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United for Literacy
Littératie Ensemble

Summer Literacy Programs

In Partnership with Local Communities in Manitoba

2025 Report

Celebrating 20 Years of Summer Literacy Programs!



Elmwood learners and counsellors celebrating the Summer Literacy Program!

Prepared by United for Literacy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	PAGE 2
Acknowledgements	PAGE 3
Evolution of Summer Literacy Camps and Programs	PAGE 4
Program Highlights	PAGE 6
Program Highlights Continued	PAGE 7
Activity Spotlight: Waywayseecappo First Nation	PAGE 8
Activity Spotlight: Elmwood	PAGE 9
Activity Spotlight: Tadoule Lake First Nation	PAGE 10
Impact on Learners—Community Reflections	PAGE 11
Impact on Learners—Community Reflections Continued	PAGE 12
Youth Mobilization / Community Impact	PAGE 13
Letter of Support	PAGE 14
Conclusion	PAGE 15



Carberry Learners and Staff smiling after a great day of activities

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

United for Literacy would like to thank our 8 community partners for another great summer of literacy and learning with our Summer Literacy Programs. We are honoured to be warmly welcomed into communities from coast to coast to coast! We are grateful to the learners, families, Elders and community members who participated in summer activities—you make it all possible! Together, the 2025 Summer Literacy Program created lasting memories for everyone.

United for Literacy's Summer Literacy Programs in Manitoba were made possible through the generous support of our partners and funders:

- The McCain Foundation
- Manitoba Ministry of Education and Training
- Manitoba Ministry of Municipal Relations
- Rotary Club of Winnipeg
- Elmwood Community Resource Centre
- Chalmers Community Renewal Initiative
- Chalmers Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation
- Canada Summer Jobs

A special thanks to our national sponsors:



**TD READY
COMMITMENT**

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

**SCHOLASTIC
EDUCATION**



Evolution of Summer Literacy Camps and Programs

2025 marks the 20th anniversary of our Summer Literacy Camps! In 2005 the late Honorable James Bartleman asked United for Literacy to run the first camps in five fly-in First Nations communities. Since then, United for Literacy has worked with Indigenous communities across the country to keep kids learning and reading through the summer.

In Manitoba, United for Literacy runs Summer Literacy Camps and Summer Literacy Programs in different communities. The aim for both is to keep learners aged 5-12 interested in reading, writing, and math. Camps also help build greater self-confidence with learning, get campers outside, and are a place campers can build friendships. In 20 years of delivering Summer Literacy Camps, our vision and goals have remained straightforward:

- Promote a love of reading and learning
- Bring Indigenous knowledge, language, and traditions into literacy learning
- Increase the size of home libraries through the distribution of free books
- Reduce skill and knowledge loss, also known as Summer Learning Loss, during school closures



A learner in Elmwood working on a writing prompt!

Learners often enjoy taking a break from school in the summer. Unfortunately, this break can negatively impact their learning. The average student can lose up to three months of what they learned in the previous year[i] if they are not kept engaged in learning activities. This effect is more severe for children from low-income or underserved families[ii]. Camp activities get campers to use, not lose, what they learned during the previous school year.

United for Literacy understands that education and learning play a vital role in the processes of Reconciliation. As such, we have made it a priority in our new Strategic Plan. As an education-focused organization, we aim to learn from our shared history.

We are literacy experts but not experts in Indigenous literacies. Our partners have been willing to teach us and innovate with us. For that we are grateful. These partnerships have given us many opportunities to learn from both our successes and challenges. Thanks to feedback, we are able to appropriately incorporate intergenerational learning and teaching, local knowledge, stories, and histories into our literacy programs and activities.

United for Literacy has partnered with the Indigenous Evaluation Network (IEN) as part of a three-year project to assess 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. We want to learn what First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) communities think about the way we gather feedback. Some of our work over this first year of the project 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 and to conduct further community needs assessments. These assessments will form the basis of a culturally relevant evaluation tool in the coming years.

This year's devastating wildfires in Manitoba and Ontario meant not all camps could run as planned. We are thankful that many of our camp communities were safe from the wildfires. In these communities, camp continued as planned, with in-person activities.

Communities including Split Lake Cree Nation (MB) and Sandy Lake First Nation (ON) had to evacuate for their safety. In these areas, in-person camp could not go as planned. Instead, United for Literacy worked with our partners to find different options. These included offering free books and literacy kits to evacuated participants or rescheduling in-person programs to a better time. These solutions align both with community needs and with our philosophy—every place is a learning place.



Waywayseecappo First Nation learners enjoying the replica 17th century merchant ship at the Manitoba Museum

Program Highlights Continued

In our 7 partner communities across Manitoba this summer, United for Literacy's Summer Literacy Programs:

- Reached **1,077 learners** aged 5-12
- Supported community-led summer learning initiatives by providing materials and training to **15 counsellors hired within the community**
- Distributed **146 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!
- Distributed **1,806 high-quality, brand-new books**, including books by Indigenous authors, to help build home libraries and bring the fun of reading into learners' homes
- Hosted **11 guest presenters, 144 family members, and 211 community members** who engaged in meaningful intergenerational learning and sharing with learners
- Participated in **10 special events and field trips**
- Experimented with **40 Let's Talk Science** activities



Learners from Tadoule Lake First Nation (left), Elmwood (centre), and Bloodvein First Nation (right) show off creations and activities done over summer

Activity Spotlight: Waywayseecappo First Nation

Each day, learners and counsellors explored learning with a variety of fun, hands-on activities! Activities included daily reading, cooking, science experiments, literacy projects, and many more. Elders and community members were frequent visitors, sharing their unique experiences and encouraging learners in discovery and literacy.

Waywayseecappo First Nation Field Trip

The Waywayseecappo First Nation program staff planned a full day field trip to Winnipeg with all the learners. They spent the day engaging in educational tours of The Manitoba Museum and The Forks. Learners got to experience the immersive galleries and interactive exhibits to learn about history, nature and science! The field trip was the highlight of the program for both staff and youth.



Waywayseecappo First Nation learners visiting the Manitoba Museum

Chanesty, a program staff member, shared that “being a part of the Summer Literacy Program has been such a rewarding experience. Watching children grow in confidence with reading and writing has inspired me as much as it inspired them. The highlight for me was the field trip to Winnipeg seeing their excitement at the Manitoba Museum and the Forks market.”

In addition, many learners expressed their gratitude for this unique experience, sharing:

“I loved reading books and getting to take some home. My favourite part was going on the trip to Winnipeg. The museums were so cool!”

Activity Spotlight: Elmwood

Elmwood Learners Celebrate Multiculturalism

At Elmwood this summer, the varied backgrounds of Winnipeg youth and their families were celebrated by the learners. They spent time each day as a group working on a presentation for the “End of Summer Cultural Celebration”. Community members and the learner’s families were invited to learn about the cultures represented at the program. Newcomers were excited to share information about their home countries.



Learners in Elmwood sharing beautiful posters and interesting facts about their cultures

Our Elmwood learners were excited to share how they felt about the program with our counsellors:

“ —

“I liked all the fun friendships I was able to make here. We all had a lot of fun together and they were really funny!”

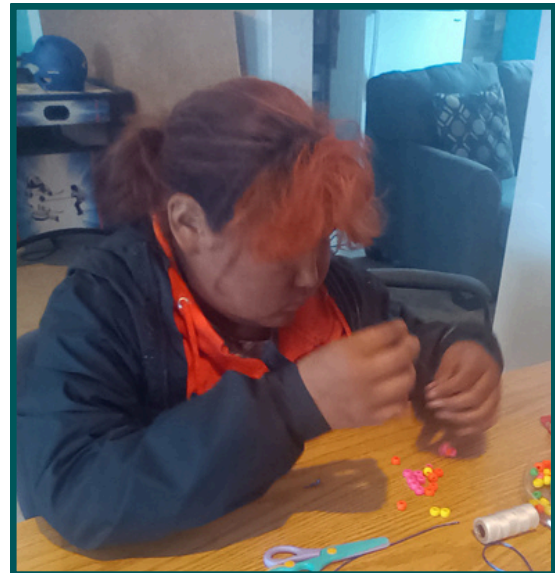
“ —

“The program has helped us read and write by doing the word unscrambles and the journal prompts. I already knew how to read and write but now I get excited about writing.”

Activity Spotlight: Tadoule Lake First Nation

Tadoule Lake First Nation Traditional Learning

In Tadoule Lake First Nation, counsellors and learners engaged in meaningful experiences that supported both traditional and academic learning. The learners received a hands-on lesson about traditional jewelry making and beading from a community Elder. In addition to learning about their community and art, the youth got to experience a hands-on demonstration about using the land and catching fish. They learned about the different types of fish in their local water and the different ways to use each part of the fish.



Learners working on their creations alongside staff and guest presenter!

Learners expressed how much the summer program meant to them by telling staff:

“

“It was so much fun! We got to read lots of stories, play games, and do crafts every day. Our favourite part was reading under the tent and making our own storybooks. It didn't even feel like school, it just felt like we were learning and having fun at the same time. We met new friends and can't wait to come back next summer!”

Impact on Learners Community Reflections

To make sure our Summer Literacy Program activities are reaching their goals, United for Literacy records how much time learners spend reading each day. We also note the kinds of fun learning activities they take part in.

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



Learner in Elmwood enjoying a good book



Learner in Bloodvein First Nation working on an "All About Me" literacy art activity

In 2025, learners in Manitoba spent an average of **80 minutes a day reading!**

“

—
“Before the program, I didn’t really like reading. Now I like it because we read stories together and the teacher helped us.”

—Learner, Waywayseecappo First Nation

Impact on Learners Community Reflections

United for Literacy collects feedback and surveys from learners, their families, and their communities. This input is key to improving the Summer Literacy Program. We want our literacy activities to remain a fun learning experience for all! This is what was said about the summer program in **Manitoba** this year:



Learners at St. Theresa Point First Nation playing a word game together

Here's what our learners said:

- **94%** of learners considered themselves to be a **"good reader"** after the Summer Program
- **95%** said **reading is important**
- **97%** said the Summer Program made them more interested in reading
- **82%** said that they **liked math** and **90%** said that they **liked science** after attending the Summer Program

Family and community members were just as eager to share their experiences with us:

“

“The literacy program has been a wonderful opportunity for my child. She came home every day excited to read, share new words, and talk about the activities. The field trip to Winnipeg gave her so many new experiences she would never have had otherwise.”

-Parent, Waywayseecappo First Nation

“

“Thank you so much for the extra book delivery. We are hosting our annual Treaty Day event and I've already had parents asking me if the book/activity booth will be at the event this year. The programming means a lot to our community, so thank you for helping us encourage our youth to read.”

-Community Partner, Bloodvein First Nation

Youth Mobilization Community Impact

Summer Literacy Programs help strengthen community capacity. Each summer, program staff and volunteers purchase materials, food, and services directly from community businesses.



*Elmwood Summer Program
Counsellors celebrating the bake sale!*

As an employer, United for Literacy aims to hire program staff directly from the area. This creates important employment opportunities to local youth.

This summer in Manitoba, United for Literacy recruited and trained **15 Summer Program counsellors locally**.

Counsellors receive training from United for Literacy. This helps youth develop the skills needed to run day-to-day operations. They gain hands-on experience in communication, time management, and creative problem-solving that can then be used in future jobs.

The unique personality of every counsellor means that, every year, new activities and projects are brought to learners.

Here is what Summer Program staff in Manitoba said about their experience:

- **100%** said that the Summer Program provided a **positive work experience**
- **100%** said that the Summer Program **helped learners strengthen their confidence and self-esteem**
- **100%** said that the Summer Program provided an **enriching learning experience** for learners

“

"This program has been such a blessing to our community. The children not only improved their literacy skills but also built friendships, teamwork, and confidence. The field trip gave them memories that will last a lifetime. Seeing them laugh and smile on the boat was a moment I will never forget."

-Staff Member, Waywayseecappo First Nation

Letter of Support



WAYWAYSEECAPPO COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Box 9, Waywayseecappo, Manitoba R0J 1S0 Phone: (204) 859-2811 Fax (204) 859-2992
Colleen Clearsky – Director of Education Marellia Cote - Principal

October 29th, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

As the previous Camp Supervisor for Camp Thunderbird, I am proud to share my strong support for this impactful literacy summer program and the growth it inspires in young readers each year in our community of Waywayseecappo. Camp Thunderbird is designed to support students of all abilities, with a strong focus on helping struggling readers gain the confidence and skills they need to be successful throughout the school year.

Throughout the duration of the camp, I had the privilege of overseeing a wide range of literacy-rich activities that were both engaging and purposeful. Our campers participated in guided reading circles, daily writing prompts, interactive storytelling, word study games, and opportunities to explore literature through art, physical activity, and educational field trips. These experiences are thoughtfully structured to boost comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and overall enjoyment of literacy.

As a supervisor, I see firsthand how the literacy support and whole group learning make a difference for students who may find reading challenging during the school year. Our staff worked closely with each student, celebrating progress and encouraging risk-taking in a supportive environment. The results had students leave camp feeling more confident, capable, and excited about reading and writing.

I fully believe in the mission of Camp Thunderbird and remain committed to the continued success of this program. The literacy gains made every summer extend well beyond the summer months and equip students with tools they carry into the upcoming school year and beyond.

Thank you for recognizing the importance of literacy support programs like Camp Thunderbird. It is an honour to supervise a camp that empowers children to grow, discover their strengths, and develop a lifelong love of reading.

Sincerely,

Marisa Wood
Camp Thunderbird Supervisor 2025

Conclusion

This summer marks another fabulous year of fun and learning! At United for Literacy, we know that learning doesn't happen alone. We are grateful for the chance to hold Summer Literacy Programs in partnership with Indigenous and local communities. Together with learners, families, and community members, we can create more opportunities for literacy and learning across Canada!



Waywayseecappo First Nation learners posing together at the Manitoba Museum

See you Next Summer!

[i] Munro, C. (2022). Learning Loss: A Summer Problem. *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, 14(2), 29–33. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcqjpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.brandonu.ca/master-education/files/2023/03/BU-Journal-of-Graduate-Studies-in-Education-2022-vol-14-issue-2.pdf](https://www.brandonu.ca/master-education/files/2023/03/BU-Journal-of-Graduate-Studies-in-Education-2022-vol-14-issue-2.pdf)

[ii] Gierczyk, M., & Hornby, G. (2023). Summer learning loss: review of research and implications for remediation of post-pandemic learning loss. *Preventing School Failure: alternative education for children and Youth*, 67(3), 132–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2023.2204823>

[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/>



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