



UNITED WAY OF THUNDER BAY

# Impact Report 2023



United Way  
Thunder Bay

# With your support, the United Way of Thunder Bay was able to invest in **22 community initiatives,** improving **52,006 local lives.**

The United Way of Thunder Bay serves northwestern Ontario, focusing on collective community efforts regarding issues of poverty.

We do this by inspiring individuals and businesses to donate, volunteer and advocate for initiatives that tackle the root causes of poverty and their negative impacts. Across northwestern Ontario, donations stay 100% local, always.

## Mission

To improve lives and build community by engaging individuals and mobilizing collective action.

## Vision

A community where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

## Values

- Demonstrate trust, integrity, transparency, inclusivity, and respect
- Energize and inspire volunteerism and volunteer leadership
- Endorse innovation, partnerships, and collective action
- Provide non-partisan leadership
- Embrace diversity

# Your Impact in 2023

## Mental Health

By supporting the United Way, you were a part of our partnership with 211, impacting **19,994 lives** in 2023.

**49%** of these calls helped individuals meet their basic needs (food, shelter, utilities, transportation).

Through United Way, you helped fund financial counselling programs through Thunder Bay Counselling accessed by **635 individuals** in 2023.

## Food Security

Your generosity in 2023 helped the United Way provide...

**1,061 households** access to the the Good Food Box.

**2,866 individuals** access to food security programming in their neighbourhoods.

**100 low-income seniors** access to additional food supports.

## Support for Children & Youth

In 2023, together with the United Way, you helped...

**7,662 children** access Shkoday's in-school cultural programming.

**794 children** attend in-school literacy, numeracy and mentorship programming.

**25 mentors** and **23 mentees** in Our Kids Count's Big Brothers Big Sisters program.

## Community Support

In 2023, your gifts to the United Way helped...

**2,735 people** access low or no-cost clothing.

**119 individuals** access stroke recovery support.

# National Statistics

**85,000+** charities in Canada.

**77%** of Canadian charities make **less than \$500k** a year.

**90%** employ **10 or fewer full-time staff**, **59%** have **no full-time staff**.

**Over half** of Canadian charities are **unable to meet current levels of demand** for their services.

**1 in 5 Canadians** used charitable services to meet essential needs in 2023, **69%** said it was their **first time relying on charity** for their essential needs.

# Regional Statistics

In 2023...

**31,584 individuals** stayed at **emergency shelters** (Salvation Army, Shelter House, Urban Abbey).

**3,370 calls** received by **intake** at The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB).

**1,200 individuals** on the **waitlist for social housing** at the end of the year.

Demand at food banks **rose nearly 40%**; Regional Food Distribution Association (RFDA) spent nearly **\$3 million** on **food** in the past year – **\$1 million higher** than in previous years.

Service usage at charities and service agencies is at an **all time high** across the country.

On a more hopeful note, Thunder Bay made the list of the **20 most generous communities** in Canada for 2023.



# How You Help



# You are Meeting People's Basic Needs

We love where we live. But local issues like poverty, unemployment, addictions, mental health struggles, violence and social isolation are hurting our communities and the people who live here.

With your help, United Way is able to work with funded partners to ensure people have access to food, shelter, employment opportunities, and a chance to stabilize their income—affording them opportunities to build a good life.

**8,867 lives** impacted by  
these programs:

#### **Community Clothing Assistance**

##### **Dew Drop Inn**

- Extras for Seniors
- Meal Enhancement Program

##### **Evergreen A**

##### **United Neighbourhood**

- Feeding Program

#### **Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre**

- Good Food Box

#### **Our Kids Count**

- Emergency Child Care Program
- Food Security



NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO WOMEN'S CENTRE

# Good Food Box



Clients of the Good Food Box program were asked, “What does the Good Food Box mean to you?” Here’s what they had to say...

“Fresh and affordable food. The ability to share food with others and have more food options helps challenge my disordered eating.”

“I feel blessed and thankful to have this available to me. I absolutely love opening the lid of that bin and seeing what bounty awaits. I’m never disappointed.”

“The GFB is a wonderful and helpful program to get fruits, veggies, and legumes into homes. It helps to supplement my meals, and encourages me (and hopefully others) to increase their fruit and vegetable intake. Love that it supports local growers. Awesome program, thanks to the Women’s Centre and the volunteers!”

“Very beneficial to increase fruits and vegetables in our diets. Grateful for this program; it is offered with no questions asked. Provides extra assistance to those in need. Wonderful programming in our community.”

“Box of caring for people. It helps my grandchildren’s eating habits.

It also helps display good food for our children to see on the table.”

“It means helping feed my children so they don’t feel the hunger I felt.”

“The Good Food Box means fewer decisions to make and fewer trips to a grocery store. I was able to cook at home and use my pantry to meal plan when I was too sick to go out to get fresh supplies.”

“The Good Food Box is everything to me because it halves my monthly grocery bill. Rent prices make it

hard to afford fresh vegetables and fruits, so this helps me to have a proper, healthy diet.”

“No matter what may happen in your day-to-day life, you are sure to have access to good food.”

“It’s like getting a Christmas gift every month.”

“It means the world to me knowing that I don’t have to be anxious about when and what I’m going to eat.”

**6,057 Good Food Boxes** distributed in Thunder Bay and across the region



You are  
**Helping Kids Be  
All They Can Be**

Every kid deserves a chance to have a great life—to develop from a curious, happy child to a healthy and productive member of society. But in order for that to happen, kids need to be set up for success from an early age. And for those growing up in poverty, witnessing domestic violence, or facing issues

like mental illness or neglect, this is often not the case.

Because of your generosity, United Way is giving children and youth the support they need to get a great start in life, do well in school and reach their full potential.

**19,734 lives impacted  
by these programs:**

**BGC (Boys & Girls Clubs  
Thunder Bay)**

- Windsor Unit

**Evergreen A  
United Neighbourhood**

- Evergreen Youth Supports

**Our Kids Count**

- Big Brothers Big Sisters

**Shkoday**

- Biwaase'aa



WINDSOR UNIT

# Boys & Girls Clubs Thunder Bay

When CJ first started attending BGC, he was shy and nervous to talk to anyone.

Within a few days, however, he began making friends and showing enthusiasm for planned activities. When his mom came to pick him up, he didn't want to leave. BGC staff overheard him telling his mom about new friends and fun activities, proudly showing her the crafts he made.

CJ then started attending after school, on PA Days, and during school breaks.

His eyes light up seeing the familiar faces of his friends. He always greets the staff with a smile, and is eager to share what's new in his life.

Here's what CJ's mom had to say:

*"I absolutely rave about BGC to any parent who will listen. My son started showing an interest in summer camps two summers ago. We struggled through some behavioural challenges, resulting in some midday pickups from city-run programs. He stopped wanting to attend them and mornings became a problem. A friend suggested*

*BGC and we haven't looked back. The staff is so attentive and fun. There's only been one day that he had some struggles, but no early pickups. He truly looks forward to attending, and through the summer, was sad when weekends came. It's his favourite place! He gets to do so many different activities there and meet other kids from all over the city. Thanks for being so supportive of these little guys. Every child needs that."*



**1,032 children & youth supported through BGC**



# You are Building Strong & Healthy Communities

Your support helps United Way and local funded partners invest in vital, community-based resources that help people receive access to timely, client-focused mental health support when they need it most. Together, we're creating strong neighbourhoods where everyone has a sense of belonging and connection to one another.

## **23,405 lives** impacted by these programs:

### **Elizabeth Fry Society of Northwestern Ontario**

- Staying Connected Within A Circle of Care

### **Evergreen A United Neighbourhood**

- Evergreen Strong Neighbourhood Program

### **John Howard Society**

- Re-integration Case Manager
- Recreational Therapist

### **Lakehead Social Planning Council**

- 211 North

### **March of Dimes**

- After-Stroke Program

### **New Directions Speakers' School**

### **Northwind Family Ministries**

- Next Steps Program

### **Thunder Bay Counselling**

- Financial Counselling
- Impact of Intimate Partner Violence Counselling
- Mental Health Counselling

# New Directions Speakers' School



Callum is a 46-year-old man living with an acquired brain injury, type two diabetes, and is in recovery. Prior to taking New Directions Speakers' School he was couch surfing, staying with friends, family members, and acquaintances. Sometimes, he reports, he would use income to spend a night at a hotel so he could get some privacy and unfettered access to a bathroom. He was referred to Speakers' School by an alumnus whom he knew from a recovery support group, with the other party citing that if nothing else he'd get "a meal and some company". Callum subsequently called a facilitator and registered for the in-person course.

During the course, Callum was initially reluctant to speak up, not wanting to "complain", but

he regularly did have insightful things to share on social issues, particularly those regarding mental health supports for men, as well as thoughts on recovery. After the first couple of weeks, he reached out to the facilitator for more information about supports, and after sharing his story, the facilitator connected him to a few resources, including food bank supports, information about housing, and access to gym passes so that he could not only work out if he so chose, but would also have regular access to the gym showers. Callum reported that having access to things like a steam room and a hot tub were luxuries he had forgotten about, and that he was able to start some strength training to better manage his diabetes.

Through the weeks, his willingness to share increased, and he cited feeling more positive about life. In class, he became known for his boisterous, infectious laughter, and a wry sense of humour. He began taking on additional tasks, showing up early to help the facilitator set up, and being amongst the last to leave, helping clean the room. By the end of the course, he not only gave a speech on his journey through precarious housing, he had also accepted a referral for employment supports. He left the course feeling proud, more sure of himself and his ability to navigate the system, and able to advocate better for himself and others. Callum subsequently relocated to Kenora, ON, but has remained in touch, citing that he still uses the skills he learned in the course.

## MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELLING

# Thunder Bay Counselling

With all of his family and friends having passed away, 78-year-old Mark\* was feeling very alone, and lacked a sense of belonging and purpose. Two years ago, Mark lost his wife of 55 years, and they don't have any children. His last remaining friend passed away a few months ago, and he expressed reservation at making new friends, not wanting to experience any future losses.

Mark would often not leave his home for days at a time, and though he would occasionally enjoy puttering around the yard, still felt a lack of purpose.

Feelings of loneliness and isolation eventually persuaded Mark to visit the Walk-in Counselling Clinic. He talked to the counsellor about his low mood and exhaustion. He was very tearful throughout the initial conversation, and explained that he finds himself crying daily. He also shared that on top of sleeping 10 hours every night, he also naps twice daily, and has seen his primary care giver to rule out any medical issues.

This was not Mark's first visit to the Walk-in Counselling Clinic for loneliness; he also attended following the loss of his wife. The

counsellor was able to validate his feelings and provide in-the-moment coping strategies, as well as help Mark identify some family and acquaintances that he could contact.

The counsellor encouraged Mark to find other hobbies and activities to find some sense of purpose. Mark used to play pool in a league prior to the passing of his wife, and recognized the opportunity to become a spare, which would get him out of the house a couple of nights a week.

Mark was also open to joining the "fix it club" at the 55 Plus Centre as he is very handy and enjoys tinkering on small engines. Although he knew about this club, Mark was unfamiliar with many of the services offered at the 55 Plus Centre. Finally, the counsellor shared some other free ongoing services to assist with more long-term needs.

By the time Mark left the Clinic, he was joking with staff and expressing feelings of hope.

\* Name changed to protect the client



211 NORTH

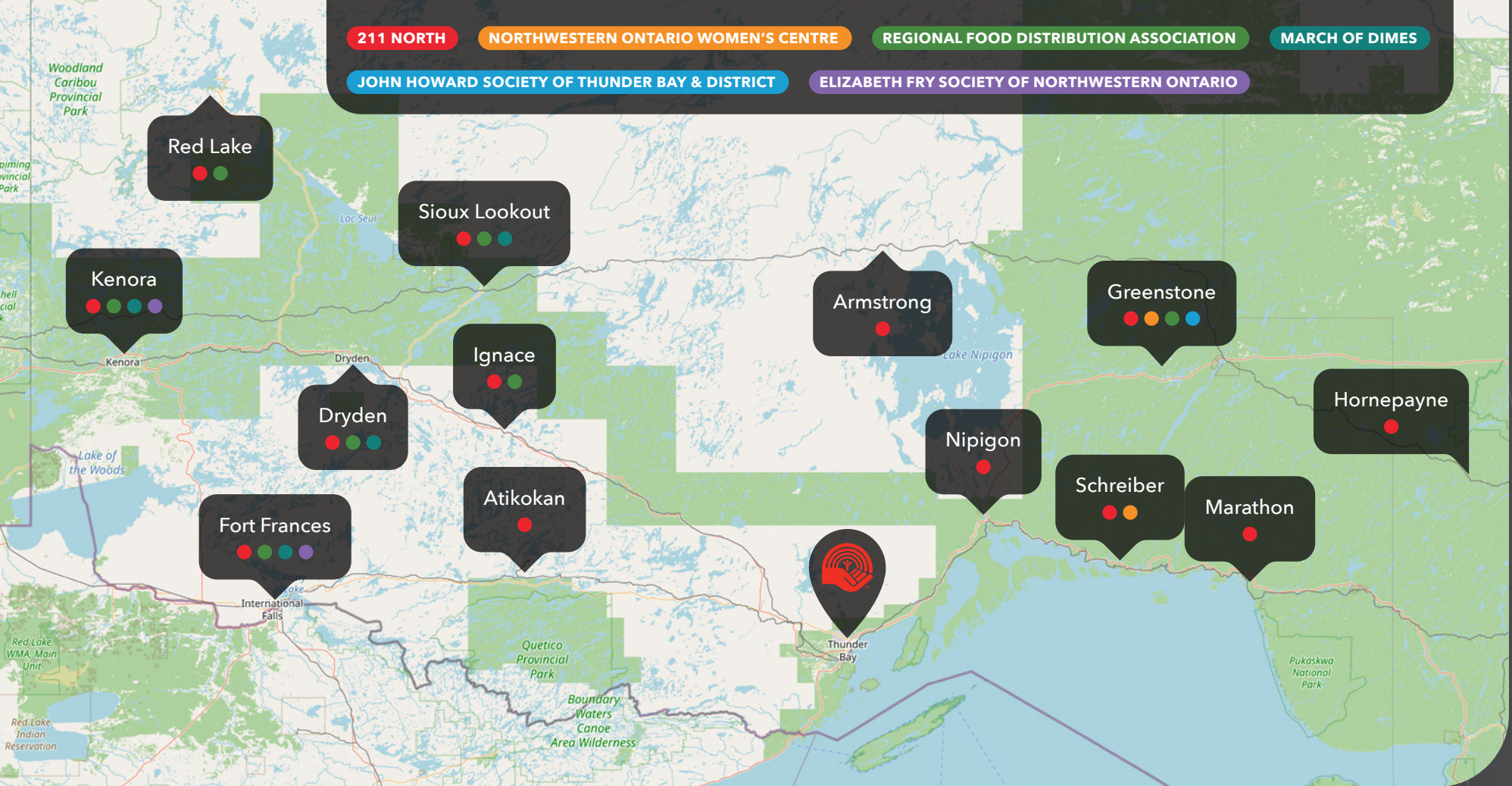
NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO WOMEN'S CENTRE

REGIONAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION ASSOCIATION

MARCH OF DIMES

JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF THUNDER BAY & DISTRICT

ELIZABETH FRY SOCIETY OF NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO



# Regional Investments

The United Way of Thunder Bay is proud to support initiatives that have a regional impact in Northwestern Ontario.

# Community Services Recovery Fund

The Community Services Recovery Fund (CSRF) is a \$400 million investment from the Government of Canada to support community service organizations, including charities, non-profits and Indigenous governing bodies, as they adapt and modernize their organizations. The Government of Canada delivered the Community Services Recovery Fund through three National Funders – Canadian Red Cross, Community Foundations of Canada, and United Way Centraide Canada.

Through the CSRF, the United Way of Thunder Bay funded 8 programs throughout the region:

## **Kenora Sportsplex**

- LakeLife PlayCenter

## **Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre**

- Thinking Outside of the (Good) Food Box

## **Northwind Family Ministries**

- Transformational Capacity Building in the Counselling Dept.

## **Regional Food Distribution Association of Northwestern Ontario (RFDA)**

- Rural and Remote Community Food Hub Project – Ignace Food Hub

## **The Ontario Archaeological Society**

- Developing Ontario Archaeological Society NW ON Indigenous Archaeology Monitor Training

## **Thunder Bay Drug Awareness Committee**

- A Storyteller Tool Kit for Rockin' Recovery

## **Thunder Bay Public Library**

- Digital for the People – TBPL's Digital Inclusion & Free Community Access Platform

## **Victim Services of Kenora & Area**

- Navigating the New Normal: VSKA Post-COVID





# Community Partnerships & Events

We wouldn't be able to do what we do without the support of our community partners and volunteers. Thanks to them, we were able to host a variety of community events throughout the year in support of local organizations and programming. A sincere thank you to all of our sponsors, volunteers and participants who made these events possible.





## Local Love Week

The Local Love flag was hoisted in September of 2023 to kick-off another Local Love Week - a full week of community events dedicated to supporting the community, including:

- Local Love Flag Raising & City Proclamation
- United in Local Love Breakfast
- United Way Open House
- Local Love Cupcakes at Carol's Cakes
- #GoRedFriday
- The Giant Food Drive

Donations were bolstered by Tbaytel, who generously agreed to **match every donation** made during Local Love Week **up to \$10,000**. Thanks to our Local Love Champions for stepping forward to help spur on the matching gift challenge.



## CommUNITY BBQ

**\$16,025.50 raised for local food programs**

Partnership with RFDA, Dew Drop Inn, Shelter House Thunder Bay, and Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre.

Presented by IG Wealth.

Through the Pay-It-Forward option, children from Shkoday were provided with pizza, juice, and cake from Carol's Cakes.



## Wasaya - United Way Plane Pull

Partnership with Wasaya Airways

**13 teams** came together to raise funds for Northwestern Ontario Indigenous Youth Achievement and Recognition Awards and United Way. IYARA celebrates the accomplishments and talents of Indigenous youth in our region. These awards recognize excellence in academics, community involvement, athletics, and more, providing opportunities and support for young Indigenous leaders to thrive and succeed.



## Tampon Tuesday

Partnership with Thunder Bay District Labour Council and OPP Northwest Region

Thanks to the numerous businesses and organizations that helped collect donations to support those who struggle to obtain menstrual hygiene products, **over 16,000 products** were collected and distributed locally and across the region through selected charities and United Way community partners.



## 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Novemburger

Novemburger celebrated its 5th birthday in 2023, and it was the **BIGGEST** year so far!

A whopping **27 eateries** participated, competing for the titles of Top Novemburger, People's Choice Novemburger, and Most Novemburgers Sold. Yet again, **Prospector Burger Barn** took home the title of **Most Novemburgers Sold at 3,305**.

People's Choice Novemburger Winner: **Beefcake's Burger Factory**

Top Novemburger Winner: **Dawson General Store**

**22,000+ burgers sold**

**\$64,000+ in donations raised!**



## Great Lighthouse Rescue

Partnership with H.M.C.S. Griffon

Three years after the last Great Billboard Rescue event, United Way of Thunder Bay set its navigation in a new direction and introduced the Great Lighthouse Rescue!

United Way of Thunder Bay and H.M.C.S. Griffon sent **13 community agency crews** out to the Thunder Bay Main Lighthouse to be stranded until they reached their fundraising goal. Thanks to Hon. Cdr. Cliff Friesen for offering a **\$25,000 Matching Gift Incentive** to help bolster donations.

**\$80,633 in donations raised**

## Year-End Giving

As 2023 came to a close, Chris, Shannon, Jordan, and Justin Sauer, the family behind Memorial Home Hardware, committed to match all donations made to United Way of Thunder Bay by the end of the year dollar-for-dollar **up to \$10,000**.



## Take Me Home Dinner

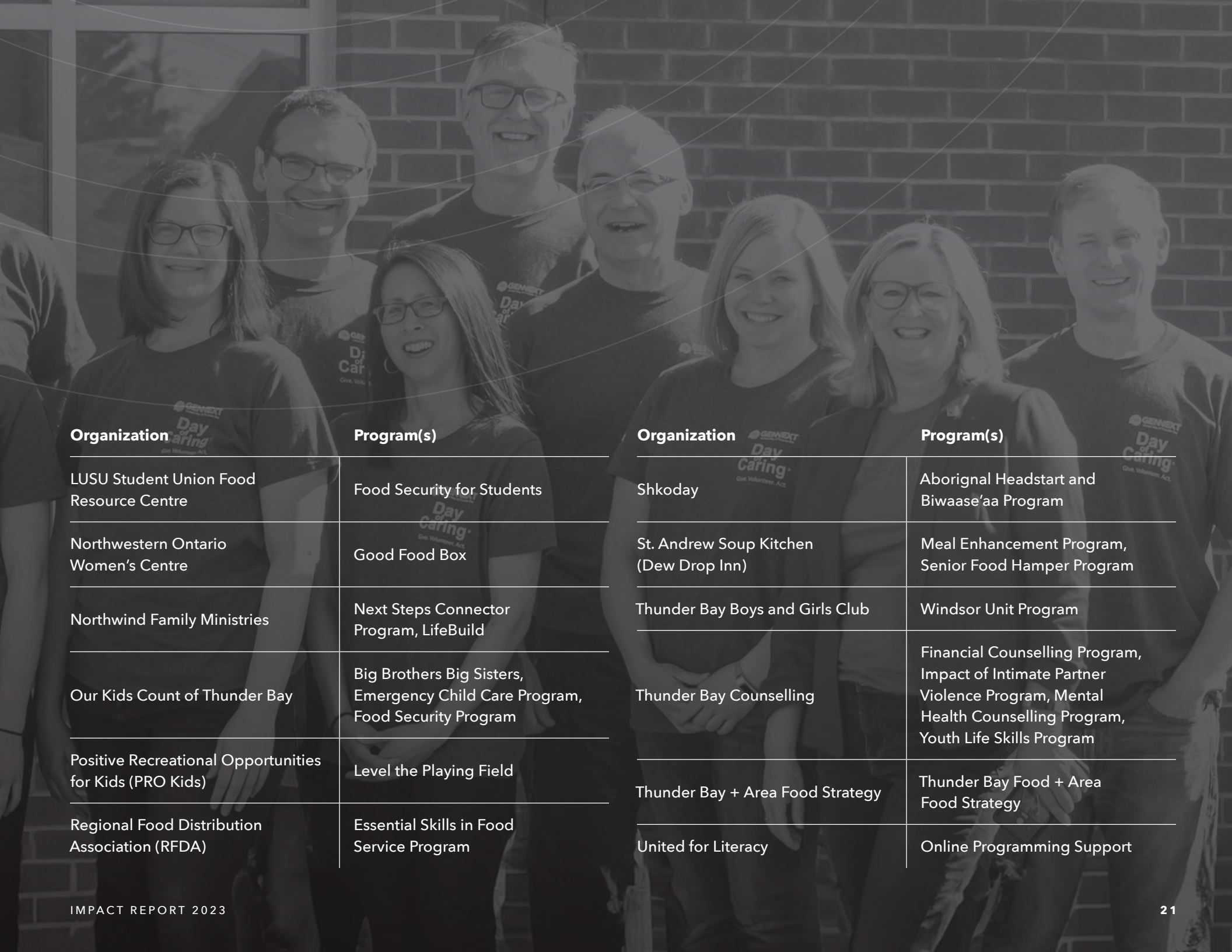
Partnership with Dew Drop Inn

**155 meals served**

**66 pay-it-forwards**

# 2024 Funded Agencies & Programs

Organization	Program(s)
Community Clothing Assistance	Partners REFERRAL Program
DEK Foundation	Backpack Program
Elizabeth Fry Society of Northwestern Ontario	Staying Connected Within a Circle of Care
Evergreen A United Neighbourhood	Strong Neighbourhood Program, Counselling Services, Feeding Program, Youth Supports
John Howard Society of Thunder Bay & District	Re-Integration Case Manager Program, Recreational Therapist Program
Lakehead Social Planning Council	211 Northern Region



Organization	Program(s)
LUSU Student Union Food Resource Centre	Food Security for Students
Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre	Good Food Box
Northwind Family Ministries	Next Steps Connector Program, LifeBuild
Our Kids Count of Thunder Bay	Big Brothers Big Sisters, Emergency Child Care Program, Food Security Program
Positive Recreational Opportunities for Kids (PRO Kids)	Level the Playing Field
Regional Food Distribution Association (RFDA)	Essential Skills in Food Service Program

Organization	Program(s)
Shkoday	Aboriginal Headstart and Biwaase'aa Program
St. Andrew Soup Kitchen (Dew Drop Inn)	Meal Enhancement Program, Senior Food Hamper Program
Thunder Bay Boys and Girls Club	Windsor Unit Program
Thunder Bay Counselling	Financial Counselling Program, Impact of Intimate Partner Violence Program, Mental Health Counselling Program, Youth Life Skills Program
Thunder Bay + Area Food Strategy	Thunder Bay Food + Area Food Strategy
United for Literacy	Online Programming Support

**Thank you for helping  
save the lives of our loved  
ones and members in North**





# Helping us improve local community Northwestern Ontario





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Thunder Bay

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