



## **Media Release**

**2018 Reading University Kicks Off July 3<sup>rd</sup> in Grande Prairie**

**Record Numbers Mark the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Session**

Despite the weather, summer has officially begun for thousands of young people across the region this week. A select group of grade three students arrived at Aspen Grove School July 3<sup>rd</sup> to participate in what will arguably be a game changing experience in their academic journeys.

Since its inception in Grande Prairie, Reading University has shown steady growth from the 32 children that attended in 2009 to the record 171 students that marched through the doors July 3. "At the grassroots of this organization lies the commitment that those students that are nominated and in need of this program will not be denied access. We stand by that commitment wholeheartedly." says Grade Three Reading University co-founder, Linda Side. "This is a critical turning point in the life of a child where they cross from learning to read, to reading to learn. The program is designed to give those kids in the Grande Prairie area not yet reading at grade level the leg up they need to succeed."

The intense, three-week program takes the students through literacy centers designed to achieve success with their "dream team" of educators. "The secret sauce is our student teacher ratio - 2 teachers for every 10 children - our incredible leadership under Principal Helen Neufeld, and unique strategies that are not always feasible to implement in the parameters of a typical classroom environment. We will use creative play, music, physical activity, and reading approaches that inspire the children in ways that may not have occurred to them to date." comments Co-founder Rhonda Side.

This marks the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Reading University and the program's first class is graduating from high school. In honor of the occasion, two post- secondary scholarships will be awarded to students of the 2009 inaugural class on July 20<sup>th</sup> when the current class graduates. "What is most meaningful to us is that had these kids not participated in the program, they may not have completed high school, let alone contemplated post-secondary. Reading University comes at no cost to the participating families. And, with increased numbers the costs naturally rise for the organization. "We go out with our hat in hand in efforts to raise awareness and funding for the kids," says Linda Side, "and we are extremely grateful to the community groups, businesses, and families that continue to support this program." September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018 is set for the Reading University Annual Hole in One Golf Tournament at the Dunes. This is a primary fundraiser for group and all funds are directed to the class of 2019. Register to sponsor and play at [golfreadingu@gmail.com](mailto:golfreadingu@gmail.com)

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