



2021

# ANNUAL REPORT



LITERAL  
CHANGE

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Literacy is a right, not a privilege

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# INTRODUCTION

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At Literal Change, we believe that literacy is a right, not a privilege, and illiteracy in Canada contributes to systemic poverty.

Since 2016, we have provided hundreds of free remedial literacy instruction to at-risk and marginalized communities in Toronto, using a proven methodology based in structured literacy. Our programming effectively identifies the gaps in a learner's knowledge of the English language, addresses the deficiencies and supports the acquisition of soft skills.

Our educators creates a safe, equitable, and positive learning environment for each individual student, while responding to their own specific needs. Even those who have previously struggled in the mainstream classroom can be successful with our programming and can reach their academic and career goals.

This annual report is important in communicating our commitment to close the literacy gap in our community by making remedial literacy intervention equitable for those in need.

# MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDERS

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2021 brought with it new perspectives on how we can grow our outreach as a charity. From our groundwork, we learned that the best way to reach more student is through training teachers. This is why our team developed a 30-hour Literacy Specialist e-Learning course designed to train teachers on our structured literacy approach.

We also have a new outlook on funding that moves away from the increasingly precarious grant process. In 2021 we launched a funding campaign looking for financial partners who believe that literacy is the key to lifting people out of poverty and creating a society in which everyone can contribute.

With the pressures of lockdowns and the increased strain on our economy, mental health, and education systems, the demand for our services is greater than ever. We feel confident that with the right partnerships with school boards and funder support, we can continue to meet the needs of our community.

MARTHA JODHAN & ROBYN KEYSTONE  
Founders & Executive Directors



# OUR TENETS

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**Our team and volunteers believe in the following tenets:**



1.

Structured literacy needs to be embedded into the curriculum in schools.



2.

Literacy is a right, not a privilege; Everyone has the right to fundamental literacy education.



3.

Remedial literacy intervention needs to be equitably available to those in need.

# AT A GLANCE 2021

\$63,500

Charitable Donations

Key Achievement

e-Learning Course Launched

514

Contact  
Hours

50+

Letters & study  
packages to the  
incarcerated

36

Students

24

Tutors

21

Teachers signed up for  
the Literacy Specialist

# HOW ARE WE ADDRESSING THE LITERACY NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY?

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Proven and effective methodology based in a structured approach to literacy



Low Literacy Levels



Specific Learning Disabilities



Our Volunteers

e-Learning & Literacy Training

one-to-one

one-to-many

via

Profits help to fund frontline services

via



Frontline  
Community Services  
Across the GTA



Special Education,  
School Classrooms,  
Small groups

# KEY INITIATIVES

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## **Youth Literacy Initiative**

Through the Youth Literacy Initiative we continue to deliver structured literacy instruction to at-risk youth who need it the most. In 2021, we expanded our network of community partners and referring organization to reach more students. We rely on our dedicated volunteer tutors for the success of this program, every tutor that works with us is trained to deliver structured literacy lessons online.



## **Teacher Training**

By partnering with school boards across the GTA, we are delivering Literacy Specialist training to teachers. Our first partnership formed in 2021 with the TDSB and we are working on a similar partnership with Peel and other school boards. We are training teachers to recognize how literacy acquisition is impacted by various learning exceptionalities and how to give students meaningful accommodations in the classroom.



## **Adult Literacy Initiative**

Delivering in-person literacy lessons at Toronto's Detentions Centres continues to be a big challenge with the current restrictions. We continue to send literacy material, books, and letters to incarcerated students for support. In 2021, we began organizing with the Toronto South Detention Centre (TSDC) to facilitate their library program when we have access to visits again. In addition, we launched a book donation drive to supply the TSDC library with more books.

# THE LITERACY SPECIALIST E-COURSE

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In 2021, Literal Change developed the Literacy Specialist eLearning course because teachers asked for it. We now know that whole language acquisition does not work for 20-25% of students. These individuals need to be directly taught with structured literacy in order to gain the skills they need to read, write, and spell. Our course provides all educators with the knowledge and practical skills to tackle low-literacy at any grade level.

"I've learned more about teaching literacy in one module than I had in an entire semester in teacher's college"

- Rachel S. Ontario teacher

In 2021, we launched training with 13 educators and booked the first 2 months of enrollment for 2022. All proceeds from the course go towards programming for at-risk and marginalized individuals. By using the profits from our e-learning course to fund our frontline services, we become more self-sufficient as a charity.



# FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

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Total Revenue \$82,500

\$ 63,600  Donations

\$ 18,900  e-Course Income

Total Expenses \$124,250

\$ 68,300  Salaries

\$ 27,300  e-Course Expense

\$ 28,650  Tax & Administrative



# LOOKING AHEAD

## 2021 AND BEYOND

What does illiteracy really mean for our community?

Our team considered this questions and we let the answers inspire our vision for the future.

Low literacy plays a demonstrable role in the school-to-prison pipeline; it results in feelings of shame and embarrassment and makes it difficult for young learners to function in a mainstream classroom. Studies demonstrate that youth in conflict with the law commonly have challenges with literacy. The challenges are not limited to justice involved youth, up to 20% of the population struggles with a language-based disability.

Our work has made it clear to us that a structured literacy approach is the best remedy for individuals struggling with reading and writing, no matter what background they come from. That is why our vision for the future includes having structured literacy embedded in the education curriculum across Canada, and making remedial literacy intervention available for every person who needs it.

With approximately 1,000,000 students in Grades 6 to 12 in Ontario, at least 200,000 students need structured literacy to acquire reading and writing skills. To make gains towards our vision, we've formulated a 7-year plan to reach 10,000 students.

Sincerely,

The Literal Change Team





# OUR TEAM

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## GROUND CREW

ERIN LEIGH  
YLI PROGRAM COORDINATOR

DINA YAGHI  
COMMUNITY LITERACY  
COORDINATOR

## SENIOR LEADERSHIP

MARTHA JODHAN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ROBYN KEYSTONE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

SAM SONSHINE  
CHAIR

GUILLERMO SUBAUSTE  
PRESIDENT

JONATHAN SHEDLETSKY  
VICE PRESIDENT

ALEX SOARES  
SECRETARY

# STAY CONNECTED

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The logo for Literal Change, featuring a stylized graphic of three vertical bars of increasing height to the left of the text 'LITERAL CHANGE' in a bold, sans-serif font.

**LITERAL  
CHANGE**