



**StoryBook  
Ottawa**

# Child Literacy in Ottawa

Presentation to the Rotary Club of Ottawa South

# Agenda

1. How StoryBook Ottawa began.
2. Where StoryBook Ottawa is today.
3. Our goals for the future.



# How StoryBook Ottawa Began



- 2002
- Little Italy
- Family connections
- St. Anthony School

# St. Anthony School



- Diverse neighbourhood
- 25 different languages
- Immigrant families
- Challenges with literacy
- Few to no books at home

# The Gift of a Book

- Purchase a book for each child that they could keep and treasure as their own.
- Feelings of joy!
- First book that they had ever owned.
- Between 2002-2020 gifted over 1,500 books to St. Anthony School.
- Each child has their own library of 8 books (JK-Gr. 6)



# Results

- Culture of reading.
- Shared books amongst friends.
- Read their new books to their families.
- Helped parents and siblings to learn English.
- EQAO Grade 3 percentage of students at or above provincial reading level 45% to 92%.





# StoryBook Ottawa/Livre de contes Ottawa

Application to Register a Charity Under the *Income Tax Act*

Needs Analysis of the Relationship between  
Income and Literacy in Low-Income Ottawa Neighbourhoods

StoryBook Ottawa Inc./  
Livre de contes Ottawa Inc.



- March 2021 new not-for-profit corporation.
- Goal was to help other schools like St. Anthony.
- Received charitable status.
- **Purpose:** "To advance education by providing books to students attending publicly-funded English and French elementary schools in low-income Ottawa neighbourhoods."



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# Ottawa's Low-Income Neighbourhoods

- Significant educational disparities based on socio-economic conditions exist in these neighbourhoods:
  - Lowertown
  - Vanier South
  - Parkwood Hills
  - Riverview
  - Ledbury-Heron Gate
  - West Centretown
  - Britannia Village
  - Carlington
  - Sandy Hill
  - Vanier North
  - Overbrook



# Ottawa's Low-Income Families

- Highest-income neighbourhoods have 3X the household income than low-income neighbourhoods:
  - almost twice as many first generation immigrants;
  - 5 times more residents that can speak neither English nor French;
  - 3 times more residents considered part of racialized populations;
  - 7 times more refugees;
  - almost 3 times as many single-parent families;
  - twice the rate of unemployment;
  - almost twice as much unaffordable housing;
  - twice as many indigenous residents.

# Why Does it Matter?

- Family income affects literacy skills of children. Children in the neighbourhoods we studied:



- attend lower-ranked schools in the bottom quartile of the province;
- vulnerable to language and cognitive development problems;
- They enjoy reading less, and
- On average, 25% of students do not meet the provincial reading standard; some schools 70%.

# Solution: Books at Home

- Studies show books at home mean improved reading skills.
- Low-income families cannot afford to buy books, school libraries underfunded, and accessing public libraries is difficult.
- Number of books at home one of the greatest indicators of a child's success, academically and in life.
- 20 books at home makes an impact on ability to reach higher levels of education.



# Benefits of Books at Home

- Studies show that children who own their own books, compared to those who don't:



- enjoy reading more;
- read more books;
- read more frequently;
- read for longer lengths of time.



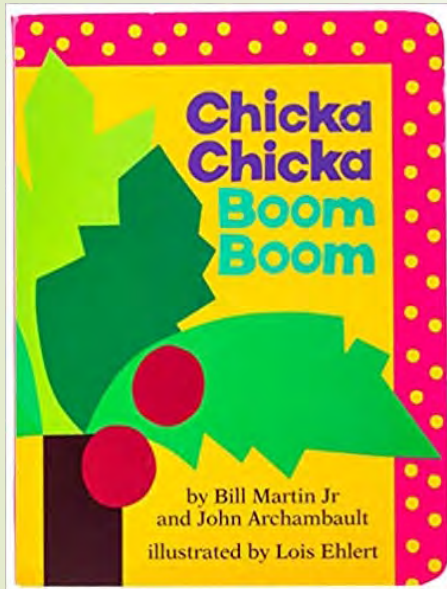
# How Does StoryBook Ottawa Help?



- We partner with elementary schools in Ottawa's low-income neighbourhood to give children their very own book!

# Book Examples

- We select four different books for each grade in the school.





# Award Winning Books

- We purchase award winning books that children can keep and treasure.



Caldecott Medal



Newbery Medal



TD Canadian  
Children's Literature  
Award




Coretta Scott King  
Award



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# Selection Sheets

- We create a book selection sheet for each grade with four choices for each child.

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**Pick a Book!**

Please check the box beside the book that you would like to keep as your very own. Print your name, teacher's name, and grade on the sheet. Your book will be delivered to your classroom soon!

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

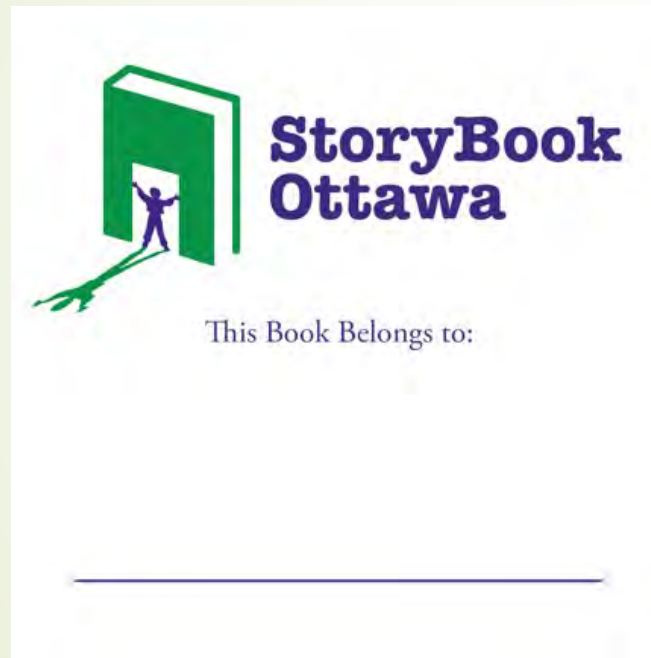
Your teacher's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your grade: \_\_\_\_\_

<input data-bbox="894 886 927 919" type="checkbox"/> 	<input data-bbox="1207 886 1240 919" type="checkbox"/> 
<input data-bbox="894 1205 927 1238" type="checkbox"/> 	<input data-bbox="1207 1205 1240 1238" type="checkbox"/> 

# Inside Each Book

- Inside each book we place a sticker and a book mark.



# Gift Bag

- Each book is placed inside a recyclable gift bag .





# Our Partner Schools

- In 18 months we have gifted 1,991 books to children in need.



École élémentaire publique  
**LOUISE-ARBOUR**

École élémentaire publique  
**Mauril-Bélanger**



# Our Partner Schools

- In May 2023 we will add three schools with 656 children at:





# Funding and Sponsorships

- In addition to fundraising, we have received funds from:



# Long-Term Partnerships

- We are seeking long-term partners; improvements to child literacy take place over time.
- Once we partner with a school, our goal is to continue to provide books every year.
- **Charles H. Hulse Public School** needs our help.
- Charles H. Hulse P.S. is in the same neighbourhood as the Rotary Club of Ottawa South.
- The club already receives the illustrated dictionary from the Rotary Club of Ottawa South.
- We only have funding from the Ottawa Community Foundation for **one year** to gift books to the 324 children attending the school.



# Charles H. Hulse Public School



**Enrolment:** 324 students

**Grades:** Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6

**Reading Score:** Only 31% of Grade 3 students are at or above the Provincial reading standard

**Provincial Reading Score:** 73%

**School Rank:** 2,867 out of 3,307 elementary schools in Ontario.

# Ledbury-Herongate Neighbourhood



**Income:** 5th lowest income neighbourhood in Ottawa (113 neighbourhoods).

**First Generation Immigrants:** 53%

**Racialized Population:** 65%

**Single Parent Families:** 34%

**Unaffordable Housing:** 42%



# The Future



- Goal is to gift books to **every** elementary school in **each** of Ottawa's low-income neighbourhoods.
- Cost: **\$10 per child** with 100% of funds going to the children.
- We are seeking long-term community partners who will sponsor a school.
- Rotary is a key partner in helping us to achieve our goal.

# Children's Comments

- "I love this program. I have been getting books from you since Grade 2."
- "I think this program should keep going because it is very fun to receive books and choose which book you get."
- "The program is amazing. This program has helped me advance in reading. It gave me one of my first chapter books."
- "I read to my brother."
- "I think this program is great for getting kids to get books because when I read one book in the series I want to read all the others."





# Final Thoughts



- Imagine the improvements we can make to child literacy in Ottawa if we were able to work together to provide books to children in Ottawa's lowest-income neighbourhoods.
- Imagine how much more successful these children will be in school and in life because we gave them their very own book.
- We can do that by gifting each child at Charles H. Hulse Public School their very own book.

# Thank You!



- Thank you for the opportunity to tell you about StoryBook Ottawa!.