



# BOOK CLUBS FOR INMATES

Annual Report 2018





Book Clubs for Inmates encourages positive change  
through the power of literature.

Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI) is a registered charity which organizes volunteer-led book clubs within federal penitentiaries across Canada. Currently, BCFI is facilitating **33 book clubs** from Nova Scotia to British Columbia.

BCFI runs French and English language book clubs for men and women incarcerated in minimum, medium, and maximum security facilities. Book clubs are usually made up of 10-18 members who meet once a month to discuss books, both fiction and non-fiction, of literary merit.

Every month, hundreds of inmates participate in book clubs across the country and each year thousands of brand new books are purchased, read, and discussed.

*Transforming lives one book at a time.*

## FROM THE FOUNDER

### Carol Finlay



2018 was a busy productive year for BCFI. This report will tell you something of what we accomplished, with opening five new book clubs, introducing ChIRP into a number of prisons, as well as, establishing a partnership with the Ephesus Project in Edmonton to deliver university education to inmates across Canada in a thoughtful effective fashion. It's been a busy wonderful year!

So much of our work is done by volunteers who have busy lives and many other useful things to do that could fill their days. But they understand the importance of our mission. They have hearts for the least, the last, and the lost. And they love to read and lead animated discussions with book club members who are, in some cases, reading their first book; in other cases, they are hearing themselves for the first time discuss a book in a civil manner that even delights and surprises themselves.

BCFI's work is almost completely dependent on these volunteers who drive off to the ends of the earth (or at least Canada) to prisons in all sorts of remote places across prairies, in the middle of forests, outside towns few of us have ever heard of, to offer community and books and discussions and kindness every month.

As well I'd like to tell you about a few others. Louise Hoelscher in Montreal not only volunteers in two book clubs, she compiles the book lists each year with choices that WILL WORK – and that's not an easy task. Volunteer readers send suggestions into her, but Louise vets them all. And our area directors in BC, the prairies, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces bring volunteers together each year for lunches and dinners and conversations about their book clubs. There are so many more volunteers I could name, if space allowed, who help BCFI fulfill its mandate. We are so grateful for them all.

But first and foremost, BCFI is about incarcerated men and women who are book club members, and I'd be remiss not to pass on to you a recent comment from one participant: "This is one of a few groups that helps expand our minds... I for one am very glad to be a part of this group."

For all that you do for BCFI, gentle reader, be you a donor, friend, or volunteer, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol Finlay".

## 2018 HIGHLIGHTS



Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette, Governor General of Canada, presented the Meritorious Service Medal (Civil Division) to Carol Finlay, Founder of BCFI. Photo credit: Sgt. Johanie Maheu, Rideau Hall © OSGG, 2018

**Book Clubs:** This year we opened five new book clubs: Drumheller (Medium) AB; Bowden Institution (Minimum) AB; Mission Institution (Minimum) BC; Cowansville Institution, QC and Donnacona Institution, QC. This brings us to a total of 33 book clubs.

**Children of Inmates Reading Program:** ChIRP is an exciting new program for BCFI now running in four institutions. With appropriate funding, we hope to expand the program to four more institutions in 2019.

**University Education:** We continue to support academically able students who aspire to earn university degrees while incarcerated or on parole. It has become increasingly difficult though to provide university instruction to inmates because of the lack of internet and hard copy courses. We believe that university education, almost more than anything else, changes lives for the better, and paves the way for better employment opportunities post incarceration.

**Recognition:** In August, the work of BCFI was recognized by the Office of the Governor-General in presenting Carol Finlay with the Meritorious Service Medal. She gladly accepted on behalf of all the volunteers who work tirelessly to make the book clubs happen; and our donors who not only support our work with funds but also tell us through their generosity that this work matters.

**Justice:** Lastly, BCFI, along with its many colleagues at the National Associations Active in Criminal Justice (NAACJ), is advocating for the changes laid out in Minister Ralph Goodale's recent Mandate Letter to Correctional Service of Canada (CSC). His letter offers a new progressive approach to Corrections, very much lost in the last 12 years. Statistics dictate that if we want safe communities in Canada, we must do restorative work (as opposed to punitive) with the incarcerated, especially with the overwhelming numbers of Indigenous and mentally ill.

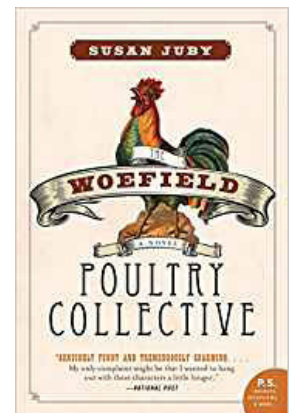
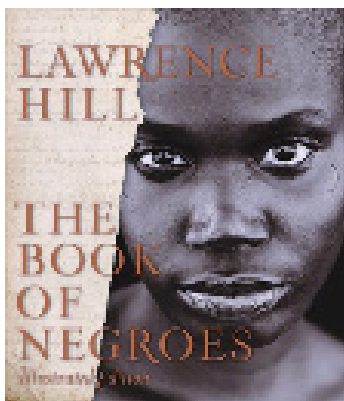
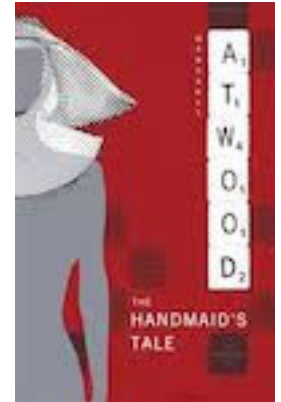
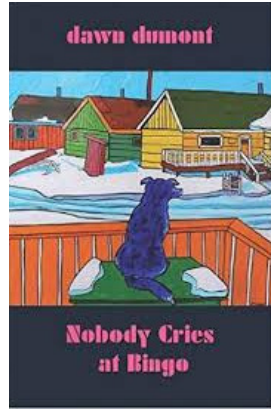
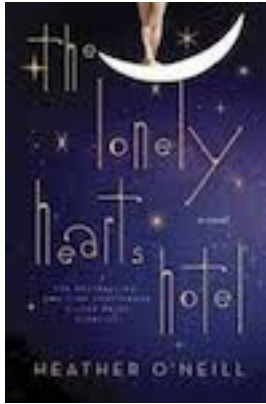
NAACJ · ANIJC



Social responsibility  
Responsabilité sociale



## 2018 FAVOURITE BOOKS



“I have been a book club facilitator for the last 8 years and I have learned that the men there are very much like my son, my friends and myself except for circumstances and bad choices. Some of the discussions we have had in the book club for inmates are so much better than discussions I have with my friends in community book clubs. Some of the men become insightful and wise because of their circumstances. The book club is a small way of helping the men listen to others, see other perspectives, and treat other opinions with respect.”

- Book Club facilitator

“I read mostly non-fiction, and this group has me reading a great variety and I really appreciate the Canadian authors.”

- Book Club member

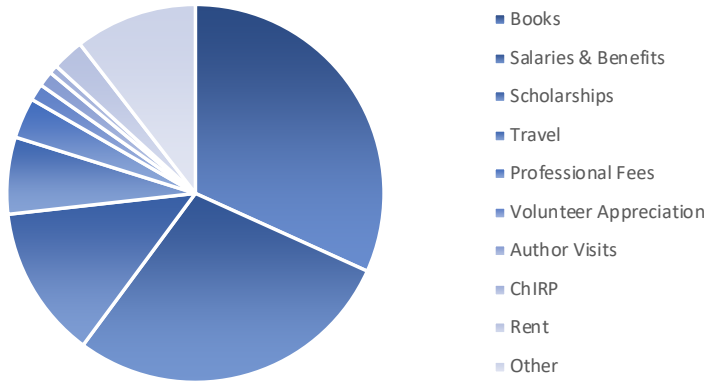
# 2018 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Year end December 31, 2018

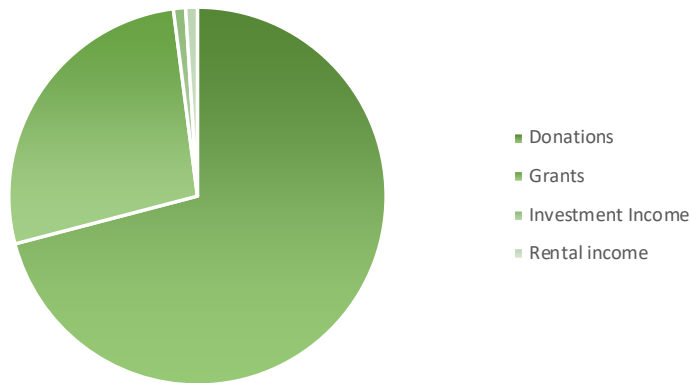
BDFI Charitable Registration No. 80417 0009 RR0001

Full financial Statements are available at: [info@bookclubsforinmates.com](mailto:info@bookclubsforinmates.com)

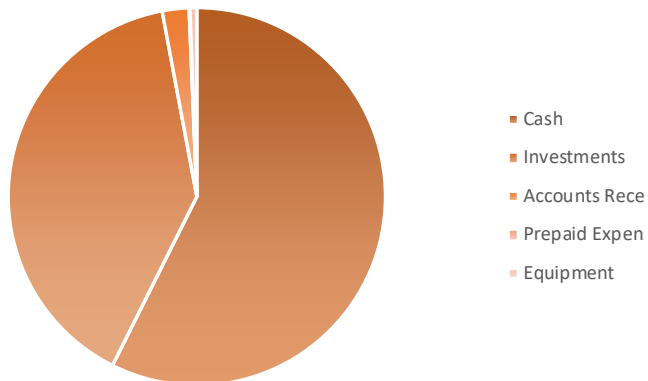
Expenditures \$211,354



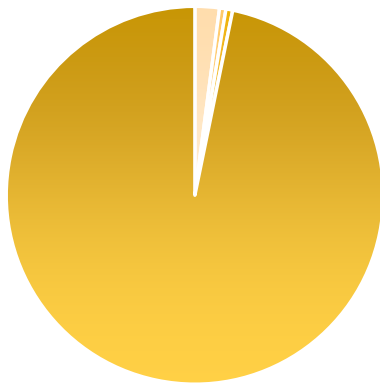
Revenues \$188,042



Assets \$257,035



## Liabilities & Surplus \$258,537



- Accounts Payable & Accrued Liabilities
- Government Remittances Payable
- Joan Lax Fund, restricted
- Operating Fund, unrestricted

## Our Sponsors



Public Safety  
Canada

## PARTNERSHIPS

Our long-standing partnership with **First Books Canada** has been critical in ensuring that we are able to provide good quality books at a reasonable cost. We are grateful to Tom Best, Executive Director, and his team at First Book Canada for all that they have done and continue to do in supporting the work of BCFI.



This year we have formed a partnership with **The Ephesus Project**, an educational program started at the Edmonton Institution through which university professors teach courses inside prison. With our support, The Ephesus Project has been able to expand their credited courses to other institutions across Canada.



“It’s my great joy to support this wonderful organization. Reading good books is transformative for anyone; and I do believe that getting incarcerated men and women (who have most likely never finished a book before) to engage with literature in this way is a great project that can change their lives, and ultimately make our communities safer.”

- *BCFI Donor*

# CHILDREN OF INMATES READING PROGRAM

BCFI's commitment to the successful reintegration of inmates and to stronger, healthier communities includes the development of Children of Inmates Reading Program (ChIRP). The mandate of ChIRP is to build and enhance a healthier parent/child relationship, develop literacy and listening skills, increase vocabulary and attention spans for children and promote a love of learning in children through the consistent presence of a parent and books.

For the past 10 years, Carla Veitch, a children's educator, has been successfully developing and operating a parent/child reading initiative. Twice a month, volunteers enter the institution and offer men the opportunity to select a book for their child and then read that book into a recording device. The book and recording are then mailed to the child.

This initiative provides a direct connection for the child with his or her incarcerated parent. In addition to the opportunity of hearing a parent's voice, the reading initiative underscores the value of reading and the importance of books. For a number of the participants, reading aloud to their child has not been part of their pattern of parenting, nor was it modelled for them as part of their early childhood years.

Children are never responsible for their parents' choices. At the same time, they are the hidden victims not only in the justice and correctional system, but also within our larger community.

"This is like a little family that encourages each other."

- *Book Club Member*

"It opened my eyes and my little world to read books that I might not have gotten the chance to read."

- *Book Club Member*



# GOVERNANCE

Margaret Atwood is the author of more than forty books of fiction, poetry, and critical essays. Her novels include *Cat's Eye*, short-listed for the 1989 Booker Prize; *Alias Grace*, winner of the Canadian Giller Prize; *The Blind Assassin*, winner of the 2000 Booker Prize; *Oryx and Crake*, short-listed for the 2003 Man Booker Prize; *The Year of the Flood*; and *MaddAddam*. Her books, particularly *The Handmaid's Tale*, are popular in our book clubs. It is with great pleasure that BCFI welcomed Margaret Atwood as **Honorary Patron** in 2018.



Ian Binnie, CC, QC  
*Honorary Chair*

Bryan Finlay, QC  
*Director*

Margaret Atwood, CC, OOnt, FRSC, FRSL  
*Honorary Patron*

Paul Haslip  
*Director*

Rev Dr Carol Finlay, OOnt, MSM  
*Founder & Chair*

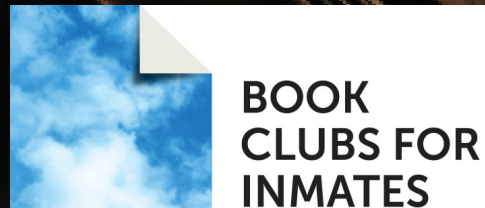
Sharon McFadzean  
*Director*

Peter Bennett  
*Treasurer*

John McKellar, CM, QC  
*Director*

David Baker  
*Director*

Helga Stephenson  
*Director*



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