

THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF ONTARIO'S

# SUMMER LITERACY CAMPS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES



**2023**  
**REPORT**



EST. 1899

**United for Literacy**  
**Littératie Ensemble**  
formerly Frontier College

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Cover photo: Campers read together in Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig (KI)

**United for Literacy’s vision, shared by our community partners, is that camp programming strengthens a year-round culture of literacy and learning and is the inspiration for community-led education partnerships.**



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



United for Literacy acknowledges the Ontario Ministry of Education as lead provincial sponsor of this program.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



In the summer of 2023, United for Literacy (formerly Frontier College) was honoured to partner with communities across Northern Ontario for the Summer Literacy Camps program. We are grateful to the children, parents, Elders, and community members who welcomed us into their communities and helped to make this summer a success! This program was made possible by the generous support of our funders and partners:

**Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario**

**First Book Canada**

**Government of Ontario**

**Hydro One Networks Inc.**

**Let's Talk Science**

**North Star Air**

**Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association**

**Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation**

**Ontario Teachers' Federation**

**Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP)**

**Scholastic**

**Scholastic Classrooms Care**

**TD Bank Group**

**Wasaya Airways**



Fun with a book in Whitesand FN

# TRIBUTE: UNITED FOR LITERACY HONOURS JAMES K. BARTLEMAN 1939-2023

The Honorable James K. Bartleman, who passed away this year at the age of 83, was a great leader for literacy in Canada, a strong advocate for Indigenous peoples, and a longtime friend of United for Literacy. Just as we mourn his loss, we honour his legacy in education and literacy.

It was the Honorable Mr. Bartleman's vision that first began the Summer Literacy Camps program. During his time as Lieutenant Governor of Ontario (2002-2007), he approached United for Literacy (then Frontier College) to help him deliver an exciting and ambitious idea: summer reading camps in isolated, fly-in First Nations. After a successful first summer in 2005, with five Northern Ontario First Nations, the program quickly expanded to reach 28 Northern Ontario First Nations in 2006 and eventually to hundreds of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities across the country.



A proud member of the Chippewas of Rama First Nation, Mr. Bartleman served as a Canadian diplomat for 35 years before becoming Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. He was a distinguished author of both fiction and non-fiction and the recipient of numerous awards, including a 1999 National Aboriginal Achievement Award for public service.

Thanks to the Honorable Mr. Bartleman's vision, and the dedication of his successors in the Office of Lieutenant Governor, United for Literacy's Summer Literacy Camps continue to run in partnership with First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities. These unique partnerships provide vital literacy and learning opportunities to the kids and communities who need them most.

We are forever grateful to Mr. Bartleman for his trust in us and for his profound contributions to literacy, education, and reconciliation in Canada.



# UNITED FOR CHANGE— WHY CAMP MATTERS

Summer Literacy Camps help children aged 5–12 to maintain and improve their reading, writing, and math skills over the summer months in their homes and in their communities. Campers develop a greater sense of self-confidence and a positive relationship to learning, supported by their families, Elders, and community members. Summer Literacy Camps keep kids reading, learning, and having fun!

The goals of the Summer Literacy Camps are to:

- ✓ **Promote a love of reading and bring kids closer to their local culture, language, traditions, and oral literacy**
- ✓ **Increase book ownership through free book distribution**
- ✓ **Reduce summer learning loss—the decline in student performance between school years**
- ✓ **Contribute to developing the leadership of local youth and offer meaningful employment during summer the months**
- ✓ **Build interest and confidence in reading, writing, math, and science following camp**



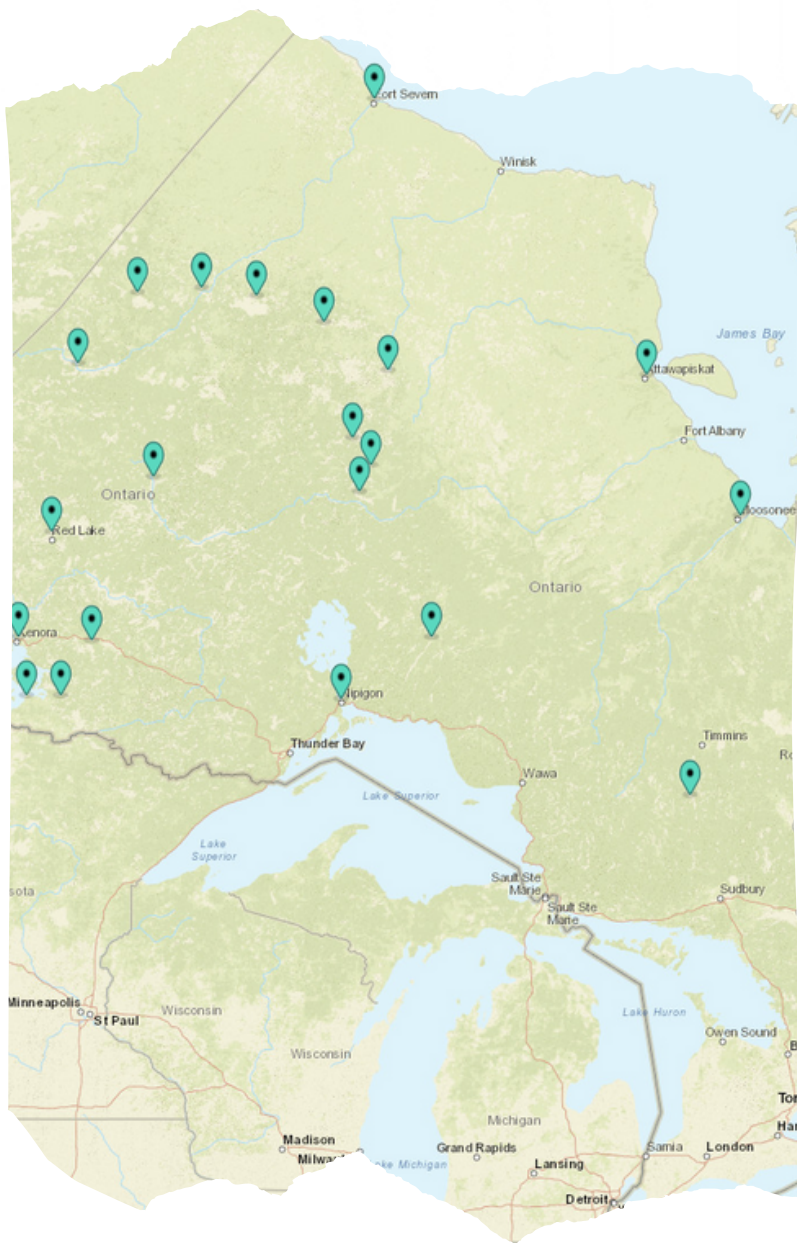
A camper leads group reading time in Kenora

Summer Literacy Camps integrate Indigenous teaching methods and knowledge. United for Literacy is mindful of its responsibilities and community relationships as a non-Indigenous program partner and invited guest. Indigenous education at camp is led by local Elders and community members, and supported by locally-hired counsellors. United for Literacy believes in learning together and from each other. As our learning continues, we are honoured to work in close collaboration with our community partners.

# CAMP LOCATIONS

United for Literacy has a long history of offering summer learning in partnership with Indigenous communities. Since the launch of our Summer Literacy Camps program in 2005—designed to support Indigenous communities on their own terms—we have been welcomed into communities across Canada to deliver Summer Literacy Camps.

This summer in Northern Ontario, we were honoured to be the literacy partner of choice for **21 communities** to provide safe, fun, and foundational literacy programming and materials to local children aged 5-12.



## Full, in-person camps for 635 kids in 12 communities:

Big Grassy First Nation  
Cat Lake First Nation  
Eabametoong First Nation  
Eagle Lake First Nation  
Kenora  
Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (KI)  
Marten Falls First Nation  
Onigaming First Nation  
Sandy Lake First Nation  
Slate Falls First Nation  
Webequie First Nation  
Whitesand First Nation

## Support for families at home with 985 learning kits in 9 communities:

Attawapiskat First Nation  
Bearskin Lake First Nation  
Fort Severn First Nation  
Kasabonika Lake First Nation  
Mattagami First Nation  
Moose Cree First Nation  
Neskantaga First Nation  
Sachigo Lake First Nation  
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations

In addition to these 21 communities, United for Literacy offered pop-up camps for the first time, reaching **577 kids** in the **Municipality of Greenstone**. (Details next page.)

# 2023 OVERVIEW

We are very proud of what strong partnerships have allowed us to accomplish.

In 2023, Summer Literacy Camps in Northern Ontario:

- Reached **635 campers** through **in-person** camps in **12 communities**
- Programmed **66** special presentations by **Elders and community members**
- Included visits from **Science North** as part of STEM programming
- Distributed **1,968 high-quality, brand-new books**, including books by Indigenous authors
- Delivered 985 learning kits to children and families in 9 communities for at-home learning
- Provided **training and employment** for 34 counsellors, including **22 local counsellors**
- Expanded our **community partnerships** with:
  - an exciting **new camp** at GaagageKiizhik School in **Kenora** (see profile on page 10)
  - **pop-up camps** across the municipality of **Greenstone**

→ These one-day camps provided fun, literacy-based activities and book donations. Based on the success of the pop-up camps, we hope to offer full Summer Literacy Camp programming in Greenstone next year!



Campers in Onigaming FN reading together



On a nature walk in Marten Falls FN

Fun and engaging camp activities included daily group and individual reading, literacy games, science experiments, outdoor exploring and learning about the community, field trips, visits from Elders and community members—and more!

In an average day of camp, kids in Northern Ontario this summer spent:

- **50** minutes a day **reading**;
- **45** minutes on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (**STEM**) activities; and
- **75** minutes on **physical and outdoor** activities.



# IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Evaluating the impact of Summer Literacy Camp is an important part of program design and planning. To better understand the outcomes of our programs, we surveyed children, parents, and community members. Here's what we heard in Northern Ontario in 2023.

## What kids said:

- **91% of campers** said they **liked reading** or **sometimes liked reading** after camp
- **95% said reading is important**, and **96% said** that they liked going to school after camp
- **89% said that they liked math or sometimes liked math** after attending camp, and **84% said the same for science**

"I can read this now. I can read this book."  
– Camper, Kenora



Chromatography in Whitesand FN

"I truly enjoy this opportunity and experience for our daughter.  
She loves coming each day and counts the sleeps until  
Monday." – Parent, Big Trout Lake

## What parents and caregivers said :

- **93% of parents** said that **their child is reading more** since attending camp and **likes reading more**
- **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, and that they would recommend camp to other parents



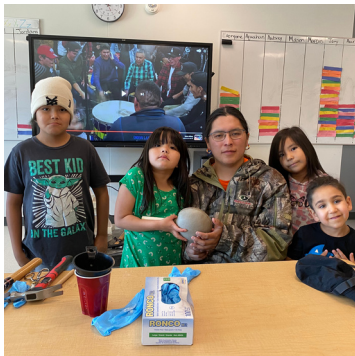
An engineering challenge in Slate Falls FN

# IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

We recognize that identity, history, and community are key principles of learning.<sup>2</sup> Community is built into Summer Literacy Camp—Elders, community members, and local camp counsellors make each day's learning reflective of and relevant to campers' lives. Community involvement is the reason that camp is so impactful, interesting, and inspiring!

Elders and community members led **66 special activities** at camp this year, including:

- Campers in Webequie First Nation practiced **bannock making** with local baker Agnes Whitehead and learned correct **preparation of fresh trout** from Janet Troutlake. Both leaders told us they participated in order to pass important skills on to the next generation.
- In Big Grassy First Nation, occupational therapist Chantal Jodoin led campers in a **weaving activity** to hone their **fine motor skills**. She saw camp as an opportunity to help kids exercise their motor skills through the summer months.
- A camp parent in Whitesand First Nation, who is also a mental health and addictions worker, led campers in **mindfulness and wellbeing** activities such as birdhouse painting, making kindness rocks, learning about grandfather teachings, and taking a nature walk.
- Three community members in Slate Falls First Nation worked with campers on **healthy eating** and the preparation of nutritious foods.



Rattle-making in  
Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug



Weaving  
in Big Grassy FN



Learning about vital signs from  
a paramedic in Whitesand FN



Making a snack  
in Slate Falls FN

In addition to these valuable contributions to camp programming, we counted **385 visits from parents, caregivers, and others in the community** who came to read a book, play a game, or just observe. Their presence helped celebrate campers' achievements and make each camp a unique experience.

"I am so happy they have this Summer Camp for the children. The children love being here. Great food, safe place, lots of laughs and fun too. Thank you."

- Community partner, Whitesand FN

# CAPACITY BUILDING

Summer Literacy Camps would not be possible without the dedication of local and visiting staff members. Hiring local camp staff allows United for Literacy to support community capacity building and provide training to people who can sustain literacy programming in the long term. Part of United for Literacy's goal is to facilitate Summer Literacy Camps in a way that builds local capacity, so that communities are fully equipped to continue camp into the future, with or without direct support from United for Literacy.



"Youth get to come here to learn and have fun! Camp gives students a safe and comfortable learning environment."

- Counsellor, Sandy Lake FN



This summer in Northern Ontario, Summer Literacy Camps employed 34 counsellors, including 22 counsellors that reside in, or are members of, the host community. United for Literacy provided all counsellors with training in topics such as: roles and responsibilities, teamwork, literacy basics, numeracy, safety and risk management, behavior management, and evaluation and reporting.

Here is what camp staff working in Northern Ontario said about their experiences:

- **100%** said that camp provided them with a **positive work experience**
- **100%** said that camp helped campers **strengthen their confidence and self-esteem**
- **90%** rated United for Literacy's camp counsellor training as good or excellent



We know, and research confirms, that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased long-term unemployment risks among youth.<sup>3</sup> Local hiring at Summer Literacy Camps leverages local talent and supports community capacity building. The day-to-day experience of running a busy camp builds a range of broadly applicable skills, from communication to time management. These skills benefit counsellors in their future opportunities and give them tools to meet the needs of their communities. Best of all, local hiring provides a platform for youth to act as role models!



# NEW PARTNERSHIP

## Kiizhik Education Corporation / GaagageKiizhik Elementary School

"In our students from our school, we've noticed huge changes in them. Less anxiety and more outgoing. We're seeing other sides of kids."

- Counsellor, Kenora

This year, United for Literacy began a new partnership with Kiizhik Education Corporation, a school board in Kenora, Ontario that is working to build a stronger, healthier life for Anishinaabeg, with a focus on building community, strengthening culture, and enriching the minds of their students.

Through its partnership with Kiizhik Education Corporation, United for Literacy was able to offer a Summer Literacy Camp for students of GaagageKiizhik Elementary School (Kiizhik School for short) for the first time. It was a fantastic first year with an average of 60 campers daily!

Kiizhik School opened in September 2015 as a result of negotiations by the Bimose Tribal Council with provincial education authorities. Language and culture are integral to the education program at Kiizhik School, where standard Ontario Curriculum and Anishinaabe teachings go hand in hand. Registered students come from the surrounding communities: Ochichaagwe'Babigo'Inning (Dalles), Grassy Narrows, Naotkamegwanning (Whitefish Bay) First Nation, Northwest Angle 33, Iskatewizaagegan (Shoal Lake #39), Obashkandagaang (Wasagamis Bay) and Wauzhushk Onigum (Rat Portage) First Nations.



United for Literacy had a wonderful time getting to know our new partners and the youth of Kiizhik School, building connections that will last for many future years.

Photos: (top) playground time; (bottom) learning to use the firehose

# LETTER OF SUPPORT



## MARTEN FALLS FIRST NATION

Ogoki Post, Ontario P0T 2L0 Tel: (807)349-2509 Fax: (807) 349-2511

October 11, 2023

To whom it may concern:

Re: United for literacy MFFN

This letter is to show our support of the Literacy Program- United for Literacy in Marten Falls First Nation. We have enjoyed having your lovely staff this summer and during the year. The connections made by the children and staff is a lifeline to the ones who need a place to feel safe and learn at the same time. This Program is so important to our children year-round.

I would like to thank all the hard-working people who make this program possible and who help the program run. I hope this program will continue to be funded so that it may continue to be that lifeline for the children of our community.

This program helps our children grow their social skills and reading confidence which in turn helps them have more self-confidence.

Meegwetch,

Susanna Baxter  
Education Director  
Marten Falls First Nation  
8076328386

# LETTER OF SUPPORT



## **MIGISI SAHGAIGAN SCHOOL**

Box 1005, Migisi Sahgaigan, Ontario P0V 3H0  
Telephone (807) 755-5350 Fax (807) 755-2086

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Wednesday, November 8, 2023

**RE: Letter of Support for Summer Literacy Camp with United for Literacy**

To whom this may concern,

On behalf of Migisi Sahgaigan School of Eagle Lake First Nation, we are thankful for the Summer Literacy Camp presented by United for Literacy held at our school this past summer of 2023.

Our students were engaged through the summer with resources provided and staff hired to administer the programming provided by United for Literacy.

Having programming through the summer provides a safe learning environment for our students and helps them continue to learn through their summer holidays away from their formal learning environments at school.

Our school and community, fully support the Summer Literacy Camp presented by United for Literacy.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely

Andrew Kivell  
Director of Education  
Eagle Lake First Nation



# LETTER OF SUPPORT



## Sandy Lake Board of Education

P. O. Box 8  
Sandy Lake, Ontario  
P0V 1V0

Tel.: (807) 774-1135/1137  
Fax: (807) 774-1166

I am writing to extend my enthusiastic support for the Summer Literacy Camp Program, a cornerstone of our community's educational and developmental activities in Sandy Lake. Each summer, the arrival of the program's dedicated counselors brings a wave of positive learning and growth experiences for our young students.

The Summer Literacy Camp Program is not just about imparting literacy skills; it's about shaping the character and future of our children. The counselors, with their commitment and expertise, have been instrumental in instilling strong values and good behavior in our students. Their efforts go beyond traditional teaching methods by creating an environment where learning is enjoyable and engaging, thereby fostering a deep-rooted love for reading and learning among our students.

This program aligns perfectly with our educational goals at the Sandy Lake Board of Education, where we aim to nurture well-rounded individuals. The focus on literacy provides a critical foundation for academic achievement, while the cultivation of positive values prepares our students to be responsible, respectful members of our community.

I, as the Director of Education for the Sandy Lake Board of Education, wholeheartedly support this wonderful initiative. The impact of the Summer Literacy Camp Program on our students is evident and deeply appreciated. We look forward to its continued success and are committed to providing any support necessary to facilitate this.

Should there be any need for further information or collaboration regarding this program, please feel free to contact me. We are eager to assist in any way to ensure the program's continued success and positive impact on our community's youth.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication to the students of Sandy Lake. Your work is invaluable, and we are profoundly grateful for the difference you make in the lives of our children.

Sincerely,

Victor Rae  
Director of Education  
Sandy Lake Board of Education

# CONCLUSION

For over 60 years, United for Literacy has partnered with Indigenous communities to co-create initiatives like the Summer Literacy Camps. The growth and evolution of the camps reflect each community's belief in the long-term impact of literacy on well-being: higher literacy is linked to a stronger economy; healthier, more engaged citizens; reduced poverty; and a higher quality of life.

United for Literacy looks forward to offering the Summer Literacy Camps in Northern Ontario again in 2024, in partnership with communities and with the help of our funders. Together, we can continue to support children's success and well-being through literacy.

**See you next summer!**



Sightseeing on market day in Kenora

# CITATIONS

- 1 Altugan, A. (2015). "The Relationship Between Cultural Identity and Learning." *Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 186. 1159 - 1162.
- 2 Eskew, C. (2012, April 14). *Aspects of Parental Involvement that Increase Student Academic Success*. [Presentation]. John Wesley Powell Student Research Conference. <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2899&context=jwprc>. Accessed on November 1, 2019.
- 3 Government of Canada. (2022, March 23). *Youth unemployment in Canada, Germany, Ireland, and the United Kingdom in times of COVID-19*. Retrieved from Statistics Canada: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2022003/article/00003-eng.htm>



A game of Scrabble in Onigaming FN



Building a tower in Slate Falls FN





EST. 1899

# United for Literacy Littératie Ensemble

formerly Frontier College

## Literacy is...

### ...transformational

It changes lives, families, and communities. It feeds growth, unleashes potential, and empowers people with the capability and confidence they need to realize their goals.

### ...urgent

Everyone can learn. But not everyone can access the help they need. Canada's literacy divide widens daily because so many people and communities lack adequate literacy support.

### ...dynamic

Society demands increasingly sophisticated understanding of written language to fully participate in daily life.

### ...vital

to Canada's long-term success. Solving systemic literacy challenges is key to advancing social equity and prosperity across our country.

### ...achievable

Bridging the literacy gap is something we can do. It's our most effective, achievable tool for change. Results are demonstrable at personal and systemic levels.

## Literacy changes everything.



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