

OUR SUMMER IN

Northern Ontario



SUMMER LITERACY CAMPS

In partnership with Indigenous communities

2024 Report

Prepared by



EST. 1899

United for Literacy
Littératie Ensemble

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**Financial Literacy Workshop for
Campers and their families**

Acknowledgments

This year, United for Literacy was excited to partner with **25 communities in Ontario for Summer Literacy Camps**, delivering both fully staffed camps and supporting communities through book deliveries and learning kits. We are thankful to our partners who facilitated our presence, and we are especially grateful to the campers and adults who participated in camp activities for another summer to remember!

Literacy is a community endeavor—it takes a team!

We would also like to recognize our funders and partners. Your support was felt, even from afar, throughout the season. **This year, United for Literacy's summer program in Ontario was delivered with support from our following partners:**

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
First Book Canada
Government of Ontario
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 Classrooms Care
Tachane Foundation Inc.
TD Bank Group
Wasaya Airways



United for Literacy recognizes 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.

The Lieutenant Governor of Ontario



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

November 01, 2024

Dear Friends at United for Literacy,

It is a pleasure to extend my warmest support to United for Literacy and the Lieutenant Governor's Indigenous Reading Camps. Each year, these camps offer young people not only a gateway to the world of reading but also a unique opportunity to celebrate their identity, culture, and roots. Working in partnership with Indigenous communities, you provide children across Northern Ontario with a safe and inspiring space where they can build confidence, explore curiosity, and develop resilience.

This year's success reflects your organization's dedication to uplifting young minds and empowering Indigenous youth to dream with courage. By unlocking the transformative power of literacy, your team equips each child with the tools to forge their own path and embrace a lifelong love of learning. These experiences go far beyond typical summer camps; they are life-changing moments that inspire hope and create lasting connections for future generations.

À titre de représentante de la Couronne en Ontario, je vous remercie pour votre engagement dynamique, qui insuffle un sentiment de fierté et d'accomplissement auprès des jeunes, de leurs familles et de leurs communautés. Votre travail est remarquable. De tout cœur, mes remerciements à toutes les personnes impliquées pour leur précieux dévouement. Je vous souhaite bonne continuation dans tous vos projets d'avenir et j'espère avoir l'occasion de participer à l'un de vos camps de lecture, l'été prochain.

Salutations cordiales,

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

Edith Dumont

Camp in Numbers

United for Literacy was proud to support learners in **25 communities** through a range of enriching summer learning activities as well as book and learning kit distributions.



Sharing stories and camp activities



Fun with science activities



Campers making a healthy snack

Highlights from our 2024 camp season include:

- We reached **540 children** through camps across **Ontario**.
- We delivered Summer Literacy Camps by recruiting and training **27 Northern and 13 visiting counsellors** who organized a variety of community literacy and learning activities.
- We distributed **600 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!
- We distributed **2,624 high-quality, brand-new books**, including books by Indigenous authors.

“

“I love playing our morning word game.”
– Camper, Eagle Lake First Nation

“I was happy to hear [my son] enjoyed his day and he was excited to tell me he helped plan ideas of his interest.”
– Parent, Mattagami First Nation

“We are grateful that camp is back after not having camp since 2019.”
– Parent, Peawanuck First Nation

”

Ontario Camp Locations



Summer Literacy Camp locations across Ontario

This year, we were proud and honoured to work with 25 communities in Northern Ontario including:

- Attawapiskat First Nation
- Bearskin Lake First Nation
- Big Grassy First Nation
- Big Trout Lake First Nation/
Kitchenuhmaykoosib
Inninuwig
- Cat Lake First Nation
- Eabametoong First Nation
- Eagle Lake First Nation
- Fort Albany First Nation
- Fort Severn First Nation
- Kasabonika Lake First Nation
- Longlac
- Marten Falls First Nation
- Mattagami First Nation
- Moose Cree First Nation
- Muskrat Dam First Nation
- Nakina
- Neskantaga First Nation
- Onigaming First Nation
- Peawanuck First Nation
- Sachigo Lake First Nation
- Sandy Lake First Nation
- Slate Falls First Nation
- Wabaseemoong
Independent Nations
- Webequie First Nation
- Whitesand First Nation

We hope to continue to work with these communities for years to come, providing more children with high-impact support as they move along their learning journeys!

Activity Spotlight

Our camp turns learning into an adventure! Camp activities cultivate the curiosity we find in each of our campers. By the end of the summer, they are lifelong explorers of knowledge, ready to take on the world with the skills they gained and the fun memories they've made. Everything campers learn is culturally grounded and extends campers' sense of community.

In Ontario, campers:

- Welcomed **14 visitors** who came to participate in or host a scheduled camp activity.
- Learned from **40 guest presenters** who taught campers more about their field of expertise.
- Hosted **276 parents** to show them—in real-time—what Summer Literacy Camps are all about!
- Facilitated daily individual and group **reading; literacy games; science, technology, math, and engineering (STEM)** activities and experiments; **field trips** to local points of interest; **arts and crafts**; and more!
- Introduced **63 Let's Talk Science activities** to campers as part of **10,798 minutes** spent on STEM learning
- Spent **16,630 minutes** on reading and **19,336 minutes** on physical and outdoor activities

Some of our community-based activities included:



**Campers crafting
"space landers"**

Space Days

Campers loved camp's space-themed activities. After the Let's Talk Science activity that taught campers to make "space landers," campers continued to be creative and chose space-related books in the library. Campers even made planet postcards and wrote home from the planet of their choice, which incorporated writing skills into their arts and crafts.

Cultural Learning

Camp counsellors work closely with community members to organize cultural learning opportunities for learners. In this picture, campers joined in on a water walk from Crow Lake to Lake of The Woods, hearing stories about local lakes.



**Campers enjoying the
water walk**

Impact Story

In addition to running Summer Literacy Camps for children during the day, camp counsellors and United for Literacy staff offered extra evening support to campers' families and other community members, ensuring that camp benefits communities holistically. For example, in Sandy Lake First Nation, counsellors and staff set up a Family Financial Literacy Workshop to help campers' caregivers learn more about the financial resources available to them.

As part of this workshop, United for Literacy staff travelled to Sandy Lake First Nation. Along with camp counsellors, they delivered hands-on, high-impact financial literacy programming. **The shared resources were previously developed by United for Literacy to meet the needs of individual learners because we know that there is no "one size fits all" when it comes to learning.** For example, the "Parent Engagement Guide" translated into Oji-Cree was included in a resource package shared with community leadership for ongoing use. We know that financial literacy is an educational priority in Ontario, and we hope that by supporting this programming for families, our work helps set up children, youth, and adults for long-term success.

Beyond the financial literacy component, this program also gave participants a chance to connect with one another and with United for Literacy staff and counsellors. **After the workshop, staff, counsellors, and parents all worked together to prepare and enjoy a pizza supper!**



Prepping pizza for community workshop participants

Reflections From Campers

Collecting feedback from campers, parents, and their communities is an essential part of our program design and delivery—which contributes to program improvements each year! To understand the successes and opportunities of our programming in 2024, United for Literacy surveyed camp program participants and stakeholders including parents.

This year, in Ontario:



Campers reading together

- **92%** of parents surveyed said that **their child is reading more since attending camp**
- **98%** of parents said that **camp helped prepare their child to return to school**
- **99%** of parents said that **camp was valuable for their community**

“

We are grateful that camp is back after not having camp since 2019.

– Parent, Peawanuck First Nation

”



Camp nature walk

- **90%** of campers said they **considered themselves to be a “good reader” or “sometimes a good reader”** after camp
- **80%** said **reading is important**, and **87%** said that **they liked reading after attending camp**
- **97%** said they **liked or sometimes liked science** after attending camp
- When asked what they **liked best about camp**, **43%** said **“reading,”** the most popular choice by far

“

I'm excited to read and be with my friends. I'm proud when I get to put a sticker on the rainbow when I finish a book.

– Camper, Nakina

”

Youth Mobilization and Capacity Building

Summer Literacy Camps contribute to the local economy through wages for local staff, honoraria to community members, and the purchase of materials, food, and services in communities. Each summer we offer employment opportunities for youth where the camps operate. United for Literacy prioritizes offering these opportunities to local youth from the community.

Working as a camp counsellor and leading the day-to-day operations of running a busy camp develops a range of skills and experiences, from communication to time management. The training offered by United for Literacy further strengthens these skills.

The commitment and dedication that counsellors show is nothing short of inspiring. One of our counsellors in Onigaming First Nation has been working with Summer Literacy Camps for 10 consecutive years! **This summer in Ontario, United for Literacy recruited and trained 27 local camp counsellors and 13 visiting counsellors.**



Camp staff setting up camp registration booth

“

“Kids told us they love the baking we do at camp.”

- Counsellors, Nakina

“I liked how everyone was happy and listened to each other. It is very nice that I was with everyone! I liked reading books!! And I want to say a big thank you to [counsellors] Cassie and Lou Emmy for working so hard to make this camp a memory. I also liked how everyone helps their friends. This camp is super fun.”

- Camper, Nakina

”

We hope that many of the counsellors who participate in our Summer Literacy Camps today will become the leaders of tomorrow! Here is what camp staff in Ontario said about their camp experience:

- **96%** said that **camp provided them with a positive work experience**
- **98%** said that **camp helped campers strengthen their confidence and self-esteem**
- **98%** said that **camp provided an enriching learning experience for campers**

Letters of Support

Each year, select communities 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 2024 Summer Literacy Camps.

Sandy Lake First Nation

September 17, 2024

Cathy Mehagan
Regional Manager – Northern Ontario
United for Literacy / Litt ratie Ensemble
Suite #5 – 895 Tungsten Street
Thunder Bay, ON, P7B 6H2

Dear Ms. Mehagan,

Subject: Support for the Lieutenant Governors Summer Literacy Camp Program

I am writing on behalf of the Sandy Lake Board of Education to extend our support for the Lieutenant Governors Summer Literacy Camp Program facilitated by United for Literacy / Litt ratie Ensemble. This program is instrumental in fostering literacy among young students in our region, which is a foundational goal of our educational efforts.

The summer months provide a critical opportunity to continue educational engagement, and your program plays a vital role in this period by ensuring that literacy skills are not only maintained but also strengthened. We are particularly appreciative of your commitment to making literacy both accessible and enjoyable, thereby promoting a lasting impact on the students' academic and personal growth.

Our board recognizes and values the positive outcomes your program has consistently achieved. We endorse your methods and the significant contributions you make towards literacy advancement. By supporting this initiative, we reaffirm our commitment to the educational development of our community's youth.

Please consider this letter a formal endorsement of the Lieutenant Governors Summer Literacy Camp Program for inclusion in your annual reporting to funders. We are eager to continue our support and collaboration on this and other similar initiatives aimed at enhancing the educational experiences of our students.

Thank you for your relentless dedication to improving literacy across Northern Ontario. We look forward to our continued partnership and the future successes of our joint endeavors.

With warm regards,



SANDY LAKE BOARD OF EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 8
SANDY LAKE, ONTARIO
P0V 1V0

Victor Rae
Director of Education

Email: vixrae@hotmail.com
Cell: (807) 738 6484 / (807) 214-5720
Phone: (807) 774-1135/1137/1089
Toll Free: (800) 878-2913
Fax: (807) 774-1166

Letters of Support (cont'd)

Eagle Lake First Nation



MIGISI SAHGAIGAN SCHOOL

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

Thursday, September 19, 2024

Via Email - cmehagan@unitedforliteracy

United for Literacy

Suite #5 – 895 Tungsten Street
Thunder Bay ON, P7B 6H2

Attention: Cathy Mehagan, Regional Manager

Dear Ms. Mehagan,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my strong support for the success of the summer literacy camp for the students in our community. As we know, literacy is a foundational skill that plays a crucial role in a child's academic and personal development. A dedicated summer program focused on literacy can offer transformative benefits for our young learners.

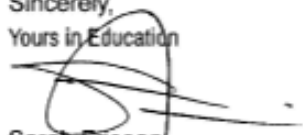
The summer camp staff were able to provide engaging, hands-on activities and instruction. The camp has helped reinforce reading and writing skills, ensuring that children return to school ready to learn and succeed.

Additionally, the camp has promoted social-emotional development. In such a supportive environment, the children were able to build friendships, collaborate on projects, and develop teamwork skills. Literacy activities often encourage discussions and sharing, helping children to articulate their thoughts and feelings in a safe space.

The summer literacy camp helped bridge educational gaps and created a more equitable learning environment. Tailoring the program to meet the diverse needs of participants ensured that all children, regardless of their background, had the opportunity to thrive.

In conclusion, the summer literacy camp is a vital resource for our community, fostering not only literacy skills but also a passion for learning that lasts a lifetime. I wholeheartedly support this initiative and urge you to consider the positive impact it can continue to have on our children. Miigwech.

Sincerely,
Yours in Education


Sarah Friesen
Principal

Letters of Support (cont'd)

Marten Falls First Nation



MARTEN FALLS FIRST NATION #65

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

October 15, 2024

Via Email - cmehagan@unitedforliteracy

United for Literacy
Suite #5895 Tungsten Street
Thunder Bay ON, P7B 6H2

Attention: Cathy Mehagan, Regional Manager

Dear Ms. Mehagan,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my strong support for the success of the summer literacy camp for the students in our community. As we know, literacy is a foundational skill that plays a crucial role in a child's academic and personal development. A dedicated summer program focused on literacy can offer transformative benefits for our young learners.

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In conclusion, the summer literacy camp is a vital resource for our community, fostering not only literacy skills but also a passion for learning that lasts a lifetime. I support this initiative and urge you to consider the positive impact it can continue to have on our children.

Miigwech.

Sincerely,

Susanna Baxter
Education Director for Marten Falls First Nation
Cell: 807-632-8386

See you next year!

As much as we love the summer holidays, without intervention prolonged school closures leave many students vulnerable to **Summer Learning Loss**. Research shows that a lot of the education gaps among students occur over the summer. As some students gain knowledge or maintain what they learned in the previous school year, others may fall behind. In fact, the average student loses up to 3 months of what they learned in the previous year. We can confidently say that through the Summer Literacy Camps, 500 children gained skills and became more engaged in learning. **Together, we are securing a more equitable future in more ways than one!**

**Thank you for being our literacy partners!
See you next summer!**



EST. 1899

**United for Literacy
Littératie Ensemble**