

2024 Impact

Little Red Reading House & Book Bank



**The Little Red Reading House and Book Bank are proudly stewarded by the
Owerko Centre at the University of Calgary**

Opening the door to literacy

Located in Inglewood, Calgary, the Little Red Reading House promotes the joy of reading by welcoming families, school groups, and community agencies through its doors. This passion for literacy reaches further throughout the community through the Little Red Reading Van and the Book Bank which support dozens of organizations to get books into the hands of children and youth.

As part of the Owerko Centre at the University of Calgary, the Little Red Reading House also helps bridge the gap between research and real-world impact. It is a place where experts from UCalgary, a top Canadian research university, can connect with the community to better understand their needs and share evidence-based knowledge and trusted resources.

Why is this important?

27%

of children start school with literacy and developmental vulnerabilities

39%

of Canadian 16-year-olds have poor or weak literacy skills

25%

of families don't spend time reading at home and 6% don't own books

Children who are read to early and often have better language skills, fewer developmental and behavioural challenges, and stronger academic outcomes.

Literacy skills lead to better health, decreased poverty, greater community engagement, lower chances of incarceration, and healthier aging.

In 2024 the Book Bank gave 34,307 books to children, including visitors to the Little Red Reading House.



The Little Red Reading House opens its doors to children, families, school groups, and community agencies to explore reading nooks, discover books of all kinds, connect with engaging house staff, and pick a book to take home and keep.

1,802 children visited the Little Red Reading House with their families last year.

297 children visited as part of a school field trip.

246 children visited with a community agency or organization.

We also hosted special events to offer extra delight for visitors.



Story-book Series
with local authors



Stuffy Sleepover



Story-time with
Santa

Jasmine's Rock Garden

Yulia and her daughter Jasmine, Ukrainian refugees, discovered the house's fair entry program in 2024. Since then, Yulia has visited over a dozen times. Initially shy, Jasmine grew comfortable and developed a routine of picking up painted rocks from the kitchen shelf.



Seeing this, the team created 'Jasmine's Rock Garden' just for her. At the Little Red Reading House, special bonds are formed with families, creating a space where children feel safe and parents feel supported.

Little Red Reading Van

For those who could not come to the house, we came to them. We visited 19 schools and 26 community agencies with the Little Red Reading Van from May-September 2024. Through Van visits, we gave away 3,031 books.



“ You don't know how much this means to us, for a lot of these kids, this will be the only book that they have in their home.” - **Teacher**

Research meets community

The joining of the Little Red Reading House with the Owerko Centre at the University of Calgary has created unique ways to activate knowledge mobilization around language, literacy, and reading.



The University of Calgary is a top Canadian research university. It has a strong reputation for harnessing the power of innovation, entrepreneurial thinking, and transdisciplinary collaboration to tackle some of society's biggest challenges. Under its umbrella, the Little Red Reading House has become a place where research and community converge.

Advancing knowledge in language, literacy and reading

Dr. Lorraine Reggin is the Westman Researcher in Residence at the Little Red Reading House and Manager of Community Partnered Research and Engagement for the Owerko Centre. As an expert in community-engaged research and knowledge mobilization, Dr. Reggin integrates UCalgary research with engagement that happens through the house, uncovering opportunities for collaboration and partnership.



Dr. Reggin is currently co-leading a research study to explore the role of healthcare providers in early language and literacy promotion through a three-year longitudinal evaluation of the Early Words program in collaboration with the Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation and Alberta Health Services. She is also analyzing secondary data from the All Our Families longitudinal cohort on the relation between attention, social skills and language with Psychology Honours student, Hadley Perkins.

Sharing Research

Dr. Reggin regularly connects with post-secondary, educational, and social service groups to collaborate and advance research projects. She also leverages communications channels to share useful research updates and resources with the Little Red Reading House community.



In September 2024, Dr. Reggin met with staff from the Women's Centre of Calgary to provide training on early literacy and create a strategy to activate a children's reading area at the Centre.

Early Childhood Literacy Network

Dr. Reggin, and Owerko Centre Director, Dr. Susan Graham, play an important role in the Early Childhood Literacy Network, an initiative that unites experts, advocates, educators, and community leaders to collectively champion childhood literacy. The network advocates for language and literacy support from birth to age eight, anchored by research-based programs.

Why research matters

Child health research uncovers important discoveries and insights that can lead to better interventions and outcomes. Language and literacy are foundational elements of child development and influence a wide range of outcomes across the lifespan. Language development begins in infancy and children who develop strong language skills early in life tend to perform better in school, have higher self-esteem, and exhibit greater problem-solving abilities. Early language skills are predictive of later reading abilities and academic performance.

Children who read proficiently by the end of third grade are more likely to graduate high school and pursue higher education. Literacy opens doors to a lifetime of learning and opportunity, serving as a gateway skill that impacts nearly all school subjects. Language and literacy are more than just academic skills; they are essential components of human development that influence health, happiness, and quality of life. Ensuring that all children have access to quality language and literacy education is a crucial investment in their future and the future of society.

Empowering Future Leaders

Through various projects, internships and employment opportunities, the Little Red Reading House has engaged with students from the various faculties at the University of Calgary, as well as Mount Royal University and Bow Valley College.

Master of Architecture students from UCalgary's School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape (SAPL) used the Little Red Reading House as inspiration for a work-integrated studio project that explored various aspects of design including designing for neurodiversity.

With support from pre-service teachers from UCalgary's Werklund School of Education, the Little Red Reading House expanded family visits to include the newly coined 'Werklund Wednesdays,' allowing pre-service teachers and families to engage in literacy together.



SAPL graduate students Nicole Hobbins, Urvashi Tiwari, Makenzie Zaugg, and Cassidy Schentag at the final exhibition of their Work-Integrated Studio Project for Little Red Reading House. (Absent from photo: students Caelin Sandhurst and Calvin Irvine.)



Werklund students, Alyssa Columbres and Jenna Turner, sorting books.



Werklund student, Alyssa Columbres, leading story time at LRRH family visits.

The magic starts at the Book Bank

Donated books that come in from generous community members are repaired, sorted, and categorized at our Book Bank and then distributed to children through the Little Red Reading House, Little Red Reading Van, and donations to 45+ community groups including schools and agencies.



Some of the community groups we partner with include:

- Calgary Food Bank
- Mustard Seed
- Brenda Strafford House
- Wood's Homes Foster Care
- Closer to Home
- Habitat for Humanity
- Elizabeth House Calgary
- Mainsprings Pregnancy and Family Support
- Radiance Family Society
- Kids Cancer Care
- Ruth's House Society
- Families Matter
- YW Calgary - Community Hub
- YW Calgary - Crisis Shelter
- Carya
- CUPS
- Women's Centre of Calgary
- Miskanawah
- Children's Cottage Society
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and Area
- Treat Accessibly
- Calgary Board of Education Books on Busses

Ruth's House

Ruth's House supports women and children escaping intimate partner violence, sheltering up to six families at a time. The Rotary Club of Calgary helped fund a new kitchen and play area and partnered with the Book Bank to deliver gift baskets with books, food, and toys. "Books are an incredible way to offer comfort and escape to children who are going through a hard time," says Dawn Cruickshank, book bank administrator.

The Little Red Reading House and Book Bank have an incredible 50 volunteers who gave 1,345 hours of their time to get books in the hands of children across our community in 2024.

Meet the Team



**Fearless
leader and
champion of
child health
research.**

Dr. Susan Graham
Director, Owerko Centre



**Passionate
about
translating
research into
real-world
impact.**

Dr. Lorraine Reggin
Westman Researcher in Residence;
Manager, Community Partnered Research and
Engagement, Owerko Centre



**Loves
encouraging
individuals to
find and embrace
their own
creative
potential.**

Parisa Radmanesh
Coordinator, Little Red Reading House



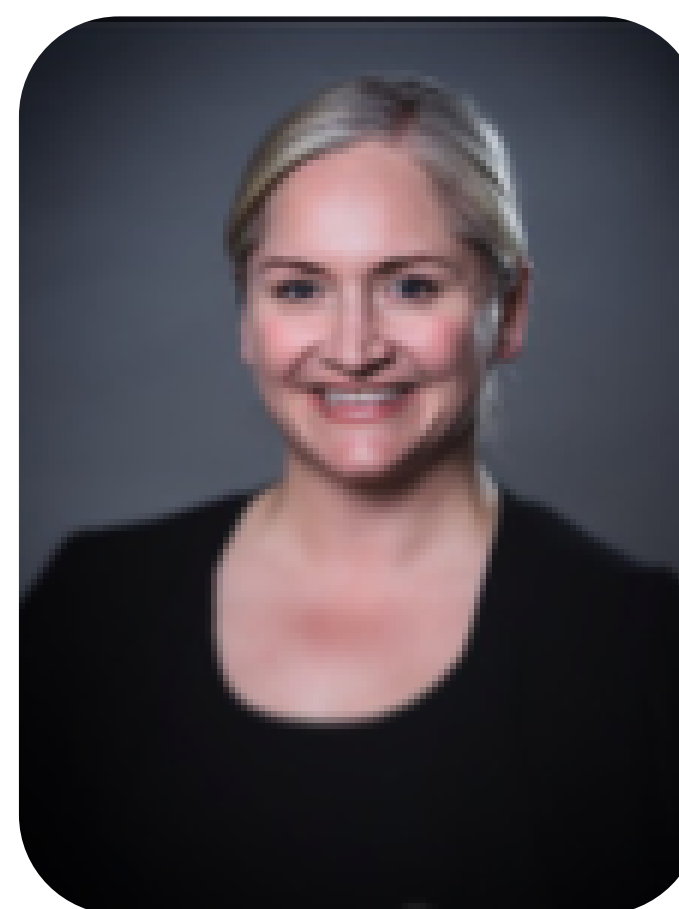
**Believes all
children should
own books so they
can become
confident readers
and successful
learners.**

Dawn Cruickshank,
Administrator, Book Bank



**Wants to help
every child feel
voraciously
entitled to the
worlds between
the pages.**

Lucas Field
Community Engagement Assistant,
Little Red Reading House



**Shares stories that
bridge the gap
between science
and community,
sparking
engagement and
enlightenment**

Helen Dunlop
Senior Specialist, Communications,
Owerko Centre & Azrieli Accelerator

Celebrating the spirit of philanthropy



Philanthropy is at the heart of what we do. Thanks to our generous supporters, we are spreading the gift of literacy and book ownership to tens of thousands of children in our community each year.

The Little Red Reading House and Book Bank are supported by generous donors through the Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation.

Calgary Reads Big Book Sale



Each year, the Calgary Reads Big Book Sale, supported by the Rotary Club of Calgary, raises money to support literacy initiatives across the community and the Little Red Reading House Book Bank is a grateful recipient. This support allows us to give books to children every year and spread the importance of reading and literacy.

The Book Bank also relies on book donations and is incredibly grateful for the support it receives from generous Calgarians throughout the year.



**33,975 books were
donated to the
Book Bank in 2024**

Chestermere Girl Guides led a book drive and donated 1,844 books to the Book Bank.

Thank you!

Thank you for being a supporter of the Little Red Reading House and Book Bank at UCalgary's Owerko Centre. Not only are you championing literacy, reading, and book ownership for thousands of children each year, you help advance research and thought leadership that strengthens literacy and child health across our community.

Want to connect? Reach out to us at owerko.centre@ucalgary.ca or hello@littleredreading.house