



ANNUAL REPORT 2022
“THE ROAD TO RECOVERY”

BOOK CLUBS FOR INMATES
www.bookclubsforinmates.com
info@bookclubsforinmates.com

TRANSFORMING LIVES , ONE BOOK AT A TIME.

Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI) is a national, charitable non-profit that organizes and administers volunteer-led book clubs in Canadian federal penitentiaries.

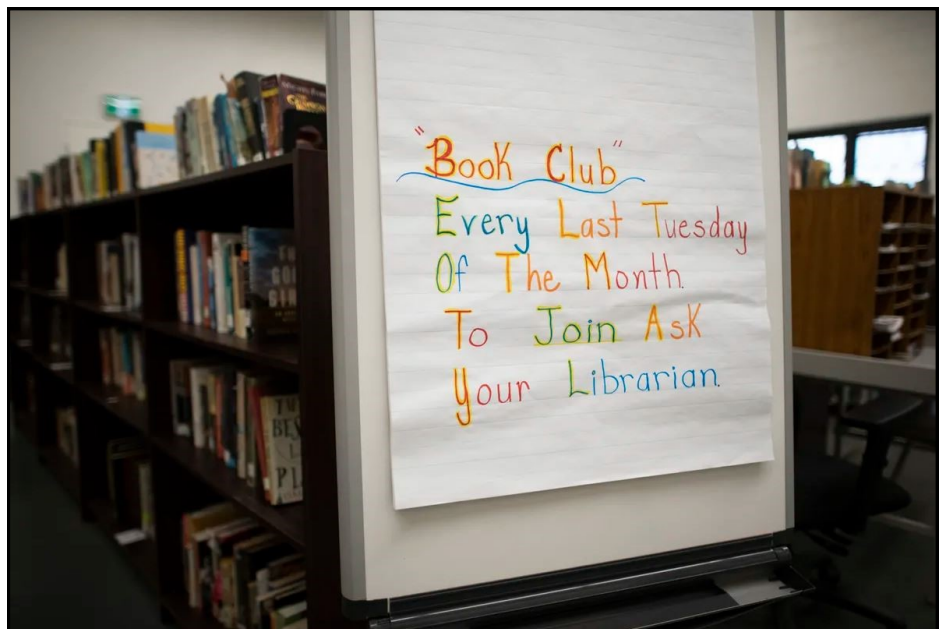
It has been operating for 15 years in Canada. We help inmates develop empathy,

listening skills, and self-awareness while

incarcerated. Book clubs offer intellectual stimulation and a healthy recreational choice to help inmates with their mental health and social interaction skills. Both are essential to improving their ability to reintegrate upon release from prison. Incarcerated men and women are among Canada's most marginalized people. Most inmates lose contact with the outside world after a while, and many have their families and friends desert them. BCFI fills this void by providing inmates with constructive activities that foster vital social and communication skills in a welcoming and encouraging environment. The program helps with rehabilitation, with the intent that an inmate has a higher chance of re-entering society, securing gainful employment, and functioning without criminal activity upon release.

We also offer a Children of Inmates Reading Program (ChIRP) to inmates who are parents. The ChIRP program initiative builds and enhances healthier parent/child relationships, develops literacy and listening skills, and promotes a love of learning in children through the consistent presence of a parent and books. Each month, with the support of dedicated volunteers, incarcerated parents can send a book and a voice recording of themselves reading the story to their families at home; the recording is copied onto a CD and then sent to the child. The ChIRP program was devised to reconnect children to their incarcerated parents, create positive memories and moments for children, and facilitate lasting bonds for a lifetime. Our focus is helping raise inmates' children to be happy, healthy, productive citizens.

In addition, BCFI has a scholarship program; we offer our academically able book club members a chance for a university education. BCFI partners with Universities to provide hard copy courses and hold tutorials in prison or via telephone calls facilitated by CSC staff.



Photography by Fred Lum



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

While it has been an interesting and challenging year for Book Clubs for Inmates in many ways, it has also been a real year of recovery. I am happy to say we have gone from limited activity at the start of the year to returning to where we were pre-pandemic and are now poised for significant growth in 2023.

Creating pathways to brighter futures for Book Club inmates and their families has always been our purpose at BCFI. We strive to accomplish this by combining various valuable programs to help female and male inmates become more engaged with great literature. Through open discussion with their group and our volunteer leaders, we help them face the complex challenges of every day. We aspire to influence their positive direction upon returning to the community.

Thanks to a remarkable group of dedicated "readers," we have significantly expanded our list of suggested titles. We have already invited our book club members to make their 2023 / 24 selections with our volunteer leaders and our dedicated Program Coordinator, Jeannie Kwan-Brydges. We know, too, that ChIRP (Children of Inmates Reading Program) and the Ephesus Project (Inmate University studies program) have restarted in earnest this past summer and are already making enormous progress. Please read the reports included in this annual summary.

This year, we are already planning to expand ChIRP dramatically. Thanks to generous sponsorship through the TD Bank 'Ready Commitment,' we will make it truly national in scope this coming year. TD Bank recognizes the importance of providing a unique program that maintains the critical bond between an incarcerated parent and their child through books.

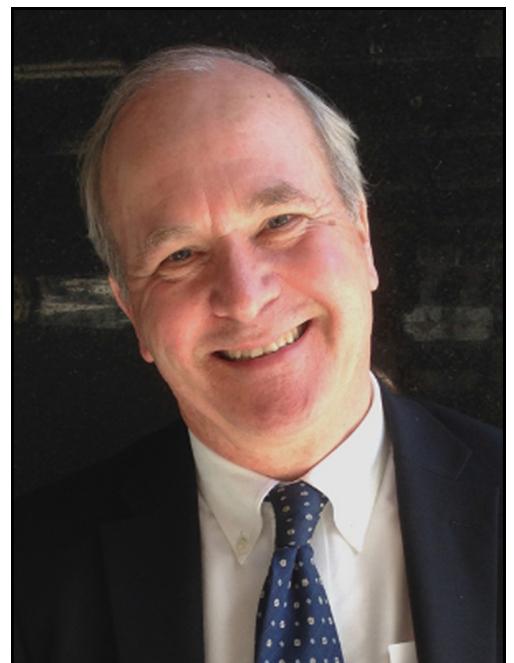
We have been so heartened by having so many new, outstanding people join us this year as volunteers as we expand our operations. We are so grateful for such wonderful, dedicated volunteers. They, indeed, are the backbone of our entire initiative. I want to thank all our long-term volunteer leaders for not giving up on us. We are so grateful for their generosity and patience through these turbulent years.

Today, we live in a world where everything is connected. The pandemic has impacted many people's social and emotional well-being and engagement in learning. Yet during this challenging time, the generosity of our donors, funders, and partners seemed to grow wings. We are so grateful for our many supporters and donors who recognize the importance of literacy and want every one of our inmates, whoever and wherever they are, to feel supported, valued, and encouraged. We thank them for helping so many deserving individuals through much-needed funding to realize the promise of a brighter future. Our donors' generosity, kindness, and commitment give us hope to continue doing that. We have made meaningful progress on many fronts this year, and we look forward to continuing. I feel privileged to be able to work with individuals who are so passionate about such a worthy cause.

Thank you for steadfastly supporting our vision: Transforming Lives, One Book at a Time. With our deepest gratitude.



Tom Best



OUR PROJECTS



ChIRP (Children of Inmates Reading Program)

ChIRP (Children of Inmates Reading Program) initiative builds and enhances healthier parent/child relationships, develops literacy

and listening skills, and promotes a love of learning in children through the consistent presence of a parent and books.

Each month, with the support of dedicated volunteers, incarcerated family members can send a book and a voice recording of themselves reading the story to their families at home. With another year of pandemic challenges that I trust are all behind us now, we can look to the future of supporting families of incarcerated parents.



The ChIRP program started in 2006 and has been a big part of family connections for inmates at both Beaver Creek sites. Over the last year the program began at both Collins Bay Minimum in Kingston, Ontario and Springhill Institution in Nova Scotia.

This valuable initiative directly connects the child with their incarcerated family member. In addition to the joy of hearing a parent's voice, the reading initiative underscores the value of reading and the importance of books. For several participants, reading aloud to their child has not been a pattern of their parenting, nor was it modelled for them as part of their early childhood.

Studies show that a child needs 1000 books read to them before they begin to read. Imagine a child's delay if they had never had even one book read to them. This program is changing that for these at-risk children. We all know that reading aloud is the most important thing a parent or caregiver can do to help a child prepare for reading and learning. More than half the children in this country will not hear a bedtime story tonight. As book lovers, we cannot imagine that!

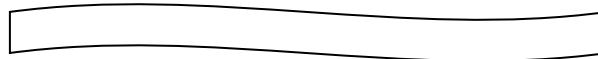
Over the years, we have heard from participants how these books have brought so much joy to these abandoned feeling children. They eagerly wait for the brown envelope to arrive, knowing they will hear the voice of their missed family member before it is opened. We have listened to how caregivers get tired of hearing the same story repeatedly as the child awaits the arrival of a new book. We hear how children have created their libraries of these treasured books, with some participants sending over 60 books over the past years.

Things could have been faster in 2022, with restrictions on volunteer visits extremely limited by CSC. In May 2022, volunteers were allowed back into all sites, and Beaver Creek, Springhill, and Collins Bay began slowly picking up again. We kept the program alive at Beaver Creek with the support of dedicated staff recording inside and then met up with a volunteer who sent the books and recordings to the families.

With a substantial grant from TD Bank, we anticipate a significant uptake across the country as we introduce ChIRP into as many federal institutions as possible, with the ultimate goal of 20 sites over the next three years, breaking it down to 3 or 4 new sites every six months. We are on target as we begin 2023 with the initiative starting in March at Warkworth, both sites at Dorchester Penitentiary, Grand Valley and Bath Institution.

I have ambitious plans for the next three years ahead, but I don't doubt that as the word spreads and we continue to get such positive feedback from families, 2023 will be a great year. We will say we impacted the lives of children of incarcerated families in such a positive way through the gift of literacy along with positive family connections.

Carla Vertch



In mid-September, our first ever incarcerated student arrived on The King's University campus. The young man began his studies with The Ephesus Project in 2017 at The Edmonton Institution. Throughout the following years he continued studies while he served time in a medium facility. On the Easter weekend of 2022 we received word he had moved to CSC Grierson, Edmonton's urban minimum facility. The summer was a flurry of activity as members of the campus community were trained as CSC volunteers and the young man steeled his nerves for his first foray into life beyond bars in a decade. I am thrilled to report that things have gone better than we could have imagined. The student is not only learning in his classes, but growing in confidence as he interacts with faculty, university administrators, and fellow students, all of whom have welcomed him.

This experience has also created opportunity for a new relationship to form between The King's University and Grierson Institution.

Shortly before Christmas the prison welcomed The King’s University Chamber Choir who sang a lessons and carols service where the men at Grierson read some of the lessons. As our Ephesus student stood at the podium, our project’s vision for reintegration took tangible form. In that moment he was simultaneously a member of both communities. He is no longer imagining what life might look like on the outside. He is living it.



While the on-campus student at King’s is the biggest news, there are many other happy stories to report. We are running our first ever blended distance, in -person class with a small group of four Ephesus students at Bowden Institution. Discussions are under way for a similar initiative at Grande Cache.

Meanwhile, the doors are open again at The Edmonton Institution. We welcomed six new students this year. During the long covid hiatus, our CSC education collaborators negotiated access to Webex (a ZOOM-like platform) that allowed us to conduct introductory courses online. We have retained the flexibility of the electronic

option for instructors who are not able to travel to the institution while we have also resumed in person classes in the prison.

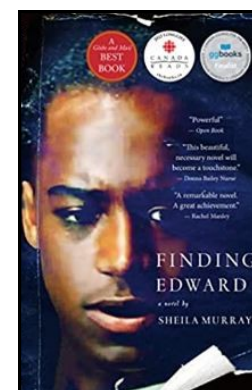
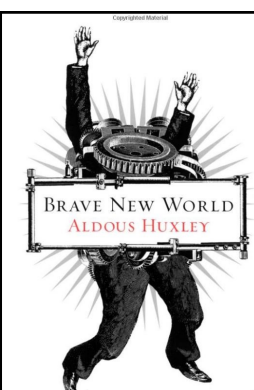
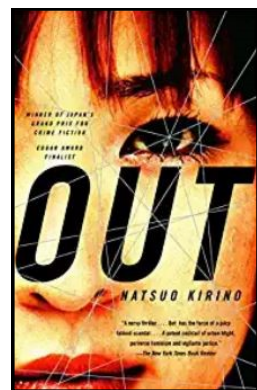
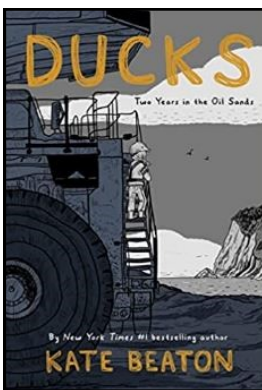
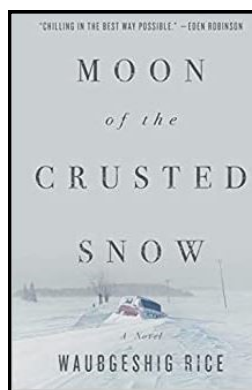
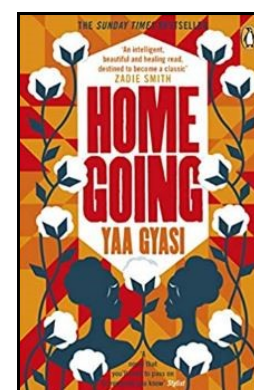
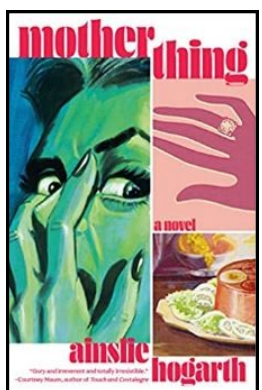
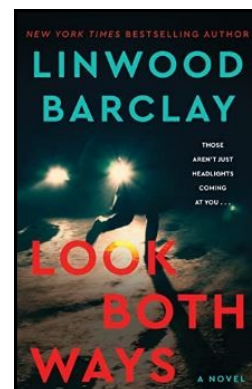
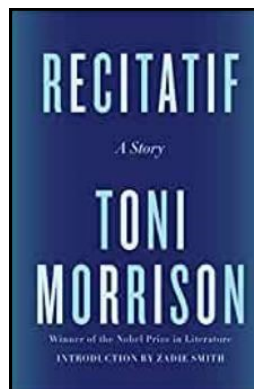
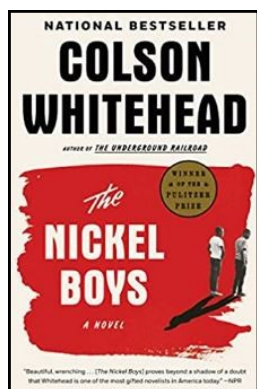
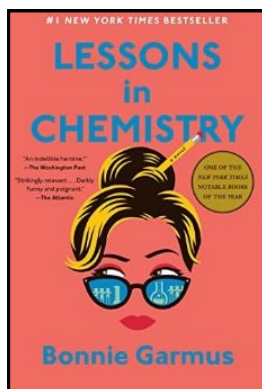
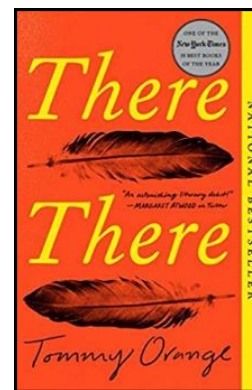
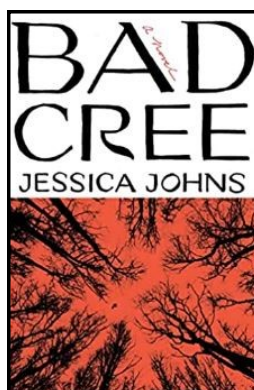
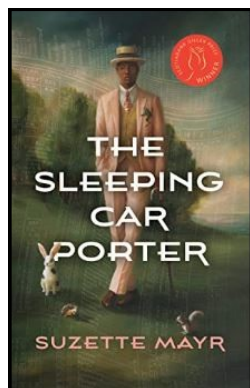
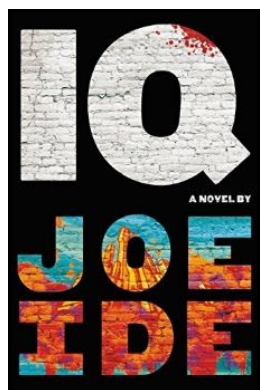
Challenges remain, of course. COVID has significantly rearranged post-secondary teaching, and pressures related to pandemic ensure faculty are stretched in new ways that prevent many from volunteering as they had before. But the tally of wins and losses is tilting in the right direction. We remain deeply grateful to our collaborating colleagues at CSC, The King’s University, and – especially – for the enduring support from BCFI. You make the work possible.

Arlette Zinck, Ph.D
Executive Director



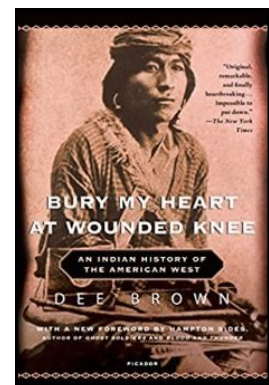
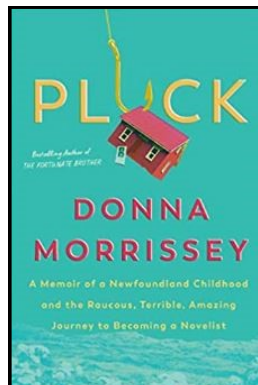
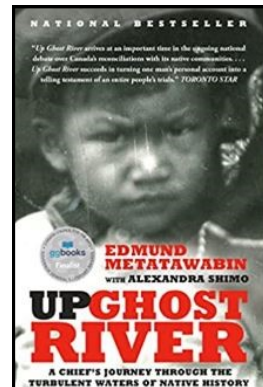
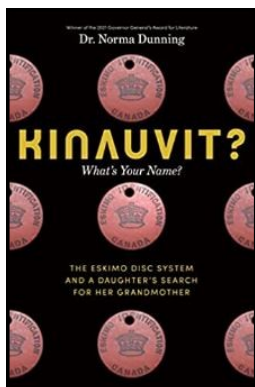
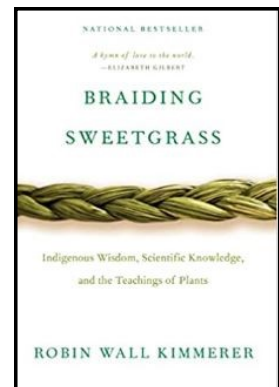
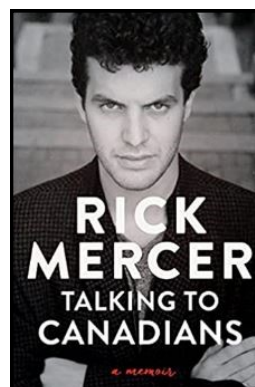
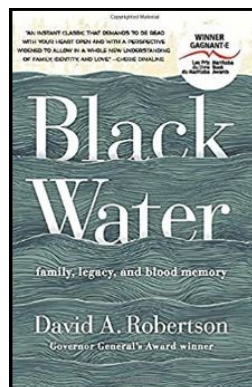
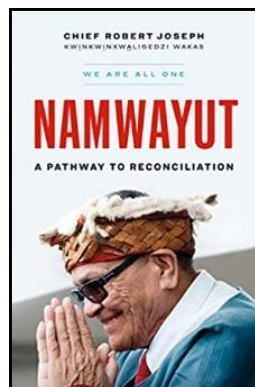
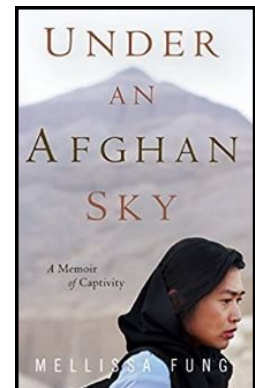
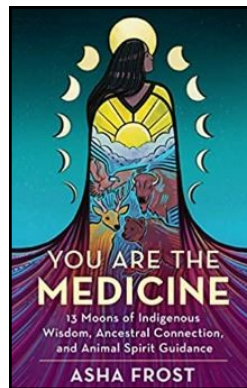
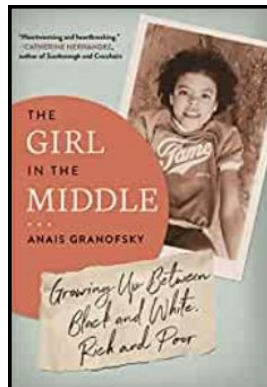
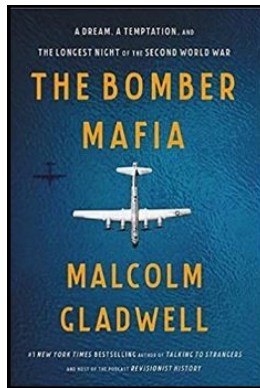
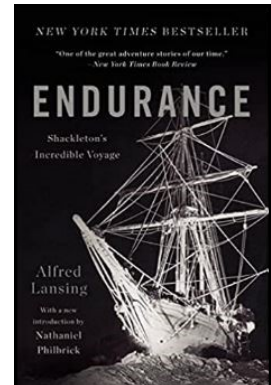
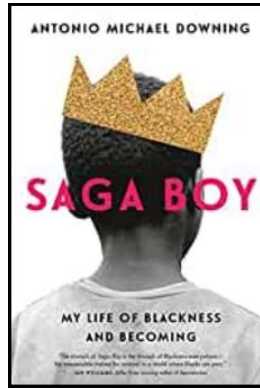
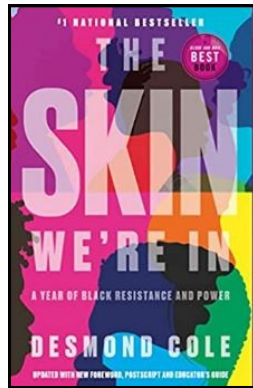
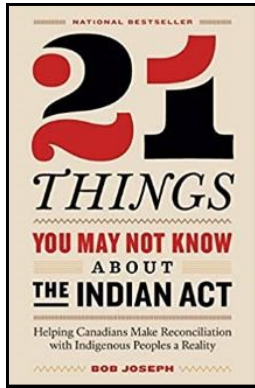
SOME OF THE BOOKS IN OUR LINE UP THIS COMING YEAR

FICTION



SOME OF THE BOOKS IN OUR LINE UP THIS COMING YEAR

NON FICTION



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Department of Justice litigator and former political staffer living in Ottawa, ON

Jacqueline Gumienny, Director

Lawyer with her own practice in Kingston, ON

Kathy Kernohan, Director

Retired businesswomen with a lifelong interest in the arts

Joanie McEwen, Director

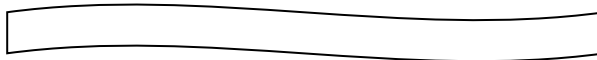
Writer, retired labour mediator / arbitrator in Vancouver, BC, and author of *Innocence on Trial*, *The Framing of Ivan Henry* (Heritage House, 2014)

John McKellar, Director

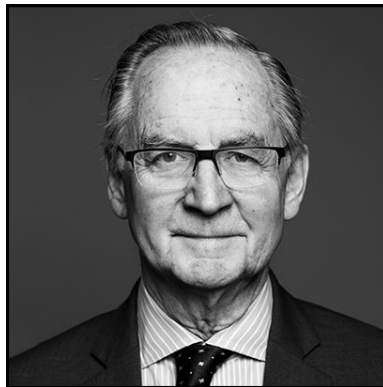
Senior corporate counsel specializing in corporate governance and not-for-profits

Erna Redekopp, Director

Retired health care management consultant and nurse educator living in Kingston, ON



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(Thank you for helping us make a difference.)

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2022 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

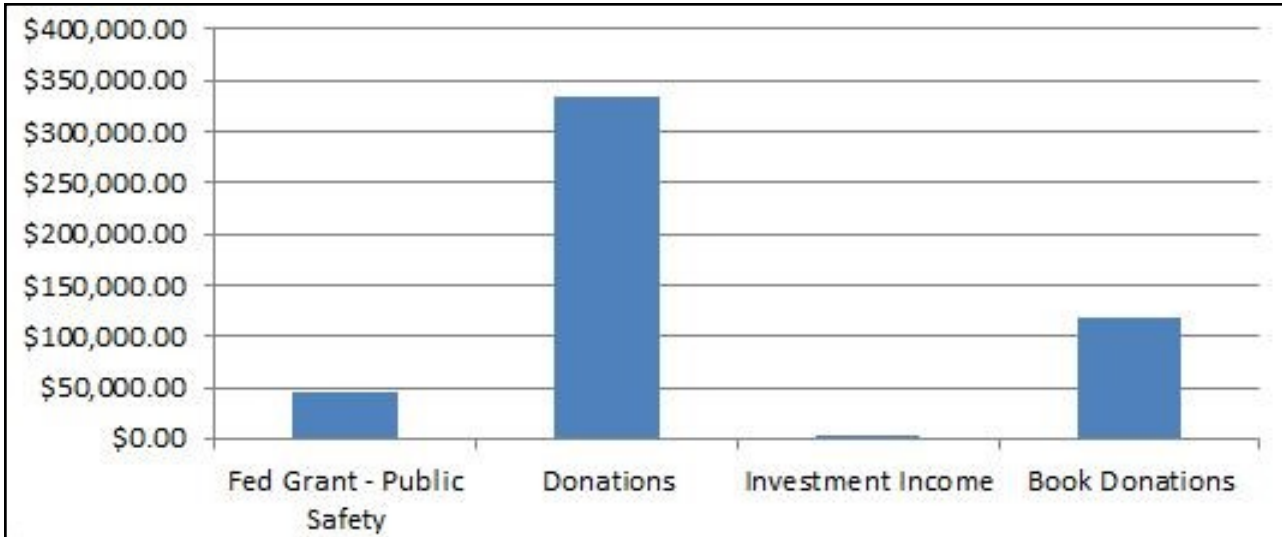
Year end December 31, 2022

BCFI Charitable Registration No. 80417 0009 RR001

Full Financial Statements are available at: info@bookclubsforinmates.com

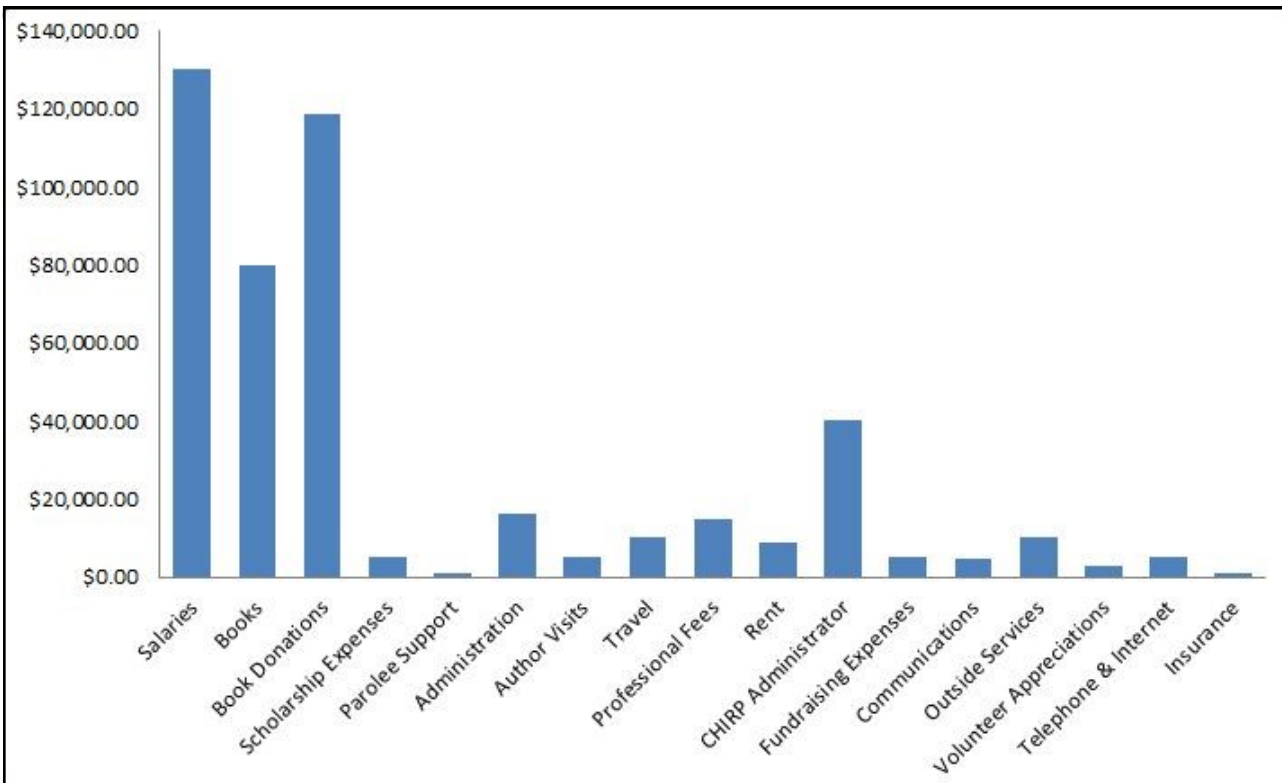
REVENUE

TOTAL REVENUE: \$499,170.00



EXPENSES

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$499,170.00



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

“The Library Project” is something we hope to launch officially in 2023. The dual goals are to improve access to ethnocultural books by including poetry, literature, history, and works of social thought and to create opportunities for incarcerated people to interact with authors and the literary community. Small pilot projects at Joyceville, Millhaven, Beaver Creek and now Bath has led us to believe that with sufficient funding we can realistically expect to provide 500,000 brand new books to federal institutions over the next three years to re-build their library collections.

We received a thank – you card Initiated by the inmate library workers at Beaver Creek’s minimum and medium sites. Sara-Lynn Hall, library technician at Beaver Creek Institution sent us the card with some of the following messages from the inmate library workers:

“Thanks for you caring, especially those new books that you donated to us during the crises time.”
Ali, Library Clerk.

“Thank you for the generous book donation & especially the perseverance necessary that made it happen. The reading material will be enjoyed by all for many years to come. Thanks again!”
Tim, Inmate Post-secondary Clerk.

“Thank you for all the books it is appreciated by so many people here at BCI. We can’t thank you enough. “
Collin, Library Assistant.

“The impact of your generosity and thoughtfulness will have an impact on the greater good for DECADES to come! The appreciation felt can never be overstated. Thanks much.”
J, Library Assistant.

“So appreciated and will be cherished!”
Bernard.

Many thanks for the donations!! These will keep inmates busy and out of trouble. “
Dat, Library Clerk.

Road to recovery

Book Clubs for Inmates

33 FEDERAL AND
PROVINCIAL ACTIVE
BOOK CLUBS AS OF
DECEMBER
2022.



BCFI THANKS OUR **80**
VOLUNTEERS , **17** VOLUNTEER READERS
AND WE WELCOME

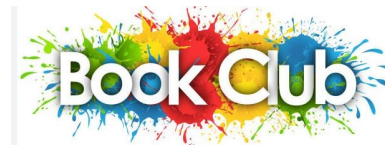
16 NEW
VOLUNTEERS.



NUMBER OF INMATES
PARTICIPATING IN BOOK
CLUBS IN 2022.

350+

4 NEW FEDERAL / PROVINCIAL
BOOK CLUBS AS OF DECEMBER.



IN 2022 WE HAD **97**
BOOKS ON OUR READING LIST.
IN 2023 WE HAVE **198**.

OVER **3,500** BOOKS ORDERS FOR BOOK
CLUB.
TOTAL VALUE OVER **\$87,500.00**.

Children of Inmates Reading Program

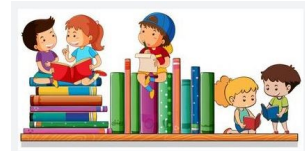
4 ACTIVE CHIRP PROGRAMS
AS OF
DECEMBER 2022.



ChIRP THANKS OUR **5**
VOLUNTEERS. WE LOOK FORWARD TO
WELCOMING NEW VOLUNTEERS.



OVER **500** BOOKS ORDERED
FOR ChIRP. TOTAL VALUE OVER
\$10,000.00.



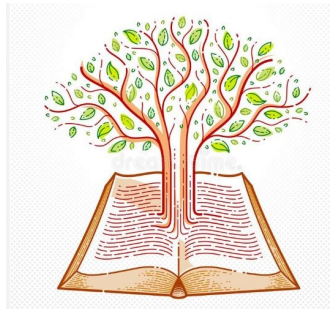
6 NEW ChIRP SITES ON TARGET FOR
THE FIRST HALF OF 2023.

20 NEW ChIRP SITES BY DECEMBER
2026.



NUMBER OF INMATES
PARTICIPATING IN ChIRP IN 2022 .

80+

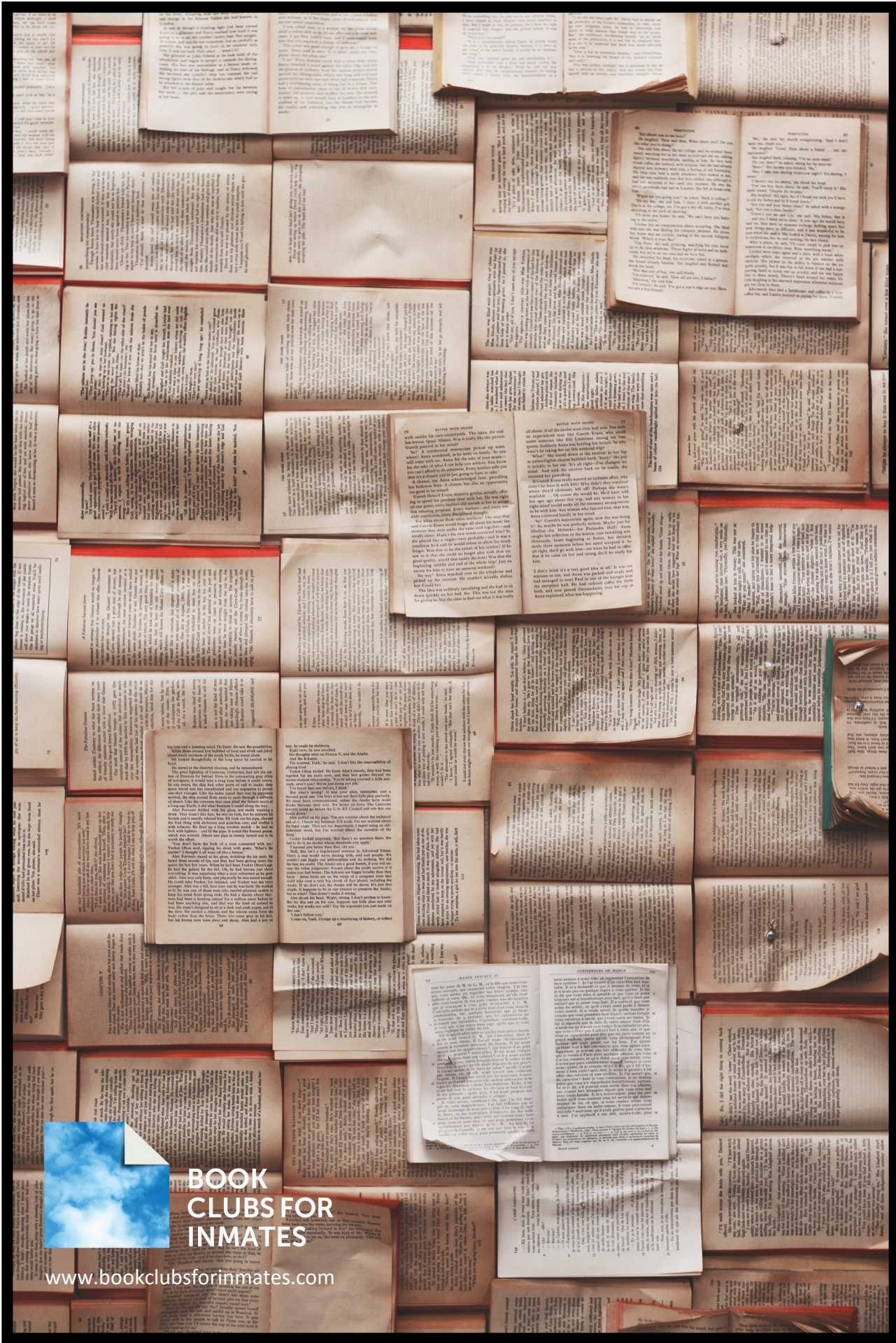


At THE END OF 2022, OVER
300 KIDS
RECEIVED MONTHLY BOOKS AND
RECORDINGS FROM THEIR
INCARCERATED PARENT.

Taking a New Road

Updating Prison Libraries

BOOK CLUBS FOR INMATES DELIVERED OVER **11,800** BRAND NEW BOOKS TO
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