. The officers led story time and stayed for camp snack, helping build positive community connections.



*Nishnawbe-Aski Police visit the Nakina camp*

# Impact Story



*Preparing grow boxes for the Community Market in Fort Albany*

Fort Albany, like many remote Northern Ontario communities, faces challenges when it comes to getting fresh produce. Fortunately, there is a Community Market! The Market not only brings in fresh produce weekly but has its own greenhouse, maximizing the produce that can be grown in the short local growing season. This year, campers in Fort Albany visited the greenhouse to help with preparing the grow boxes and planting this summer's crop.

Campers continued to visit the greenhouse weekly, helping tend the vegetables and gaining a sense of the labour and dedication that growing local produce requires.

Drawing on their knowledge, campers took ownership of tending to the plants in the school's staff room through the summer so that they would be healthy and flourishing when the teachers return in September.

Working with plants gave campers a chance to give back to the community and exercise civic responsibility! Thus, this camp activity brought together the joint priorities of civic responsibility and literacy. For more information on how literacy impacts civic responsibility, visit <https://www.unitedforliteracy.ca/About/News/Civic-Engagement>.



*Caring for school plants in Fort Albany*



# Impact on Campers: Community Reflections

United for Literacy records how much time campers spend reading each day. We also note the kinds of fun learning activities they take part in. This ensures that our Summer Literacy Camp activities and programs help campers to reach their goals.



15 minutes of daily reading helps learners keep their grade level over the summer. This boosts their chances of completing school, which opens more opportunities and outcomes in the long term[iii].

In 2025, campers in Northern Ontario spent an average of **43 minutes** a day reading! **89% of parents** said that their **child is reading more** since attending camp!



*Campers enjoying  
story time in Nakina*



*Campers learning  
together in Longlac*

*Girls left with a few books [from Camp], took a long drive out of town and they read the whole time. Girls didn't want to put their books down.*

*– Parent, Longlac*



# Impact on Campers: Community Reflections

United for Literacy collects feedback and surveys from campers, their families, and their communities. This input is key to improving the Summer Literacy Camp program. We want our literacy activities to remain a fun learning experience for all! This is what was said about camp in Northern Ontario this year:



*Building spaghetti structures in Webequie FN*

Here's what our campers said:

- **87%** said **reading is important**
- **94%** said camp made them more **interested** in reading
- **77%** said that they liked **math** and **83%** said that they liked **science** after attending camp
- **73%** of campers considered themselves to be a **"good reader"** after camp

Family members were just as eager to share their experiences with us:

- **100%** of parents said that camp helped prepare their child to return to school
- **100%** of parents said that camp was valuable for their child, family, and community



*STEM activities in Big Grassy FN*

*I've already seen a difference in my grandson's attitude towards reading! – Camper's grandfather, Wabigoon FN*

*Reading camp is extremely important for the kids, now more than ever.  
– Camper's parent, Onigaming FN*

# Youth Mobilization: Community Impact

Summer Literacy Camps helps strengthen community capacity. Each summer, camp staff and volunteers purchase materials, food, and services directly from community businesses. As an employer, United for Literacy aims to hire camp staff directly from the area. This creates important employment opportunities to local youth.



*2025 Camp Counsellors*

This summer in **Northern Ontario**, United for Literacy recruited and trained **17** camp counsellors locally.

Counsellors receive training from United for Literacy. This helps youth develop the skills needed to run day-to-day Camp operations. They gain hands-on experience in communication, time management, and creative problem-solving that can then be used in future jobs.

The unique personality of every counsellor means that, every year, new activities and projects are brought to campers. Here is what camp staff in Northern Ontario said about their experience working at camp:

- **100%** said that camp provided a **positive work experience**
- **100%** said that camp helped **campers strengthen their confidence and self-esteem**
- **100%** said that camp provided an **enriching learning experience** for campers

*"It [camp] has brought the community closer and makes everyone have a good bond, and that's good to have in a small community."*

*-Camp Counsellor, Nakina*

*"I believe it has made a positive impact for the campers since the program has started. Campers/families look forward to this camp each summer."*

*-Camp Counsellor, Webequie First Nation*

# Letters of Support



September 4, 2025

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the recent literacy summer camp held in Webequie First Nation, generously sponsored by United for Literacy. This initiative has made a meaningful impact by fostering essential reading and writing skills among the youth in the community.

The camp provided a welcoming environment where children could engage in literacy activities tailored to their cultural context, helping to build confidence and a lifelong love of learning. United for Literacy's commitment to supporting Indigenous communities through education is truly commendable and vital for empowering future generations.

We recognize and appreciate the dedication of all involved in making this camp a success and look forward to seeing continued growth and positive outcomes from such programs.

Sincerely

*Mary Gardiner*

Mary Gardiner, Principal

Simon Jacob Memorial Education Centre

Webequie First Nation

Webequie, ON P0T 3A0



# Letters of Support



## **MUNDO PEETABECK EDUCATION AUTHORITY EDUCATION OFFICE**

P.O. Box 31, Fort Albany, Ontario P0L 1H0  
Tel.: (705) 278-3390 Fax (705) 278-1049  
Toll Free: 1-800-267-8521

September 3, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: SUPPORT LETTER FOR UNITED FOR LITERACY

This letter is in support for the Summer Literacy programming to happen in each First Nation Communities every Summer.

I have been here since Summer Literacy started and has helped a lot of students that participate in these communities. They look forward to the Summer Literacy program including the parents, this helps their child in reading and other programs that Summer Literacy has to offer.

We hope this programming can continue for our children.

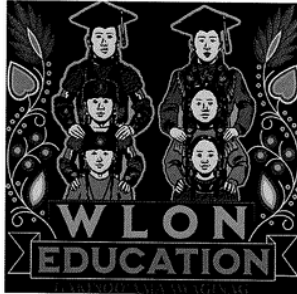
If you have any questions, please contact me at our office.

Sincerely,

  
Nicole Gillies  
Education Director

**TOGETHER WE'RE MAKING EDUCATION WORK**

# Letters of Support



## **WLOn EDUCATION**

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation  
Box 325 Site 115 RR1  
Dryden, ON P8N 2Y4  
P: (807) 938-6825  
P: (807) 938-6684 ext. 2600

Tuesday, August 19, 2025

### **To Whom It May Concern,**

As Principal and Director of Education at Waabshki Pinesi School, I would like to express my deep appreciation for the UFL Summer Reading Camp and the benefits it has brought to our students and community.

The camp plays a critical role in supporting literacy development, which is foundational to student success. By combining structured reading activities with engaging games, cultural connections, and community involvement, the program nurtures not only academic growth but also a love of learning. The balanced approach helps prevent summer learning loss while making reading an enjoyable and shared experience.

We have noticed that students who participate in the camp come back to school in the fall more confident in their reading and more enthusiastic about participating in class. This positive momentum supports our teachers and helps us build stronger learning outcomes across grades.

The UFL Summer Reading Camp has become an important part of our education programming, and we are grateful for the ongoing partnership and investment in our students' futures.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Andrew Kivell', written in a cursive style.

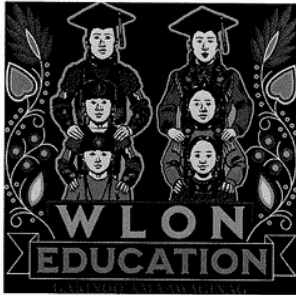
Sincerely,

**Andrew Kivell**

Principal & Director of Education

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation

# Letters of Support



## **WLOE EDUCATION**

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation  
Box 325 Site 115 RR1  
Dryden, ON P8N 2Y4  
P: (807) 938-6825  
P: (807) 938-6684 ext. 2600

Tuesday, August 19, 2025

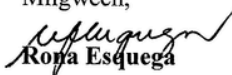
### **To Whom It May Concern,**

As Education Administrator for Waabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation, I have witnessed firsthand the positive impact that the UFL Summer Reading Camp has had on our students. The camp provides children with a safe, supportive, and fun environment where they can build their literacy skills while also enjoying activities that spark creativity and confidence.

Parents have shared with me how proud they are to see their children excited about reading at home, carrying over the skills and enthusiasm they gained at camp. The program helps close learning gaps that sometimes grow during the summer months, ensuring that our students return to school in September better prepared and more confident in their abilities.

The UFL Summer Reading Camp continues to be a valuable program for our community, and I strongly support its continuation.

Miigwech,

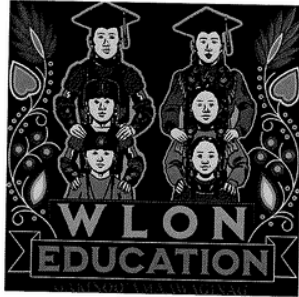
  
Rona Esquega

Education Administrator

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation



# Letters of Support



## **WLON EDUCATION**

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation  
Box 325 Site 115 RR1  
Dryden, ON P8N 2Y4  
P: (807) 938-6825  
P: (807) 938-6684 ext. 2600

### **To Whom It May Concern,**

As the Right to Play Coordinator for Waabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation, I have seen the UFL Summer Reading Camp provide meaningful opportunities for children to grow not just academically, but also socially and emotionally.

The camp blends literacy learning with play-based activities that encourage teamwork, problem-solving, and confidence building. These experiences go far beyond reading—they help children develop resilience, communication skills, and a sense of pride in themselves and their community.

Students consistently share how much they enjoy the program, and the friendships and skills they develop carry over into the school year. The camp creates an environment where learning feels exciting and achievable, which is especially valuable in the summer months when children can otherwise lose momentum in their education.


The UFL Summer Reading Camp is a wonderful resource for our community, and I wholeheartedly recommend its continued support.

Sincerely,

**Daniel Currier**

Right to Play Coordinator

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation



# Conclusion

This summer marks another fabulous year of fun and learning! At United for Literacy, we know that learning doesn't happen alone. We are grateful for the chance to hold Summer Literacy Camp in partnership with Indigenous communities. Together with campers, families, and community members, we can create more opportunities for literacy and learning across Ontario!

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[i] Munro, C. (2022). Learning Loss: A Summer Problem. *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, 14(2), 29–33. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgicfindmkaj/https://www.brandonu.ca/master-education/files/2023/03/BU-Journal-of-Graduate-Studies-in-Education-2022-vol-14-issue-2.pdf](https://www.brandonu.ca/master-education/files/2023/03/BU-Journal-of-Graduate-Studies-in-Education-2022-vol-14-issue-2.pdf)

[ii] Gierczyk, M., & Hornby, G. (2023). Summer learning loss: review of research and implications for remediation of post-pandemic learning loss. *Preventing School Failure: alternative education for children and Youth*, 67(3), 132–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2023.2204823>

[iii] Barshay, Jill (2014). *Three lessons from data on children's reading habits*. The Hechinger Report. <https://hechingerreport.org/three-lessons-data-childrens-reading-habits/>

## See you Next Summer!



EST. 1899

**United for Literacy**  
**Littératie Ensemble**