

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY – LARGE

Indigo Books & Music: The Indigo Love of Reading Foundation

Awarded to a retailer that demonstrates an innovative and proactive solution to societal and/or environmental challenges, resulting in enhanced community awareness of the retailer and improved brand image.

2009
ESR
WINNER

In 2001, Indigo Books & Music Inc. CEO Heather Reisman was introduced to the nation's literacy crisis firsthand while touring an inner-city school in Toronto. Although the principal and teachers at Church Street Elementary School were committed to a culture of learning, decades of limited government funding left them without the necessary books to do their jobs. The library shelves were mostly empty and what books they had were significantly outdated, extremely worn and of little interest to the students.

Shocked to see the library so neglected and the impact it had on student learning, Indigo's team invested in the

library, ensuring that the students would have access to new books and education materials. This strengthened teacher morale, encouraged the children to embrace books and reading, and in turn resulted in increased literacy scores at the school. The success of the program demonstrated the need for a permanent solution, and so the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation was born in 2004.

Every year, the foundation commits \$1.5 million to high-needs elementary schools, funding that allows them to build their libraries with the purchase of new books and educational resources. In 2007, the foundation released *Writing on the Wall*, a documentary

that highlighted some astonishing facts about the state of literacy in Canada, including the fact that only 12% of schools in Ontario have full-time librarians and 42% of adult Canadians are functionally illiterate.

In 2008, the foundation celebrated the "graduation" of its first 10 schools to receive Foundation Grants. That same year, the foundation doubled the number of schools inducted into the program and generated considerable media coverage for both the foundation and its impact on schools across Canada. To date, the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation has committed \$6 million to 50 schools nationally. ☐