



Literacy:  
Learning for Life.

L'alphabétisation,  
Une leçon pour la vie.



**Words Can  
Rewrite Lives.**

# Literacy is more than the ability to read and write.

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

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**FRONTIER COLLEGE** is a national charitable literacy organization, established in 1899 on the belief that literacy is a right. We work collaboratively with community-based agencies across Canada to provide targeted, innovative literacy and numeracy support where it's needed most. Each year, over 31,000 children, youth, and adults participate in our programs in more than 160 communities throughout the country.



## Why focus on literacy?

*Higher literacy can boost the economic and financial success of individuals and the economy as a whole. It can reduce poverty, improve health, lift community engagement, and lead to a higher standard of living. In fact, it is hard to identify any other single issue that can have such a large payoff to individuals, the economy, and society.* TD Economics

# Why does literacy matter?

A person's literacy skills can have an enormous impact on their quality of life.

## Compared to people with a high level of literacy, someone with low literacy



has fewer choices when it comes to jobs,

education, and housing. Household income for those with literacy level 4 or 5 is 70% higher than for those at level 1 or below—and 33% higher than those with level 2.

(Statistics Canada, February 2016)



is generally 1.5 to 3 times more likely

to have adverse health outcomes. People with higher literacy skills are more likely to participate in disease screening and prevention practices, and are less likely to be hospitalized.

(DeWalt et al., 2004)



is more likely to interact with the criminal justice

system. Neighborhoods with lower literacy have higher crime rates. And people who commit crime—or are the victim of crime—are more likely to have lower levels of literacy.

(Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, 2008)

**Beyond all these statistics is the simple reality that, for millions of people in Canada, improving literacy is the key to a brighter future.**



A 2017 survey by Frontier College revealed that Canadians have a strong appreciation for the importance of literacy, with 90% agreeing that boosting literacy rates would improve everyone's quality of living.

Although the vast majority of Canadians understand the connection between literacy and poverty and employment, fewer than half are aware of a connection to physical health.

# WHO WE ARE

## Our Mission and Our Work

Frontier College is a national charitable literacy organization. We believe literacy is a right. We work with volunteers and community partners to support people in gaining the skills and confidence they need to reach their potential and fully contribute to society.

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 free and inclusive of any individual for whom our assistance is welcome and needed.

### Some examples of our adaptable work include:

- ✓ Basic math, literacy, and exam preparation for adults and youth pursuing careers in trades
- ✓ Workplace literacy and essential skills for employees
- ✓ Literacy and life skills for adults with disabilities
- ✓ Academic upgrading (General Educational Development®) and computer skills training for street-involved and at-risk youth
- ✓ Literacy training for inmates in institutions
- ✓ Reading and homework support for children and youth in a variety of settings
- ✓ English/French as an additional language (EAL/FAL)
- ✓ Support for newcomers to Canada and temporary foreign workers
- ✓ Intergenerational programs for families
- ✓ Literacy- and learning-based conferences
- ✓ Parent and caregiver workshops



Across Canada, we also run Summer Literacy Camps for children and youth in over 125 Indigenous communities. These camps involve a variety of hands-on, interactive literacy games; storytelling; arts and crafts; drama; music; and cultural activities to create a fun and engaging experience for young people (5–16 years of age). We work with communities to develop camps that best suit the needs of their children and youth.

Through our web-based Virtual Learning Portal and extensive, online library of tutoring resources, adult learners and trained tutors located anywhere can work together in real time to address individual learning goals.





## Our History

Since 1899, Frontier College has been reaching out to people in their communities and responding to their learning needs.

Concerned about the lack of access to education for many immigrant labourers in remote locations on the Canadian frontier, Frontier College founder, Alfred Fitzpatrick, set up Reading Tents that displayed one simple message: **READING TENT—ALL WELCOME**. These mobile libraries presented learning opportunities within the workplace, and established that **every place is a learning place**. It was here that Fitzpatrick first envisioned Labourer-Teachers, a group of young, university-educated volunteers who worked with the labourers by day and taught them by night, thereby pioneering how education and basic literacy was taught throughout Canada.

Since then, **we have grown to serve over 31,000 people annually** in most provinces and territories, with learner-centred programming in libraries, health centres, public housing sites, prisons, shelters, and schools.

We have nearly **500 community partners throughout the country**. Based on a third party survey, 89% stated that the contribution of Frontier College brought a strong and definite impact to their organization.

In 2017, we received **The Canadian Teachers' Federation Public Education Advocacy Award** for "longstanding contribution to public education in our country." And in 2018, we received the **Ontario Teachers' Federation's Greer Award** in recognition of "outstanding contributions to publicly funded education in Ontario."



**We are honoured to receive such acknowledgement of our work.**



## Our Future

Frontier College recently embarked on an in-depth strategic planning process. We consulted volunteers, staff, partners, learners, parents, teachers, and supporters to determine opportunities for growth and barriers to success.

Our research revealed that Frontier College is **well respected**—we are seen as **excellent partners** who produce good results and use resources wisely; our work is appreciated and valued. But we learned that more needs to be done, and the first thing we need to do is get people talking about the issue. By finding new ways to share our story—highlighting the value of literacy and the evidence of our impact—we will attract new resources to support our efforts to help people in Canada enjoy the many positive benefits of literacy.

# OUR PLAN

## Our 2017–2020 Strategic Plan focuses on three priorities:



1

**Enhance awareness**  
of our work and the  
importance of our cause  
among key audiences



2

**Demonstrate the impact**  
of our work through  
improved evaluation



3

**Increase revenue**  
and diversify  
funding sources

Our ultimate goal is to help more people by highlighting the critical importance of literacy and ensuring that our programs are effective and responsive to our learners' needs.

We are also working to create a national literacy network to serve as a catalyst for sharing best practices and resources among literacy-related organizations at the local, provincial, and national levels.

For more information on ways you can get involved with Frontier College, visit [frontiercollege.ca](http://frontiercollege.ca) or contact us at **1-800-555-6523**. Charitable Registration: #10740 8445 RR0001

## An investment in literacy is an investment in the future.

### Help make progress in literacy.

- ★ Make reading a daily activity in your home
- ★ Become a Frontier College volunteer tutor in your community
- ★ Make a tribute gift. Honour someone special—or a special occasion—with a gift in support of literacy
- ★ Support the work of Frontier College with a donation
- ★ Attend our fundraising events

### The impact is enormous...

- ✓ Children discover the joy of reading.
- ✓ Youth, who once struggled with homework, take pride in completing their assignments and feel empowered.
- ✓ Adults who once struggled with staying in school now have the skills to find a better job and provide for their families.
- ✓ Your support is an integral part of our efforts to reach out to those who want to read and learn, whatever their age, background, or location in Canada.

Most importantly, your support will help children, youth, and adults realize a brighter future by opening up more opportunities that were once limited by low literacy.



## MEETING NEW MILESTONES THROUGH LITERACY

Melanie, a young woman in her 30s, had many gifts and abilities to share but she needed help to complete her high school diploma so she could find a new job and get off social assistance.

“My support worker suggested that I attend school and focus on getting a career. I moved from program to program until I arrived at Frontier College’s *Beat the Street* program,” Melanie says.

Melanie arrived at Frontier College uncertain of her future and not knowing what to expect from Frontier College. She spent eight months in intensive study with our volunteer tutors working on English and Math, with the hopes of attaining her General Education Development (GED®)—a high school equivalency certificate—and enrolling in a trades program in college. In between sessions with her tutor, Melanie also participated in Frontier College’s social enterprise, *Frontier College Books*, where she developed strong employment and leadership skills.

Despite her best efforts, Melanie had a setback when she wrote her exam the first time—she passed in all areas, except for Math. Not to be deterred, Melanie returned to her studies and focused on mathematics. On her second try, she passed and earned her diploma. She is now an apprentice plumber and continues to work hard to have the life she wants.

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“ I learned that failing is not really a failure, but an opportunity to improve and grow as a person. It has been a long journey, and with the support and opportunities that Frontier College provided I will continue my journey to a better life. ”

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