SUMMER LITERACY CAMPS

In partnership with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Communities

2026 National Report



Prepared by

EST. 1899
United for Literacy
Littératie Ensemble

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements . . . . . PAGE 3
Our Vision . . . . . PAGE 4
Overcoming Challenges . . . . . PAGE 5
From Measurement to Meaning . . . . . PAGE 6
Camp Highlights . . . . . PAGE 8
Activity Spotlight . . . . . PAGE 9
Impact Story . . . . . PAGE 10
Impact on Campers: Community Reflections . . . . . PAGE 11
Capacity Building: Youth Mobilization and Community Impact . . . . . PAGE 14
Letters of Support . . . . . PAGE 16
Conclusion . . . . . PAGE 21
Appendix: List of Camp Communities . . . . . PAGE 22

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

Acknowledgements

United for Literacy was proud to partner with **75 communities** from coast to coast to coast for our 2026 Summer Literacy Camps. It was another amazing summer of literacy, learning, and lasting memories. We are grateful for our partners, who welcomed us into their communities and facilitated our presence. Thank you to the campers, families, Elders, and other community members who participated in camp activities—you make it all possible!

United for Literacy would like to recognize the generous support of our partners and funders for the 2026 Summer Literacy Camp season:

- Air Inuit
- Athabasca Denesuline Education Authority
- Calm Air
- Denisiqi Services Society
- Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
- Elmwood Community Resource Centre
- ESUMA (Kativik Regional Government Sustainable Employment Department)
- First Book Canada
- Government of Alberta
- Government of Canada
- Government of Manitoba
- Kitaskinaw Education Authority
- Let's Talk Science
- Makivvik Corporation
- Maskwacis Education School Commission
- Municipality of the County of Kings
- North Star Air
- Nunastar Properties Fund for Northern Children
- Nunatsiavut Government
- Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services
- Nunavut Department of Education
- Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association
- Ontario Power Generation
- Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
- Ontario Teachers' Federation
- Ontario Teachers' Insurance Plan (OTIP)
- Rotary Club of Winnipeg
- Scholastic Classrooms Care
- Sitansisk (St. Mary's) First Nation
- Squamish First Nation
- Tachane Foundation
- TD Bank Group
- The McCain Foundation
- United Way Pictou County
- Wasaya Airways
- Welamukotuk (Oromocto) First Nation
- Wotstak (Woodstock) First Nation

Our Vision

Since 2005, United for Literacy has worked with Indigenous communities across the country to meet the summer learning needs of children and reinforce local capacity. Summer Literacy Camps aim to keep children aged 5-12 learning over the summer months, fostering an interest in reading, writing, math, and science. Camps also help to build overall confidence and engagement with learning, all while nurturing friendships and community, and prioritizing time spent in nature. In more than 20 years of delivering Summer Literacy Camps, our vision and goals have remained clear:

Promote a love of reading and learning:

- Engaging camp activities allow young campers to see reading and learning as a fun part of everyday life.

Champion reconciliation:

- Summer Literacy Camps are community-driven, reflecting priorities articulated by each community. Reconciliation is one of United for Literacy's core values. As we continuously work toward more deeply aligning our work with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, we prioritize the following:
  - Building relationships and listening
  - Including Indigenous voices and leadership
  - Co-developing programs and resources
  - Supporting capacity building and autonomy

Bring Indigenous knowledge, language, and traditions into literacy learning:

- As a non-Indigenous-led organization, we actively seek and value Indigenous perspectives across all aspects of our work. We co-design camps with Indigenous communities, blending literacy activities with local Indigenous knowledge, cultural practices, and language. Camps include guidance from Elders and Knowledge Keepers, ensuring that Indigenous ways of knowing are respected and passed down, helping campers strengthen cultural identity. Rather than using a prescriptive classroom format, Summer Literacy Camps take a holistic approach to learning based on the lived experiences of the community.

Help families build home libraries through the distribution of free books:

- Kids growing up in homes with more books are more likely to have better educational and career outcomes. Countless studies have also found that reading for pleasure has many other benefits, including cognitive, social, and emotional ones.[i]

Reduce "summer learning loss":

- Studies show that when students are away from school for extended periods, like summer break, there is a noticeable loss of knowledge and skills that sets them back in their learning. This phenomenon has the biggest effect on children with the lowest socio-economic status.[ii] Summer Literacy Camps help to counter summer learning loss by engaging campers in learning activities over the summer, which helps maintain their skills, or even increases them for when they return to school. Camp helps children build oral language, reading fluency, comprehension, literacy independence, critical thinking, and STEM skills.

Build program sustainability for our partners:

- A United for Literacy Summer Literacy Camp partnership is not designed to last forever. While we remain enthusiastic about supporting Summer Literacy Camps, and we will continue to support a community as long as they want our help, initiatives like local hiring contribute to building community capacity so communities can eventually deliver summer programming on their own.

Overcoming Challenges

Wildfires across the country have become a devastating reality. In multiple communities in Northern Ontario this summer, several camps experienced reduced programming days due to poor air quality and smoke, with communities advising residents to stay home and remain indoors. For situations when camps are unable to run as planned, we have created mitigation strategies to reach children from affected communities. This summer, two communities were evacuated for their safety. We worked with our partners and staff to find alternative options, including sending activity kits and adapting camp programming so that staff could provide activities for children in their new location. These solutions align both with community needs and with our philosophy that every place is a learning place.

We are thankful that many of our camp communities were safe from wildfires. In these communities, camp continued as planned, with in-person activities.

From Measurement to Meaning

Measuring the impact of our programs is extremely important for program development and delivery. United for Literacy is committed to continually strengthening our evaluation practices so we can better demonstrate the impact of our programs. Part of strengthening our practices means intentionally focusing on bringing forward the impacts that are most meaningful to our camp partners and learners. To work toward this goal, we've partnered with the Indigenous Evaluation Network (IEN) for a three-year project to assess and inform 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.



Group photo of camp staff with campers in Nain (NL)

We want to learn what First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) communities think about the way we gather feedback and evaluation data. We are now in the second year of this project. Some of our work over the first year included consultations with Elders, youth, and knowledge keepers within the FNMI communities that we partner with across the country. 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. This committee also conducted further community needs assessments. These assessments will form the basis of a culturally relevant evaluation tool.

Our community-based and flexible approach for this project responds to the needs of individual communities. We've built relationships and a rapport within communities that set the stage for the productive and meaningful conversations that took place in this second year of our project. This year, our IEN consultant joined our staff for camp training. Staff members shared their experience, and IEN gathered feedback from staff, campers, and parents. These consultations helped us to draft a holistic Indigenous Evaluation Framework, which was piloted in person over the last summer, and we have met our year-two goal of creating a dialogue around this draft framework. From many open conversations, we collected data about how the framework could be used within communities.

Together, with Indigenous communities from coast to coast to coast, we are working to redefine program evaluation, from measurement to meaning.



Group reading time for Akulivik campers (QC)

Camp Highlights

Across Canada, United for Literacy proudly partnered with 75 communities to offer fun and dynamic learning activities. Camp programming is co-created with each community and is tailored to meet each community's interests and needs. In 2026, Summer Literacy Camps accomplished the following:

Reached **2,655** campers aged 5-12

Distributed **10,482** high-quality, brand-new books, including books by Indigenous authors

Distributed **452 literacy kits** to learners at home. Each kit comes with literacy activities, books, and craft supplies for learners to enjoy with their families

Hosted **172** guest presenters, **824** family members, and **339** community members

Facilitated **136** special events and field trips

Facilitated **240** Let's Talk Science activities



Cadotte Lake campers learning Cree words (AB)

Activity Spotlight

Every day at Summer Literacy Camp involves campers and counsellors exploring learning with a variety of engaging hands-on activities. Campers took part in daily reading, as well as many other activities, like cooking, science experiments, and literacy and art projects. Elders and other community members participated in valuable camp visits. They participated in activities, shared their unique experiences, and encouraged campers in learning and literacy.



Cultural Activities in Nunatsiavut

In Hopedale (NL), campers visited Inotsiavik, a youth-led initiative dedicated to language and culture revitalization in the region of Nunatsiavut. Based out of Hopedale, they aim to provide an accessible means to Inuit cultural and language programming for Nunatsiavummiut of all ages. While there, the campers and counsellors were shown the garden, had a taste of pitsik (made from dried fish), and learned how to smoke fish.



Welamukotuk First Nation Art Activity

Campers in Welamukotuk First Nation (NB) made some beautiful art. Guest presenters visited camp to teach campers about pottery, ceramics, and watercolour painting.

Impact Story

Since the start of Summer Literacy Camps in Alberta, United for Literacy has trained 425 staff, including 73 staff this year. Training is robust, thorough, and based on the individual needs of our staff and community partners. All camp staff partake in three days of paid training prior to the start of camp. By delivering training to local members, United for Literacy ensures that the knowledge gained during training stays within each community.



Staff member with campers in Loon River First Nation

"It helped develop my leadership skills and communication with families." ***—Counsellor, Samson Cree Nation***



Camp counsellor reading to campers in Cold Lake First Nation

Camp staff receive training on curriculum planning, delivering literacy games and activities, safety and risk management, group management, teamwork, and administrative reporting. The method in which this training is delivered is highly dependent on each camp's needs and preferences. Prior to camp beginning, we check in with community partners about their goals for camp and tailor the training to meet their individual needs. For example, if they'll be going on more field trips, there will be an emphasis on group management in outdoor settings. The United for Literacy team also works with community partners to continue improving camps from the previous year.

For recurring camps, we offer live virtual training as a refresher for courses that the returning staff have already completed. For new staff and new camps, we arrange smaller trainings, either in-person or virtually, to provide more one-on-one support with camp planning and delivery. The United for Literacy team visits new camps ahead of the first day to help set up the space and ensure that our camp teams know they are supported at each step in the process.

Impact on Campers: Community Reflections

To ensure we're reaching our goals with our activities and programs at Summer Literacy Camps, we track how much time campers spend reading each day. We also record all of the fun learning activities campers take part in.

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

In 2026, campers spent **33,956 minutes** reading!

89% of parents said their child is **reading more** since attending Summer Literacy Camp



Reading a story together in Taloyoak (NU)



Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation camper enjoying a good book and a healthy snack (ON)

"I feel so excited to go to school now because now I know how to read!"
—Camper, Waywayseecappo First Nation (MB)



Cooking Week at Kangirsuk (QC)



Hatchet Lake Denesuline First Nation campers watching their mini volcanoes erupt (SK)

In order to always be improving our Summer Literacy Camp programming, United for Literacy collects feedback and surveys from campers, their families, and their communities. We want our literacy activities to remain a fun learning experience for everyone. **The response from 2026 campers was very positive:**

- **94%** of campers said reading is important
- **84%** said they considered themselves to be a "good reader" after camp
- **94%** said that camp maintained or increased their interest in reading
- **85%** said that they liked math after attending camp
- **89%** said that they liked science after attending camp

"Learning to read is important so that you can learn better in the older grades."
—Camper, Pictou Landing First Nation (NS)

We also collected valuable feedback from family members:

99% 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**



Motivational speakers visited Sandy Lake First Nation (ON), where older campers attended a session on self love, confidence building, and suicide awareness

"I liked that we got to take books home. I also took books home for my siblings. They will be so excited. I can't believe they are all free!"
—Learner, Enoch Cree Nation (AB)

Capacity Building: Youth Mobilization and Community Impact

Summer Literacy Camps help strengthen community capacity. Each summer, camps contribute to local economies through wages for local staff, honoraria to community members, and the purchase of materials, food, and services within communities.

To further build community capacity and ensure camps reflect the values and cultures of communities, United for Literacy prioritizes hiring local youth as camp counsellors. Giving local youth the opportunity to grow their skills increases a community's professional capacity, which leads to a future where local challenges can be solved with local resources.[iv]

Camp counsellors participate in thorough training, empowering them as future leaders. Training is tailored to the specific needs of communities and covers many topics, including camp objectives; literacy games; reading and writing techniques; math and multidisciplinary activities; curriculum development and planning; camp set-up, safety, and behaviour management; teamwork and communication; and impact evaluation and reporting.

> *"This program is a real blessing for any community, especially with all of our families who struggle with summer childcare and also with poverty."*
> ***—Camp Counsellor, St. Theresa Point First Nation (MB)***

> *"I absolutely loved getting to know this group of kids. I looked forward to work because I knew no matter what, the day wouldn't be boring."*
> ***—Camp Counsellor, Wotstak First Nation (NB)***

Working as a camp counsellor and leading the day-to-day operations of a busy camp develops a range of skills. By participating in training and then working at camp, youth gain meaningful employment experience and enhance employability skills, such as communication, leadership, time management, and organization. And Summer Literacy Camp would not be possible without the dedication of our camp counsellors.

We strive to keep a cycle of capacity building going, which benefits both individuals and the community. One example of long-term capacity is that many of our campers have ended up becoming camp counsellors. They give back to their communities by stepping into leadership roles as literacy champions for the next generation.

Here is what camp staff had to say about their camp experience in the summer of 2026:

- **98%** said camp provided a positive work experience
- **97%** said camp helped strengthen their employability skills
- **99%** said camp helped strengthen campers' confidence and self-esteem
- **100%** said camp provided an enriching learning experience for campers



Camp staff in Inukjuak during training (QC)

Letters of Support

Each year, community partners share letters of support to reflect on the successes and impact of our camp season. We are pleased to share with you a few partner reflections from the 2026 Summer Literacy Camps.

FCSS (Family & Community Support Services)

Granum, AB

Date: August 23, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing on behalf of FCSS in Granum to express our strong support for United for Literacy and their ongoing efforts to support students who are at risk of falling behind.

We have partnered with United for Literacy since 2023 and appreciate the dedication and passion for learning that their staff and volunteers bring to our students. They provide direct support for students through fun and individualized programs to help improve reading, writing, and math skills. This work facilitates social development. It also promotes socio-emotional development, educational support, and life-long learning.

I am also connected to the local school and it is always inspiring when I hear that students' reading levels have been maintained or improved, when they have attended the United for Literacy Summer Camps. They show improvements in their schoolwork and frequently display more confidence by participating in class more often, working independently, and showing enthusiasm for reading. They are excited to take part in the program and to choose new books to take home.

We continue to see strong participation and registration in these programs and we know from our community that parents and caregivers are grateful for the free access to high quality student support. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the United for Literacy camps that we can offer each year. We look forward to our continued partnership with United for Literacy to ensure the best tools are available to every child.

I look forward to having United for Literacy as a partner next summer for our camps!

Sincerely,

Eliise Jeffers

Granum FCSS Volunteer

Letters of Support Continued

Oromocto First Nation Child & Family Services
33B Hiawatha Avenue
Oromocto, NB
E2V 2W2
Tel: (506)-357-7220

To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept this letter in both support and recognition of United For Literacy and their continued work within New Brunswick. Welamuktotuk First Nation offers a summer program each year for community youth; United for Literacy has been integral in ensuring the program is successful. Throughout their time with us, the United for Literacy workers demonstrated a high level of professionalism, competence, and dedication. Each worker quickly established relationships with each youth, regardless of who they were or their additional needs.

The workers demonstrated patience and flexibility in adapting their approach to meet the individual needs and interests of each child. This was particularly important when working with youth who had varying levels of literacy. Rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach, the workers were able to modify activities and provide encouragement in ways that allowed each participant to feel successful and included.

The workers also showed an excellent ability to balance literacy-focused activities with opportunities for creativity, play, conversation, and social interaction. Their approach helped make literacy enjoyable and accessible while supporting the development of important skills such as reading, writing, communication, comprehension, and confidence.

United for Literacy made a meaningful contribution to our summer programming, and we appreciate the time, effort, and expertise their workers brought to our community. We would be pleased to support their continued work providing literacy programming and opportunities for youth.

Sincerely,

Natasha Giroux

B.A. Sociology, Master of Counselling Psychology (Candidate), Registered Social Work Technician

Oromocto First Nations Child & Family Services

Welamukotuk First Nations

Letters of Support Continued

Postville Inuit Community Government

20 Kaipokok Drive
P.O. Box 74
Postville, Nunatsiavut, NL
A0P 1N0
Ph: (709) 479 9830 or 479 9831
Fax: (709) 479 9888
E-mail: postvilleicg@gmail.com

August 4th,2026

RE: Letter of support

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing this letter to express my full and enthusiastic support for the Postville Literacy Camp that ran from July 13th,2026 to August 7th, 2026. Seeing firsthand the critical need for programs that combat summer learning loss and foster a genuine love for reading. During the summer months, many students experience a drop in reading achievement known as the "summer slide". The Postville Literacy Camp addresses this issue directly by providing targeted, high-quality reading intervention in an engaging and accessible environment. This program does not just teach mechanics; it builds confidence, expands vocabulary, and sets children up for academic success in the upcoming school year. Our community relies on initiatives like this to close the achievement gap. Allowing kids to have a positive trajectory who return to school in the fall are more eager to read and better equipped to participate in class. I strongly urge you to provide the funding and resources necessary to make this camp a reality. Investing in youth literacy is one of the most effective ways to secure the long-term educational and economic health of our community. Postville Inuit Community Government is fully committed to supporting this program.

Thanks for your time, consideration, and ongoing dedication to our youth.

Alaster Sheppard
Chief Administrative Officer
postvillecao@gmail.com

Letters of Support Continued

KÎSISAM PÂTISSERIE
Dominique Lalonde, Oji-Cree Chef & Owner
133 rue Principale, Saint-André-Avellin, QC J0V 1W0
819-743-8281 | hello@kisisam.com | www.kisisam.com

July 22, 2026

RE: Letter of Support for United for Literacy

To Whom It May Concern,

It is my pleasure to support **United for Literacy** and the exceptional work they do for children and families in northern communities. During the summer of 2026, I had the privilege of collaborating with their team in **Sirivik, Inukjuak**, through our partnership with **La Tablée des Chefs**, where I led a hands-on muffin-making workshop for children aged 5 to 8.

The workshop was filled with curiosity, teamwork, and laughter, and it was inspiring to see the children proudly create something together. Throughout the program, I also noticed that many children often arrived hungry, making United for Literacy's welcoming environment even more meaningful. Despite those challenges, the children remained engaged, excited, and eager to learn.

I wholeheartedly support the work of United for Literacy and believe there is a wonderful opportunity to expand our collaboration by offering simple cooking workshops alongside literacy activities. Sharing food while teaching practical skills would help ensure children have something nourishing to enjoy while creating memorable learning experiences.

Thank you for the opportunity to be part of this important initiative. I would gladly collaborate with United for Literacy again in the future.

With respect,

Dominique Lalonde
Chef & Owner | Cheffe propriétaire
KÎSISAM Pâtisserie

Letters of Support Continued

Simon Jacob Memorial Education Centre
P.O. Box 240, Webequie, Ontario P0T 3A0
Tel (807) 353-6491 Fax (807) 353-1306

To: UNTIED LITERACY

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to express my thoughts and enthusiasm regarding the literacy camp currently taking place in our community. This program represents a valuable opportunity for our students to enhance their educational skills and gain confidence in their literacy abilities.

The camp not only focuses on academic learning but also incorporates a variety of outdoor activities that promote teamwork, creativity and physical well-being. These experiences are essential for holistic development and help foster a love for learning beyond the classroom.

As a community member, I want to assure you that we are committed to supporting this program in providing resources, or spreading the word to encourage participation.

Thank you once again for your commitment to our community's youth. I look forward to seeing how we can all work together to continue this fantastic initiative for another successful year.

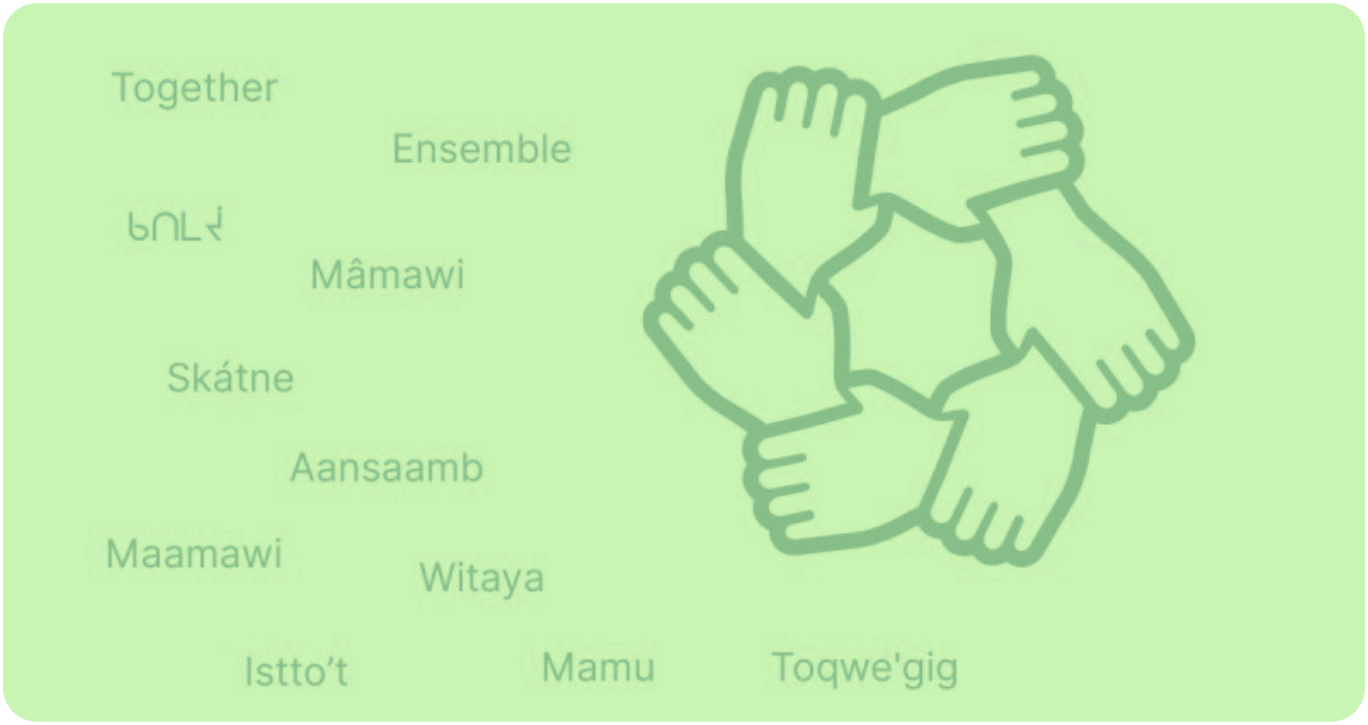
Sincerely,

Beverly Jacob
Chairperson of Webequie Education Authority

Conclusion

The summer of 2026 was another successful adventure in literacy and learning—and a whole lot of fun! We are forever grateful to our partners, the Indigenous communities who invite and welcome us as guests for the summer and help us to make camp a meaningful and memorable experience for all.

See you next summer!



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[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/
[iv] Koopmans, Dillon (2023). When Indigenous youth succeed, whole communities benefit. CERIC. https://careerwise.ceric.ca/2023/09/22/when-indigenous-youth-succeed-whole-communities-benefit/

EST. 1899
United for Literacy
Littératie Ensemble

Appendix: List of Camp Communities

The 2026 Summer Literacy Camps were hosted in 75 communities across 10 provinces and territories:



Alberta (20)
Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation
Anzac
Cadotte Lake
Cold Lake First Nation
Conklin Métis
Elizabeth Métis Settlement
Enoch Cree Nation
Ermineskin Cree Nation
Fort McKay First Nation
Gift Lake Métis Settlement
Goodfish Lake First Nation
Grouard
Heart Lake First Nation
Loon River First Nation
Paul First Nation
Peavine Métis Settlement
Pigeon Lake First Nation (Ma-Me-O Beach)
Piikani First Nation
Samson Cree Nation
Tsuut'ina Nation

British Columbia (7)
Esdilagh (Alexandria) First Nation
Squamish First Nation
Tl'esqox (Toosey) First Nation
Tsideldel (Redstone) First Nation
Ulkatcho (Anahim Lake) First Nation
Xeni Gwet'in (Nemiah) First Nation
Yunesit'in (Stone) First Nation

List of Camp Communities Continued

Manitoba (6)
Bloodvein First Nation
Carberry
Elmwood
Tataskweyak Cree Nation
St. Theresa Point First Nation
Waywayseecappo First Nation

New Brunswick (3)
Sitansisk (St. Mary's) First Nation
Welamukotuk (Oromocto) First Nation
Wotstak (Woodstock) First Nation

Nova Scotia (1)
Pictou Landing First Nation

Nunatsiavut (Newfoundland and Labrador) (5)
Hopedale
Makkovik
Nain
Postville
Rigolet

Nunavik (Québec) (14)
Akulivik
Aupaluk
Inukjuaq
Ivujivik
Kangiqsualujjuaq
Kangiqsujuaq
Kangirsuk
Kuujjuaq
Kuujjuarapik
Puvirnituq
Quaqtaq
Salluit
Tasiujaq
Umiujaq

Nunavut (3)
Arviat
Naujaat
Taloyoak

Ontario (14)
Big Grassy First Nation
Boys and Girls Club Summer Program
Evergreen Summer Program
Fort Albany First Nation
Longlac
Marten Falls First Nation
Nakina
Neskantaga First Nation
Onigaming First Nation
Sandy Lake First Nation
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation
Wabshkaa Animkii Benesii Program
Webequie First Nation
Whitesand First Nation

Saskatchewan (2)
Fond Du Lac Denesuline First Nation
Hatchet Lake Denesuline First Nation