

SUMMER LITERACY CAMPS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES



2023 National Report



EST. 1899

United for Literacy
Littératie Ensemble

formerly Frontier College

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	PAGE 2
TRIBUTE—UNITED FOR LITERACY HONOURS JAMES K. BARTLEMAN	PAGE 3
UNITED FOR CHANGE—WHY CAMP MATTERS	PAGE 4
2023 OVERVIEW	PAGE 5
IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES	PAGE 6
IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES	PAGE 7
IMPACT—IN THEIR OWN WORDS	PAGE 8
CAPACITY BUILDING	PAGE 9
SUSTAINABILITY—THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF CAMPS	PAGE 10
LETTERS OF SUPPORT	PAGE 13
CONCLUSION	PAGE 17
CITATIONS	PAGE 18
APPENDIX	PAGE 19

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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A graphic with the text "Thank You!" in a bold, sans-serif font. "Thank" is in white and "You!" is in green. The text is set against a dark blue background that has a curved bottom edge.

In the summer of 2023, United for Literacy (formerly Frontier College) was honoured to partner with **81 communities to deliver Summer Literacy Camps across Canada. 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:

- Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation
- Alberta Ministry of Education
- Carrier Sekani Family Services
- Clearwater River Dene School
- Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
- Elmwood Community Resource Centre
- Fusion Credit Union
- First Book Canada
- Government of Canada
- Government of Manitoba
- Government of Ontario
- Hewitt Foundation
- Hydro One Networks Inc.
- Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council
- Kativik Ilisarniliriniq
- Let's Talk Science
- L'ICQ | Bibliothèque de Québec
- Bilijk (Kingsclear) First Nation
- Makivvik Corporation
- Manitoba Ministry of Municipal Relations
- Manitoba Education and Training
- Maskwacis Education School Commission
- The McCain Foundation
- North Star Air
- New Brunswick Education & Early Childhood
- Nunastar Properties Fund for Northern Children
- Nunatsiavut Government
- Nunavut Department of Education
- Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association
- Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
- Ontario Teachers' Federation
- Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP)
- Rotary Club of Winnipeg
- Scholastic Classrooms Care
- Squamish First Nation
- Sitansisk (St. Mary's) First Nation
- St. Thomas University
- Sturgeon Lake First Nation
- TD Bank Group
- University of New Brunswick
- Wasaya Airways
- Wotstak First Nation

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!

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. We are honoured to have the opportunity to learn from and with the communities we serve. It is by learning together that we are able to make every day of Summer Literacy Camps so meaningful.

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[1]**
- ✓ **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**
- ✓ **Build interest and confidence in reading writing, math, and science following camp**



Camper enjoying a book in
Marten Falls First Nation, Ontario



Campers enjoying outdoor reading time in
Rigolet, Newfoundland and Labrador

2023 OVERVIEW

This summer, we had the privilege to be the literacy partner of choice for 81 communities to provide safe, fun, and foundational literacy programming and materials to **3,678 local children aged 5-12**.



Reading time in Sturgeon Lake First Nation, Saskatchewan



Meeting ducklings during a field trip in Peavine Metis Settlement, Alberta



Books and bonding in Umiujaq, Nunavik

Across Canada, Summer Literacy Camps took many forms. The three camp models were:

1. **Fully Staffed**, where Camps were run by local or visiting camp counsellors;
2. **Community Staffed**, where United for Literacy offered training to staff hired by the community; and
3. **Resource Model**, where United for Literacy distributed literacy kits—including a workbook, brand-new children’s books, and craft supplies—to homes in partner communities.

As part of these Camps, United for Literacy:

- Distributed **13,139 brand-new books**, including books by Indigenous authors
- Delivered **1,309 literacy kits**
- Hosted **499 community visitors**
- Welcomed **220 guest presenters**
- Received **638 parent visitors**



Playground fun in Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug/ Big Trout Lake First Nation, Ontario

“I love this camp, it’s full of positivity. My daughter had a rough year in her grade 1 class. She started hating school, but ever since she came to this day camp she can’t wait to go back to school.”

–Parent, Puvirnituaq, Quebec

IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Program evaluation is an important part of program design and planning. While we know each Summer Literacy Camp is unique, at United for Literacy, we also recognize the benefits of looking at the bigger picture to understand the camp's greater impact. Here's what campers, and their parents, said.

What kids across Canada said:

- **84% of campers** said they considered themselves to be a **"good reader"** or **"sometimes a good reader"** after camp
- **94%** considered **reading important**, and **88%** said that they **liked** or **sometimes liked** to read after attending camp
- **86%** said that they **liked math** after attending camp, and **88%** said the same for science

What parents and caregivers said:

- **100% of parents** said that **camp helped prepare their child to return to school**
- **87% of parents** said that **their child is reading more** since attending camp
- **99% of parents** said that **camp was valuable** for their child, family, and community



Counsellors preparing for camp in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut



Bridge building in Wet'suwet'en First Nation, British Columbia

"My favourite thing about camp was making slime, and my least favourite thing about camp is that we have to leave!"

– **Camper, Pictou Landing First Nation, Nova Scotia**

"Kids need more things like this. It's good to see them happy and safe."

– **Parent, Paul First Nation, Alberta**

IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

We recognize that identity, history, and community are key principles of learning.[2] Community learning is built into Summer Literacy Camp—Elders, community members, and local camp counsellors make each learning environment reflective of and relevant to campers' lives. They are integral to making camps so impactful, interesting, and inspiring.

This year, Summer Literacy Camps:

- Introduced **279 Let's Talk Science activities** to campers as part of **32,068 minutes (~534 hours) spent on STEM learning**
- Featured **40,240 minutes (~670 hours) of reading** and **62,618 minutes (~1,044 hours) of physical and outdoor activities**
- Included fun camp activities like daily stories and **literacy games, "slime-y" science experiments, field trips** to local points of interest, **arts and crafts—and more!**

Across the country, highlights included:

The creation of a **beautiful button blanket in Nadleh Whut'en, British Columbia**. Campers sewed buttons onto the blanket and adorned it with their handprints. The campers' various clan emblems were also sewn onto the blanket. It will now be displayed proudly in the community.

In **Aupaluk**, an Elder volunteered to **read stories in Inuktitut during the camp's Inuit Culture and Heritage Day**. Afterwards, the campers requested more stories in Inuktitut!

In **Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug**, also known as Big Trout Lake First Nation, **a guest speaker taught campers how to filet a trout**.

These activities not only taught campers new skills, but complimented the local community's culturally relevant summer activities in meaningful ways.



Campers reading a group story,
Sipekne'katik First Nation, Nova Scotia



Lego building fun in Grouard,
Alberta

IMPACT: IN THEIR OWN WORDS



One of the great things about Summer Literacy Camps is that every single camp is unique. Thus, we feel like the experience of camp is best expressed by the folks who participated in it. Below is a testimonial from a camp counsellor in Samson, Alberta, sharing her experiences of camp.

"My name is Mary Telfer and I have been running Literacy Camps for the past few years through United for Literacy. Unfortunately, due to COVID, we could not have in-person camps until this year. **This year, we were able to bring the children of Samson together for [three] week-long camps...with their peers where we practiced reading, writing, beading, painting, experimenting, science, stem, and outdoor exploration.** We connected with the campers in our community and created a safe space for them to continue their love of learning while also having a TON of fun! Each day the campers showed up asking 'What are we going to do today?'

Community camps like the ones provided by United for Literacy make it possible to slow the summer slide, while also giving an outlet for creative and innovative kids. The creations that came out of our camp were amazing and far beyond anything that I could have imagined. We also ignited a love for beading with Pony Beads which was a love of mine when I was in grade 3! Lizards, Penguins, video game characters, you name it our campers beaded it. **We were also able to include cultural crafts and teachings during our camps.**

Thanks to United for Literacy, we were able to have a robust camp that offered the campers something of interest for each camper and we are so thankful for the opportunity to have this right in our own community."



Camper and counsellor selfie from Samson Cree Nation, Alberta



Crafting together in Samson Cree Nation, Alberta

CAPACITY BUILDING

Summer Literacy Camps would not be possible without the dedication of local and visiting staff members. 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 our direct support. 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.

We know, and research confirms, that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased long-term unemployment risks among youth.[3] 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!



Painting together in Marten Falls First Nation, Ontario



Learning kit from Alberta



Nadleh Whut'en Staff with their camp-created button blanket.



Camp counsellor from Bilijk First Nation, New Brunswick

Here is what camp staff working across Canada said about their experiences:

- **95%** said that camp provided them with a **positive work experience**
- **99%** said that camp helped campers **strengthen their confidence and self-esteem**
- **98%** said that camp provided an **enriching learning experience for campers**
- **98%** said that camp strengthened their **employment skills**

“Working as a camp counsellor has made me better at being flexible.” – **Camp Counsellor, Stellat'en, British Columbia**

SUSTAINABILITY: THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF CAMPS

What happens once summer is over? Based on what we've heard from campers, counsellors, and communities, the end of summer is just the beginning of their literacy journeys.

Across the country, Summer Literacy Camps provide campers with the opportunity to learn, grow, and develop strong community ties. But what happens when summer is over? The wonderful thing about Summer Literacy Camps is that their impact ripples through communities long after camps are over. Summer Literacy Camp's long-term impacts are felt at three levels: camper, counsellor, and community.

Long-term Effects on Campers

At United for Literacy, we know that a child who develops a love of reading is more likely to grow into an adult who makes reading, writing, and learning a part of their everyday life. Studies show that reading is kind of a gateway to the development of academic skills across all disciplines (PACE Study, 2021). When kids enjoy reading as part of camps they not only want to return year after year but also take their new skills with them into other facets of their lives!

**"I'd like to be a counsellor here one day."
— Camper, Ivukivik, Nunavik**



**Reading break in Fort McKay
First Nation, Alberta**



**Reading Circle in Makkovik,
Newfoundland and Labrador**

SUSTAINABILITY:

THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF CAMPS

Long-term Effects on Counsellors

Summer Literacy Camps would not be possible without the dedication of camp counsellors. Working as a camp counsellor develops a range of skills and experiences that increase an individual's employability or academic prospects beyond the summer. Here is what we heard from our Community Coordinator, National Indigenous Programs who started at United for Literacy as a camp counsellor in Ontario:

"In 2012 I had the opportunity to be a **camp counsellor** for the Literacy Summer Camps in **Bearskin Lake First Nation** and **Fort Severn First Nation**. It was an experience of a lifetime! I decided to apply for the position because I was taking Indigenous Studies (then Native Studies) in university, knowing I was going to be switching over to a Mental Health diploma program in the fall. **I wanted to know what it was like on fly-in reserves in Ontario and understand the full scope of barriers facing many different people.** While I was in these communities I had a great time, meeting people, running literacy camps and enjoying the sceneries of the land. I was able to explore culture, and was able to make connections that I still have today. **I used my love for literacy and this experience for a decade in mental health work settings and was able to help many people who had made the transition into urban life.**



Arriving in Northern Ontario



Enjoying the view!

In this past year I was at a crossroads with where I wanted my career to go. I had opened my own business of a indigenous pop-up bookshop but needed something more and I happen to stumbled upon a job at United for Literacy. It was perfect, working with literacy and supporting indigenous people across the country...**Being able to work in the organization that helped create a strong foundation for my career after a decade is a dream come true.** I am so grateful for all of my experiences with this organization and how my first summer job with them has had such a powerful ripple effect in my life."

SUSTAINABILITY: THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF CAMPS

Long-term Effects on Communities

One of the wonderful things about Summer Literacy Camps is that they help communities develop the infrastructure and tools they need to eventually run camps on their own, with decreased support from United for Literacy. We feel privileged to be welcomed into communities to host camps, but we are equally thrilled when communities tell us that they are now ready to run Summer Literacy Camps on their own. The transition to camps run by the community is part of Summer Literacy Camp's sustainability model. **As communities transition to running camps on their own, United for Literacy continues to provide infrastructural support and staff training, as well as books and learning kits. Many community-run camps are not strictly literacy camps but rather culturally grounded programs that foster an environment that prevents summer learning loss.**

This transition took place this year in several communities in British Columbia. We have run camps across British Columbia for more than 10 years. **This year, Wet'suwet'en First Nation and Saik'uz First Nation with the support of Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS) ran camps on their own for the first time. United for Literacy offered training to staff at CSFS and offered supplies to run the camp.** We have heard from partner communities that it was the presence of United for Literacy in their communities for so many years that allowed them to develop the capacity they needed to sustain camps on their own—now and in the future. We couldn't be happier for our friends in British Columbia!



Stellat'en First Nation, British Columbia, community guest teaching the campers how to play the traditional game, Lahal

LETTER OF SUPPORT



To: To Whom it May Concern

From: G. Tyrone MacPherson

Director of Education, Sturgeon Lake First Nation

Date: August 16, 2023

Re: Summer Literacy Camp

As the Director of Education for our community of Sturgeon Lake, I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and support to both United for Literacy and our local staff.

This summer, in partnership with United for Literacy, we hosted a three week Literacy Camp with a focus on aboriginal children. We were successfully able to deliver an engaging three week program for over 80 of our elementary students. Parents and students alike were appreciative of the chance to be part of the camp.

In closing, I want to recognize the support from United for Literacy and the hard work of our staff, some of whom gave up summer holidays to make this happen. This was an excellent initiative and we look forward to our continued partnership.

Respectfully,

G. Tyrone MacPherson
Director of Education
Sturgeon Lake First Nation

LETTER OF SUPPORT

Tursujuq Park, Umiujaq, Québec, Canada, J0M 1Y0

Frontier College / Summer Literacy Camp

35 Jackes Avenue

Toronto, Ontario, Canada



To whom it may concern,

We would like to express our pleasure and gratitude to work with the literacy summer camp kids this year. It was awesome to collaborate with Al & Saina and give the kids the opportunity to plan and read around the park. We also invited an elder for some story reading one day to get deeper into the Inuit culture.

We saw that the kids of Umiujaq community really enjoy to participate in the literacy camp and also spending time at Park Tursujuq.

We believe Tursujuq Park is a pillar in the nature education & outdoors activities planning. We hope we can plan more activities for next year literacy summer camp for kids, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Bobby Alec Tooktoo
Tursujuq Park Director
P.O. BOX 9, Umiujaq , J0M 1Y0
Tel: (819) 331-5454
Email: btooktoo@krg.ca

Anna-Kim Pagé Cornforth
Tursujuq Park Visitor Experience Officer
P.O. BOX 9, Umiujaq , J0M 1Y0
Tel: (819) 331-5454
Email: akpcornforth@krg.ca

LETTER OF SUPPORT



MARTEN FALLS FIRST NATION #65

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 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

August 4, 2023

Dear United Literacy Reading Program

Re: 2023 Nadleh Whut'en Literacy Reading Program

I am pleased to write this letter supporting the 2023 Nadleh Whut'en Literacy Reading Program to the United Literacy Program.

Marlene and Renata are matriarchs in our community and balhats, as they both hold cultural knowledge and teachings and are passionate about mentoring our younger generations. Having these two coordinating the Literacy and Reading camp has created a safe environment for the children to open up and engage in cultural education, literacy, and mathematics. The children often reviewed books covering our seasonal traditional foods and how important it is to preserve them for the upcoming year. They were taught how to make Bannock, the different types of berries and how to turn them into jam. The camp also included additional community service workers to introduce their profession to the children. I have had two children attend the camp and come home with plenty of reading and writing resources focused on cultural activities.

In conclusion, I fully support the Literacy Reading program's efforts to ensure our children stay consistent with reading and writing throughout the summer months.

If you have any questions, please call the Nadleh Whut'en Administration Building at 250-690-7211 ext. 108. Or via email at atheathcliff@nadleh.ca

Sincerely,



Ashley Heathcliff

Councillor, Nadleh Whut'en Indian Band

CONCLUSION

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 and more engaged citizens, reduced poverty, and an improved quality of life.

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

See you next summer!



Smiles all around in Makkovik, Newfoundland and Labrador!



Learning together with firefighter guest speaker in Kenora, Northern Ontario

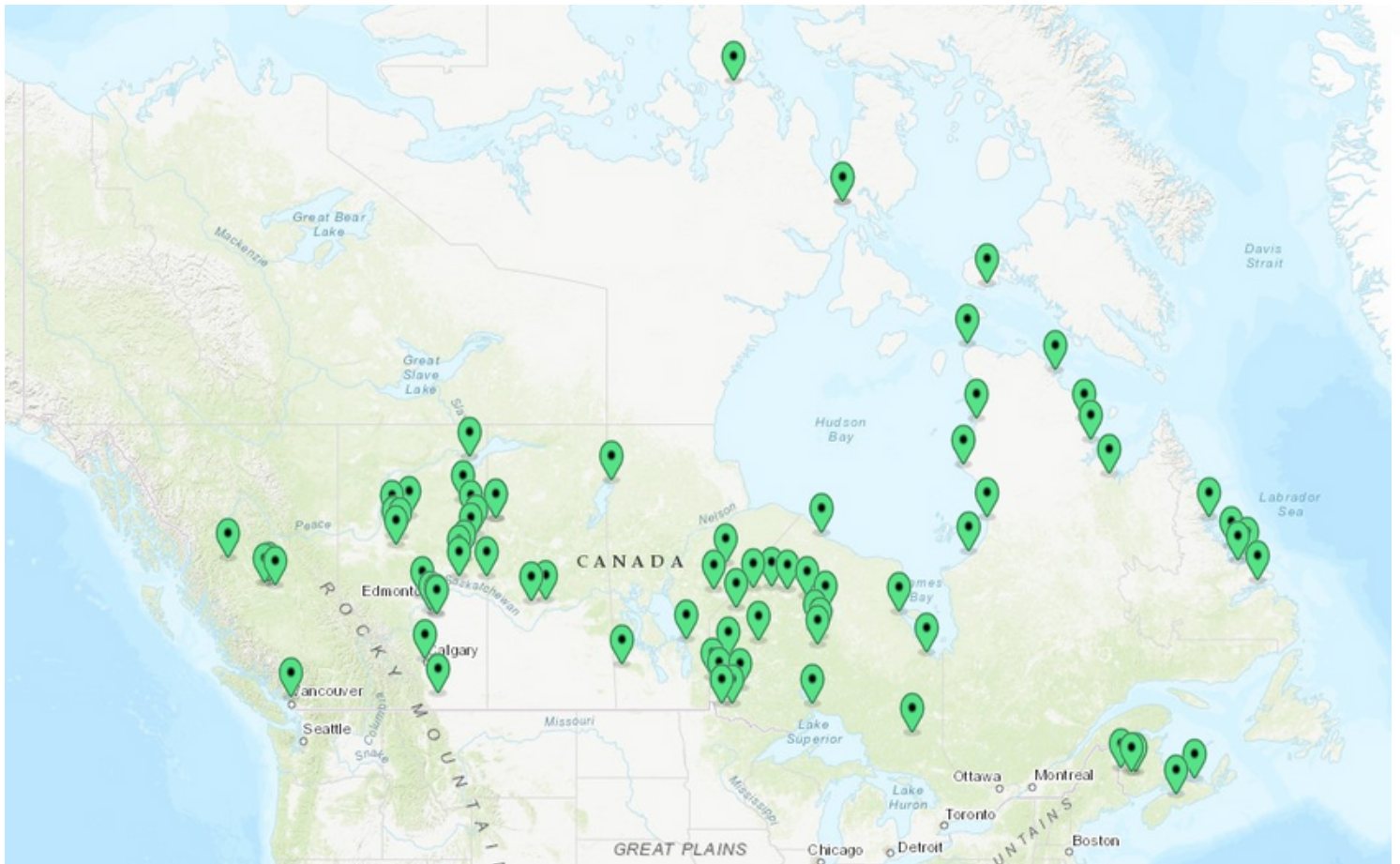
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- [3] Government of Canada. (2022, March 23). *Youth unemployment in Canada, Germany, Ireland, and the United Kingdom in times of COVID-19*. Retrieved from Statistics Canada: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2022003/article/00003-eng.htm>



**Learners heading on a walk
in Sipekne'katik First Nation, Nova Scotia**

Appendix A: 2023 Camp Communities



Communities that hosted camps across the country

81 Communities

8 Provinces

2 Territories

Camp Locations Continued

Alberta (21)

Anzac
Beaver Lake Cree Nation
Cadotte Lake Cold Lake First
Nation
Conklin Métis
Ermineskin Cree Nation
Fort Chipewyan Métis
Fort McKay First Nation
Gift Lake First Nation
Goodfish Lake First Nation
Grouard
Heart Lake First Nation
Janvier
Kainai Nation
Lethbridge – St. Paul School
Loon River First Nation
Ma-Me-O Beach
Paul First Nation
Peavine Metis Settlement
Samson Cree Nation
Tsuut'ina Nation

British Columbia (4)

Carrier Sekani Family Services
(Wet'suwet'en First Nation &
Saik'uz First Nation)
Nadleh Whut'en First Nation
Squamish First Nation
Stellat'en First Nation

Manitoba (5)

Bloodvein First Nation
Lac Brochet
Manto Sipi Cree, God's River
St. Theresa Point First Nation
Waywayseecappo First Nation

New Brunswick (3)

Bilijk (Kingsclear) First Nation
Sitansisk (St. Mary's) First Nation
Wotstak (Woodstock) First Nation

Nunatsiavut (Newfoundland and Labrador (5)

Hopedale
Makkovik
Nain
Postville
Rigolet

Nova Scotia (2)

Pictou Landing First Nation
Sipekne'katik First Nation

Nunavut (4)

Kinngait
Naujaat
Rankin Inlet
Taloyoak

Ontario (22)

Attawapiskat First Nation
Bearskin Lake First Nation
Big Grassy First Nation
Cat Lake First Nation
Eabametoong First Nation
Eagle Lake First Nation
Fort Severn First Nation
Kasabonika Lake First Nation
Kenora
Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig (KI)
Marten Falls First Nation
Mattagami First Nation
Moose Cree First Nation

Municipality of Greenstone
Neskantaga First Nation
Onigaming First Nation
Sachigo Lake First Nation
Sandy Lake First Nation
Slate Falls First Nation
Wabaseemoong Independent
Nations
Webequie First Nation
Whitesand First Nation

Saskatchewan (3)

Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation
Clearwater River Dene Nation
Sturgeon Lake First Nation

Quebec - Nunavik (12)

Akulivik
Aupaluk
Inukjuaq
Ivujivik
Kangiarsujuaq
Kangirsuk
Kuujuuaq
Kuujuarapik
Puvirnituaq
Quaqtaq
Tasiujaq
Umiujaq



EST. 1899

United for Literacy Litt ratie 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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