

We are United for Literacy



EST. 1899

United for Literacy
Littératie Ensemble

Our Mission

We believe literacy is a right. We work with volunteers and community partners to give people the skills and confidence they need to reach their potential.

Values

Our network of volunteers provides excellent and effective programming to improve literacy in communities across Canada, from coast to coast to coast. We value mutual respect and collaboration in all our relationships.

In order to achieve our mission, we are committed to finding and using innovative ways to reach the people who need us most. Our activities, programs, and services are inclusive of any individual for whom our assistance is welcome and needed.

Our Vision

Literacy is recognized as a human right and a driving force to empowerment and prosperity. United for Literacy leads the effort in Canada to help people and communities achieve their goals through the power of literacy.

Unite With Us!

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CHARITABLE REGISTRATION NUMBER

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Literacy for all.

Everyone deserves access to literacy and learning. United for Literacy is dedicated to making that possible.

Since 1899, our *All Welcome!* approach and innovative services have been transforming **every place into a learning place**. From coast to coast to coast, our programs serve all ages, in person and online.

Literacy is more than the ability to read and write. It's the ability to understand the printed word, put it to use, and engage fully in activities and opportunities at home, at work, and in the community. **It's about succeeding in today's world.**

Our programs are effective because they're adaptable to the specific needs of individuals and communities, especially those who experience barriers or who do not succeed in mainstream education systems. **Everyone can learn. But not everyone gets the help they need.**

Socio-economic factors or early gaps in schooling mean many people are playing "catch-up" from the beginning. Our learner-centered approach—tailored to a person's skills, interests, experience, culture, and goals—engages them in deciding what they want and need to learn.

Adults, youth, and children may face barriers to learning, including their location, family and legal issues, employment and financial concerns, trauma, health matters, and a lack of support systems. It is through **our partnerships with communities and volunteers** that we provide basic literacy support designed with overcoming barriers in mind.

Our **learner-centered programs** are tailored appropriately to different ages, life stages, and community priorities. Educators widely regard our programming as best-in-class examples of **Student-Centered Individualized Learning** principles.

WHY LITERACY?

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.

Our Story

We're proud to have been bringing literacy to communities across Canada since 1899, starting with reading camps equipped with books and volunteers to teach people in remote locations.

Our founder's approach was "**every place is a learning place,**" which established how education and basic literacy was taught throughout Canada.

Teacher Alfred Fitzpatrick creates **The Canadian Reading Camp Movement**. Reading tents are set up in remote and isolated communities and equipped with books and volunteers to teach workers in logging camps, on the Canadian National Railway, and in mines to read and write. **1899**

Fitzpatrick develops the **Labourer-Teacher** model after Angus Gray, a University of Toronto student and tutor, tired of waiting for his students to come to classes in the evening, joins workers in digging a ditch in Nairn Centre.

1912 Norman Bethune, a second-year university medical student joins The Reading Camp Association as a Labourer-Teacher. He works at the Victoria Harbour Lumber Company teaching math, history, hygiene, spelling, geography, and letter writing to immigrant workers.

The Reading Camp Association changes its name to Frontier College and, in 1919, the Ontario Government incorporates the College, recognizing it as a teaching organization like any other College. **1917**

1922 The Canadian Government, recognizing the national character of the College, passes a parliamentary Act allowing the College, with Alfred Fitzpatrick as the first Principal, to award university degrees anywhere in Canada.

The Government of Northwest Territories contracts Frontier College to serve Dene and Inuit individuals in minimum security institutions. This is the organization's first prison literacy initiative, later named *Transitions*. **1960**

The Government of Northwest Territories, Department of Education, and Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Act also engage us in establishing community adult learning centres. These are later incorporated into the community college system.

Two former street-involved youth create the **Beat the Street** program. Literacy and Basic Skills are taught including preparation for the General Education Diploma® (high school equivalency diploma). Many graduates of this program have become entrepreneurs or trades workers and pursued post-secondary education. **1985**

1990-2000 With a focus on building a literacy culture in Canada with university and college students as volunteers, the **Students for Literacy** program is formed. This national initiative begins at McGill University, Montreal, Quebec.

At the request of The Honourable James K. Bartleman, Ontario's first Indigenous Lieutenant Governor, Frontier College leads the creation of **summer literacy camps for children and youth** in partnership with Indigenous communities. **2005**

2014 The year-round **Community Literacy Catalyst program** is established with Indigenous communities. Local community members are hired and supported by Frontier College, to deliver customized, culturally relevant literacy activities and workshops to other residents of all ages. The program continues to run in urban and remote communities across the country.

Physical restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic require the organization to move entirely to **online tutoring** for the first time in its history. **2020**

2022

Frontier College changes its name to **United for Literacy**, reflecting the ambitious next chapter in its history.



For the full history, go to **Our Story** at unitedforliteracy.ca.



My tutor understands when I have a problem and tries to figure out different ways and see which one I'm more comfortable with. If I write a word wrong or spell it incorrectly, she'll help me fix it. **My tutor really helps us be kind to each other and to ourselves.**

— YOUTH LEARNER



“When I first started at United for Literacy, I was very shy and nervous and had no self-confidence. I didn't want to speak up in class and there were many topics I didn't understand, but I was too nervous to ask for them to be explained. With the help of my tutor, **I became much more confident in my literacy skills.**”

— ADULT LEARNER



“Reading is really important and that is why I am here with United for Literacy—to help some of the learners who are here and are struggling. Even if they can read a simple word such as bug or hug, you can see their eyes light up and say ‘Ah, I got it.’ **It's just beautiful.**”

— KEISHA, VOLUNTEER TUTOR



NATIONAL



SERVING AGE GROUP

- 58% – Children
- 15% – Youth
- 14% – Families
- 13% – Adults



PROGRAM TYPE

- 44% – Tutoring
- 42% – Large Group
- 14% – Summer Camp

Tutoring includes:

- Direct One-to-One or Small Group Instruction and Support
- After-school Literacy and Numeracy Programs
- Reading Circles

Large Group includes:

- Training and Workshops
- Presentations and Speeches
- Awareness Events
- Family Learning Activities
- Reading Tents
- Conferences

Summer Camp includes:

- Literacy Programming and Materials for Children Aged 5-12

With more than a century of **frontline experience** to draw on, United for Literacy brings deep expertise, supported by extraordinary volunteers and collaborations, to the challenge of bridging Canada's literacy gap.

We see the impact of our collective work every day in the lives of the tens of thousands of people who feel empowered by gaining literacy skills and the confidence they need to reach their goals and explore their full potential.

Who We Support

We offer **free** tutoring and mentoring to adults, youth, and children who need extra support to succeed in the mainstream school system, in the workplace, or in life. Our learners include: those experiencing poverty and living in under-resourced communities; individuals with disabilities; low-skilled workers; and newcomers to Canada. Equity, diversity, and inclusion are key attributes of our approach.

Where We Work

Across Canada—in urbanized, rural, and remote locations—we believe any place can be a learning place.

- **Locally, and online**, we deliver free tutoring that meets people of all ages, wherever they are, with high-impact, learner-centered solutions through community partnerships.
- **Nationally**, we work with partners to solve systemic literacy challenges that will advance social equity and prosperity across our country.

Literacy touches virtually every aspect of our lives and has a great influence on our well-being.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Each year, over 30,000 children, youth, and adults in over 190 urban, rural, and remote places across Canada (including over 90 Indigenous communities) gain access to **free, inclusive literacy and numeracy** programs, in person and online, supported by up to **1,600 trained volunteer tutors**.

That's *impact*.



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