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United for Literacy
Litt ratie Ensemble
formerly Frontier College

SUMMER LITERACY PROGRAMS

**IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH LOCAL
COMMUNITIES**



Manitoba

2023

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Thank
You!**

In the summer of 2023, United for Literacy (formerly Frontier College) was honoured to partner with eight communities to deliver Summer Literacy Programs in Manitoba. 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:



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

UNITED FOR CHANGE

WHY SUMMER PROGRAMS MATTER

United for Literacy has a long history of offering summer learning in partnership with Indigenous communities. Throughout the summer months, we have designed Summer Programs to support Indigenous communities on their own terms—we have been welcomed into communities across Canada to deliver Summer Literacy Camps and other summer programs that get kids reading—and keep them learning and having fun!

Summer Literacy Programs provide children with the support they need to improve their reading, writing, and math skills, as well as develop a greater sense of self-confidence and a positive relationship to learning. We have immense privilege to be working in close collaboration with our community partners, enabling constant renewal of best practices and knowledge. United for Literacy is mindful of its responsibilities and community relationships as a non-Indigenous program partner and invited guest. 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.

Summer Literacy Programs are designed 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 local employment opportunities for local youth during summer months**
- ✔ **Build interest and confidence in reading writing, math, and science following the program**



Learners at St. Theresa Point First Nation



Learners at Elmwood

2023 OVERVIEW

This summer, in Manitoba we were honoured to be the literacy partner of choice for **eight communities** to provide safe, fun, and foundational literacy programming and materials to **807 local children aged 5-12**.

In 2023 United for Literacy partnered with **eight communities** to run Summer Literacy Programs:

- **St. Theresa Point First Nation**
- **Waywayseecappo First Nation**
- **Bloodvein First Nation**
- **Brokenhead Ojibway Nation**
- **Lac Brochet**
- **Elmwood Community Resource Centre**
- **Manto Sipi Cree Nation, God's River (Book Donation)**
- **Peguis First Nation (Book Distribution)**

Through these Summer Programs we:

- Distributed **2,388** high-quality, brand-new books, including books by Indigenous authors.
- Donated **143** literacy kits to families in the partner communities. Literacy kits are one of the exciting innovations we developed during COVID-19. Each literacy kit comes with a workbook – designed by our staff with learners' specific needs in mind– as well as brand-new children's books and craft supplies.
- Welcomed **441** parents and community visitors to our Summer Programs.
- Hosted **5** guest presenters.

Fun program activities included building a maze, creating a recycled robot, musical chairs, learning a cultural dance – and more!



Ready for program at St. Theresa Point First Nation



STEM tower-building activity in Elmwood

"We are proud to partner with United for Literacy and look forward to continuing our collaboration in the years to come. Together, we are nurturing the leaders and changemakers of tomorrow, providing the children with the tools and experiences they need to succeed in all aspects of life."

- Community Partner, Bloodvein First Nation

IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Program evaluation is an important part of program design and planning. While we know each Summer Program is unique, at United for Literacy we also recognize the benefits of looking at the bigger picture to understand the Impact of our programs. Here's what learners and their parents said in Manitoba In 2023.

What kids said:

- **94% of learners** said they considered themselves to be **"good readers"** after the Summer Program
- **88% said reading is important**, and **82% said** that the Summer Program made them or kept them **more interested in reading**
- **88% said that they liked math** after attending the Summer Program, and **94% said the same for science**

What parents and caregivers said:

- **91% of parents** said that **their child is reading more** since attending the Summer Program
- **100% of parents** said that the Summer Program **helped prepare their child to return to school**
- **91% of parents** said that the Summer Program **was valuable** for their child, family, and community

"I learned about different countries like South Korea and their cultures!" – Learner, Elmwood

"I love super heroes! I made my mask using my favourite colours!"

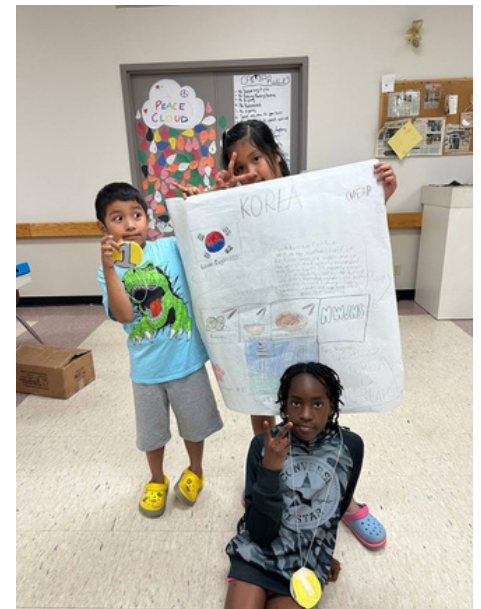
– Learner, Brokenhead Ojibway Nation

"Thank you for the free books for our family!"

– Parent, Brokenhead Ojibway Nation



Activity time in Brokenhead Ojibway Nation



Learning about countries and cultures in Elmwood

IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

We recognize that identity, history, and community are key principles of learning. [2] Community learning is a key aspect of programming –Elders, community members, and local Summer Program counsellors make each learning environment reflective of and relevant to learners’ lives. They are the reason that our program is so impactful, interesting, and inspiring!

In Manitoba, Elders, and community members led **5 special presentations** at the Summer Programs. Parents, family members, and community members visited to read a book, play a game, or just observe. Their presence helped celebrate learners’ achievements and made each program a unique experience:

- Introduced **46** Let’s Talk Science activities to learners as part of STEM learning
- **1,740** minutes were spent in reading, **1,445** minutes were spent on physical and outdoor activities
- **441** visits were made by families and community members, where they took part in the programs by reading books, discussing stories, participating in arts and crafts, and choosing a book to take home.

In Manitoba, other highlights included:

- Kite building – After watching a short tutorial, the learners worked in groups of 2-3 to assemble, decorate, and test their own kites outside.
- Origami making – Groups used a single paper to make animals like cats and frogs. They had instructions of varying difficulty, showing how well they could follow steps with little to no help.



Making and flying kites in Elmwood



Origami activity in Elmwood

IMPACT: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

AN ELDER'S STORY



United for Literacy led a weekly Elders and Tots program at Brokenhead Ojibway Nation. We gathered at the Elder's Lodge to read a story and do an activity with pre-school-age children, their families, and the Elders in the area. We had the privilege of hearing from one Elder about why she strongly believes the work that United for Literacy is doing needs to continue in her community - it helps people reach their literacy goals in ways that work with them. Here is what she had to say:

"When I went to school, things were so different. I went to day school, and it was some of the worst memories that I carry with me. We would be told to read out loud, and if we stuttered or didn't pronounce a word right, we would be hit with a wooden ruler, slapped in the face, or publicly embarrassed by sitting in the corner of the room for the rest of the day. Every time I think about reading, writing, or school I block it out because it wasn't a good experience for me back then. Teaching was done in such a wrong way, and it was a struggle for many of us to learn and think about.

But when I see your program and how you teach the children by encouraging them, making them feel comfortable, and showing them it is ok to make mistakes, it makes me happy to see there are good programs available to help teach children in a positive way. I really think this organization is so great and much needed in our community of Brokenhead. The community of Brokenhead has one of the lowest-ranked literacy comprehensions in Canada [across Canada, Indigenous people score lower in literacy and numeracy than non-Indigenous populations][3], so we really benefit from having you come in and help our children with learning and reading.



Participants at Elders and Tots, Brokenhead Ojibway Nation

It's hard to un-do the trauma that past teaching ways have ingrained in us, so to see you come in and encourage literacy in such a fun, safe, new way is such a breath of fresh air. Good on you, and the whole organization! Keep it up!"



IMPACT: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

A LEARNER'S STORY



One of the best aspects of United for Literacy's Summer Programs is getting to know the learners and watching how they grow and develop over the course of the program. Anna is one such special learner. Here is what she and her counsellors had to say about her summer with United for Literacy in Elmwood:

"Anna is a bright, friendly 12-year-old who is always willing to learn something new. It was a joy to watch her gradually become more comfortable around the kids her age, as well as learn how to interact with the younger campers. Although she already had plenty, she found confidence in what she does and who she is here."

Anna and her brother, Andy, were at Elmwood for our July and August sessions, and we loved having them both times. Anna's literacy and numeracy have both seen a change for the better, and we constantly had to find new ways to challenge her. She always lent a helping hand to those who needed it and encouraged others to do better every day. Anna's favourite activities involved group work. Particularly, when the learners were tasked with making a boat that could hold weight using cardboard and other materials. She liked brainstorming with her group and 'mixing ideas to make it work.' She learned how to work as part of a team and how to use what they had to make the boat a success. Their group then went on to being able to carry the most weight out of all the other teams!

Anna was able to make lifelong friends and fond memories. She felt safe in this space and was always happy to be here. 'This program was the best one I've been to, and I've been to three others. The first day was fun, right away,' she told the counsellors."



Anna (right) and Andy with their STEM activity: learning the basics of chromatography using coffee filters

IMPACT: IN THEIR OWN WORDS A COUNSELLOR'S STORY



Harnette has worked as a counsellor in Elmwood for years. She spoke about her experiences, the valuable lessons she has learned, and the positive impact the Summer Programs have on her career path. Here is what she had to say:

“Although my job is to help these kids learn, I’ve learned so much about myself through working here. No job is easy, but I didn’t know how hard being a teacher is until I realized I wanted to be one for myself. It’s not easy to pull yourself together, sometimes on your worst days, to be in a room of loud kids for 7 hours. Not to mention the amount of planning, time and care it takes to create a curriculum for the weeks to come. It’s difficult thinking of games and activities that the kids will both enjoy and learn from. But when I come in every morning and see the kids, I remember the reasons I’ve chosen to work here for almost 3 years now.

I’m incredibly lucky to have found a work environment that not only accepts my identities but also celebrates them. I love that I get to feel fully comfortable in my identity as an immigrant, visible minority, and member of the queer community. I love knowing that sharing my struggles can help this next generation with theirs. Best of all, I get to make sure that everyone that comes to the program feels the same way—the learners, the counsellors, and volunteers.

I get to see the impact I have on the campers, sometimes in real time. I love seeing a kid’s face light up after finally understanding something they’d been struggling with. I love reading to these kids and hearing them read back to us. I love seeing the kids slowly learn how to help each other and themselves. I love the tiny community we’ve built this summer. I love that I found out I love teaching, and it’s all because I volunteered with United for Literacy.

The more that I come to care about teaching, I realize there’s always more that I could be doing. I’m constantly learning new, better ways to teach. I’m learning about different cultures, circumstances, and backgrounds. Because of that, my motivation to become a better teacher and person increases. This job is hard. It challenges me in ways I didn’t know existed. It’s pushed me beyond limits I didn’t know I had. This job is hard, and I couldn’t be happier that it found me.”



Harnette (left) worked with learners to create a cardboard maze.

IMPACT: IN THEIR OWN WORDS AN ELMWOOD STORY



United for Literacy counsellors work hard to keep learners engaged and challenged while having fun. With craft supplies and enthusiasm, anything can be possible! Here is what an Elmwood counsellor had to say about their favourite activity this summer:

"My most memorable experience this summer was when the kids were tasked with making a boat that will hold weight and float on water. They were given materials such as cardboard, ping pong balls, and tape. On top of being very fun for everyone, I think we all learned something. The kids learned how to work in a team to get things done under a time limit and how to creatively find solutions to their problems, while the counsellors learned how to lead the learners to a solution instead of doing it for them."



Making boats in Elmwood



Elmwood learners worked in groups of two to build structures out of spaghetti and marshmallows



Teaching meditation in Elmwood

CAPACITY BUILDING

We know and research confirms that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased long-term unemployment risks among youth. [4] Local hiring at Summer Literacy Programs helps to leverage local talent and support community capacity building so that communities are fully equipped to continue the program into the future, with or without direct support from United for Literacy.

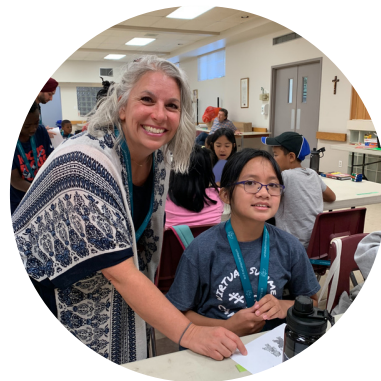
This summer in Manitoba, we recruited **12** literacy workers and counsellors. We worked with **1** counsellor who was hired by the Elmwood Community Resource Centre. United for Literacy trained each of these counsellors. These trainings covered topics such as: roles and responsibilities, teamwork, literacy basics, numeracy, safety and risk management, behavior management, and evaluation and reporting. 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!



St. Theresa Point First Nation
Counsellors and United for Literacy
staff



Counsellor and Reader,
Brokenhead Ojibway Nation



United for Literacy staff
member and Reader, Elmwood

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

- **96%** said that the Summer Program provided them with a **positive work experience**
- **99%** said that the Summer Program helped learners **strengthen their confidence and self-esteem**
- **98%** said that the Summer Program provided an **enriching learning experience for participants**

"Being a part of the Summer Literacy Program was an incredible experience. Participants were eager to learn and participate in various literacy activities. The curriculum was well-structured, focusing on reading comprehension, writing skills, and fostering a love for reading. Watching the children gain confidence in their abilities was truly rewarding. I look forward to being a part of this program in the future."

- Literacy Summer Outreach Worker, Waywayseecappo First Nation

CONCLUSION

Over 60 years, United for Literacy has partnered with Indigenous communities to co-create initiatives various Summer Literacy Programs that worked with the partner communities. The growth and evolution of these programs 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 a higher quality of life.

United for Literacy looks forward to offering the Summer Programs in Manitoba 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!



Climate Inventors activity in Elmwood



Learners at Brokenhead Ojibway Nation

CITATIONS

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- [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] Deloitte (2020). *An Economic Overview of Children's Literacy in Canada*. <https://childrensliteracy.ca/cclf/media/PDFs/Deloitte-Report-An-Economic-Overview-of-Children-s-Literacy-in-Canada.pdf>. Accessed on October 31, 2023.
- [4] 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>



Summer Program Activities in arts, science and reading at Bloodvein First Nation



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United for Literacy
Littératie Ensemble

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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