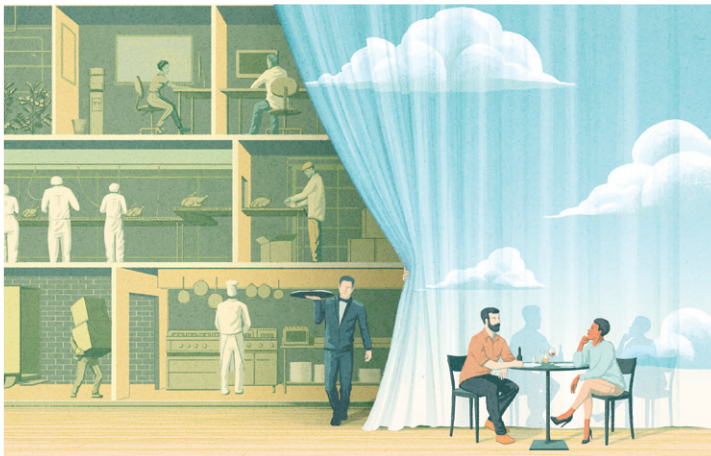


# THE WALRUS 2020 IN REVIEW



# This Is Our Moment

♦ ♦ ♦

“**NEW IS THE NEW NEW.**” This is an expression we used a lot in 2020. On top of a pandemic, The Walrus was onboarding a new executive director as of April 1 and a new board chair as of June 10.

A change in leadership naturally ushers in a new chapter with new ideas. A change in global public health naturally turns the world upside down. COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of our lives, both personally and professionally. For The Walrus editorial team, that meant figuring out how to publish a national magazine from home offices and kitchen tables. For our events team, it meant moving The Walrus Talks, our in-person national events series, to an online format. And for The Walrus Lab, it meant creating new digital offerings, from podcasting to online conferences, for our corporate, nonprofit, and government clients.

For a new executive director, it’s not ideal to start such an important role in the middle of a pandemic, without meeting everyone on the team face-to-face, but you work with what you have. What The Walrus has is an incredible team: staff, board, National Advisory Council, Educational Review Committee, donors, partners, and supporters. This year in review is the story of that community coming together, all hands on deck, to get through the unknowns of the pandemic.

There has never been a prouder time to be a member of The Walrus Board of Directors. It was a privilege to celebrate and reflect on the progress made under former executive director Shelley Ambrose’s leadership. So many members of our community, including board members past and present, stepped up to support The Walrus philanthropically. The board is inspired by the extraordinary performance of The Walrus team during these challenging times. The Walrus has always stood on the shoulders of many—our audience, team, contributors, volunteers, and donors. We needed each and every one of you this year, and you all showed up. Thank you. We are exceptionally grateful.

This is our moment for journalism and fact-checking, convening and conversation. As we look back at the historic year of 2020, and ahead to what remains in 2021, let us continue to embrace the moment.

—  
*Jennifer Hollett*  
*Executive Director, The Walrus*

*Jodi Butts*  
*Chair, The Walrus*

**2020 WILL ALWAYS** be remembered as a year of great disruption and change. For The Walrus, it was also a time of rededication to our editorial purpose.

In March, like people all over the world, our organization began to work from home. The technical disruption was surprisingly fluid—the events of the pandemic forced us to adopt new technologies and processes that feel second nature to us now. It’s hard to remember a time when we used to huddle together in our downtown Toronto offices over paper page proofs and pizza. We’ve adapted to asynchronous work and to collaborating across time zones. With our digital colleagues, we’ve also developed new ways to connect with our audiences, from social media innovations to online editorial events.

Finding our place in the conversation was a bigger challenge. The pandemic has called on every media outlet to defend its relevance in the face of a global emergency. As our readers adapted to disruptions to the ways they worked and lived (“Will people working from home and facing child care challenges still read long-form journalism?” we wondered), we doubled down on the type of journalism we do best, including in-depth examinations of health care, the future of work, and societal change. In real time, our journalists followed through on questions shared by many: Would we ever eat in restaurants again? Why was it so hard to develop and distribute a vaccine? How can we keep ourselves and our communities safe? Our successful online series *Living Rooms* looked at our changing relationship with home—suddenly the most important space we had. The antiracism protests following the murder of George Floyd led to a deeper, more direct conversation about our coverage of race and a heightened role in the organization for our newly formed Equity and Inclusion Committee.

We hope The Walrus of the past year feels not like a new magazine or website but like the evolution of the publication it was always designed to be. As I write this from the perspective of 2021, we’re delighted that our work from 2020 has been nominated for seven Digital Publishing Awards (including General Excellence in Digital Publishing) and twenty-two National Magazine Awards, leading every magazine in the country. Our online audience continues to grow month over month. While we don’t know what the next year will bring, it’s clear that the broad themes and sense of urgency that have informed us for the past year will be with us for the foreseeable future. Thank you for joining the conversation.

—  
*Jessica Johnson*  
*Editor-in-Chief*

# Looking Back

♦ ♦ ♦



# A Historic Year

**THE YEAR 2020** was one of the toughest Canadians have faced collectively. As it became clear that the “new normal” was here to stay—at least for a while—The Walrus team pivoted to a new way of building readership, audience, and community during this time of crisis.

With 2020’s incredible call to action for social equity, The Walrus also strengthened its commitment to highlighting voices that are truly reflective of the many peoples living from coast to coast to coast. We are eternally grateful to our donors, partners, and sponsors for their commitment to Canada’s conversation during such an extraordinary year.

## The Walrus Talks (this time, at home)

For nearly a decade, The Walrus Talks have brought together speakers and audiences across the country to hear a range of perspectives on issues that are important to Canadians. Before the pandemic forced us into lockdown, The Walrus convened five in-person events in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, and Ottawa. During the spring and summer, we reimagined The Walrus Talks to reach national and international audiences in the comfort of their homes, and in September, we launched a season of The Walrus Talks at Home.

In addition to The Walrus Talks at Home, we reformatted The Walrus Leadership Dinner to a ninety-minute conversation over Zoom while maintaining its commitment to Chatham House Rules. The Walrus Leadership Roundtable was born, bringing together Canadian business, media, academic, policy, and political leaders in virtual roundtable events to discuss the challenges and opportunities around Health Care and COVID-19, Sustainable Communities, and the Future of News. The format allowed for greater national and international engagement, with keynote speakers joining us from the United States and Europe.

Cover image credits (left to right, top to bottom): Jamila Noritz Reyes, Jeremy Fokkens and Mark Rowe, Myriam Wares, Ashley Mackenzie.

Photo (above): A year in lockdown enabled households to tune in to The Walrus Talks at Home from across Canada and beyond. Photo by Fabiola Mendelez Carletti (@fiercefab)

The Walrus also launched The Walrus Leadership Forum, a new sixty-minute webinar format that offers a keynote presentation with panel discussion and audience Q&A.

Throughout the autumn, we convened thirteen virtual events on the topics of circular economy, intelligence, inclusion, living better, progress, and housing, drawing thousands of curious participants from across Canada and thirty-six countries around the world. We extend heartfelt thanks and appreciation to our sponsors and partners for trusting us to convene virtually and continuing to support the conversations that matter to Canadians.

## Article Club

The Walrus Article Club was launched in May 2020 to connect writers with audiences live on Facebook. Based on trending articles at *thewalrus.ca*, the concept was to create a new platform for the conversations we love having with our audiences and to use our journalism to spark dialogue with a live panel and audience Q&A. The Article Club has garnered more than 45,000 followers since its launch, and is now an ongoing series on our Facebook page.

## The Conversation Piece

Many Canadians have spent more time listening to podcasts during the pandemic. In July 2020, The Walrus launched *The Conversation Piece*—a weekly podcast series—as an opportunity to connect with these audiences and revisit some of the most interesting

talks we brought to stages across Canada before the pandemic.

Each week, we curate a seven-minute talk from our archive of more than 900 speakers. Many of them, including André Picard’s talk on the lethality of loneliness and Desmond Cole’s talk on a future without police, felt newly illuminating in 2020. *The Conversation Piece* launch reminded us of the timelessness of much of our work and the power in revisiting the past. “Being connected to a partner, family, friends, a running group, a mosque, can literally add years to your life,” Picard said at The Walrus Talks Healthy Cities, in 2016. “The corollary is that isolation and loneliness are devastating to a person’s well-being—deadly, even.”

Now at 10,000 downloads a month, *The Conversation Piece* was featured in Apple Podcasts’ Top 25 and profiled in the New & Noteworthy and Boredom Busters sections.

## Poetry for the Moment

Our 2020 TD Fellow on Disability and Inclusion, Aimee Louw, led us to create another new virtual event: Poetry for the Moment. With accessibility and inclusion top of mind, we designed this initiative to showcase Canadian poets whose work spoke to the year that saw not only a pandemic but a worldwide reckoning with anti-Black racism.

Much like the Article Club, the event introduced poets to one another and to the wider community, complete with ASL translation. Since the broadcast, the event has reached over 4,500 followers. Read more on page 23.

### AT A GLANCE

212 articles in print and online

87 artists featured in print and online

4,571,914 page views on *thewalrus.ca*

137,952 followers on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube)

10,000 downloads of *The Conversation Piece*

18 events across Canada and at home

4,970 attendees registered from 36 countries for The Walrus Talks at Home

### TOP 5 COUNTRIES OUR AUDIENCE CAME FROM IN 2020:

CANADA: 44%

US: 34%

UK: 5%

INDIA: 2%

AUSTRALIA: 1.8%

10 fellows trained in long-form journalism and fact-checking

40 kitchen tables turned into home offices

All of these achievements were made possible with the support of over 2,783 donors, partners, and sponsors

# COVID-19

## HIGHLIGHTS

**Anatomy of a Pandemic**  
by Kevin Patterson

**Your Brain on COVID-19**  
by Carolyn Abraham

**How to Vaccinate 38 Million People**  
by Danielle Groen

**Distant Threat**  
by Judy Ziyi Gu

**How Pandemics Shape History**  
by Simon Lewsen

**THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC** transformed the world in spring 2020, shutting down most of the global economy. For months, Canadians didn't know what would happen tomorrow, let alone next month or next year. In the vacuum of knowledge, rumours and misinformation spread quickly, which made rigorous, thoughtful journalism and thorough fact-checking all the more important.

The Walrus took a long view on the virus, offering readers important context for the breaking news updates, press conferences, and alarming statistics that marked the progression of the pandemic. Danielle Groen's "How to Vaccinate 38 Million People" looks at the fastest inoculation effort in history while Carolyn Abraham seeks to understand how the human brain responds to such a protracted, uncertain threat in "Your Brain on COVID-19." There were also more personal stories, such as Judy Ziyi Gu's essay "Distant Threat," a reflection on the jarring difference between experiences of the pandemic in North America and in China.

The Walrus Lab produced a new online series to dispel online misinformation about the

pandemic (see page 25 for more information). The project was designed to meet the Poynter Institute's rigorous standards of fact-checking, and it challenged dozens of online claims about COVID-19 to determine their factual accuracy.

Over the course of the year, COVID-19 became a through line for The Walrus Talks, which moved online in a reimagined format. At The Walrus Talks at Home: Living Better, in November, Ravi Jain, Najmeh Khalili-Mahani, Joshna Maharaj, and Carly Ziter discussed how the pandemic is a chance to reimagine the way we live—from the impact of screen time on our bodies and minds to the vital role of urban nature in bolstering our well-being. "Never before had so many people been aware of this fundamental truth that I've dedi-

cated my career to studying—that, to live better in the city, nature is critical, not just nice to have but essential for well-being," said Ziter, an assistant professor of biology at Concordia University. The Walrus thanks Concordia University for its ongoing support of the series.

"Thank you for your COVID-19 coverage thus far. You are one of relatively few media outlets that I fully trust."

—  
*Donor,*  
*British Columbia*



**How to Lift a Lockdown**  
by Danielle Groen



The Walrus was thrilled to win a silver Canadian Online Publishing Award for our COVID-19 series, *Record of a Pandemic*. Kevin Patterson's "Anatomy of a Pandemic" was listed in *Best Canadian Essays of 2021*.

"As we move out of COVID-land, the kind of journalism that The Walrus does will be even more important in ensuring that we learn the right lessons and have the courage to do what those lessons teach us to make a better world going forward."

—  
*Fay Martin (donor),*  
*Ontario*

## ARTICLE CLUB

**Parenting in a Pandemic**

## SPEAKER SERIES

**Women Leading Through Crisis**  
Deena Hinshaw at The Walrus Leadership Forum

**To Live Better in the City, Nature Is Critical**  
Carly Ziter at The Walrus Talks at Home: Living Better

♦ ♦ ♦

Photo (above)  
by Jeremy Fokkens and Mark Rowe.  
Illustration (below)  
by Sébastien Thibault



Why Resolving the Wet’suwet’en Crisis May Depend on an Ancient Treaty  
by Adam Leith Gollner



David Frum Fights the Right  
by Curtis Gillespie



The New Separatists  
by Max Fawcett

“Effective journalism needs to be kicked from all sides before it goes public in order to endure, and The Walrus is one of the few remaining outlets where this still happens as a matter of pride, not simply necessity.”

—  
Dimitri Nasrallah, author

# POLITICS

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Three Truths and the Lie of American Democracy  
by Drew Nelles

How Universal Basic Income Will Save the Economy  
by Max Fawcett

In Deep  
by Hilary Beaumont

**THE YEAR 2020** was politically tumultuous. The pandemic exposed social and economic inequities around the world; the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and others sparked global protests against police brutality and anti-Black racism; and the divisive US election stoked further political polarization and distrust in the media. To make sense of a pivotal and historic year, The Walrus covered the changing political landscape in Canada and abroad.

Before the pandemic began, Canada faced a crisis in British Columbia, on the territory of the Wet’suwet’en Nation. In “Why Resolving the Wet’suwet’en Crisis May Depend on an Ancient Treaty,” Adam Leith Gollner seeks to understand the Silver Covenant Chain, which

still sets the terms of this country’s relations with dozens of First Nations.

In “The New Separatists,” Max Fawcett reports on the rise of “Wexit” rhetoric in western Canada. And Curtis Gillespie’s profile of David Frum examines how the former speechwriter for president George W. Bush became one of the last defenders of liberalism in the Republican Party.

Zoe Heaps Tennant spent over a year reporting on the growing tensions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous fishers in Nova Scotia. Her story, “The New Lobster Wars,” was published in the midst of an escalating conflict, as fishing communities called on the federal government to resolve a decades-old dispute over Indigenous treaty rights.



The New Lobster Wars  
by Zoe Heaps Tennant

♦ ♦ ♦

Photo (opposite left) by Rene Johnston. Illustration (opposite right) by Clay Rodery. Photo (above) by Brett Gundlock. Art (left) by Marcus Gosse



The End of Grocery Shopping  
by Corey Mintz

# BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY



**DURING A YEAR** that saw major disruptions to the way we work, The Walrus explored how Canada’s business-and-technology landscape could change in the years to come.

Vicky Mochama chronicled the ways that Black communities have long used mutual-aid networks to get help to people in need, a practice that became widespread during the pandemic. Matthew Halliday reported on a Nova Scotia community that may become the site for a new spaceport, while Brian J. Barth investigated who owns our data after we die. “Should digital assets remain under the lock and key of a corporation? Or should they be inheritable by our next of kin—just as physical assets are now?” Barth writes.

The Walrus also considered the pandemic’s influence on supply chains and recognized Canadian businesses looking to expand beyond the country’s borders. In “The Struggles of

Sustainable Farming,” Kathryn Kuitenbrouwer investigates the ways that cheap food relies on exploitative, unsustainable labour practices, while Ellen Himelfarb’s “Vine Intervention” details British Columbia’s efforts to become the wine superpower of the north.

At The Walrus Talks, speakers wrestled with what Canada’s future economy could look like. In October, Stephanie Cairns at the Smart Prosperity Institute spoke about the economic and environmental potential of a circular economy. “It draws inspiration from the natural world, where materials cycle infinitely in one form or another and there is no such thing as waste, only resources,” she said. The Walrus Talks at Home: Circular Economy was presented by Desjardins Group and attracted attendees from 495 households across Canada, the US, the UK, Australia, Barbados, Japan, and the Netherlands.



**IN 2020**, The Walrus published Corey Mintz’s “Tables Turned,” an essay on the future of the restaurant industry that was later featured in the book *The Next Supper: The End of Restaurants as We Knew Them, and What Comes After*. Some experts, Mintz writes, predict that 60 percent of restaurants may not survive the pandemic—and they can take employees, suppliers, farmers, and landlords down with them. In the essay, he asks what this cataclysm means for the food landscape in the coming years and what we can do about it.



New Highs  
by Lauren McKeon

**HIGHLIGHTS**

The Giving Economy  
by Vicky Mochama

The Digital Afterlife  
by Brian J. Barth

How MEC Lost Touch with Its Roots  
by Harley Rustad

The East Coast Takes Off  
by Matthew Halliday

Story Sellers  
by Tatum Dooley

Vine Intervention  
by Ellen Himelfarb

The Struggles of Sustainable Farming  
by Kathryn Kuitenbrouwer

**SPEAKER SERIES**

Replacing Our Take-Make-Waste Economic System  
by Stephanie Cairns at The Walrus Talks at Home: Circular Economy



Illustration (opposite left) by Min Gyo Chung. Illustration (above) by Myriam Wares. Illustration (below) by Cynthia Kittler

HIGHLIGHTS

Point of No Return  
by Carolyn Thompson

Foraging for Mushrooms on Zoom  
by Amy van den Berg

Frog Songs  
by Caitlin Stall-Paquet

Climate Believers  
by Josiah Neufeld

SPEAKER SERIES

In some cases, space research happens beneath our feet. At The Walrus Talks Exploration, in Calgary, Queen’s University astrophysicist Mark Chen spoke about dark matter research at SNOLAB, a laboratory deep underground near Sudbury, Ontario. The Walrus Talks Exploration was generously supported by CIFAR.

# SCIENCE AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS

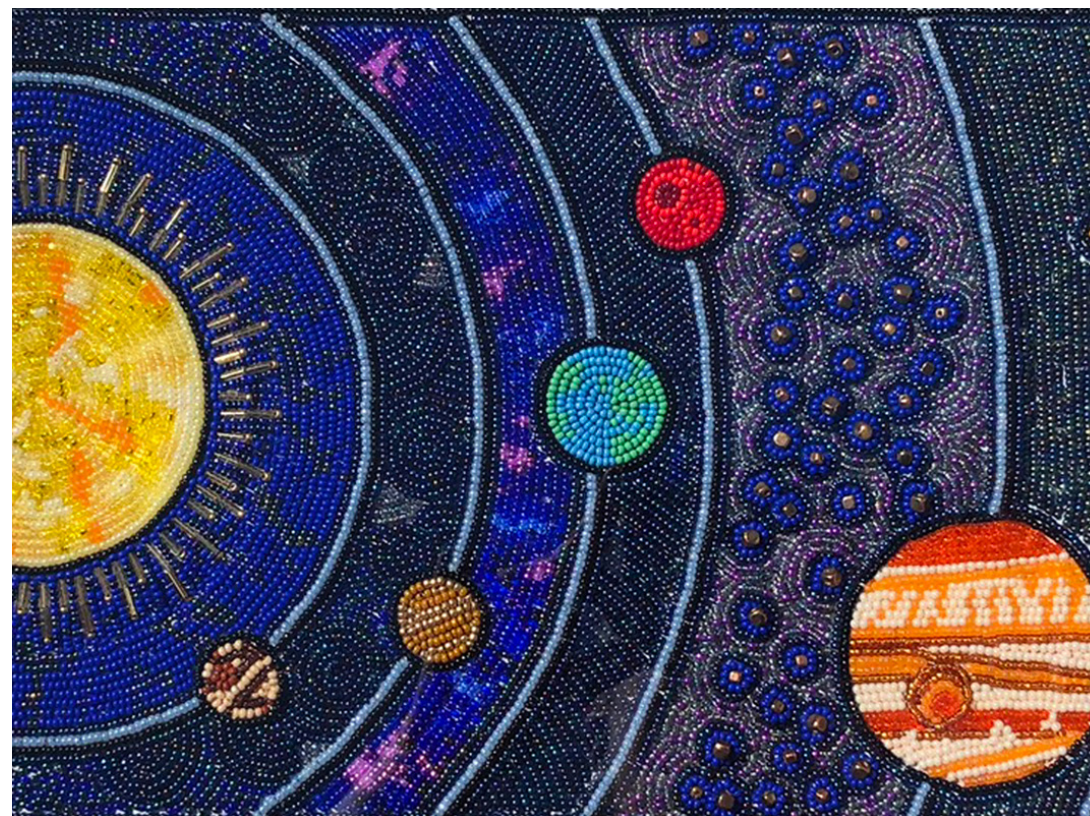
**THOUGH COVID-19** dominated headlines in 2020, the climate crisis continued to pose an urgent risk to communities around the world. Carolyn Thompson’s “Point of No Return,” a project supported by the International Development Research Centre, covers global environmental disasters that are making parts of the world uninhabitable. She tells the stories of climate refugees such as Moga Hassan Ahmed, a Somali man who has been forced to flee his home twice—first due to political conflict, then due to extreme drought. “In some cases, people displaced across international borders may end up living in an essentially stateless limbo, as Ahmed does—unable to return home and unable to establish new roots,” writes Thompson.

The COVID-19 pandemic intersected with other global issues, such as factory farming, as David Waltner Toews demonstrates in “A Warning from the Chickens of the World.” Toews, a veterinarian and epidemiologist, writes that the globalization of farming has

made mass outbreaks of disease among animals more likely—and increased the risk that these diseases will leap to humans.

Other stories explored the roles everyone can play in advancing science, such as Caitlin Stall-Paquet’s “Frog Songs,” on volunteer frog researchers, and Josiah Neufeld’s “Climate Believers,” on the role of churches in climate education.

The Walrus Talks at Home explored intelligence, both human and artificial, in October 2020. Yann LeCun, co-director of the CIFAR Learning in Machines & Brains program and chief AI scientist at Facebook, spoke about the enormous challenge of designing AI with general “common sense”—even at the level of a cat—while Stephanie Dinkins, a transdisciplinary artist and associate professor at Stony Brook University, spoke on maintaining a sense of grace and humanity in AI systems. More than 476 households tuned in to The Walrus Talks at Home: Intelligence, presented by CIFAR.



Teaching Indigenous Star Stories  
by Kelly Boutsalis

The stars are closer to home than we think. In a special web series, *In Other Worlds: A Space Exploration*, The Walrus charted the ways humans are interacting with our solar system—including Indigenous star stories, an extraterrestrial legal system, and the rising threat posed by space junk orbiting the planet.



A Warning from the Chickens of the World  
book excerpt by David Waltner Toews

♦ ♦ ♦

Art (above) by Blu Hummingbird.  
Photo (below) by ArtistGNDphotography

# HEALTH CARE

**HIGHLIGHTS**

**We're Failing Our Kids' Mental Health**  
by Lauren McGill

**Hacking Diabetes**  
by Jonathan Garfinkel

**Can Virtual Therapy Replace the Real Thing?**  
by Allison Crawford

**How Universal Health Care Fails Queer Communities**  
by Brianna Sharpe

**MANY CANADIANS** were forced to confront the limitations of their health care system during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Walrus examined some of the inequities and ethical quandaries that emerged in 2020.

The 2020 O'Hagan Essay on Public Affairs, "The Myth of Universal Health Care" by Nadine Caron and Danielle Martin, delves into the gaps in Canada's health care system. Danielle Martin is a family physician and the executive vice-president of Women's College Hospital in Toronto, and Nadine Caron, who joined The Walrus Educational Review Committee in 2020, is Canada's first woman general surgeon of First Nations descent and a founding co-director of the University of British Columbia's Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Health. Though it has long been touted as a model for other countries, they write, Canada's health care system still fails to provide universal access to prescription drugs, mental health care, dental care, and long-term care. These shortcomings are particularly acute in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. "Canada has moved so slowly on the journey to expand and improve medicare that it has been accused of a 'paradigm freeze'—stuck in a system just good enough to prevent any major change or improvement from ever occurring," Caron and Martin write.

Throughout the year, The Walrus published stories on how the health care system can be improved to better serve all Canadians. In "Count Me In," Brianna Sharpe writes that there is insufficient health data about LGBTQ communities in Canada—and that, for many LGBTQ patients, not being counted can lead to marginalization. As counselling has moved online, CAMH clinical scientist Allison Crawford contemplates whether the same therapist-patient bond is possible in "Can Virtual Therapy Replace the Real Thing?"

The pandemic was a national health care emergency, and The Walrus responded by creating forums for members of the health care community to connect and exchange views. We virtually convened Canadian leaders in business, academia, media, and government to discuss topics such as "Has COVID-19 shifted health care priorities in Canada?" and "Building health care resiliency in a pandemic economy." The two Leadership Roundtables were generously supported by Johnson & Johnson and Santis Health.

At TD Presents The Walrus Talks at Home: Inclusion, Sajel Bellon, a psychotherapist and founder of Mind Armour & SOS Psychotherapy, spoke about why businesses should invest in creating a culture of psychological safety. "We will essentially be investing in our bottom line, which is our people," she said.



**The Myth of Universal Health Care**  
by Nadine Caron and Danielle Martin

The annual O'Hagan Essay on Public Affairs is generously supported by Peter and Sarah O'Hagan in honour of Peter's late father, Richard, and his considerable contributions to public life, including serving for eleven years on The Walrus Board of Directors.

**SPEAKER SERIES**

**Has COVID-19 shifted health care priorities in Canada?**

The Walrus Leadership Roundtable

**Building health care resiliency in a pandemic economy**

The Walrus Leadership Roundtable

Where Canadians live and work deeply affects their health and well-being. We were proud to host Andrew Boozary, executive director of population health and social medicine at the University Health Network, as a speaker on the connections between health and housing at The Walrus Talks at Home: Housing, in November 2020. The Walrus thanks the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation for supporting the talk.

♦ ♦ ♦

Illustration (above) by Pete Ryan.  
Illustration (below left) by Jillian Tamaki.  
Illustration (below right) by Franziska Barczyk



**The Age of Surrender**  
by Sharon J. Riley (winner of The Allan Slaight Prize for Journalism, 2020)



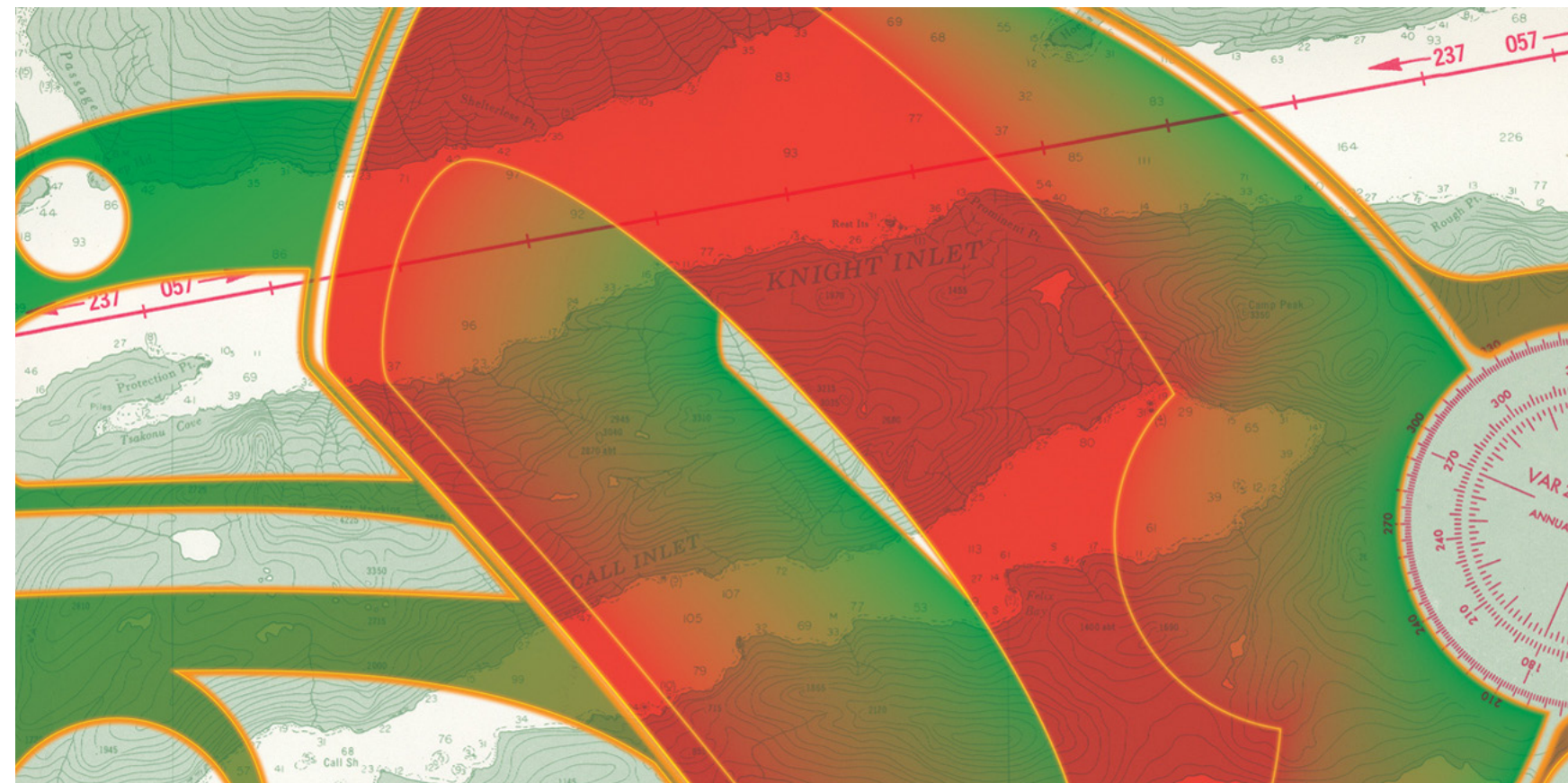
**A Dose of Dr. Zee**  
by Jonah Brunet



# TERRA COGNITA

What would our stories look like if, just for a little while, we stopped telling them for other people and instead told them for ourselves?

—



## HIGHLIGHTS

Notes from an Apocalypse  
by Chelsea Vowel

Bloodlines  
fiction by  
Erika T. Worth

The Hungry People  
by Robert Jago

♦ ♦ ♦

Art (above)  
by Sonny Assu.  
Illustration (below)  
by Luke Swinson

IN 2020, The Walrus launched *Terra Cognita* (“known land”), an online project guest-edited by long-time contributor Robert Jago. In his introduction to the series, he writes that, as an Indigenous writer, “you waste a lot of time teaching Indian 101 to non-Native readers: filling in historical blanks, explaining how a story affects non-Natives, or telling non-Natives what they can do to make things better. Sometimes, doing this can eat up the entire story and you’re left adding nothing new. For this project, I’ve asked writers not to ‘translate’ themselves or feel hemmed in by these conventions. At least once in a while, I want Native writers to tell stories about whatever they want, in the ways that they want—to talk about Indigenous creativity and also have a chance to express Indigenous creativity.”

In 2020, this ongoing project included Jago’s “The Hungry People,” which explores the innovations that European colonizers took from Indigenous lands; Erika T. Wurth’s “Bloodlines,” a short story about vigilante justice; “Notes from an Apocalypse” by Chelsea Vowel, which describes how filmmaker Jeff Barnaby’s latest film, *Blood Quantum*, brings an underrepresented perspective to Indigenous cinema; and Waubgeshig Rice’s “Letter to a Young Indigenous Journalist”—a first-hand account, written directly to aspiring Indigenous writers, describing the perils of working as an Indigenous reporter in a largely homogeneous journalistic landscape.

*Terra Cognita* will continue to provide a space for Indigenous writers, illustrators, and storytellers to share their perspectives in the coming years. At the time of its launch, the series attracted more than 37,000 page views on *thewalrus.ca*.



Letter to a Young Indigenous Journalist  
by Waubgeshig Rice

# JUSTICE AND SOCIETY

**SOCIETY IS UNDERGOING** a massive disruption—one highlighted and furthered by the pandemic—and The Walrus contributors captured some of the salient conversations throughout 2020.

It was a year that saw a shift in the national conversations on social justice, putting spotlights on police violence, online radicalization, and the deep-seated inequities in Canadian media.

“Our professionalism is questioned when we report on the communities we’re from, and the spectre of advocacy follows us in a way that it does not follow many of our white colleagues,” writes journalist and producer Pacinthe Mattar in “Canadian Media’s Racism Problem.” Her essay in The Walrus has been incorporated into course content in journalism schools at Carleton University, Ryerson University, and UBC, in Canada, and Columbia University, NYU, Syracuse University, and the University of Southern California, in the US. She has since been invited to give guest lectures at a number of journalism schools and appear on industry panels, and was in May 2021 awarded the twenty sixth prestigious Martin Wise Goodman Canadian Nieman Fellowship at Harvard University.

Lauren McKeon’s “Beyond Bars” interrogates the effectiveness of prisons—especially women’s prisons, where many inmates are in



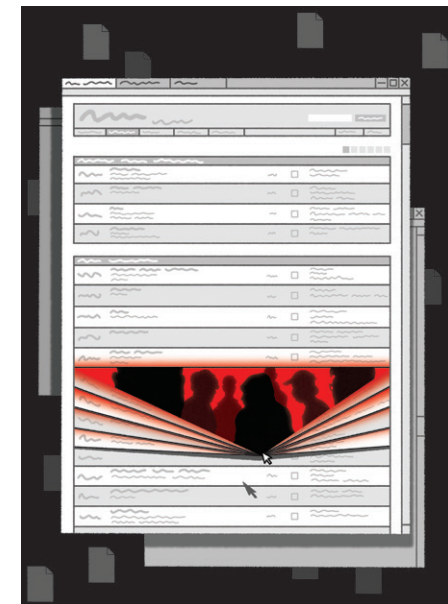
**Beyond Crime and Punishment**  
by Viviane Fairbank

custody not for serious violent crimes but for drug offences, property crimes, or violence in self-defence against abusive partners. Katherine Laidlaw’s “The Making of an Incel” examines how violent views expressed online, particularly among “incel” communities, can manifest in the physical world. This deeply reported piece was published in advance of the trial of Alek Minassian, the man now convicted of ten counts of murder for the 2018 Toronto van attack.

In 2020, The Walrus was proud to welcome speakers from across Canada to spark conversations on social issues. Pacinthe Mattar spoke about her essay with The Walrus readers at the Article Club “How Do We Fix Our Newsrooms?” in September 2020, as did James Wilt, in August 2020, regarding his essay “The Fight to Save Public Transit.” At The Walrus Talks Impact, presented by Carleton University in February 2020, audiences heard from Roberta Jamieson—the first Indigenous woman to earn a law degree in Canada—on how Indigenous education will change the future of Canada, while Black Lives Matter Canada co-founder Sandy Hudson spoke about her introduction to activism at The Walrus Talks at Home: The Moment I Realized I Could Change the World, at the Broadbent Institute’s 2020 Progress Gala.



What happens when bedrooms become de facto offices? Or when real estate prices keep rising, even during a pandemic when renters face a shortage of housing? In a special digital series called *Living Rooms*, The Walrus looked at the transformations in where and how we live.



**The Making of an Incel**  
by Katherine Laidlaw

## HIGHLIGHTS

**Canadian Media’s Racism Problem**  
by Pacinthe Mattar

**Searching for Mackie**  
by Annie Hylton

**Forgotten Disaster**  
by Jordan Michael Smith

**Murder in Old Barns**  
by Lindsay Jones

**Beyond Bars**  
by Lauren McKeon

**Black in The Ivory Tower**  
by Hadiya Roderique

## ARTICLE CLUB

**How Do We Fix Our Newsrooms?**

## SPEAKER SERIES

The Walrus Talks at Home: Housing, in November 2020, explored solutions to the affordable housing crisis, with Dave Eddy, CEO of the Vancouver Native Housing Society, and The Walrus contributor Cristina D’Amico. We thank the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for its generous support.

◆◆◆

Illustration (opposite) by Holly Stapleton.  
Illustration (above) by Kathleen Fu.  
Illustration (left) by Anson Chan

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Vocal Range  
by Carly Lewis
- Poetic Justice  
by Anita Lahey
- Sense and Sensitivity  
by Tajja Isen
- Stand-Up's Next Act  
by Erika Thorkelson
- Eye of the Needle  
by Abi Hayward
- Of Needlework and Nebulae  
by Pamela Young
- The Challenge of Addressing Slavery in Children's Stories  
by Donna Bailey Nurse

- All I Need Is YouTube  
by Michael Harris
- The Racist History of the Painter's Palette  
by Sadiqa de Meijer
- Lorna Goodison and the Wicked Force of Poetry  
by Kate Siklosi
- Consider the Beaver  
by Tom Jokinen
- Inner Life  
by Sophie Weiler

# ARTS AND CULTURE

**IN 2020**, The Walrus featured a diverse and eclectic mix of art and culture from across Canada to soothe, question, and inspire us through an unprecedented year. Reviews like Sophie Weiler's article on the work of Toronto-based artist Margaux Williamson set the stage. "Although it was developed in a world before COVID-19, the collection feels oddly prescient," Weiler writes. "Through her art, living spaces offer the potential for us to indulge in the present....A dining table might become the night sky, and in confinement, the banal can be full of possibility."

In "Eye of the Needle," Abi Hayward writes about the hand-painted embroidery of Vancouver-based artist Bettina Matzkuhn, while Connor Garell's "Welcome to the Willyverse" profiles Nigerian Canadian photographer William Ukoh and the world of leisure,

tranquility, and beauty his photographs envision. Contributor Carly Lewis writes about genre-bending Nunavut-born throat singer Riit in "Vocal Range," while Tajja Isen's "Sense and Sensitivity" delves into the misconceptions surrounding sensitivity readers and their role in vetting books for cultural insensitivity.

Other essays revisited the past, such as Tom Jokinen's "Consider the Beaver," on *Hinterland Who's Who*, the iconic one-minute nature documentaries of the 1960s and '70s—and why they should inspire creatives today. "They were media that had no intention of being popular," Jokinen writes. "They did not chase ratings or provoke adrenalin; they were television for our own good, like dry socks on an overland hike."

In "Poetic Justice," Anita Lahey looked back to the work of feminist poet Bronwen Wallace as her writing became newly relevant.



**Sisters**  
by Jamila Noritz Reyes

In "Sisters," photographer Jamila Noritz Reyes captures intimate, candid moments with her siblings to explore how their relationships and upbringing shaped their individual personalities.

**SPEAKER SERIES**

The Walrus Talks at Home brought artists and writers together throughout the year. Ravi Jain, artistic director of Why Not Theatre, spoke at The Walrus Talks at Home: Living Better, in November 2020, on the potential of using empty city spaces to create art.

At The Walrus Talks at Home: Inclusion, writer Dorothy Ellen Palmer spoke of the switch to virtual communication and how it has finally made the Canadian literary scene more accessible to people with disabilities. "It's been exciting, energizing, and uplifting to explore the possibilities of virtual access with the disabled community," she said.

The Walrus thanks TD Bank Group and Concordia University for their generous support of these two events.

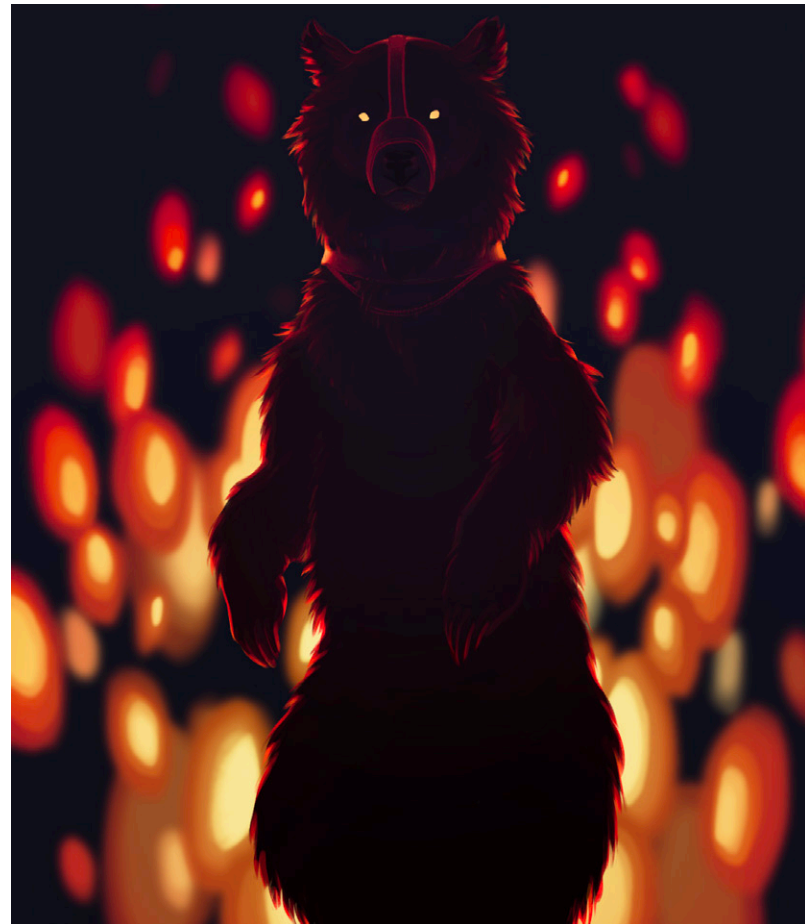


Photo (above) by Jamila Noritz Reyes. Photo (below) by William Ukoh



Welcome to the Willyverse  
by Connor Garell

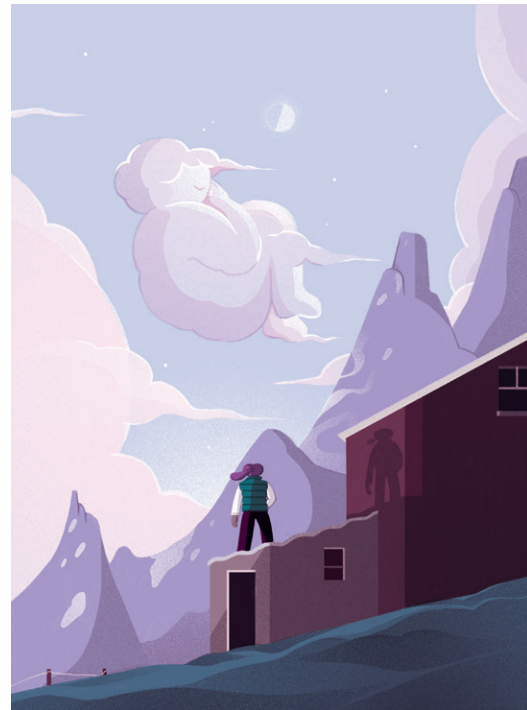
# LITERATURE AND POETRY



Dancing Bear  
by Dimitri Nasrallah

**THE WALRUS** continued to feature the best of Canadian literary fiction, poetry, and memoir writing in 2020.

Kevin Chong’s “Lottery Poetry” follows a fortune teller in Vancouver during the first months of the pandemic, while Georgina Beaty’s short story “Shelter Seekers” vividly describes the climate anxiety of an anthropologist on a field mission to Patagonia gone terribly awry. Many poems captured precious moments of humanity during the deprivations of lockdown measures. Sadiqa de Meijer’s “Incantation” describes a scene of a mother pushing a child on a swing while lost in a book, in the “paper valley of an elsewhere.” Kayla Czaga’s “The Peace



Shelter Seekers  
by Georgina Beaty

Lily,” meanwhile, details a narrator’s fruitless attempts to save a dying houseplant:

Like a famous connoisseur  
of death, it took its time:  
every last leaf withered  
into a black ash that stuck  
on the shelf, and what  
remained in the pot  
resembled the dregs  
of a great forest fire.

In memoirs, Dimitri Nasrallah’s “Dancing Bear” recounts the author’s childhood in Athens, after his family fled civil war in Lebanon, and reflects on the prejudice he encountered. And

Russell Smith, a former columnist for the *Globe and Mail*, argues that trends in media consumption have made Canadian newspapers less adventurous in “Not Recommended.”

The Walrus also held its first Poetry for the Moment live event in 2020, an evening of poetry to take stock of the year, featuring Otoniya Juliane Okot Bitek, Brandon Wint, and Chimwemwe Undi. Our TD Fellow on Disability and Inclusion, Aimee Louw, ran the event on Facebook Live with an ASL translator and live captioning. Poetry for the Moment came out of conversations about the need for poetry in a time when we are isolated from one another.

## COVID-19 Couplets

By Jason Guriel

On daily walks, we cut the neighbours swaths  
Of space. Instead of paper towels, cloths.

To touch a soul with talk—that’s now the task.  
The face approaching us is mostly mask.

## HIGHLIGHTS

**Saturday Project**  
by P.N. van den Bosch

**Witness**  
excerpt by  
Kaie Kellough

**Lottery Poetry**  
by Kevin Chong

## POETRY

**Incantation**  
by Sadiqa de Meijer

**Essential Tremor**  
by Barbara Nickel

**Autobiography**  
by David O’ Meara

**The Peace Lily**  
by Kayla Czaga

**It Follows**  
by Domenica  
Martinello

♦ ♦ ♦

Illustration  
(opposite left)  
by Ashley Mackenzie.  
Illustration (opposite  
right) by Wenting Li

We thank the following donors for their support of our fellowship program in 2020:

Adventure Canada

The Chawkers Foundation

Cannonbury Foundation

Power Corporation of Canada

Journalists for Human Rights (JHR)

TD Bank Group

Our inaugural JHR Indigenous Editorial Fellow, Oscar Baker III, served on The Allan Slaight Prize for Journalism 2020 jury and was also recently shortlisted for JHR's second annual award for outstanding work by an Indigenous youth reporter. In 2020, we welcomed Phoebe Sutherland as the second JHR Indigenous Editorial Fellow.

“The Walrus, like its animal namesake, approaches issues thoughtfully, deliberately, and carefully. It is an increasingly rare species in journalism: a serious, credible source for journalism. It’s something we’ve got to protect.”

—Justin Ling, journalist and author

# Fellowships at The Walrus

THE WALRUS Editorial Fellowship Program is one of the few programs in Canada that offer emerging journalists the rigorous training and mentorship necessary to thrive as outstanding professionals in the industry.

The year 2020 presented no better time for The Walrus to address gaps in the media sector, starting with the editorial fellowship program. We extended our traditional six-month fellowship program to a one-year program, thereby deepening the learning experience for fellows and expanding editorial resources. The longer training period, paired with the opportunity to work remotely, made the position more accessible to applicants who find it increasingly difficult to relocate to Toronto, one of Canada’s most expensive cities. In 2020, we welcomed fellows from Toronto, Montreal, and as far away as Berlin.

The Walrus also debuted its first senior editorial fellowship in 2020. Geared toward candidates

with at least one year of fact-checking experience, the position advances the fact-checking skills of an early career journalist and provides the opportunity to both receive mentorship and provide it to more junior fellows.

In May 2020, Aimee Louw joined The Walrus as our second TD Fellow on Disability and Inclusion. Louw challenged us all to consider how people with disabilities are excluded from a range of social, political, and economic conversations vital to strengthening democracy. Her contributions included moderating two inclusion-themed events in October for The Walrus Talks at Home, writing a reported essay on the effects of COVID-19 for people with disabilities, and creating a new online event, Poetry for the Moment.



Photo (above) Aimee Louw, 2020 TD Fellow on Disability and Inclusion

# The Walrus Lab

THE WALRUS LAB creates content, manages awards programs, plans events, produces podcasts, writes, edits, and fact-checks for top brands in Canada and beyond. During the pandemic, the team continued to expand its work with clients to tell enriching stories and provide educational resources to Canadians.

The Walrus Lab partnered with the Institute of Canadian Citizenship to produce COVID-19 Fact-Checking, a project dedicated to reducing the spread of misinformation online. The project was designed to meet the rigorous standards of the Poynter Institute and challenge claims about COVID-19 in national and international media to determine their factual accuracy.

The Walrus Lab produced a number of editorial supplements and podcasts on key social and economic issues throughout 2020. One of the year’s highlights was an eight-page supplement on the fiftieth anniversary of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, in partnership with Heritage Canada.



The Lab grew its podcast production output from one podcast, in 2019, to four over the course of 2020. Jay Famiglietti hosted *Let’s Talk about Water*, an educational podcast about the future of our planet’s water and why listeners should care, produced for the University of Saskatchewan’s Global Institute for Water Security.

In partnership with Shaw Communications, the Lab produced *Bandwidth*, an eight-episode podcast, hosted by Alan Gregg, on the future of connectivity in Canada. Other podcast series included *What Do We Do Tomorrow?*, hosted by Hannah Sung, and *Courage Incorporated*, hosted by Duncan Sinclair, Deloitte’s Chair for Canada and Chile.

In December 2020, The Walrus and the VeriStell Institute hosted *Daring to Leap*, a one-day online conference on corporate purpose and the importance of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria for investors. An audience of more than 400 people signed up to the full-day event, which included five panels with brands such as Deloitte, Shopify, Maple Leaf Foods, Canada Goose, and the *New York Times*.

In 2020, The Walrus Lab clients included:

6 Degrees

Amazon Canada

Audible

Canadian Museum of Nature

Deloitte

Global Institute for Water Security

Gordon Foundation

Heritage Canada

Lord Cultural Resources

Nature Conservancy Canada

Ryerson Image Centre

Shaw Communications

VeriStell Institute

YMCA of GTA

The Walrus can help your business tell its story as part of Canada’s conversation. Contact Mihira Lakshman, director of The Walrus Lab, at [mihira@thewalrus.ca](mailto:mihira@thewalrus.ca) to learn more.

The Walrus Books, published in partnership with House of Anansi Press, received recognition in 2020. Lauren McKeon's *No More Nice Girls* was excerpted both in *Chatelaine* and at *thewalrus.ca*, and McKeon was interviewed in the *Toronto Star*, the CBC, *Hamilton Review of Books*, and more.

Emily Urquhart's *The Age of Creativity*, published in September 2020 through House of Anansi Press and The Walrus Books, was a CBC Book of the Year, a Quill & Quire Book of the Year, and a Now Magazine Book of the Year. Urquhart also shared her talk, "How Creativity Stays With Us For Life," at The Walrus Talks at Home: Intelligence, in October 2020.

## Awards and Accolades

**IN A TESTAMENT** to the artists we support, The Walrus swept the photojournalism and photo essay category at the 2020 National Magazine Awards. Roger Lemoyne and Rémy Bourdillon's "Who Owns Colombia's Gold?" was awarded gold and Derek Shapton's "Last Stop" won silver, while "Watchers in the North" by photographer Philip Cheung received an honourable mention.

At the Digital Publishing Awards, Dmitry Beniaminov, a digital consultant at The Walrus, won a leadership award, while Joseph Tunney won gold in the best personal essay category for "What It's Like to See the World through a Lazy Eye" and Meghan Bell was awarded silver for her widely read essay "I'm Part of the 0.1 Percent and I Want a Wealth Tax."

The Walrus was proud to receive a silver award from the Canadian Online Publishing Awards for *Record of a Pandemic*, an online series of articles dedicated to COVID-19. The Walrus pivoted quickly to cover the pandemic in a way that went beyond the daily tallies and press conferences, taking a step back to examine how

COVID-19 was reshaping the way we live, work, and interact with one another. The award was an indication of readers' continued desire for reflective, big-picture journalism.

Inside The Walrus, our 2020 Allan Slaight Prize for Journalism went to Sharon J. Riley for "The Age of Surrender," an account of how our medical systems can strip seniors of their autonomy and how this loss of control affects them and their families. Launched in 2017 by The Slaight Family Foundation, the annual



\$10,000 prize is awarded to an independent journalist for excellence in research and analysis of one of the most important topics of our time. Riley's piece proved to be prescient as COVID-19 revealed the urgent need for reform in Canada's long-term care homes.

Since 2017, The Allan Slaight Prize for Journalism has celebrated journalistic achievements by contributors to The Walrus. Corey Mintz is pictured above with Chethan Lakshman, Jessica Johnson, and Emmanuelle Gattuso at The Walrus 2020 gala. Mintz was awarded the prize for "The History of Food in Canada Is the History of Colonialism."



## Celebrating Canada's Conversation

**IN MANY WAYS**, 2020 was a pivotal year for The Walrus, and we were fortunate to be able to celebrate important milestones with our community. In January, to kick off the year, The Walrus Gala united some 360 guests and sponsors in support of the future of fact-checking. A mainstay of our annual fundraising cycle, this special event raised \$450,000 in support of journalism at The Walrus. The Walrus thanks the many corporate and individual supporters of the annual gala for their continued contributions to our work.

In June, we bade a fond farewell to our esteemed executive director of fourteen years, Shelley Ambrose, and welcomed Jennifer Hollett to the helm of The Walrus. The Walrus Celebrates Shelley was an intimate online party attended by over 165 individuals across Canada, with a special performance by Molly Johnson and recounts of wonderful memories by those who lived and loved The Walrus alongside Ambrose. An emotional goodbye to a beloved leader, The Walrus Celebrates Shelley proved that one can still shed a tear at a virtual event.

The Walrus Optimistic Canadians party brought together forty friends and donors, online, along with Emily

Urquhart, who treated the audience to a reading from her latest book, *The Age of Creativity* (of which all guests received a signed copy). This annual celebration is a special thank you to those donors whose multiyear commitments establish a strong foundation for long-term planning at The Walrus. We were pleased to welcome three new Optimistic Canadians and a new member of The Walrus Trust in 2020.

Our fall campaign is one of our most important philanthropic calls to action of the year. With the tagline "This is Our Moment," our year-end fundraiser appealed to our audience to help create a better Canada. With contributions from 1,197 donors, we raised more than \$240,000 for independent, fact-based journalism. We thank Diane Blake and Stephen Smith for their generous support of this campaign with a matching gift of \$100,000.

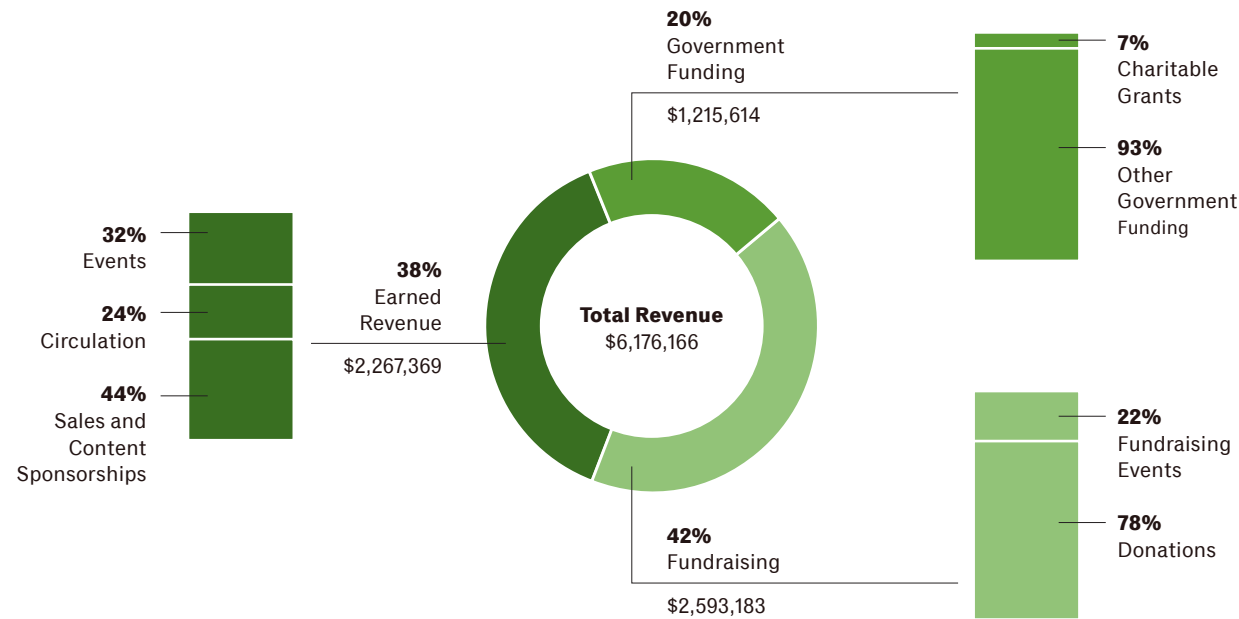
Above, left to right: Mihira Lakshman, Andy Willis, Chethan Lakshman, Kevin Chan, Jessica Johnson, Jennifer Hollett, Mitzie Hunter, Stephen Smith, Helen Burstyn, and Shelley Ambrose at The Walrus Gala, 2020

**THE WALRUS** depends on the support of individual, foundation, and corporate philanthropy, as well as government grants and earned revenue, in order to sustain its independence as a leading Canadian media organization. In 2020, 54 percent of our revenue came from philanthropy and corporate partnerships as well as our annual gala. We thank the many individuals, foundations, and corporations who are committed to upholding independent fact-based Canadian journalism by supporting our work year after year.

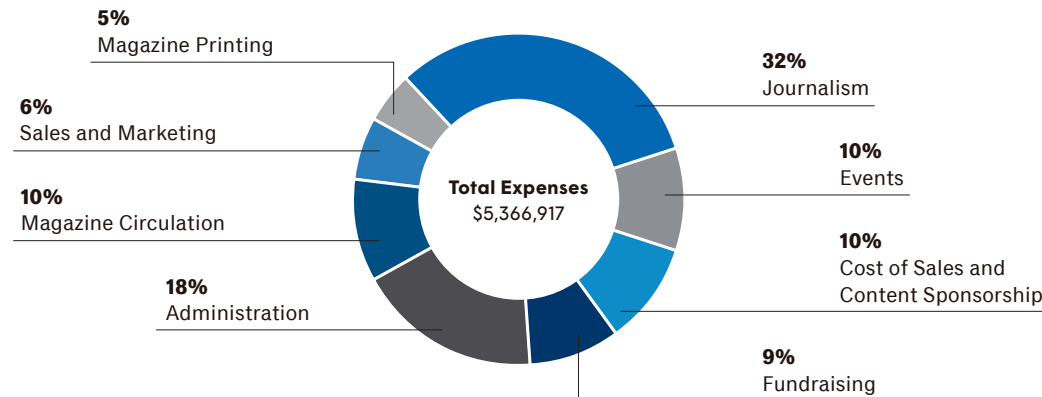
The Walrus is grateful for the stalwart support of our national event sponsors: Air Canada, our exclusive airline partner; Labatt Breweries of Canada, our national sustainability partner; Shaw Communications; Indspire, our national education partner; and TD Bank Group, our national inclusion partner. We are especially thankful for the long-standing support of our founding donor, The Chawkers Foundation, and for the transformational commitment to our work by The Slight Family Foundation and RBC Emerging Artists Project. We are grateful for funding provided by the Government of Ontario and the Ontario Arts Council. We acknowledge the support of the Government of Canada and the Ontario Creates Magazine Fund.

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We thank all those who make our work possible. A full 2020 donor listing was included in the May 2021 issue of The Walrus and is available at [thewalrus.ca](http://thewalrus.ca)

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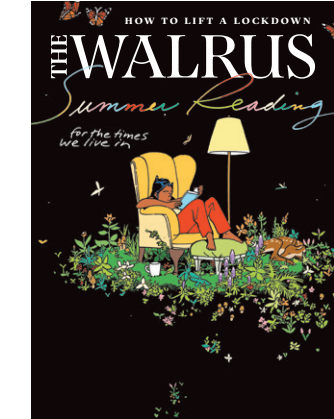
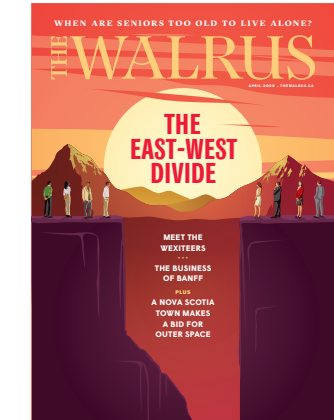
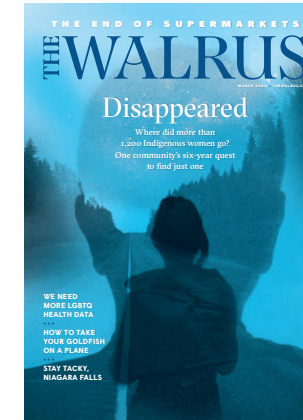
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and reflect the 2020/21 year.



The  
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# The Walrus provokes new thinking and sparks conversation on matters vital to Canadians.

As a registered charity, we publish independent, fact-based journalism, produce national, ideas-focused events, and train emerging professionals in publishing and nonprofit management.

The Walrus is invested in the idea that a healthy society relies on informed citizens.

THE WALRUS | CANADA'S  
CONVERSATION



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