



Annual Report 2021

BOOK CLUBS FOR INMATES

www.bookclubsforinmates.com
info@bookclubsforinmates.com



Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI) is a registered charity which organizes volunteer-led book clubs within federal penitentiaries across Canada.

BCFI Charitable Registration No. 80417 0009 RR0001

It is our mission to establish book clubs in every federal penitentiary across Canada.

Transforming lives one book at a time.

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Tom Best

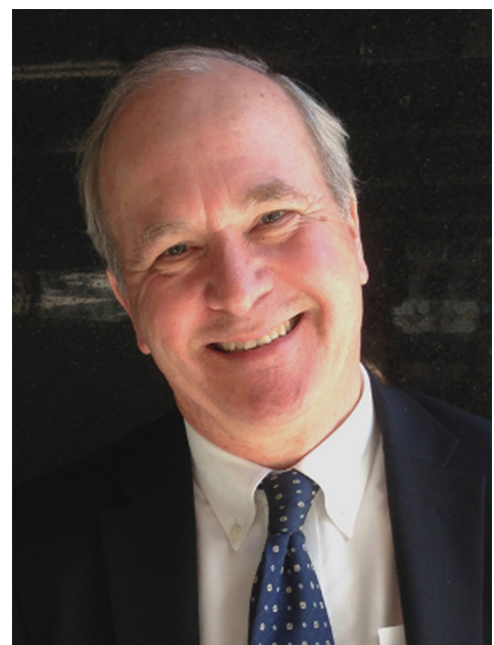
Since coming on board at BCFI, I have heard from so many of our volunteers, from CSC staff, and even from program leaders with other organizations just how much our programs have been missed. Since the start of the year, we have been trying to get ready for a new season for Book Clubs for Inmates. A significant amount of work was done in the first two months, drawing up a new, expanded list of titles we can offer to BCFI members and volunteers for their selection in the coming year. Thanks to Louise Hoelscher, our Reading Team Co-ordinator and a remarkable group of dedicated 'readers', we have greatly expanded our overall list of suggested titles and will be inviting our book club members to make their 2022 /23 selections as soon as our book clubs are revived.

We know, too, that ChIRP (Child Inmate Reading Program) and the Ephesus Project (Inmate University studies program) are very keen to get started again. I urge you to read the reports included in this annual summary. This year we plan to expand ChIRP dramatically and truly make it national in scope. We are actively looking for a corporate partner keen to help us to recognize the importance of providing a unique program that maintains a bond between a parent and child through books. It is a supportive

service that fosters self-esteem, security, and the development of resilience for children and youth affected by parental involvement in the justice system.

Our mission remains the same... to establish a book club in every penitentiary in Canada offering lively discussions and modeling respectful listening and speaking. After our established clubs re-open, we plan to work with new ones where we have support from CSC staff. We have already had wonderful discussions about rekindling our Book Club at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary and starting a new ethnocultural Book Club at Matsqui Institution in Abbotsford. We have begun to actively recruit new volunteers for both locations and will continue to share our love of literature with those inside prison walls.

Tom Best





WHERE WE HAVE BEEN AND WHERE WE ARE GOING

Our Year of Remote Learning

Our second year of living through the pandemic was filled with extraordinary success battling COVID-19, but it was a very difficult year for inmates across Canada, and a frustrating one for all our volunteers. For most of the year, our Book Clubs remained dormant.

While the rapid development of vaccines against COVID-19 is an extraordinary achievement, successfully vaccinating inmates and CSC staff presented many challenges, from production to distribution, deployment, and importantly, acceptance.

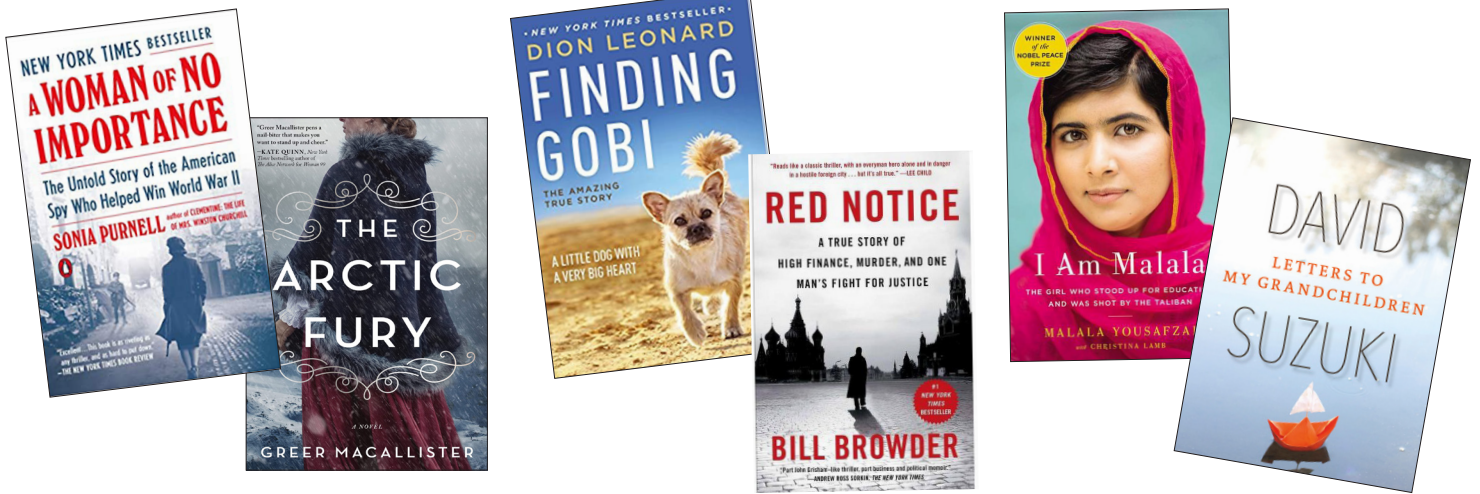
The isolation for inmates for the past two years, along with all the restrictions imposed to try to stem the spread of COVID-19, has made life exceptionally difficult for all those behind bars. Most have had no opportunity to make progress with their correctional plans.

In mid-November 2021, volunteers were once again allowed to start up Book Clubs. But in less than a month, the Omnicom variant swept through the country and again all our activities were placed on hold. At the time this Annual Report is being put together no date has been given for when lifting these restrictions will be reassessed.

We want to recognize those Book Clubs which continued to operate in 2021 on a limited basis against overwhelming odds. One held a number of online discussions, using the technology in place for online parole hearings. Two Clubs distributed books and carried on discussions through correspondence conversations, with questions drawing out responses and thoughts from inmates. In some institutions, CSC staff helped to carry on Book Clubs with smaller cohorts, and in many institutions, we were able to at least distribute books to inmate members so they could continue to read throughout the lockdown periods. Our ChIRP program also kept going forward where possible (see the report on page 5).

We are grateful for all the efforts made by our volunteers and CSC staff finding ways to adjust to the 'new normal' during this past year.

In November, BCFI hired Jeannie Kwan-Brydges as our new Program Coordinator. A graduate of Ryerson University, Jeannie brings over 20 years of experience in managing, planning, and implementing projects and programs. Working with Carol, she implemented a very successful fundraising campaign during the holiday season, has an excellent grasp of all our systems, and has completed an outreach to all our volunteer coordinators. She has done a remarkable job getting us ready to start up our programs as soon as we get a green light to do so.



OUR VOLUNTEERS / OUR BOOKS

We are so grateful to all our volunteers who facilitate the book clubs, read for the annual book list, seek out writers to visit the book clubs, and support parolees. We would not be able to accomplish all that we do without these wonderful dedicated volunteers. One volunteer we would like to highlight in this Annual Report is Louise Hoelscher who supports BCFI in a myriad of ways. This year she and her reading team have selected over twenty five new titles to add to our growing list of remarkable titles. Due to a serious health issue Louise is taking a sabbatical this year while she deals with her health. We want to wish her well and a return to good health and a full recovery. We look forward to her return in 2023

From Louise Hoelscher, Reading Team Coordinator

I have a BA in Sociology from McGill University and I live just outside of Montreal with my 6 dogs and many many stacks of books.

In 2016 Michèle Tibblin (another volunteer) and I had just started a French book club for BCFI at Joliette Institution for Women outside Montreal when CSC asked us to add an English book club there too. So, we started the English book club as well. Then in 2018 I also joined the Rev. Tim Smart at another book club at Cowansville Institution, also just outside Montreal.

Before our pandemic shutdown, a book club had just been started at Donnacona Institution, near Quebec City, and we hope to re-start it and also start a new French book club in Cowansville when we re-open. As the BCFI Area Director for Quebec my work is also to support and expand prison book clubs throughout Quebec.

At the end of 2017 I also became the Reading Team Coordinator, compiling our yearly reading lists with the

help of our 16 Volunteer Readers. Each Volunteer Reader makes several suggestions of books that the inmates would likely enjoy reading and discussing. These books are carefully screened for appropriate content and potential triggers, and as a team we strive for diversity in our reading lists which include classic and contemporary, fiction and non-fiction titles.

I am very proud and honored to be part of this wonderful organization which creates human connections through books for those whom society has discarded and forgotten.



OUR PROJECTS

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.

From Carla Veitch, ChIRP Coordinator

One winter evening, 14 years ago, I found myself teary eyed, thinking about an article in *Home-maker's* magazine that was entitled "Good Night I Love You". It outlined what is now known as ChIRP, Children of Inmate Reading Program - a simple yet profoundly impactful program that connects incarcerated parents to their families in a positive way through literacy.

Simply put, volunteers bring books into the prison. Incarcerated parents choose books to read to their family every month. They are given the opportunity to read the book aloud as they are being recorded. The reading is burned to a CD, and the CD and book are mailed to the inmates' family.

Because of the critical importance of reading in my own childhood, I jumped at the chance to investigate the possibility of organizing such a program at Beaver Creek Correctional Facility in Gravenhurst. Within weeks of putting in an application to run the program, I was contacted by the Warden who informed me that they wanted me to facilitate the program at the minimum site. I scrounged around for books and the rest is history.

That was 14 years ago! To this day my trusted partner and fellow volunteer Beth and I visit both the minimum and medium sites in Gravenhurst on a monthly basis. Over the past 14 years, over 3,500 books have been read and sent to families

across Canada and as far away as China and Pakistan through this hugely successful and relationship mending program.

I am happy to say that, as of today, ChIRP is running at both Beaver Creek sites in Gravenhurst, Springhill Penitentiary in Nova Scotia, Collins Bay minimum and medium sites in Kingston, and at both the minimum and medium sites in Drumheller. We are currently working with contacts at Joyceville Penitentiary in Kingston, Saskatchewan Penitentiary in Prince Albert, Dorchester Penitentiary in New Brunswick, the Nova Institution for Women in Truro, and the Stony Mountain near Winnipeg. We have ambitious plans to set up programs at each of these institutions in 2022.

The severe restrictions caused by the pandemic over the past year has limited operations for the ChIRP program. Working with CSC staff we have been able to keep many of these programs operating throughout 2021, but are looking forward to full resumption of programs this coming spring.



THE EPHEBUS PROJECT

For a number of years, BCFI has supported inmates in their pursuit of post-secondary education. We are delighted to continue to support post-secondary education through The Ephesus Project, an Edmonton-based initiative in which professors volunteer to teach university courses (via hard copy materials, as no internet is allowed in Canadian prisons) to incarcerated students.

From Arlette Zinck, The Ephesus Project Coordinator

And we thought last year was crazy! Let's face it: in the pandemic world, it is all a little crazy. As I write this year's report, I am filled with gratitude for the few things that have remained sane over the last year. I am also grateful for the remnants of relationship and resource that made small gains a reality this reporting period and make visions of future work possible.

We have had a few victories: Two learners were released from CSC this year, and one is now continuing his post-secondary studies on the outside, on his own dime. He is studying with The Ephesus Prof who worked with him while he was inside. A third learner is poised for a parole hearing in May. He hopes to earn a minimum placement and continue studies on campus at King's University next fall.

Two new learners have been admitted to the program. Two more have been interviewed and are awaiting placement in our mandatory non-credit introductory course. We have also begun processes for our own charitable status.

But, of course, there continue to be disappointments: Of the 12 learners registered in our program, only seven have been active this year. The remaining five are either blocked entirely by CSC, or temporarily delayed by internal prison processes and personnel changes.

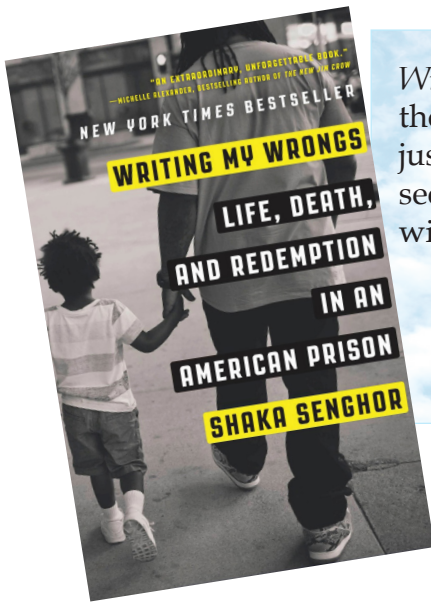
Our dreams for multi-learner classes and other plans to nurture further educational endeavors remain paused. As a result, and echoing last year's report, we again have made very modest use of our generous BCFI funding.

In the previous report, we expected roughly \$2,000 dollars to be spent on expenses for books and roughly \$10,000 in expenses for tuition. We did not come close to realizing these values, spending roughly \$433 on books and \$1,266 on tuition – a small fraction of our goals. In addition to the substantial unused accrued donations for education programming, we received the additional \$15,000 in April from BCFI, which leaves us with approximately \$50,000 of unused funds for educational programming. While this is very frustrating because of our loss of programming during the pandemic, these funds provide solid support for our efforts in the coming year.

As always, we are grateful for the collaboration with BCFI, and we look forward to the year ahead.

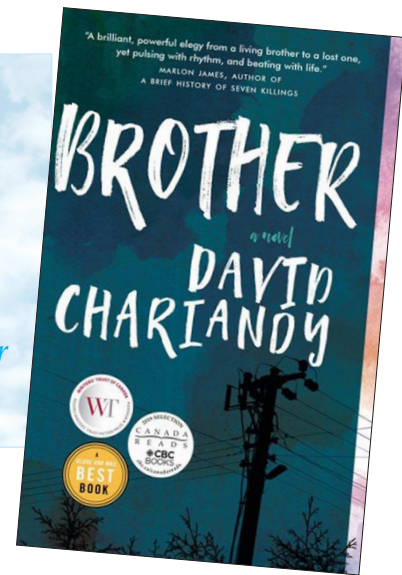


2021-2022 BOOKS



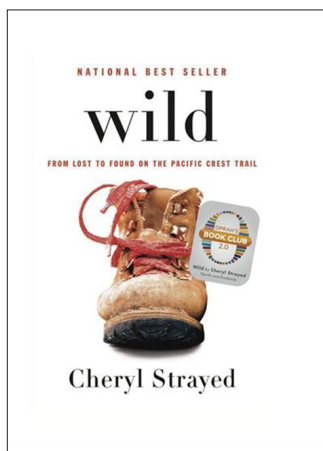
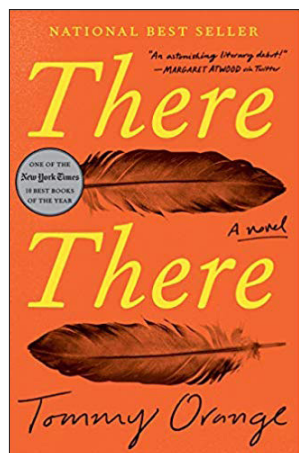
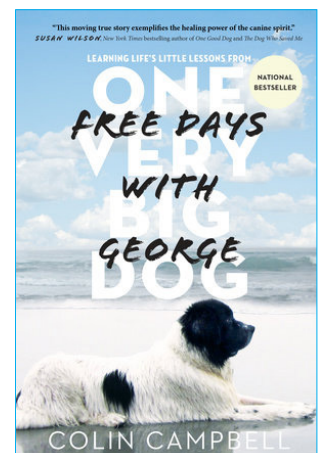
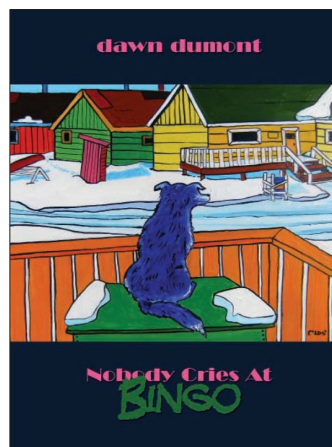
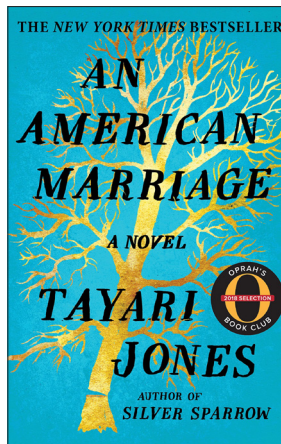
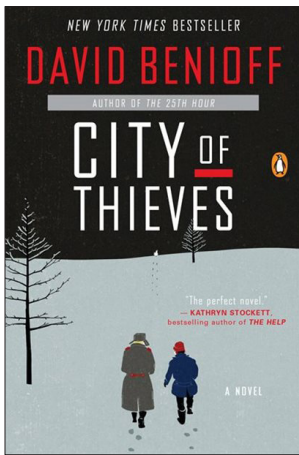
Writing My Wrongs provoked thoughtful discussion about the justice system and the value of seeking redemption and living with hope for a better future.

- Book Club facilitator



Brother was extremely well received by the men and we had an absolutely fantastic discussion with them, one of the best this year.

- Book Club facilitator



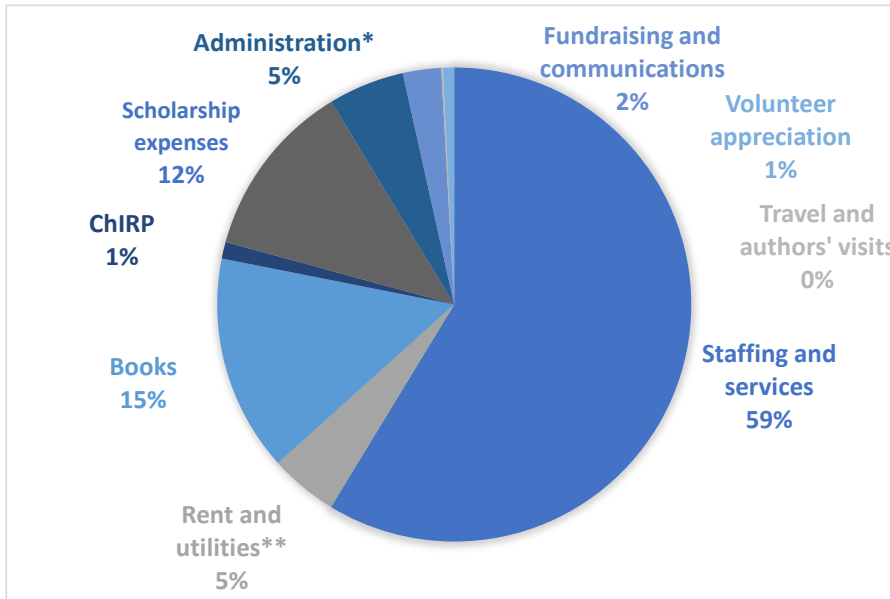
2021 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Year end December 31, 2021

BCFI Charitable Registration No. 80417 0009 RR0001

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

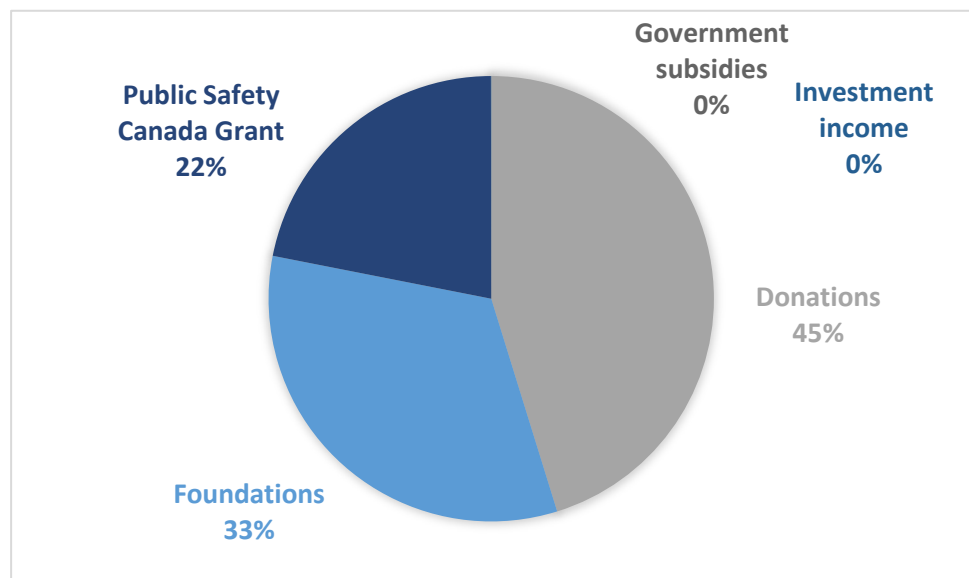
EXPENSES



* Includes professional fees

** Includes rent, telephone and internet, amortization, and insurance

REVENUE



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Meet Heather



My name is Heather. I was sentenced to three years at Grand Valley Institution for women in Kitchener Ontario in 2017.

When I first arrived at Grand Valley, the women told me about the book club program. I was very eager to join because I love books. I really enjoyed Book Club because of the friendships that I made but also for the intellectual conversations that would entail. We would get together, we'd exchange laughs, and we would have discussions about some very interesting and deep topics.

The Book Club has been a support system for me and I'm grateful to be a part of their program but **Book Clubs for Inmates should be in every prison in Canada** because literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning also it would mean friendships intellectual challenge and survival for others the way it was those things for me."

Meet Pierre

My name is Pierre. I'm 51 years old, I'm Anishinabek and I spent 10 years in federal custody in the custody of Corrections Canadian, in various penitentiaries across Ontario and Quebec.

This organization is able to provide about a dozen inmates per institution with a new book once a month. Outside volunteers come into the prisons and gather with the inmates for group discussions and reviews about the books at hand. There's always an active waiting list and whenever a spot opens up it fills immediately.



The club promotes and encourages reading of course, it challenges inmates to read outside of our typical genre sometimes or comfort zones. **The book club is also about breaking down barriers, labels and stereotypes.** It provides a sense of belonging in an otherwise difficult and hostile environment. It involves a small pocket of inmates conversing in an atmosphere otherwise void of displaying proper communication skills at times. For me it's personal, it provided me with purpose and meaning.

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