



BOOK
CLUBS FOR
INMATES



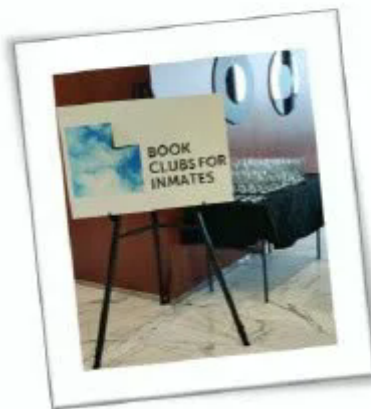
BCFI NEWSLETTER

June 24, 2023

- Book Clubs for Inmates Celebrated 15 Years of Transforming Lives, One Book at a Time.
- We Joined WOTS 2023 Festival on May 27 & 28, 2023.
- What's New With Us....

Book Clubs for Inmates Celebrates 15 Years of Transforming Lives, One Book at a Time.

On May 10, 2023, we thanked our loyal Greater Toronto Area supporters and donors at WeirFoulds LLP and celebrated our 15th Anniversary. That is right, Book Clubs for Inmates has been running its programs for 15 incredible years this August.



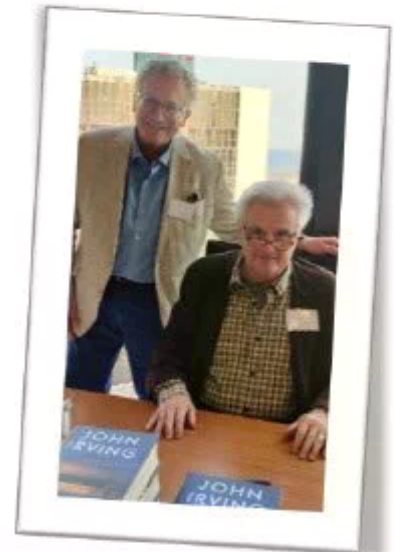
Our gracious host, WeirFoulds LLP worked with us to put on an impressive book signing with nine wonderful Canadian authors. We were also fortunate to hear the stories of two remarkable individuals who benefited directly while incarcerated with our Book Clubs. **Emily O'Brien**, founder and creative director of Comeback Snacks, a gourmet popcorn company she started while in federal prison, was a member of Book Clubs for Inmates at the Grand Valley Institution for Women in Kitchener, Waterloo. Our second speaker was **Saad Gaya**, who served nearly 10 years in prison, and is now a practicing lawyer with ST. LAWRENCE BARRISTERS PC . He served time at Millhaven and at Warkworth. While incarcerated, he attended university by correspondence and was a member of Book Clubs for Inmates. Both Saad and Emily spoke of how book clubs encouraged positive change through the power of literature.



Books that were signed by our authors at our celebration event:

- Stephen Brunt, *Playing the Long Game: A Memoir* Christine Sinclair
- Claire Cameron, *The Last Neanderthal*
- John Irving, *The Last Chairlift*
- Vincent Lam, *On the Ravine*
- Linden MacIntyre, *The Winter Wives*
- Rick Mercer, *Talking to Canadians*
- Carol Off, *All We Leave Behind*
- Ian Williams, *Reproduction*

We are so grateful to the nine authors who devoted their evening to us Stephen Brunt, Claire Cameron, John Irving, Vincent Lam, Linden MacIntyre, Dr Jean Marmoreo, Rick Mercer, Carol Off and Ian Williams. We also wanted to thank their publisher Penguin Random House Canada for donating the books for the evening for our supporters. We were honoured with the presence of BCFI's founder, Rev. Dr. Carol Finlay, and her husband, Bryan Finlay along with our honorary Chair, The Hon. Ian Binnie. Of course none of this would have been possible without having a marvelous location to host the event and want to take this opportunity to thank Tammy Nestoruk, Christina Reay and Kristina Talalaievska of WeirFoulds, who helped to orchestrate the evening with us.



Tom Best, the executive director of Book Clubs for Inmates, spoke about future plans for BCFI and The Children of Inmates Reading program (ChIRP), our plans for growing and launching new initiatives like ChIRP's Reading Spot in family visitation locations within prisons, and our goal of revitalizing prison libraries. Max Binnie, our chair celebrated and paid tribute to Carol for her leadership and persistence over the past 15 year, setting up and guiding the Book Clubs for Inmates program from one club to the now forty clubs we have across Canada.

A memorable evening, with delicious food and fun company, was had by all. We want to thank everyone who came out and so appreciated the generous donors who have contributed to our current work. You make it all possible.

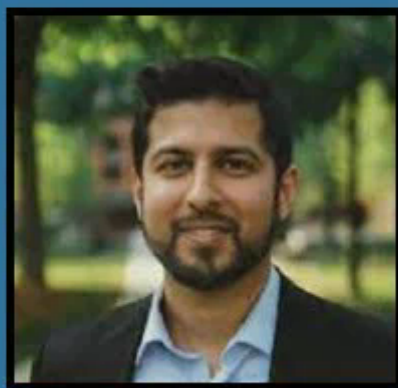
We Joined The Word on the Street 2023 Festival on May 27 & 28, 2023.

Our Guest Speakers:

Emily O'Brien, Founder of
Come Back Snacks

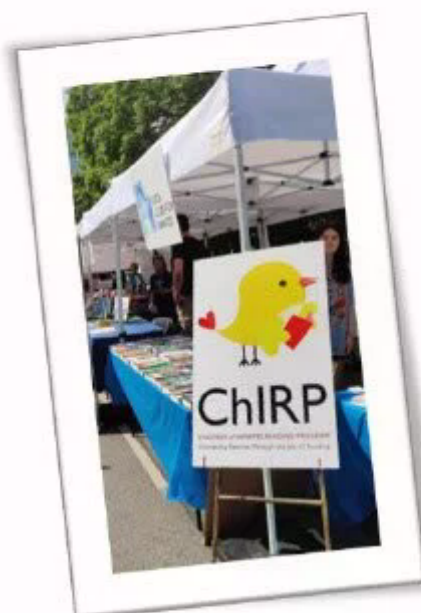


Saad Gaya,
Civil Litigation Lawyer

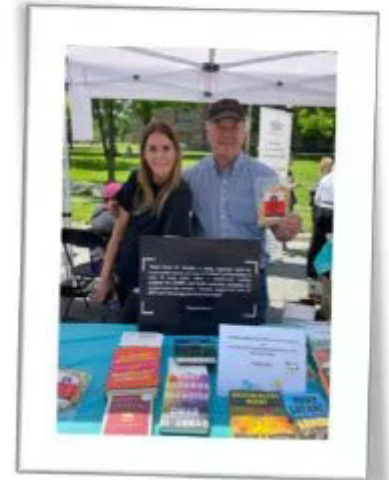
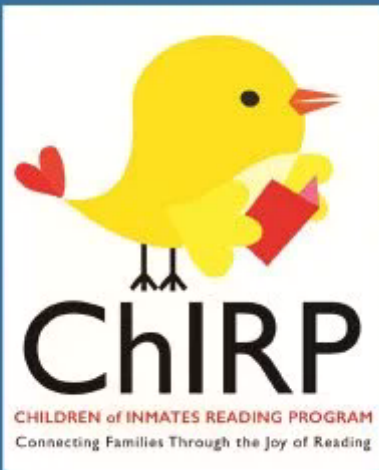


On May 27th and 28th BCFI participated in The Word on the Street in Toronto for the first time. WOTS Toronto is an annual celebration of storytelling, ideas and imagination, hosting Canada's largest free book and magazine festival, promoting great books by Canadian and Indigenous authors. It was a gorgeous weekend for the book fair. BCFI's booth had a lot of foot action both days, with hundreds of participants talking to us about the organization, and taking away a simple pamphlet about BCFI. Penguin Random House Canada kindly donated books to us (the sorts of books our inmates are reading this year) and we asked for donations if anybody wanted a book. We even gave away some of Emily's delicious Come Back Snacks with each donation, while they lasted.

This would not have been possible if it were not for the excellent volunteers who manned the booth and who were so welcoming and eager to discuss the dedication of our volunteers in the field and the work that BCFI and ChIRP undertakes every day. We raised over \$4,400 in just two days.



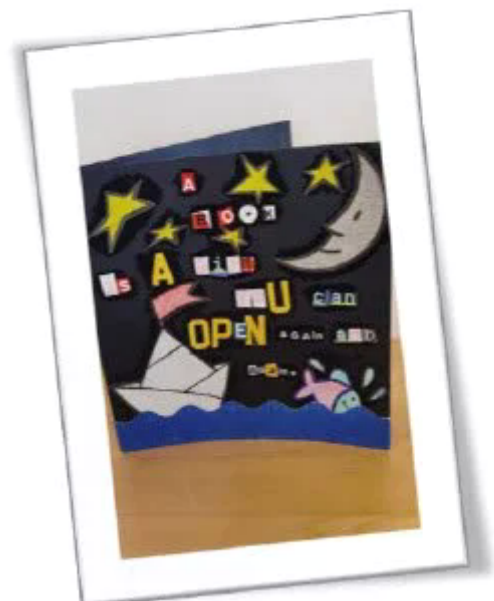
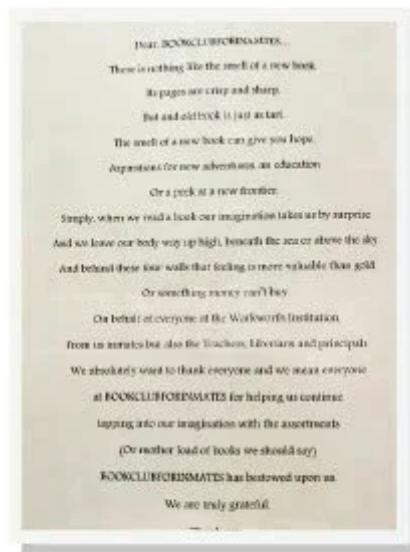
ChIRP HAS A NEW LOOK.



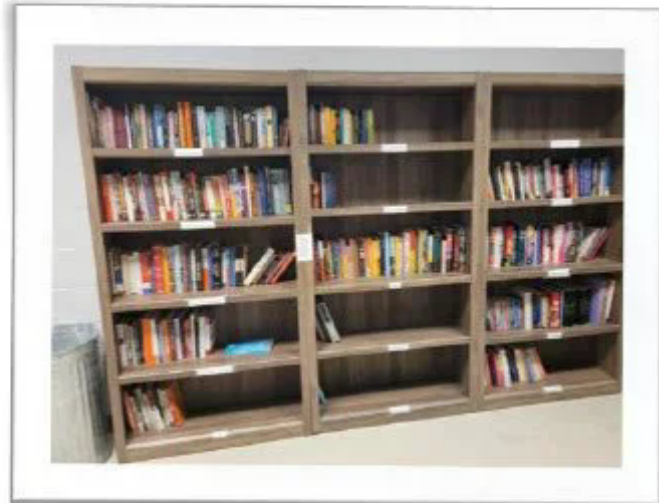
What's New With Us....

A lot of the time our supporters don't physically see the benefits of their donations. So, here is a short recap of what is transpiring with BCFI and ChIRP, primarily because of our generous donors.

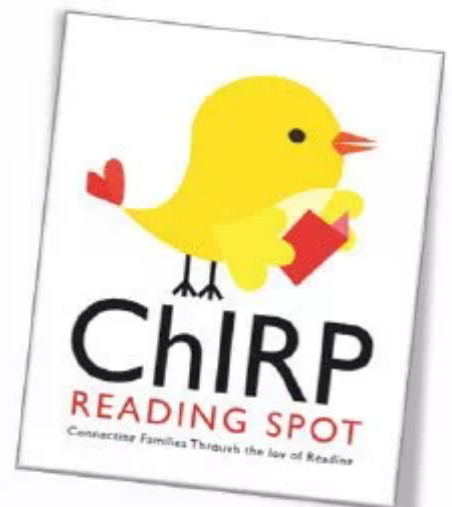
At Warkworth Institution, the members of the Book Club sent us a beautifully handmade card, telling us how much book club meetings mean to them and how it is changed their lives. The card is now proudly displayed at our office in Toronto, ON.



Donations have also helped establish an Ethnocultural library at Collins Bay Institution and a ChIRP Reading Spot at Beaver Creek.



Through the generous support of BCFI the Reading Spot's intention is to provide shelving along with perhaps a reading rug to make a cozy spot where family visits can include the sharing of books. Books will be provided as needed with the hopes that an inmate would be responsible for keeping the shelves neat and accessible for all family visits. Along with books for families to enjoy during visits we also would like to provide activity books that can be shared during visits but also be available for children to take home to encourage literacy and numeracy skills. The hope is that each child will be able to leave the site with a new book at the end of each visit.



We've also started new book clubs at five institutions; Ford Mountain Correctional Centre, Chilliwack, BC; Red Deer Remand Centre, Red Deer, AB; Regional Reception Centre, Ste. Anne des Plaines, QC, Saskatchewan Hospital Integrated Correctional Facility, North Battleford, SK, and at Stony Mountain Institution.

ChIRP has been able to start six new programs at Atlantic Institution, Smith Crossing, NB; Bowden Institution, Innisfail, AB; Collins Bay Institution, Kingston, ON; Dorchester Institution, Dorchester, NB; Grand Valley Institution for Women, Kitchener, ON; and Warkworth Institution, Campbellford, ON. Our goal of having ChIRP in twenty federal institutions by the end of 2025 is coming to fruition.

We always get warm responses when introducing ourselves to new people and discussing Book Clubs for Inmates and the Children of Inmates Reading Program. They are initially surprised that a program like this exists. Still, when we explain how much the inmates and their families value and benefit from these programs, their expression rapidly changes to genuine appreciation. Without our donors, supporters, and volunteers, BCFI and ChIRP would not exist. Words simply cannot express our gratitude to each of you.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!



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