



Back To School 2019-2025

Report Date: November 2025

True North Aid's first charitable object is to advance education by providing books, equipment and educational aids to students in northern Indigenous communities. Annually since 2019, we have done just that by sending backpacks full of school supplies to northern and remote Indigenous communities. The program can be divided into two phases: 2019-2021 and 2022 onwards. Prior to 2022, the supplying of northern Indigenous communities with backpacks was done through an amalgamation of TNA handling logistics and expenses, volunteers handling logistics with TNA handling expenses and suppliers donating product with TNA covering shipping. In 2022, we formalized the Back To School program into what it is today. We invite communities to apply in the spring and then work with one supplier to fulfill as many applications as budget allows to be delivered for the start of a new school year.

This report will begin by looking at totals from the past 6 years, analyzing and commenting on our successes and learnings. The report will then move on looking at each year individually.

Totals

Requested Vs Approved

142	applications have been submitted
86	of those applications were approved

61%

of all the applications submitted were approved. The number one driver behind this figure is funding. While some applications may come in for communities that do not fit within our mandate (ie, not northern or remote), funding is our greatest restriction to approving more applications.

17,658	supplies/backpacks have been requested
12,483	supplies/backpacks have been approved

71%

of all requests for supplies have been approved. Each year, we decide on a maximum number of backpack kits we will approve per community. This means that a community may receive backpacks, but at a reduced number than they requested. This allows us to reach more communities and promotes equality. We may make exceptions for requests that are a small number above the limit, and we will have a conversation with communities with a very large ask to ensure a much-reduced approval would still be beneficial.

12,845	elementary supplies have been requested
12,745	elementary backpacks have been requested
9,488	elementary supplies have been provided
9,488	elementary backpacks have been provided

74%

of all requests for elementary supplies and 74.4% of all elementary backpacks were provided. Over the many years of running this program and listening to communities, we have learned to offer supplies and backpacks separately. In some communities, backpacks are not as great a need, especially for high school students. By offering the option to opt out of receiving backpacks, we can focus on providing what communities identify as their greatest needs.

4,813	high school supplies have been requested
4,565	high school backpacks have been requested
2,995	high school supplies have been provided
2,935	high school backpacks have been provided

62%

of all requests for high school supplies and 64% of all high school backpacks were provided. The difference between approval rates can largely be attributed to the approval rate in 2023. While in 2022, 2024 and 2025, the cost of the backpacks and supplies was the same for both elementary and high school. In 2023, the difference in the cost was approximately \$9. This led to more elementary kits being approved that year over high school kits, to stretch our dollars.



Since 2022, each kit looked similar to this:

Elementary Kit	High School Kit
A Backpack (Optional)	A Backpack (Optional)
Pencil Case	Pencil Case
Pencil Crayons	Pencil Crayons
Pencil Sharpener	Pencil Sharpener
Erasers	Erasers
Gluestick	Gluestick
Scissors	Scissors
Notebook	Notebook
Ruler	Ruler
Pencils	Math Set
Markers	Scientific Calculator
Crayons	Pens

Numbers



68 communities have received 12,483 backpack kits



While 86 deliveries of backpacks have been made, 68 of those deliveries were to unique communities. When reviewing applications, we prioritize communities that have not received backpacks in the past and then those that have not received any within recent years. As our approval rate is not 100%, communities will often apply again to receive what we could not provide the first time. Additionally, new supplies are needed to supplement what was used up in the previous year.



58



1



27

Over two thirds of the deliveries have been shipped via truck. Luckily, due to the size of the boxes delivered, barge shipments were able to be avoided. The one boat shipment was to Klemtu, BC via ferry. The remaining third of deliveries were shipped via plane.



Spending

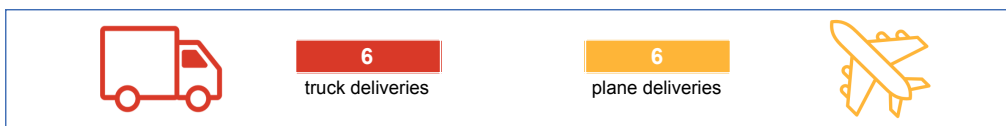
\$607,706.87	has been spent by True North Aid on backpacks, supplies and shipping since 2019.
\$49,447.28	has been spent by True North Aid on shipping. It is difficult to compile averages of shipping costs. This is because the price we have paid for shipping has been inconsistent over the years. Review each year's breakdown below for more information.
\$47,397.54	has been covered by suppliers. The true cost of sending 12,476 backpack kits to the north these past 7 years is an estimated \$657,154.15. More details on these expenses are found in each year's breakdown.

2025

36	applications were submitted in 2025
12	communities received deliveries
3,403	backpack kits were requested
2,057	backpack kits were provided

We partnered with Indigenous Reflections for a second year after receiving positive feedback from communities the previous year on the Indigenous designed backpacks and quality supplies. Indigenous Reflections also provided a very competitive price, allowing us to maximize the number of backpacks we could provide with our \$100,000 budget.

\$103,853.26	was spent by True North Aid in 2025
\$13,139.56	was spent by True North Aid on shipping. \$9,286.30 to Indigenous Reflections as one fee & \$3,853.26 on unexpected additional shipping
\$15,848.56	was covered by Indigenous Reflections on shipping. The true cost of shipping to the 12 communities served in 2025 was \$25,134



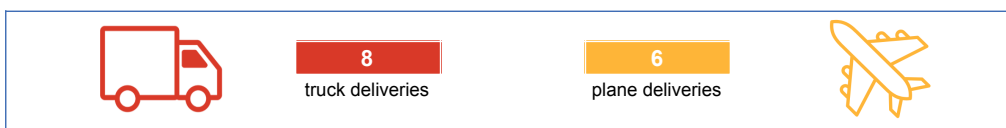
Quebec received backpack kits for the first time in 2025. We have increased our efforts to build more relationships in Quebec since 2023.

2024

29	applications were submitted in 2024
14	communities received deliveries
2,270	backpack kits were requested
1,789	backpack kits were provided

We partnered with Indigenous Reflections for the first time after learning about them through Good Minds, which supplied our Northern Read program with Indigenous authored books in 2023.

\$99,450.00	was spent by True North Aid in 2024
\$10,000.00	was spent by True North Aid on shipping as one fee to Indigenous Reflections
\$6,000.00	was covered by Indigenous Reflections. This is an approximate figure provided from Indigenous Reflections so we could understand the true cost of shipping to be around \$16,000 in 2024.



2023

23	applications were submitted in 2023
14	communities received deliveries
5,252	backpack kits were requested
2,550	backpack kits were provided

We partnered with Bargains Group in 2023. Additionally, RBC gathered backpack kits and shipped them to two communities in Saskatchewan. Since 2024, that type of southern to northern partnership is run through our One Pallet, One Community program, but in 2023, it was tucked into the Back To School program since it was school aids provided.

\$82,109.17	was spent by True North Aid in 2023
\$0.00	was spent by True North Aid on shipping as Bargains Group did not charge it



\$10,500.00

was covered by RBC and Bargains Group. RBC spent approximately \$600 on the shipping of 85 backpacks to Jans Bay and Cole Bay, Saskatchewan, two communities close to each other. While Bargains Group spent approximately \$9,900 on shipping to 12 communities.



12

truck deliveries

2

plane deliveries



Notably, all 14 communities were from Saskatchewan and Manitoba in 2023. Of the 9 applications that were not chosen, 4 were from other provinces. Three of those communities were not chosen because they either had an active Community Initiative Program project running or received backpacks the previous year. One community was southern.

2022

25

applications were submitted in 2022

16

communities received deliveries

2,687

backpack kits were requested

2,137

backpack kits were provided

We partnered with Start Right Supplies in 2022. This was the first year in which Back To School officially ran under the name Back To School. It was a pivotal moment as True North Aid shifted its approach to providing backpacks and school supplies.

\$157,240.63

was spent by True North Aid in 2022

\$14,125.85

was spent by True North Aid on shipping

\$0.00

was covered by Start Right Supplies



12



1



2



2021

23

applications were submitted in 2021

23

communities received deliveries

2,261

backpack kits were requested

2,261

backpack kits were provided

We partnered with Start Right Supplies, Bargains Group and a volunteer. 2021 was very different from the years that followed. One community contact volunteered her time and efforts to purchase backpacks and supplies and to drive them all to the 7 northern communities of Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation. True North Aid reimbursed her costs. Additionally, Bargains Group reached out to donate 150 backpacks to Igloolik, NU, and again, we covered the shipping costs. We then partnered with them to purchase another 200 backpacks for the 7 communities of Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation. Though there were 23 deliveries in 2021, only 16 were to unique communities. Start Right Supplies supplied the remaining communities.

\$145,608.57

was spent by True North Aid in 2021

\$8,500.27

was spent by True North Aid on shipping

\$14,725.00

was covered by Bargains Group through the donation of backpack kits, by communities that covered a portion of transportation and by Start Right Supplies when the owner delivered two of the shipments personally.



20

truck deliveries

3

plane deliveries

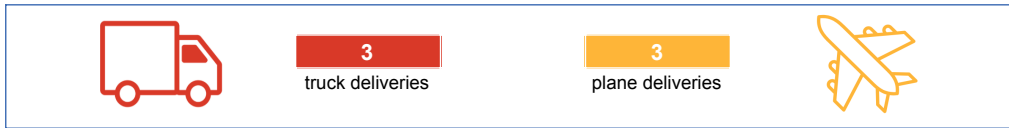


2020

6	applications were submitted in 2020
6	communities received deliveries
1,610	backpack kits were requested
1,514	backpack kits were provided

We partnered with Bags in Bulk, Sew on Fire and volunteers. One volunteer collected items, and we covered shipping, while another purchased the items and delivered them, with us reimbursing her costs.

\$17,542.74	was spent by True North Aid in 2021
\$7,087.20	was spent by True North Aid on shipping
\$125.00	was covered by one volunteer for a portion of her delivery costs



2019

1	application was submitted in 2019
1	community received a delivery
175	backpack kits were requested
175	backpack kits were provided

We partnered with Bags in Bulk, Sew on Fire and volunteers. One volunteer collected items, and we covered shipping, while another purchased the items and delivered them, with us reimbursing her costs.

\$5,755.76	was spent by True North Aid in 2021
\$447.66	was spent by True North Aid on shipping
\$200.00	was covered by one volunteer for a portion of her delivery costs

