



**BOOK
CLUBS FOR
INMATES**

20

24

ANNUAL REPORT

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OUR MISSION

Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI) offers three key programs to support incarcerated individuals' reintegration: book clubs in federal penitentiaries, the Children of Inmates Reading Program (ChIRP), and the Library Project. Each of these programs shares the same mission—to provide incarcerated men and women with opportunities for personal growth, education, and connection, helping them transition back into society with fewer barriers.

Our book clubs offer intellectual stimulation and a positive recreational outlet for inmates. Through thoughtful conversation, participants explore life's challenges, moral dilemmas, and personal relationships, gaining valuable communication and social skills. For instance, we have seen previously withdrawn and isolated inmates become more open and engaged after participating in our book clubs. Incarcerated individuals are among Canada's most marginalized populations. Many lose contact with the outside world, and family and friends abandon some. BCFI helps fill this void by providing a meaningful activity that encourages connection, learning, and self-reflection in a welcoming and supportive environment.

The Children of Inmates Reading Program (ChIRP) fosters emotional connection despite physical separation while promoting literacy, expanding vocabulary, improving listening skills, and nurturing a love of learning.

In pursuing education, rehabilitation, and the successful reintegration of incarcerated individuals, prison libraries serve as vital sanctuaries of transformation. They are beacons of learning, avenues for personal growth, cultural connection points, and sources of joy. More importantly, these libraries cultivate critical thinking, empathy, and essential communication skills—foundational for a smooth transition back into society. Recognizing that not all incarcerated individuals can access book clubs, we launched our Library Project to address this gap. This initiative is dedicated to rebuilding prison libraries by donating new, high-quality books, ensuring every inmate can access relevant, engaging, and educational materials.

A Message from Tom Best Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters of Book Clubs
for Inmates,

As we reflect on the year 2024, I am filled with gratitude for the profound impact we have made together. This year has been one of significant growth for Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI), and it would not have been possible without the generosity of our donors, sponsors, and the dedication of our volunteers across the country.

Thanks to your support, we expanded from 39 to 44 federal book clubs and launched five provincial ones. We are thrilled by the growth of our programs, including the Children of Inmates Reading Program (ChIRP), which doubled in size and now operates in 18 federal institutions and two Ontario Provincial Detention Centres. Additionally, we distributed 160,000 new books to federal penitentiaries and Ontario Correctional Centres, helping to rebuild library collections and support inmates' rehabilitation.

In 2024, we also saw a remarkable 45% increase in the number of books ordered and read by inmates. We are incredibly excited to announce the upcoming release of our Master Book List and new "breakout" lists featuring Indigenous and Black books, as requested by our members.

Our dedicated volunteers continue to lead the way in fostering personal growth and connection through literature, and our recent author visits have provided much-needed inspiration and hope. With your continued support, we look forward to the many exciting developments ahead in 2025.

Thank you for being an essential part of this transformative journey.

Warm regards,



BOOK CLUB LOCATIONS

ATLANTIC REGION

- Dorchester Penitentiary, Dorchester, NB
- Nova Institution for Women, Truro, NS
- Springhill Penitentiary, Springhill, NS

QUEBEC

- Archambault Institution, Sainte-Anne-des-Plaine, QC (trial)
- Cowansville Institution, Cowansville, QC
- Federal Training Centre, Laval, QC (trial)
- Joliette Institution for Women, Joliette, QC *

ONTARIO

- Bath Institution, Bath, ON
- Beaver Creek Institution, Gravenhurst, ON*
- Central East Correctional Centre, Lindsay, ON
- Collins Bay Institution, Kingston, ON*
- Grand Valley Institution for Women, Kitchener, ON*
- Joyceville Institution, Kingston, ON*
- Millhaven Institution, Kingston, ON*
- South West Detention Centre, Windsor, ON
- Toronto South Detention Centre, Toronto, ON
- Warkworth Institution, Warkworth, ON

PRAIRIE REGION

- Bowden Institution, Innisfail, AB*
- Drumheller Institution, Drumheller, AB
- Edmonton Institution for Women, Edmonton, AB
- Okimaw Ochi Healing Lodge, Maple Creek, SK
- Red Deer Remand Centre, Red Deer, MB
- Stony Mountain Institution, Winnipeg, MB*

PACIFIC REGION

- Ford Mountain Correctional Centre, Maple Ridge, BC
- Fraser Valley Institution for Women, Abbotsford, BC
- Mission Institution, Mission, BC*
- Mountain Institution, Agassiz, BC
- Pacific Institution, Abbotsford, BC
- William Head Institution, Victoria, BC

CHILDREN OF INMATES READING PROGRAM LOCATIONS

ATLANTIC REGION

- Atlantic Institution, Smiths Crossing, NB
- Springhill Institution, Springhill, NS

QUEBEC

- Archambault Institution, Sainte-Anne-des-Plaine, QC
- Cowansville Institution, Cowansville, QC
- Joliette Institution for Women, Joliette, QC

ONTARIO

- Bath Institution, Bath, ON
- Beaver Creek Institution, Gravenhurst, ON*
- Central East Correctional Centre, Lindsay, ON
- Collins Bay Institution, Kingston, ON*
- Grand Valley Institution for Women, Kitchener, ON*
- Warkworth Institution, Warkworth, ON

PRAIRIE REGION

- Bowden Institution, Innisfail, AB
- Drumheller Institution, Drumheller, AB
- Stony Mountain Institution, Winnipeg, MB

PACIFIC REGION

- Nanaimo Correctional Centre, Nanaimo, BC (trial)
- Pacific Institution, Abbotsford, BC

OUR

PROGRAMS

ChIRP (Children of Inmates Reading Program)

ChIRP, Children of Inmate Reading Program, is a simple yet profoundly impactful program that connects incarcerated parents to their families in a positive way through literacy. The feedback we get from families confirms that this initiative has a positive effect on restoring family connections during this difficult time of separation. Along with facilitating the inmate reading program, we have had the opportunity to provide books for family visits at numerous sites across the country. With a great selection of read-aloud books, families can now engage in reading together when they are visiting. This initiative has helped to bridge the communication gap and provides a positive, endearing activity during these difficult visits to a correctional facility.

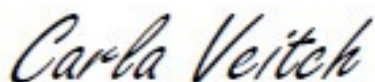
2024 became another year of tremendous growth as the program spread nationwide. We were encouraged as we saw new volunteers step up as facilitators and CSC staff at most of these sites, recognize the value of this initiative, actively participate, and promote the program to the inmates.

We, too, are grateful to partner with the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation in 2024. We could send books to children during their summer and holiday breaks. Due to the Canada Post strike, the kids received them after Christmas, but they loved getting the book *A Grateful Winter* by Angela Kohler from Indigo.

Another standout moment of 2024 came in September when we had the pleasure of hosting a unique visit to the Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVI) with our Japanese delegation—a truly memorable and successful experience that offered a rare insight into our work. During the visit, our volunteers led a reading session, offering our guests a glimpse into the wide selection of books available for inmates to choose from when recording stories for their children or grandchildren. The delegation observed the recording process firsthand; it was a deeply moving and insightful experience that evoked a strong sense of empathy.

We are making a tremendous impact in the lives of these children! And we thank you for your support and dedication to ensuring this program continues to thrive.

Thank you,



Carla Veitch
Founder and Program Coordinator

The Library Project

In 2023, we embarked on a transformative initiative to rebuild institutional libraries across Canada, ensuring every incarcerated individual can access high-quality, relevant books. This initiative is about books and creating an environment that fosters education, personal development, and successful rehabilitation. Over three years, we committed to sending more than 500,000 brand-new books to federal penitentiaries, making a significant difference in the lives of those behind bars.

Determined to double our 2023 milestone of 50,000 books, we achieved and exceeded that goal—expanding our reach beyond federal institutions to include several provincial correctional facilities in Ontario. As of 2025, we have donated books to over 20 federal institutions and five provincial correctional centres.

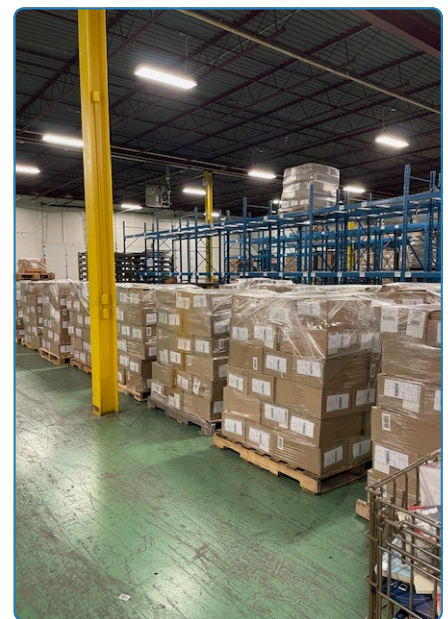
Libraries play a crucial role in rehabilitation, providing access to information, supporting lifelong learning, and fostering a sense of community—all essential for a smooth reintegration into society. Our initiative has already started to make a difference, with many incarcerated individuals expressing gratitude for the opportunity to learn, grow, and prepare for their future through the books we provide.

Thanks to Penguin Random House Canada's generous support, we have shipped thousands of books to institutional libraries. Earlier this year, our executive director, Tom Best, organized a packing party at PRH Canada's warehouse in Mississauga. Volunteers from the warehouse and corporate offices came together to pack and prepare boxes of books tailored to each institution's specific needs. This collaborative effort, with your invaluable contributions, has been instrumental in our progress.

Looking ahead to 2025, we are filled with optimism. We aim to secure additional funding and build partnerships with other publishers. If successful, the library project will transition from a pilot initiative to a permanent program—one we hope to sustain for years, bringing hope and opportunity to many more incarcerated individuals.



Aaqigiavik Correctional Healing Facility



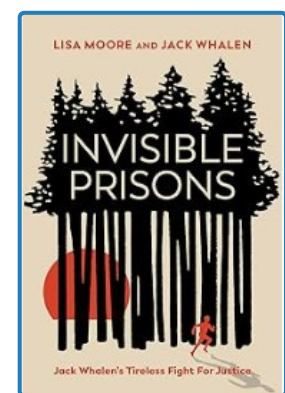
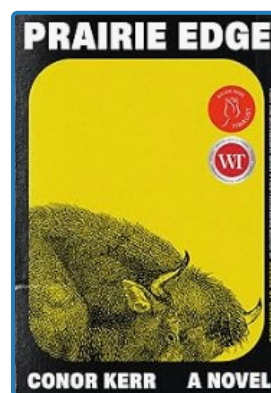
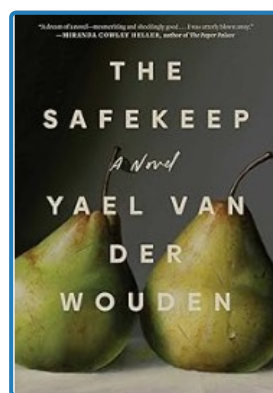
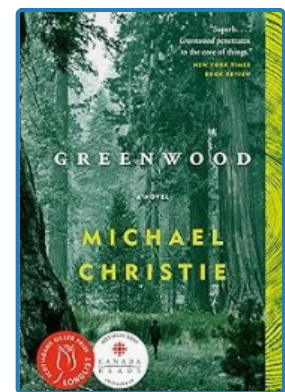
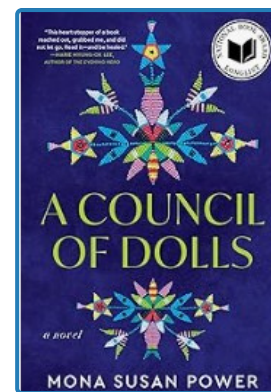
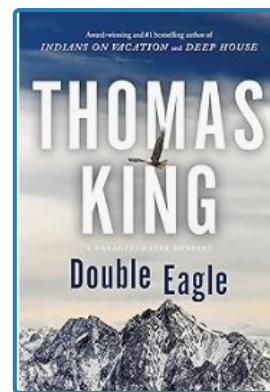
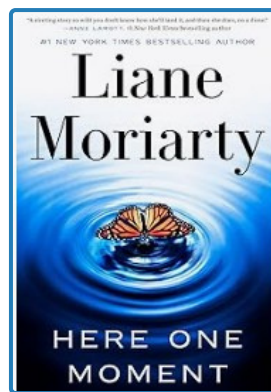
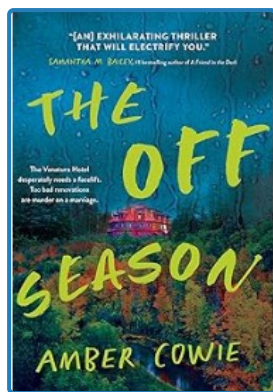
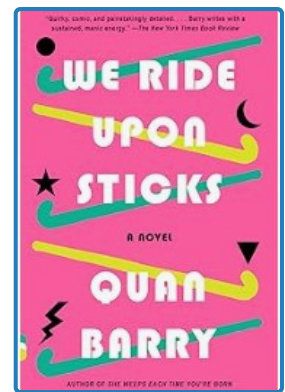
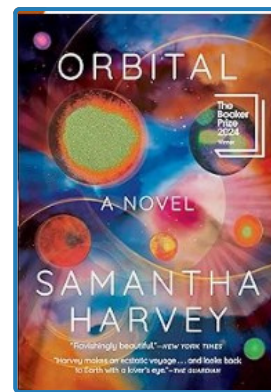
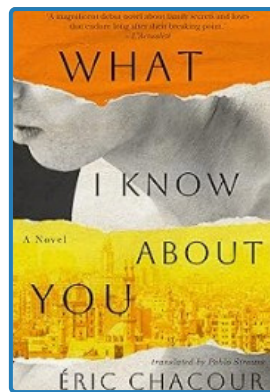
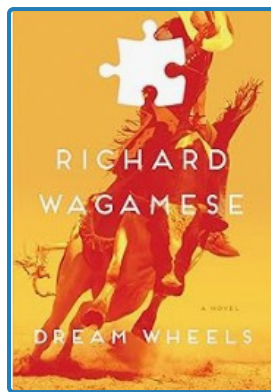
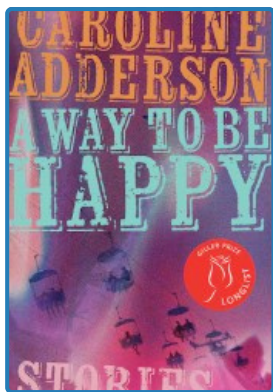
Packing Party at PRH Canada



Volunteers at PRH Canada

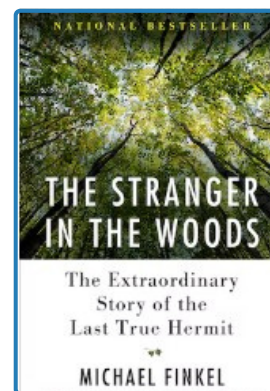
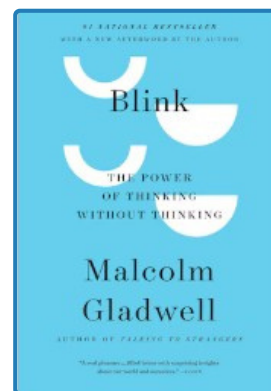
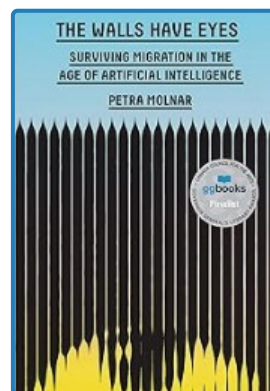
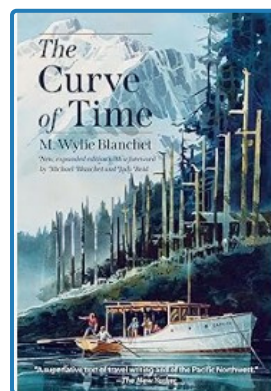
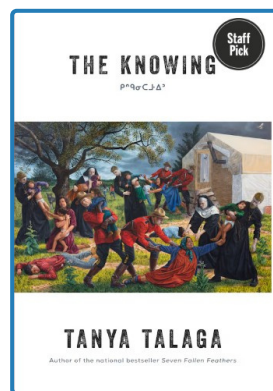
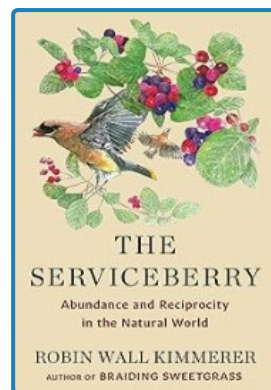
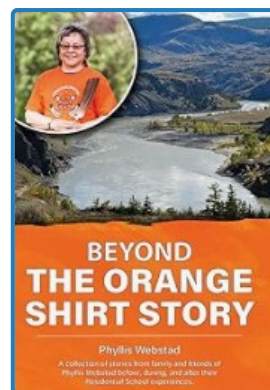
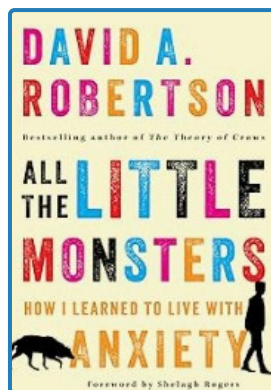
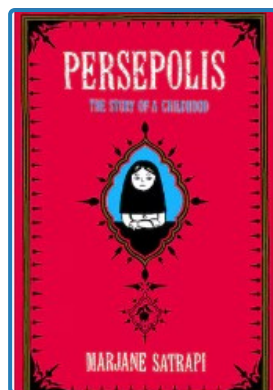
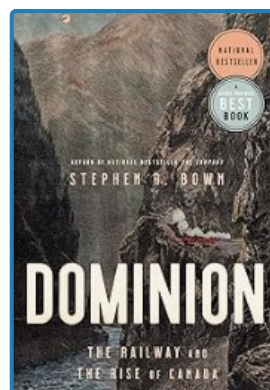
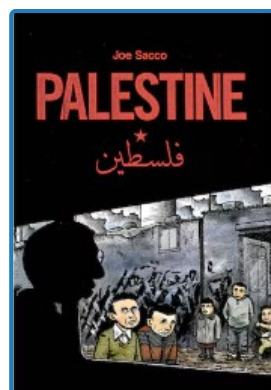
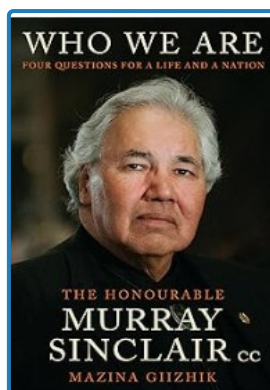
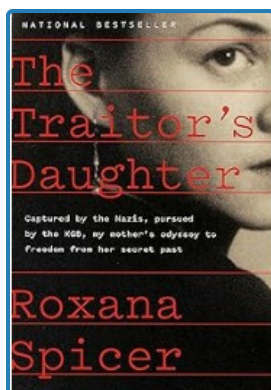
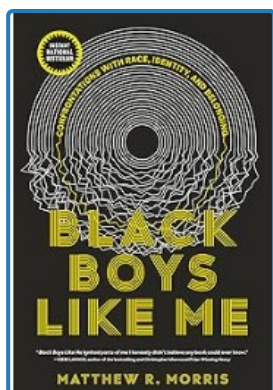
Some of the Books in Our Lineup This Coming Year

FICTION



Some of the Books in Our Lineup This Coming Year

NON-FICTION



Book Clubs for Inmates

Board of Directors

Max Binnie, Board Chairperson

A Department of Justice litigator and former political staffer living in Ottawa.

Stephanie Sinclair, Director

Publisher, McClelland & Stewart and Hazlitt, Vice president, Penguin Random House Canada.

Elamin Abdelmahmoud, Director

A Sudanese-Canadian writer and the host of Commotion on CBC Radio.

Joanie McEwen, Director

Writer, labour mediator/arbitrator in Vancouver, and author of Innocence on Trial, The Framing of Ivan Henry (2014).

Jake Brunt, Director

Senior Brand Manager at Labatt Canada and former Program Coordinator for Book Clubs for Inmates.

Stephanie Domet, Director

Co-executive director, AfterWords Literary Festival, and award-winning author.

Book Clubs for Inmates

Honorary Members

Margaret Atwood, CC, Oont

Honorary Patron
Canada's preeminent writer.

Ian Binnie, CC Q.C

Honorary Chair
Eminent retired Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada.

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Thank you for your continued support!

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Robyn McMorris
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W. A. Derry Millar
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Le Cabinet de relation publiques inc.



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Thank you for your continued support!

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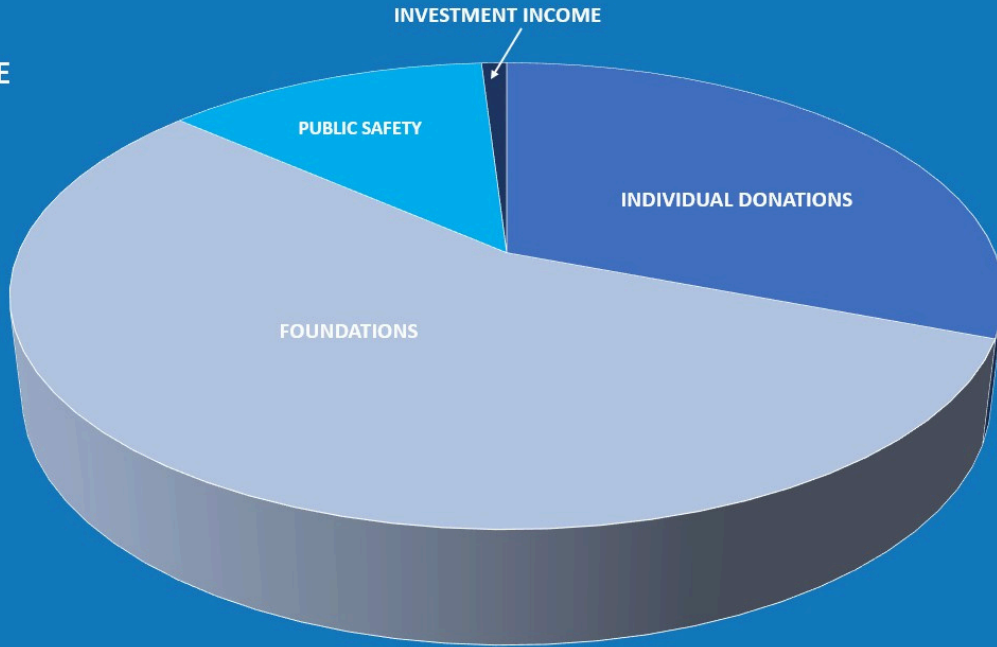
OUR PARTNERS



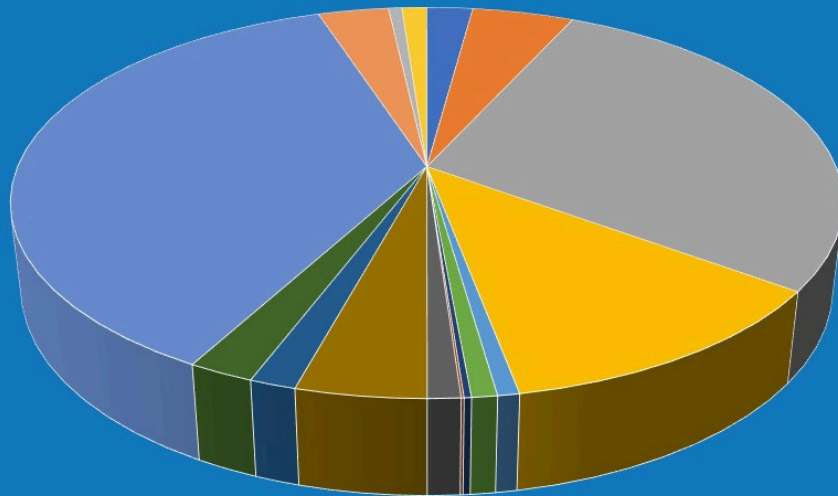
Penguin
Random House
Canada

2024 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

2024 REVENUE



2024 EXPENSES



- | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| □ Administration | □ Author Visits | □ Books (Purchased) | □ ChIRP |
| □ Communications | □ Fundraising Expenses | □ Insurance | □ Meals & Entertainment |
| □ Office & General | □ Outside Services | □ Professional Fees | □ Rent |
| □ Salaries | □ Shipping | □ Travel | □ Volunteer Appreciation |

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024

AUTHOR VISITS



Conor Kerr,
Bowden Institution



Sarah Polley, Grand
Valley Institution for Women



Lawrence Hill,
Nova Institution for Women



Elamin Abdelmehmoud
Collins Bay Institution, Maximum



Lisa Moore & Jack Whalen,
Millhaven Institution



David A. Robertson with Shelagh
Rogers, Stony Mountain Institution

KINGSTON WRITERSFEST



Shelagh Rogers & Eric Friesen

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024

VISITORS FROM JAPAN AT THE GRAND VALLEY INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN



Ayako Sasaki from Japan's Ministry of Justice and Rie Muranaka, leader of the NHK program in Japan



Ayako Sasaki, Rie Muranaka, and Peter Stuart, Chief of Education



Volunteer and incarcerated individual collaborating on a recording



Volunteer guiding the selection of books.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024

WORD ON THE STREET: TORONTO



HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024

WEIRFOULDS FUNDRAISING EVENT



Tom Best, Executive Director



Carol Off, Author



Sara Tessier, Northpine Foundation



Emily O'Brien, Founder of Comeback Snacks



Vincent Lam, Author



Lively turnout

2024 IMPACT REPORT: BCFI

Reflecting on 2024 and Looking Ahead

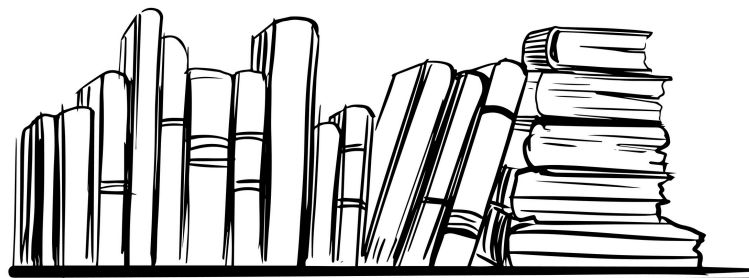
2024 was a remarkable year for Book Clubs for Inmates. We aimed to expand our program to include provincial institutions while continuing our mission to establish book clubs in every federal penitentiary. Along the way, we achieved some incredible milestones:

- **Donated over 160,000 books** to more than 30 federal and provincial institutions, revitalizing their libraries.
- **Launched five new book clubs** to further engage inmates in meaningful discussions.
- **We welcomed 14 inspiring authors** who visited over 20 institutions to connect with participants.
- **Recruited more amazing volunteers** to support our mission.
- **Boosted our visibility** both online and offline.
- **Participated in prestigious events** such as the Kingston Writers' Festival, Word on the Street, and the Innis Town Hall at Innis College, University of Toronto.

Looking ahead to 2025, we're excited to build on this momentum. Our goals for the year include:

- Donating more books to additional institutions.
- Adding new book clubs to our roster.
- Growing our social media following to reach more people.
- Expanding our presence at events across Canada.

Thank you for being part of our journey. We're looking forward to another impactful year together!



2024 IMPACT REPORT: ChIRP

Reflecting on 2024 and Looking Ahead

2024 was an outstanding year for ChIRP! We set ambitious goals to expand our program and are thrilled to share our progress and achievements:

- **We now have 18 ChIRP programs** in federal penitentiaries. In 2025, we aim to add six more, focusing on the Pacific region. We've established two ChIRP programs in provincial detention and correctional centres, and our goal is to add at least four more across Canada.
- **At the Grand Valley Institution for Women, membership has tripled.** This growth trend is also evident in other participating institutions.
- **We were honoured to host** Ayako Sasaki from Japan's Ministry of Justice and Rie Muranaka, leader of the NHK program in Japan, at Grand Valley Institution for Women.
- **Our ChIRP Reading Spot program** thrives with an expanded collection of activities and reading books.
- **We were delighted to receive Narwhal and Jelly books**, generously donated by Penguin Random House Canada, for our Reading Spot program.
- **Our partnership with the Indigo Love of Reading (ILOR) program** has grown significantly. In addition to their summer program, they supported us during the 2024 holiday season by donating an excellent holiday book for members to read with their children.

As we look forward to 2025, we are excited to build on these successes and continue making a difference. We are deeply grateful for your support, which has been instrumental in helping us achieve these milestones!



2024 IMPACT REPORT TESTIMONIALS (BCFI)

“The Book Club means a lot to me. It keeps me focused, and most of all, it keeps me busy. I enjoy reading. It’s a lot of self-meditation. For me, I’ve read 74 novels since 2021, and my goal is to read 1000 books. I discovered I enjoyed reading when I came to prison. I probably would have never read a book in my life if it weren’t for prison.”

- Jas, Drumheller Institution

Thanks a lot for your interest in setting up an official book club at Springhill! We (the inmates and Sarah) have set up a, in the interim, book club. We have read and discussed “Sherlock Holmes,” “The Tiger,” and “The Broker.” Education is limited in their supply of books. We are approaching finishing all the available books here! There are currently 12 of us inmates enrolled. 3 of us have been in BCFI at other institutions.

-Inmate, Springhill Institutions

“In the latest meeting for our book club at Drumheller Institution, we read Grapes of Wrath. Joanne and Lynn come in from the community to volunteer and facilitate our meetings. Being incarcerated means that there is a limit to our contact with the community. It also means there is a limit to our perception of the world. “

- Stephan, Drumheller Institution

2024 IMPACT REPORT TESTIMONIALS (ChIRP)

“ This program is amazing. It helps prisoners feel more involved in their children’s lives. My kids love the books, and it helps them feel closer to me. The selection of books is great. I never have trouble finding something to read.

-Brad, Inmate”

“ This program has made it possible for me and my five-year-old daughter to share laughs and stay connected throughout this difficult time in both our lives. She always loves the books and loves to hear me reading them even more. I am grateful for what the ChIRP program has done for me and my daughter, and I truly believe that it means a lot to a lot of people.

-Noah, Inmate”

“ I really enjoy the program; it brings me joy to know I am helping my son and helping keep a connection to him. Jan is really nice and helps me find books that my son might like. Thank you very much for helping me in this program.

-Kris, Collins Bay Institution”

2024 IMPACT REPORT

TESTIMONIALS (Authors)

“ I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for the experience I had yesterday in Mission. The conversation I had at both places were extraordinary—we spoke about redemption, grief, intergenerational trauma and so much more. They showed sincere interest in me and did such close reading of the memoir. At times, I thought they knew my book better than I did!

The men teared up several times speaking about how the book moved them and they told me how much they appreciated it. It was an experience I will never forget. I'm still digesting.

-Minelle Mahtani, author
May It Have a Happy Ending

“ I have had the opportunity to work with inmates at various facilities over the course of my career. Together, we've done writing workshops, and I have discussed literature with them, both my books and books from other authors that have served to enrich, inspire, and transform their lives.

There's nothing more powerful than a good story; it brings people together and builds community. Book Clubs for Inmates Inc is an important program that should be supported to continue to provide transformative experiences to people who have been incarcerated.

-David A. Robertson, Author
The Theory of Crows



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