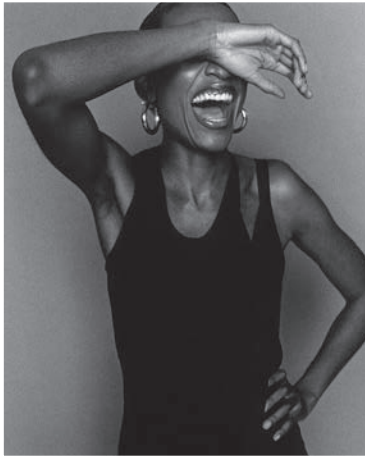


THE WALRUS

2023 IN REVIEW



Looking back helps us look forward

♦ ♦ ♦

2023 WAS A NOTABLE YEAR for The Walrus as we celebrated our 20th anniversary. Throughout the year, we reflected on Who We Are Now, a theme that served as an inflection point for who we are, who we have become, and who we want to be—as individuals and as a country.

Last year, like for many organizations, was not without its challenges. Fully emerging into a post-pandemic reality, with the new terrain of hybrid work and events which we welcomed and embraced, led to growing our team across the country and continuing to reach new audiences anywhere and everywhere. It was also one of the most challenging years to date for the state of journalism, with many organizations folding, navigating bankruptcy or layoffs. Developments such as the Online News Act meant we had to quickly devise new ways of reaching and staying connected with audiences. In the wake of these discouraging headlines—which we also reported on—The Walrus produced some of its best work.

As executive director and board chair, we continue to be proud of a team that embraces innovation and trends and nimbly uncovers new ways of addressing challenges while telling the stories that demand our attention. We are also fortunate to have leadership that, in the organization's early years, had the foresight to establish The Walrus as a registered charity. Our founding donor, The Chawkers Foundation, had much to do with this, and we are ever grateful for their steadfast support.

For two decades, The Walrus has relied largely on donations from our community of support, with the safeguard of a mixed revenue model (please turn to page 32 for more on our revenue sources in 2023). It means that The Walrus has been able to weather economic downturns and stand the ongoing tests of these times. **And it means that we stand strong thanks to you.**

We thank our staff, board of directors, national advisory council, educational review committee, our audience and donors, and our partners for their hard work and counsel during this milestone year. We hope you enjoy reading this special year in review and learning more about how your support has enabled trusted, award-winning Canadian storytelling to truly thrive.

Here's to another 20 years of The Walrus. Thanks for being a part of our history and our future!

—

Jennifer Hollett

Executive Director, The Walrus

Jodi Butts

Board Chair, The Walrus

IT'S HARD TO REMEMBER A BUSIER YEAR—or one that felt more game changing.

In 2023, we reported on the boom in generative AI. We offered fresh insights into Canada's allegations of India's involvement in the killing of a Sikh separatist on BC soil. We were among the first to detail the sexual abuse allegations against the leader of an Oakville, Ontario, megachurch, the Meeting House. We broke the story about the Nazi past of former Winnipeg Art Gallery director Ferdinand Eckhardt, who rose to prominence as the gallery head in the 1950s. We published an exposé on crucial aspects of the *Titan* submersible disaster—namely, Memorial University of Newfoundland's partnership with OceanGate and its efforts to distance itself from the disgraced company. For the first time, we published work in Inuktitut.

As we kept pace with a relentless news cycle, we launched the contributing writer program, an initiative that made us more responsive to daily events and gave us a voice in some of the major debates of the year. We also published two special issues to mark our 20th anniversary.

That legacy is what we celebrated in 2023. For two decades, readers have stayed loyal because we break new ground in the country's most pressing conversations. Our anniversary was a testament not only to our survival in a challenging media landscape but also to the survival of a specific idea about journalism. Journalism as an art and craft but also as a pursuit galvanized by a burning need to change, or challenge, some aspect of the world.

As job losses mount, it can be hard to stay optimistic about media. But 2023 has shown that there is still an audience for honest, fearless, and accurate reporting. The top movies of the year were two originals (*Oppenheimer* and *Barbie*) after years of franchise culture and engineered mass taste. We are Barbenheimer.

Thank you for reading The Walrus, supporting us, and taking part in our mission.

—

Carmine Starnino

Editor-in-Chief, The Walrus

A message from our Editor-in-Chief

♦ ♦ ♦

Celebrating Two Decades of Canada's Best Stories



How a Sexual Assault Case in St. John's Exposed a Police Force's Predatory Culture
by Lindsay Jones

Noise Is All around Us—
and It's Affecting You More than You Think
by Bojan Fürst

AS THE WALRUS MARKED its twentieth year of publishing, in 2023, we didn't just reminisce about the past. Instead, we took a look at the present, and the moment we're in, with a defining statement: *Who We Are Now*. The answer, in many ways, feels more complicated than it did two decades ago: the media landscape has drastically shifted, and generative AI has ushered in a new era of innovation and uncertainty. Despite these challenges, this year showed us just how capable we are of adapting to new realities. *Who We Are Now* represents not only an organization able to better inform and inspire Canadians through our stories and events but also one that's well positioned to keep doing so for the next twenty years.

That central question—and answer—guided all of our work this year, including the creation of a special “Who We Are Now” June issue, which delved into the stories that define us, and a 20th anniversary archival issue in November, which looked back on our reporting and investigations that still resonate today.

Of course, we also continued to cover the ideas and issues that matter

most to Canadians, and many of those stories put us at the forefront of national discourse. 2023 was one of our biggest years of media coverage, with a 20 percent increase in radio, TV, and online mentions from the previous year. We were consistently featured on CTV's *The Social*, *Newstalk 1010*, *The Big Story*, and *National Newswatch*, and our stories also appeared on radio stations from coast

to coast, including Vancouver's CKNW 980, CTV *Morning Live Ottawa*, and CBC St. John's. We published stories that brought about real change.

As we reflect on the milestones and moments that defined 2023, we extend our gratitude to our donors, partners, and sponsors for their generous support. Without you, none of this would be possible. We thank you all for another incredible year.

“I knew I was in the right place when I got the emails. Zealous readers, thankful writers, and even disgruntled cities, flustered that their power had been challenged. All their notes spelled out a clear message: the work we do means something to people.”

—
Emma Buchanan, Cannonbury Fellow, 2022/23

In 2024, we embarked on an audience research project with Proof Strategies. Participants gave us an insight into what their interests and values are and how they consume news and information today. This audience views itself as treating politics and news journalism as more

important than the average Canadian does, with 98 percent agreeing that a healthy democracy depends on citizens who are well informed by an independent and trusted press. These findings helped us formulate our strategic plan for the next three years of The Walrus.



Photos (above, cover) by Justin Aranha. Photo (opposite left) by Johnny C. Y. Lam. Illustration (opposite right) by Tenzin Tsering

AT A GLANCE

- 218 articles published
- 75 artists featured in print and online
- 18 poems featured on our pages
- 14 fellows trained in fact checking, long-form journalism, digital production, and marketing
- 5.1 million page views on *thewalrus.ca*
- 190,000 followers on social media
- 54,000 downloads of our podcasts
- 50,613 active newsletter subscribers
- 11,427 households registered from 74 countries for The Walrus Talks and The Walrus Talks at Home

TOP FIVE COUNTRIES READING THEWALRUS.CA:
CANADA, UNITED STATES, UNITED KINGDOM, INDIA, AND AUSTRALIA

THE STORIES BEHIND THE STORIES

CANADA'S MEDIA LANDSCAPE is constantly changing, and 2023 was no different. With artificial intelligence emerging as a dominant topic of discussion, many organizations also grappled with the rise of AI-generated misinformation—making The Walrus's commitment to fact-based journalism even more important. We delved into the implications of this burgeoning technology, offering insights on both its potential and ethical hang-ups.

In June, the Canadian government passed the Online News Act, or Bill C-18. The bill was meant to make tech giants—like Google and Meta—pay to distribute links from Canadian media organizations, but instead Facebook and Instagram blocked national news from appearing on their platforms. Despite this new challenge, The Walrus continued to publish stories that had a far-reaching impact. Our March/April cover story investigated a string of sexual abuse and misconduct allegations against the evangelical pastor of a popular megachurch in Oakville, Ontario. A few days after our piece was published, the church held a rare public meeting to address many of the accusations uncovered by reporter Rachel Browne. For the story, she was subsequently awarded the 2024 Wilbur Award by the US Religion Communicators Council for best magazine article.

For the first time ever, one of our stories, about Canada's first Inuk governor general, Mary Simon, was published in both Inuktitut and English. In contrast to the widely entrenched notions of English-French bilingualism in Canada, the profile underscored our country's linguistic diversity.

Then, in November, we published evidence suggesting that Ferdinand Eckhardt, a celebrated former director of the Winnipeg Art Gallery, had been a Nazi supporter. A few months later, following their own independent investigation, WAG-Qaumajuq started removing Eckhardt's name from its main entrance hall, website, and all other gallery materials. Manitoba's premier, Wab Kinew, also revoked the Order of the Buffalo Hunt Eckhardt had received in 1982 for his "outstanding service in the field of the arts."

We were also able to respond quickly to national and global events, offering analysis on everything from Memorial University of Newfoundland's role in the *Titan* submarine disaster to allegations of India's involvement in the killing of a Sikh separatist on BC soil, to the Israel-Hamas war. Our ability to get ahead of the news was thanks, in part, to our new contributing writers: award-winning journalist Michelle Cyca, in Vancouver, and former digital editor at The Walrus Tajja Isen, based in New York City. Their regular commentary and insights into the most pressing topics of the day were widely read and helped boost our online presence.

2023 also saw the launch of our Fall Books series, which we celebrated at independent bookstore Flying Books, in Toronto. The event included readings by Kathryn Kuitenbrouwer and Zalika Reid-Benta, both of whom have been longlisted for the Giller Prize.

The following pages contain some of the most memorable stories, events, poems, and art that we shared with audiences across the country this year. Read on to see how we continued to shape Canada's conversation in 2023.

"The 20th anniversary issue is terrific—in particular, three long features that I thought were all excellent. And some very good shorter material too, including a crisply written editor's column. In short, if you keep up this standard, I'll be downright eager to read every issue!"

—
Mark Abley, Quebec



What's the Point of "Pretendian" Investigations?
by Michelle Cyca

Photo by
Levi Manchak



The Curious Connection between
a Canadian University and OceanGate
by Laura Trethewey



Fall Books

Illustration by Adam de Souza

HEALTH

HIGHLIGHTS

Top 3 health stories published on thewalrus.ca in 2023:

Are We Losing the War on Cancer?
by Renée Pellerin

How I Tried to Stop Snoring, Fix My Sleep Habits, and Confront My Mortality
by Jordan Foisy

Does Journalling Actually Improve Mental Health?
by Anne Thériault

THE WORST EFFECTS of the pandemic finally began to taper in 2023, but many of the challenges that exist within our global and national health care systems remained. In “The Vaccine Problem,” Sharon Nadeem explored how countries should prepare for future pandemics, highlighting the need for a better production and procurement process around the globe.

Then, in September, Renée Pellerin asked whether we’re losing the war on cancer. Her story looked at the long history of the quest for a cure and found that we’re no closer to achieving it than we were half a century ago. “We’ve made progress. Yet cancer remains the leading cause of death,” she wrote.

In other stories, writers tried to find their own health remedies. In Jordan Foisy’s case, he purchased every over-the-counter nasal strip and nose spray to help with his snoring—to no avail. His extremely popular essay, “How I Tried to Stop Snoring, Fix My Sleep Habits, and Confront My Mortality,” was featured on Pocket and in *Memoir Monday*. And in “Does Journalling Actually Improve Mental Health?,” Anne Thériault—a long-time journaler herself—argued that writing down our feelings isn’t an adequate substitute for proper mental health care. “If so many of us are working out our feelings in notebooks, shouldn’t we all be feeling

a whole lot better?” she asks. Her story was recommended in LitHub’s weekly newsletter.

Health was also a big theme for The Walrus events.

Four of our leadership dinners — which bring together Canadian business, media, academic, policy, and political leaders for off-the-record, moderated roundtable conversations — focused on topics related to health, including the future of youth mental health, health reconciliation, and the state of cancer in Canada.

In April, The Walrus Talks at Home: Indigenous Health asked what it would take to fix health disparities among Indigenous people in Canada. Marcia Anderson, the Vice-Dean of Indigenous Health at the University of Manitoba, and Melanie MacKinnon, of the Ongomiizwin Indigenous Institute of Health and Healing, were among the speakers to offer solutions.



Why We Made Fewer Memories during the Pandemic

by Jadine Ngan



The Mental Health Crisis on the Other End of the Phone

by Inori Roy



Are We Losing the War on Cancer?

by Renée Pellerin



Does Journalling Actually Improve Mental Health?

by Anne Thériault

THE WALRUS EVENTS

The Walrus Talks at Home: Indigenous Health presented by Johnson & Johnson (April 2023)

The Walrus Leadership Dinner on the Future of Youth Mental Health presented by Brain Canada, powered by RBC Future Launch (April 2023)

The Walrus Leadership Dinner on Health Reconciliation presented by Johnson & Johnson (October 2023)

The Walrus Leadership Dinner on the State of Cancer in Canada presented by Canadian Cancer Society (November 2023)

The Walrus Leadership Dinner on Health presented by Amgen Canada and Gilead Sciences Canada (December 2023)

♦ ♦ ♦

Illustration (above left) by Chanelle Nibbelink

Illustration (above right) by Jeannie Phan

Illustration (bottom right) by Corina Lo

“While I can’t live without my *New Yorker* magazine and other subscriptions, I find myself far more engaged on a personal level with The Walrus. It holds up a mirror to me and what I most want to read.”

—
Darlene Madott, Toronto

POLITICS



Mary Simon Is Leading Indigenous Peoples to New Heights
by Julian Brave NoiseCat

LAST YEAR, as the world continued to grapple with climate change, economic disparities, and geopolitical tensions, the spotlight was fixed on political leaders. At home, the question of how to protect Canadian democracy was among the most pressing after evidence emerged that China had interfered in the 2021 federal election. Soon after the news broke, in early March, Ira Wells scrutinized Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s reaction, in “China’s Election Meddling: Canadians Deserve a Serious Response.” Then, two months later, writer Stephen Maher came up with a list of tangible ways to prevent election interference. *The Big Story* invited Maher to the podcast to discuss the solutions presented in his article.

For every political setback in 2023, there were also efforts toward positive change. In “Mary Simon Is Leading Indigenous Peoples to New Heights,” Julian Brave NoiseCat highlighted the life and achievements of Canada’s first Inuk governor general. Simon had written for us back in 2007 about sovereignty in the North, and we republished the story in our 20th anniversary issue in November 2023. “Simon might be the representative of an office rooted in Canadian and British imperialism. But she rose to that office through an Inuit political tradition that successfully combatted imperialism and transformed

Canadian sovereignty and the international order in a remarkably short time frame—in no small part, because of her,” wrote Brave NoiseCat. The Walrus published the story in both English and Inuktitut—a first for us.

At the provincial level, David Moscrop examined the failures of the Ontario government, in “We May Be Stuck with Doug Ford,” while Tim Querengesser looked into the conflict unfolding between some of Alberta’s progressive mayors and its provincial leaders, in “Why Alberta Is Bullying Its Cities.” Other stories focused on municipal politics, including David Moscrop’s “Olivia Chow Won the Battle for Toronto. Can She Win the War?” and former Toronto mayor David Miller’s “City Diminished: The Shrinking Power and Influence of Toronto.” Both Moscrop and Miller were invited to talk about their stories on *Newstalk 1010*.

In March 2023, The Walrus hosted its Trust in Democracy leadership forum following the release of the 2023 CanTrust Index, which asked Canadians to rank the trust levels of government leaders, corporations, services, and institutions. The speakers—who included the Honourable Catherine McKenna, former minister of environment and climate change, and the Honourable James Moore, former minister of industry—discussed what the results of the report mean for the future of democracy.

HIGHLIGHTS

Top 3 politics stories published on *thewalrus.ca* in 2023:

We May Be Stuck with Doug Ford
by David Moscrop

Mary Simon Is Leading Indigenous Peoples to New Heights
by Julian Brave NoiseCat

Why Are Conservatives So Obsessed with the CBC?
by Tom Jokinen

THE WALRUS EVENTS

The Walrus Leadership Forum: Trust in Democracy
presented by Proof Strategies (March 2023)

◆ ◆ ◆

Photograph (opposite) by Sgt. Mathieu St-Amour

SCIENCE AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS



How to Make Peace with Canada Geese
by Tom Jokinen

HIGHLIGHTS
Top 3 science and climate crisis stories published on thewalrus.ca in 2023:

Are Herring Making a Comeback in BC?
by Lauren Kaljur

Canada's Big Flex in Space
by Omar Mouallem

Fast Fashion Is Everywhere on Social Media. How Can Teens Resist?
by Ava Furfaro

COVERING THE CLIMATE CRISIS continued to be a priority for The Walrus in 2023. Our stories and events offered lessons to be learned from recent catastrophes as well as slivers of hope for the future. In “Stop Calling Each New Disaster ‘The New Normal,’” Arno Kopecky dissected the problematic ways media and commentators talk about weather-related events. “‘The new normal’ has itself been normalized, and so has the thing it describes,” he wrote. “But normalization is the worst possible response to climate change, short of denial.” His story caught the attention of *National Newswatch*, *Newstalk 1010*, and *Politico*.

Then, in “Ten Years after Disaster, Lac-Mégantic Is a Model for a Greener Future,” Caitlin Stall-Paquet reflected on 2013’s rail explosion,

where a runaway train destroyed a small town in Quebec, killing forty-seven people. In rebuilding the community, urban planners, engineers, and architects were able to turn the tragedy into an opportunity that could serve as a sustainability blueprint for other cities around the world. This story was our top TikTok video in 2023, with 93,000+ views.

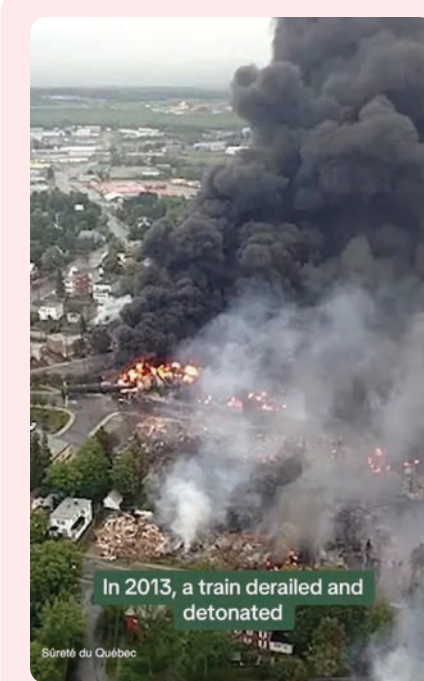
Some stories celebrated Canada’s scientific achievements—and our national quirks. “Canada’s Big Flex in Space,” by Omar Mouallem, looked at how Canadarm robotic limbs are shaping the future of space travel. And in “How to Make Peace with Canada Geese,” Tom Jokinen prompted readers to rethink their relationship with their avian enemies. “The seasonal V-shaped



Fast Fashion Is Everywhere on Social Media. How Can Teens Resist?
by Ava Furfaro

honking flock overhead is as haunting as it is iconic, one in the settler’s starter pack of romantic Canadian imagery along with Mountie red serge and the Tragically Hip, he wrote.” *The Big Story* dedicated an episode to “Canadians vs. Canada geese.”

The Walrus also shaped the climate conversation in 2023 with The Walrus Talks. In April, The Walrus Talks A New City presented by Concordia University brought audiences ways to make urban living more sustainable. Then, in May, The Walrus Talks It’s Happening Now asked how we can plan for a better future amid a warming world. “What we need to understand is that the circumstances we find ourselves in at this moment, our current challenges, cannot be addressed by a moral appeal,” said QuakeLab Inc.’s founder and CEO Sharon Nyangweso. “Systemic problems can only be addressed with systemic solutions.” November’s The Walrus Talks at Home: The Health and Climate Crisis, put on in partnership with the Canadian Medical Association, Canadian Nurses Association, and Canadian Association of Public Health, was moderated by *Globe and Mail* health journalist André Picard. Also in November, alongside the German Embassy and Consulates in Canada, The Walrus hosted Climate Talks: Protecting Biodiversity from the Impacts of Climate Change.



[thewalrusca](https://twitter.com/thewalrusca)

On July 5, 2013, a devastating train disaster and oil spill changed Lac-Mégantic forever. As it rebuilds, the town has become a model of sustainable development.



Canada’s Big Flex in Space
by Omar Mouallem

THE WALRUS EVENTS

The Walrus Talks A New City
presented by Concordia University
(April 2023)

The Walrus Talks It’s Happening Now
presented by Concordia University
(May 2023)

The Walrus Talks at Home: The Health and Climate Crisis
with event partners Canadian Medical Association, Canadian Nurses Association, and Canadian Association of Public Health
(November 2023)

Climate Talks: Protecting Biodiversity from the Impacts of Climate Change
presented by the German Embassy and Consulates in Canada
(November 2023)

♦ ♦ ♦
Illustration (opposite) by Elijah White

Illustration (above) by Emily Verscheure

Photos (bottom) courtesy of the Canadian Space Agency and NASA

BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY

WITH GENERATIVE AI'S recent surge in popularity, few topics were as relevant in 2023 as technology. While some were excited about its transformative possibilities, The Walrus closely examined AI's implications for industries ranging from education to entertainment. In "Will ChatGPT Kill the Student Essay? Universities Aren't Ready for



AI and Politics: How Will We Know What—and Who—is Real?
by Colin Horgan

the Answer," Irina Dumitrescu defended the importance of writing, arguing that educators need to do more to save the humble essay. And in "Margaret Atwood Reviews a 'Margaret Atwood' Story by AI," the esteemed Canadian author assured fellow writers that chatbots are unlikely to replace them anytime soon.

Several of our AI stories — including those by Dumitrescu, Atwood, and Horgan — were referenced in newsletters, radio interviews, and podcasts, such as *LitHub Daily*, *The Big Story*, on Newstalk 1010, and *Politico Ottawa Playbook*.

Some AI enthusiasts were optimistic about the technology's potential to usher in new economic models, like universal basic income. But in "Will Universal Basic Income Save Us from AI?," Colin Horgan was quick to point out its flaws. "We don't need to sit by as AI overwhelms our professional or personal lives, hoping that a UBI scheme, offered as some kind of consolation, saves the day," he wrote.

There were plenty of new developments in the business world too—some for the better and others for the worse. "Why Hudson's Bay Company's Future Is in Question," by Don Gillmor, looked into the rise and fall of Canada's oldest company. And as Sebastian Leck points out in "Lululemon Tried to Become a Tech Company. It Didn't Work Out," sometimes corporate innovation goes too far.

Several of The Walrus Talks explored the challenges and opportunities presented by technology. In June, The Walrus Talks Digital Skills, presented by Deloitte, asked how we can create digital equity. The speakers discussed ways to equip people with the knowledge required in our digitized world. That same month, seven experts from different industries—including media, arts, and medicine—came together to discuss the rapidly changing world of AI, at The Walrus Talks Artificial Intelligence, presented by Google.



Why Is Starbucks at War with Its Unions?
by Rob Csernyik



Zellers Is Back. Is Nostalgia to Blame?
by Monika Warzecha



Lululemon Tried to Become a Tech Company. It Didn't Work Out
by Sebastian Leck

HIGHLIGHTS

Top 3 business and technology stories published on thewalrus.ca in 2023:

Margaret Atwood Reviews a "Margaret Atwood" Story by AI
by Margaret Atwood

Will AI Actually Mean We'll Be Able to Work Less?
by Elizabeth M. Renieris

Lululemon Tried to Become a Tech Company. It Didn't Work Out
by Sebastian Leck

THE WALRUS EVENTS

The Walrus Talks Digital Skills
presented by Deloitte (June 2023)

The Walrus Talks Artificial Intelligence
presented by Google (June 2023)

♦ ♦ ♦

Illustration (opposite) by Jarred Briggs

Illustration (above) by Michael DeForge

Illustration (middle) by Katie Carey

Illustration (bottom) by Rafael Mayani

UP
NEXT



Being Black in a Small Town
by Joy Spearchief-Morris

THE WALRUS has always been committed to amplifying a diversity of voices—including those of youth in Canada—and 2023 was no different. Young people have a lot to contribute when it comes to conversations about social issues and the impacts of climate change, yet there are few opportunities for them to share their perspectives in mainstream Canadian media.

To help change this, The Walrus was pleased to renew its partnership with The Rossy Foundation. Following the success of 2022’s “Teen Walrus” series, we launched a six-episode podcast called *Youth for Youth*, featuring teenage hosts who dive into the biggest issues facing young people today. The podcast has been renewed for a second season, with the premiere scheduled for fall 2024.

Youth were also at the centre of some of 2023’s events. In April, The Walrus hosted a leadership dinner in Ottawa on the future of youth mental health, moderated by *Globe and Mail* columnist André Picard. And in December, The Walrus Talks at Home: Media Right Now featured four young leaders.



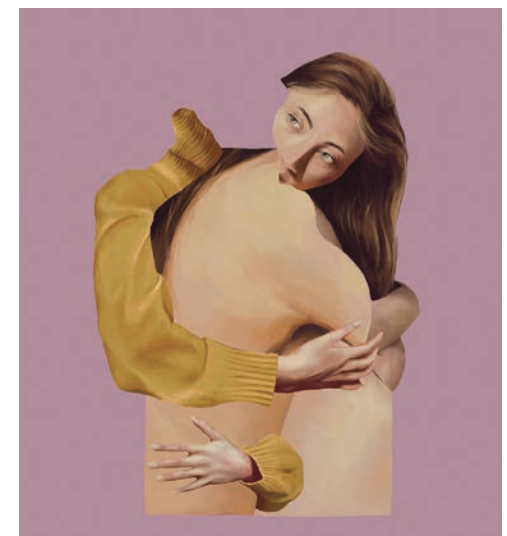
“You’ll hear older individuals declare that ‘the youths’ don’t read the news anymore, that we’re less informed, and that we’re wasting our days on TikTok. They’ll dismiss the power of information sharing on social media, but as an early career writer and journalist, I have to push back on this narrative,” said guest speaker Carol Eugene Park. “I’d argue that it is the accessibility and authenticity of apps like TikTok that enables us to be more interested and to have more empathy with communities outside of our own.”



100 Years after the Exclusion Act, Chinese Canadians like Me Still Question Their Belonging
by Adrian Ma



Nuchatlaht First Nation: How a Legal Battle Could Change Land Rights for Good
by Troy Sebastian / nupqu ?a-kʔ am



The Money
by Lynn Coady

**THE WALRUS
AMPLIFIES
YOUNG
CREATORS**

**Teen Walrus:
Young People
on What
Matters Now**

Youth For Youth
podcast, presented
by The Walrus Lab
with support
from The Rossy
Foundation

♦ ♦ ♦
Illustration (opposite)
by Michelle Theodore

Illustration (above)
by Phoebe Xiao

Illustration (right)
by bailey macabre /
Cedar Sage Skoden

Illustration (below)
by Celeste Colborne

♦ ♦ ♦
The illustrations
on this spread and
the article by Joy
Spearchief-Morris
were made possible
with the support of
RBC Emerging Artists.

JUSTICE AND SOCIETY

HIGHLIGHTS

Top 3 justice and society stories on *thewalrus.ca* in 2023:

As a Therapist, I Know What's Breaking Couples Up
by Andrew Sofin

The Meeting House: Inside a Megachurch Scandal
by Rachel Browne

Kids Deserve a New Gender Paradigm
by Kai Cheng Thom

SOME OF THE WALRUS'S biggest stories in 2023 probed the questions that shape our society as well as the systems designed to uphold it. In March, contributing writer Michelle Cyca looked into the growing trend of people claiming Indigenous ancestry. "The cumulative effect is an impression of Indigeneity as a marketable asset, divorced from its historical, political, and cultural significance," she wrote. "The essential power structure of whiteness remains intact, and the sprinkle of artificially flavoured Indigeneity covers up the bad taste of settler guilt." Cyca was invited on Newstalk 1010, *The Big Story* podcast, and the *Independent's Berry Grounds* podcast to discuss her story. Rachel Browne's March/April cover story, "The Meeting House: Inside a Megachurch Scandal," also garnered a lot of media attention.

Her investigation into sexual abuse and misconduct allegations within a popular megachurch in Oakville, Ontario, was featured on Newstalk 1010 and on *The Big Story*.

While Canada is considered to be progressive when it comes to LGBTQ2S+ rights—especially compared to places like the US, where a record number of anti-LGBTQ bills were introduced in 2023—Kai Cheng Thom showed us that there's still work to be done. In "Kids Deserve a New Gender Paradigm," she explored the lack of access to gender-affirming care for trans children in Canada. The problem, she writes, "boils down to a misunderstanding about the nature of gender itself." In June, Megan Gillmore took a more critical look at medical assistance in dying (MAID) by asking "Have Assisted Dying Laws Gone Too Far?"



Have Assisted Dying Laws Gone Too Far?
by Meagan Gillmore

A number of The Walrus Talks examined other big societal questions. In January, The Walrus Talks at Home: Inequality asked why the rich keep getting richer while vulnerable populations worry about the rising cost of living. In March, The Walrus Talks Economic Reconciliation discussed ways that the private sector and government can better support Indigenous communities in Canada. In October, The Walrus Talks Equitable Housing, in Vancouver, explored solutions for Canada's housing shortage. Later in the year, journalists, drag queens, and nonprofit leaders looked into the issue of gender-based violence in Canada, in partnership with Canadian Women's Foundation.

"I moved to Canada in May 2022. Most of what I know of Canada, I've learnt from The Walrus, an organization which, to me, also reflects the best of this country. In many ways, The Walrus made my new Canadian life possible—and keeps it possible day after day."

—
Siddhesh Inamdar, copy editor at The Walrus

"This was really a good watch! Progress is being acknowledged by all major participants, skills and capacity are being developed, confidence is building... I'm plugging in!!!!!!!"

—
Joel Strickland (via X), on The Walrus Talks Reconciliation presented by Enbridge



The Meeting House:
Inside a Megachurch Scandal
by Rachel Browne



Many Canadians Will Never Own a Home.
Does It Matter?
by Brad Badelt

THE WALRUS EVENTS

The Walrus Talks at Home: Inequality
presented by Oxfam Canada
(January 2023)

The Walrus Talks Economic Reconciliation
presented by Enbridge
(March 2023)

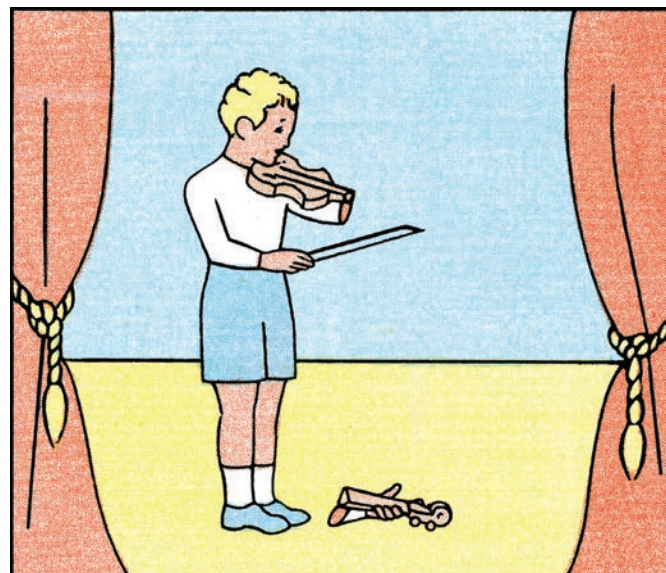
The Walrus Talks Equitable Housing
presented by TD Ready Commitment
(October 2023)

The Walrus Talks Gender-Based Violence
presented by Canadian Women's Foundation
(November 2023)

♦ ♦ ♦
Illustration (opposite)
by Diana Nguyễn

Illustration (above)
Cornelia Li

Illustration (right)
by Maggie Prince



Why Do Kids Hate Music Lessons?
by J.R. Patterson

FROM MUSIC ICONS to blockbuster films to art scandals, The Walrus spotlighted a myriad of influences shaping cultural discourse both at home and abroad. In “I’m Not Here to Make Friends, Eh: *Big Brother Canada* Turned Backstabbing into Art,” The Walrus associate editor KC Hoard explained why the show could “play in the reality TV big leagues” when so many other Canadian spinoffs have failed. Hoard was invited on CBC Radio’s *Commotion with Elamin Abdelmahmoud* to discuss his story in March.

The world couldn’t stop talking about Taylor Swift in 2023, but in “Do We Really Need a Taylor Swift Reporter?,” contributing writer Tajja Isen asked whether our obsession has gone too far. Her story was a response to major US media outlets hiring beat reporters to write exclusively about Swift and other big stars like Beyoncé.

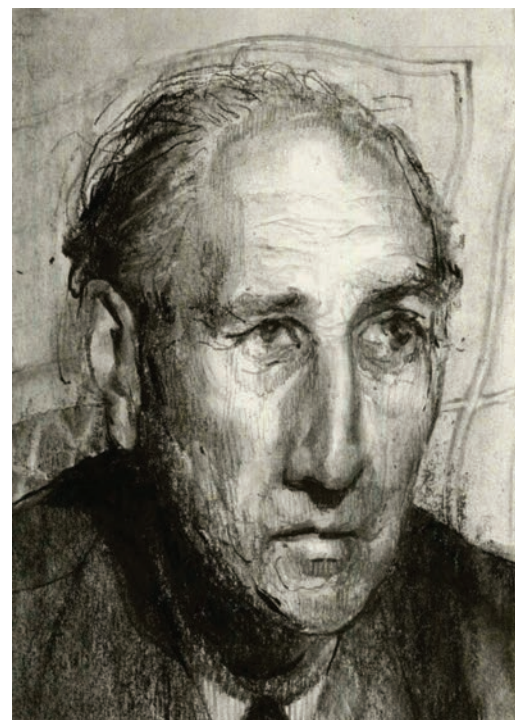
Our most impactful arts and culture story of the year was Conrad Sweatman’s criticism of Ferdinand Eckhardt, the celebrated former director of the Winnipeg Art Gallery

(now WAG-Qaumajuq). Research suggests that Eckhardt, who died in 1996, was a Nazi. “For all the popular talk today, in the fine arts world and beyond, of ‘diversity, equity, and inclusion,’ the museum world has a Nazi problem,” Sweatman wrote. “From accusations of actively encouraging suspected Nazis to resettle here to later dragging their heels on prosecuting war criminals, governments from both sides of the aisle have a lot to answer for... In Eckhardt, we have a disquieting case of a Nazi sympathizer who enjoyed such influence. It’s time Canadians confronted this fact.”

Eckhardt was the 1982 recipient of the Order of the Buffalo Hunt for his “outstanding service” in the field of the arts, but in January 2024, the province’s premier, Wab Kinew, revoked this honour. “He has no place being honoured in the public sphere here in Manitoba,” he said.

The University of Manitoba and University of Winnipeg, which both have faculties named after Eckhardt, are also conducting their own independent reviews.

ARTS AND CULTURE



A Canadian Art Gallery Refuses to Reckon with Former Director’s Nazi Ties
by Carmine Starnino

Sweatman’s story was prominently featured in other Canadian media outlets, including CTV News, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and the CBC. A few months later, following their own independent investigation, WAG-Qaumajuq started removing Eckhardt’s name from their main entrance hall, website, and all other gallery materials.



At Ninety-One, Alanis Obomsawin Is Not Ready to Put Down Her Camera
by Zoe Heaps Tennant



I’m Not Here to Make Friends, Eh: *Big Brother Canada* Turned Backstabbing into Art
by KC Hoard

HIGHLIGHTS

Top three arts and culture stories on the *thewalrus.ca* in 2023:

Why Do Kids Hate Music Lessons?
by J. R. Patterson

Second Genesis: When a Tribute Band Transcends the Original
by Dafna Izenberg

The Darker Side of Leonard Cohen
by Myra Bloom

THE WALRUS EVENTS

The Walrus Talks at Home: Media Right Now supported by The Rossy Foundation (December 2023)



Illustration (opposite) by Alain Pilon

Illustration (above) by James Lee Chiahian

Photo (left) by Shelby Lisk

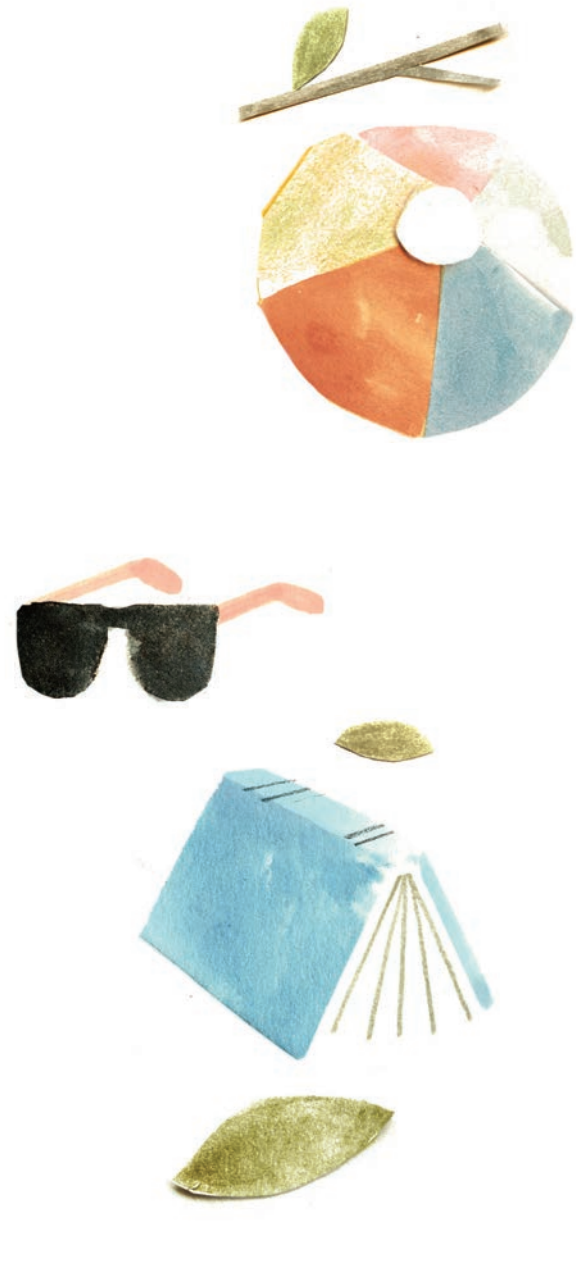
Illustration (right) by Franziska Barczyk

LITERATURE AND POETRY

THE WALRUS CONTINUED its tradition of showcasing Canada's vibrant literary talent. We published fiction and poetry from both emerging writers and celebrated voices, including Governor General's Award-winning poet Julie Bruck and 2022 Giller Prize nominee Fawn Parker, whose short story about the complexities of motherhood, marriage, and self-identity was featured in our annual Summer Reading issue.

Nazneen Sheikh's "The Photograph, 1889," published in February, was about a mysterious photo discovered under a dying man's pillow that became the subject of fascination and speculation within a family for generations. "Jude the Brave," by Claire Cameron, meanwhile, told the story of a father's experience of grief following the loss of his son to cancer.

The poems we published over the year touched on a wide range of themes, including Bertrand Bickersteth's "Woody Strode, Black Cowboy," about the erasure of Black experiences and contributions to Canadian history, and Julie Mannell's "A Love Poem for Steven Page," about memory and longing.



Honey Crisp By Molly Peacock

Featured in *The Walrus*,
July 2023

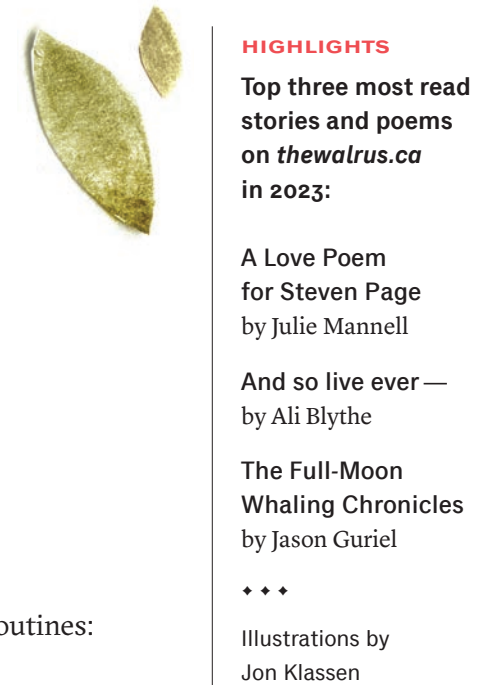
Molly Peacock is the author of *Flower Diary: In Which Mary Hiester Reid Paints, Travels, Marries & Opens a Door* as well as seven volumes of poetry, including *The Analyst: Poems*.



Hello wizenface, hello apple,
understudy in the fridge
since March (it's September).
Hello wrinkly red cheeks,
I'll bet you're almost a year old,
born last autumn,
kept in the fruit storage built
half-underground on the farm,
then, in the snow, sold to me.
Hello my honey crisp (well,
my honey, no longer crisp...)
are you asking why you
haven't been eaten by now?

Because that man hewed to his routines:
an apple for lunch every day,
the same red punctuation.
You were earmarked for the date
he slipped from my arms & we both
slid to the floor, red angel, are you
listening? 911, hospital, hospice,
and ten days later (you were
about six months old then),
he died and was carried
to a cold shelf.

Hello smiley stem, hello days
moving you from spot to spot.
Hello week where I forgot
and left you at the back and
went about my new life.
Greetings new groceries!
Their jumble causes a re-
arrangement of your bin,
so I have to pick you up
— would you rather
have been eaten and
lived on as energy?
Not yet, not yet, my pomme.
Hello soft wrinkled
face in my palms.



HIGHLIGHTS

Top three most read stories and poems on thewalrus.ca in 2023:

A Love Poem for Steven Page
by Julie Mannell

And so live ever —
by Ali Blythe

The Full-Moon Whaling Chronicles
by Jason Guriel

♦ ♦ ♦

Illustrations by
Jon Klassen

Fellowships, Education, and Awards

THE IMPACT of The Walrus continued in 2023 with a robust fellowship program that trained a number of emerging professionals in journalism, fact checking, and marketing in the media industry. Our fellowships have been an essential part of our educational mandate—not only do we provide on-the-job training and experience for rising storytellers, we also provide them with a holistic understanding of working in a media organization, through mentorship and workshops on fact checking, editing, fundraising, and more.

Alongside our long-standing fellowships with The Chawkers Foundation, Power Corporation of Canada, TD Bank Group, and CIBC, in 2023, we also introduced a new fellowship, the CRRF Fellowship for Emerging Indigenous, Black, and racialized Journalists and welcomed Indigenous journalist Colby Payne as its first recipient.

The Walrus’s educational influence goes beyond our fellows. We received several requests to reprint our stories in other publications, including *Readers’ Digest Canada* and *The Cottage*. In 2023, educational bodies, like the British Columbia ministry of education, the New York City department of education, and Public Consulting Group, and literacy program CommonLit also republished

a number of our stories for use in assessments and educational resources.

Through analytics tracking, we also discovered that many major universities and colleges in Canada frequently use our stories in their courses. Carleton University, Concordia University, George Brown College, Humber College, Norquest College, Seneca College, Toronto Metropolitan University, and University of New Brunswick are just some of the nationwide institutions that have incorporated The Walrus’s stories into their courses.

The Walrus was once again recognized by peers for our journalism. The year began with a gold award for Gabrielle Drolet, whose piece “In Defence of Garlic in a Jar: How Food Snobs Almost Ruined My Love of Cooking” won the Best Feel-Good Story award in the media category at the Canadian Online Publishing Awards. This was followed by Leyland Cecco winning the Mindset Award for Reporting on the Mental Health of Young People for his personal chronicle “How a Tourette’s Diagnosis Helped Me Understand Who I Am.”

On the biggest night of Canadian media awards, The Walrus took home three National Magazine Awards, including gold for poetry by Susan Musgrave and silver for Julien

“My fellowship experience at The Walrus, supported by Journalists for Human Rights, was a golden opportunity that revived my motivation to become a better and more proactive advocate like I was in my home country, Afghanistan, before the fall of Kabul. It allowed me to continue on the path I had fought for years to uphold as well as to learn and develop new skills and knowledge in Canada and Canadian media.”

— Soraya Amiri, JHR Fellow, 2022/23



The Sisters @Yoursylxsister

This past month we’ve been doing trainings with independent media and want to give a shout out to the [@thenarwhalca](#), [@IndigiNewsMedia](#) & [@thewalrus](#) for joining us in learning how Indigenous storytelling protocols apply as trauma-informed practice.

“I feel incredibly grateful to have spent a year learning and growing at The Walrus. Having the opportunity to talk through editorial decisions and collaborate with seasoned editors has been a deeply valuable experience, and I’m excited to further develop my editing skills after the fellowship.”

—Tobin Ng, Chawkers Fellow, 2022/23,
now Associate Editor, Maisonneuve

Posture’s illustrations in “What Tourette’s Taught Me” as well as for Eva Holland’s “Giant Mine’s Toxic Legacy,” which won for personal journalism. At the Digital Publishing Awards, celebrated on the same night, K. J. Aiello won gold in the personal essay category for “Who Gets to Be Mentally Ill?”

We were also finalists at the Webster Awards in the excellence in feature reporting category, for Amy Romer’s “‘The New Residential School System’: How a First Nation Rallied against the Foster Care System,” and Meagan Gillmore won the Katherine Schneider Journalism Award for excellence in disability reporting, at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism at Arizona State University, for “Have Assisted Dying Laws Gone Too Far?”

Former The Walrus fellow and event manager Sheima Benembarek was selected as one of the 2023 Concordia University First Book Prize finalists at the Quebec Writers’ Federation Book Award, for her book *Halal Sex: The Intimate Lives of Muslim Women in North America*.

To cap off a year of accolades, senior editor Harley Rustad’s best-selling book *Lost in the Valley of Death: A Story of Obsession and Danger in the Himalayas* won a Religion News Association Award and placed first in the non-fiction books category and was also the overall grand prix winner at the 2023 Poland Mountain Festival. The book is also set to be developed into a documentary by Blue Ant Media-owned Beach House.

Mihika Agarwal,
Cannonbury Fellow, 2023/24
Vancouver, British Columbia

Soraya Amiri, JHR Fellow, 2022/23
(Journalists for Human Rights
Fellowship for Afghan media
professionals, in partnership with
the Meta Journalism Project)
Toronto, Ontario

Emma Buchanan,
Cannonbury Fellow, 2022/23
Toronto, Ontario

**Mashal Butt, Power Corporation
of Canada Senior Fellow, 2023/24**
Vancouver, British Columbia

Yasmin Duale, CIBC Fellow, 2022/23
(CIBC Digital Fellowship for
Emerging Black Journalists)
Toronto, Ontario

**Khalida Elsadati, TD Fellow,
2023/24 (TD Fellowship on Disability
and Inclusion)**
Toronto, Ontario

**Connor Garel, Justice Fund Writer
in Residence, 2023**
Toronto, Ontario

Trisha Gregorio, TD Fellow, 2022/23
Toronto, Ontario

**Dhriti Gupta, Chawkers Fellow,
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Makda Mulatu, CIBC Fellow, 2023/24
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Tobin Ng, Chawkers Fellow, 2022/23
Ottawa, Ontario

**Colby Payne, CRRF Fellow,
2023/24 (Canadian Race Relations
Fellowship for Emerging BIPOC
Journalists)**
Vancouver, British Columbia

**Aysha White, The Walrus Editorial
Fellow, 2022/23**
Montreal, Quebec

**Emma Wilkie, Power Corporation
of Canada Senior Fellow, 2022/23**
Bass River, Nova Scotia

The Walrus Talks

IN 2023, The Walrus events team continued to provide a platform for thought-provoking discussions and community engagement. Building on the success of previous years, The Walrus Talks included a dynamic mix of virtual and in-person events that reached over 11,000 households both nationally and internationally. The appetite for livestreamed events grew, with last year seeing an increase in online attendance.



2023 was also a year of new partnerships. In June, The Walrus Talks partnered with Google Canada to host an event on the ways that artificial intelligence could help solve some of society's biggest problems and security challenges, and in November, we collaborated with the Canadian Women's Foundation to put on The Walrus Talks Gender-Based Violence. These were two of our biggest Talks to date.



Alkarim Devani, Co-founder of RNDQR, speaking at *The Walrus Talks A New City*, in Toronto

At home, The Walrus Talks covered topics including the rising cost of living, health equity among Indigenous people, the growing prevalence of climate-related illnesses, and the ways Canadian youth are disrupting the media.

The Walrus Leadership Dinners—by-invite, off-the-record gatherings of Canadian leaders to discuss challenges and opportunities in various fields—returned stronger than ever in 2023. Alongside Brain Canada,

powered by RBC Future Launch, we hosted an event on the future of youth mental health. The Walrus also partnered with Johnson & Johnson for two leadership dinners, one on health reconciliation, which was attended by Indigenous health leaders and federal representatives in the health sphere. Another leadership dinner was held, in partnership with Canadian Cancer Society, on the state of cancer in Canada today.

“Participating in The Walrus Talks allowed me to share my thoughts and feelings about my gender identity in a way I never had before. It was such an empowering experience.”

—
Tranna Wintour, former speaker at The Walrus Talks

The Walrus Lab

THE WALRUS LAB serves as The Walrus’s client-services arm, helping brands tell their stories through custom content, including writing, podcasts, and awards.

2023 started with the launch of *Canadian Time Machine*, a podcast for Canadian heritage that looks at key historic anniversaries in national history. This was the first project that The Walrus Lab produced in both English and French. In 2023, The Walrus Lab also worked with Google to produce a new podcast called *AI for Social Good* and started production on another new series for McMaster University’s Future of Canada Project. *Imagine 2080* premiered in early 2024.

Other podcasts created by The Walrus Lab were renewed for further seasons. For the Global Institute for Water Security’s *What about Water?*, now in its fourth season, we worked on a special summer series about the consequences of the Colorado River drying up. It featured documentary-style storytelling, with two of the episodes produced by a field team in the US.

All content produced by The Walrus Lab is fact-checked. And profits from The Walrus Lab are reinvested directly back into our journalism.

2023 saw another successful Amazon Canada First Novel Award ceremony at the Globe and Mail Centre in Toronto. The annual award celebrates emerging Canadian novelists and young writers. This year’s \$60,000 prize went to Jasmine Sealy for her debut novel, *The Island of Forgetting*,

while seventeen-year-old Danica Popovic won \$5,000 for her short story “Local Shopper.” Former winner Michelle Good—whose Governor General’s Literary Award-winning novel was optioned to be adapted into a television series in 2021—was chosen by the Youth Short Story category applicants to be the guest speaker.

The Walrus Lab also produced a number of special custom-content features. In March, we worked with the Rideau Hall Foundation on their Indigenous Teacher Education Initiative, which aims to solve the Indigenous teacher shortage. We also strengthened Buffalo Niagara Tourism’s campaign to draw attention to the revitalization of Buffalo’s downtown.



Michelle Good, author of *Five Little Indians*, speaking at the 2023 Amazon Canada First Novel Award ceremony



Canadian Time Machine podcast



AI for Social Good podcast

Celebrating Canada's Conversation

2023 WAS A YEAR TO CELEBRATE. And we did so with three extraordinary special events that marked two decades of Canada's conversation.

On May 8, 2023, over 320 people gathered for The Walrus Gala: Who We Are Now, held in the stunning Ricarda's Atrium, in downtown Toronto. Guests enjoyed a reading by Ontario Poet Laureate Randell Adjei, an opening performance by Veronica Johnny, live music by The Walrus House

Band, and a sumptuous meal by Ricarda's executive chef Julien Laffargue. Our 20th anniversary gala was an evening to remember, with over \$550,000 raised to support The Walrus. We thank our 2023 Co-Chairs, Chethan Lakshman and Jaime Watt.

On September 20, 2023, retiring board member Elizabeth Gomery held a fundraiser in her beautiful Montreal home, bringing together over fifty supporters and new



Left to right: Jennifer Hollett, Executive Director of The Walrus, with The Walrus board member Ira Gluskin and Maxine Granovsky Gluskin, hosts of our 2023 Optimistic Canadians celebration. But is it cake?



Media Girlfriends en masse at The Walrus Gala 2023



Heather Dunn, Chethan Lakshman, and Kumudini Lakshman at The Walrus Gala 2023



Tamara Thermitus, human rights lawyer and subject of our November 2022 article "How Quebec's Human Rights Commission Drove Out Its First Black Female President" by Martin Patriquin addresses the room at our Montreal Fundraiser, September 2023.

friends of The Walrus. Guests heard contributor Martin Patriquin speak about his November 2022 account of the racism experienced by Tamara Thermitus (who was also in attendance), former head of Quebec's human rights commission, with an opener by Carmine Starnino, The Walrus interim editor-in-chief during 2023.

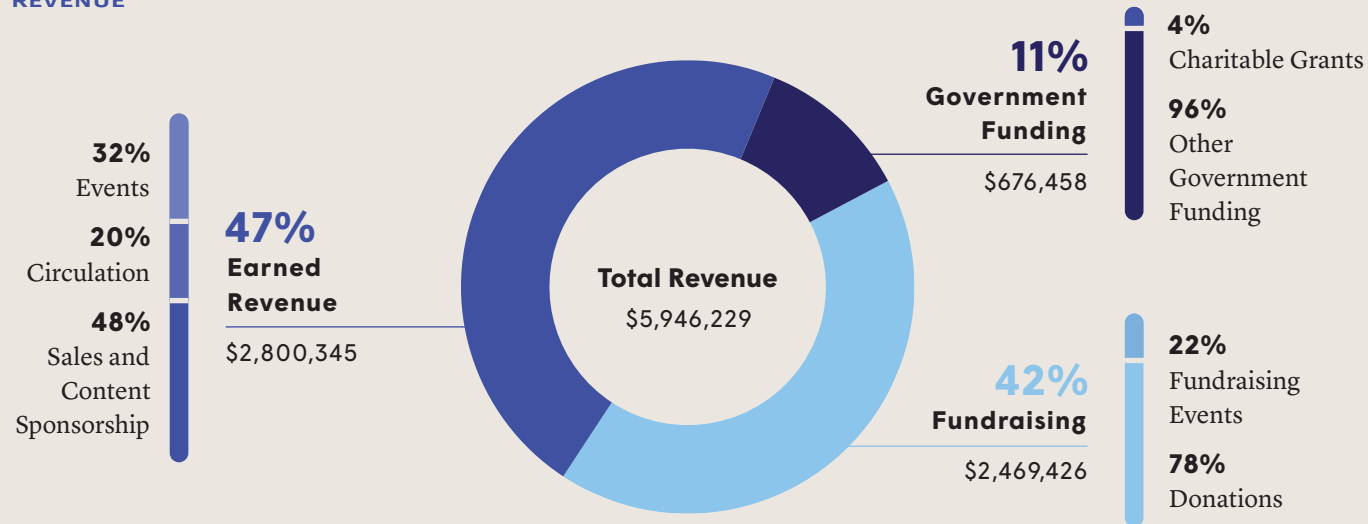
Our annual Optimistic Canadians celebration welcomed over fifty close friends and supporters of The Walrus, generously hosted by Ira Gluskin and Maxine Granovsky Gluskin in their beautiful garden. This social event is held every year to thank our donors and partners and bring them closer to the work of The Walrus.

To mark our 20th anniversary with some fun, guests were treated to a slice of "Is It Cake?" by April Julian, Toronto-based runner-up on the acclaimed Netflix show — yes, a larger-than-life tote bag complete with magazines, all good enough to eat!

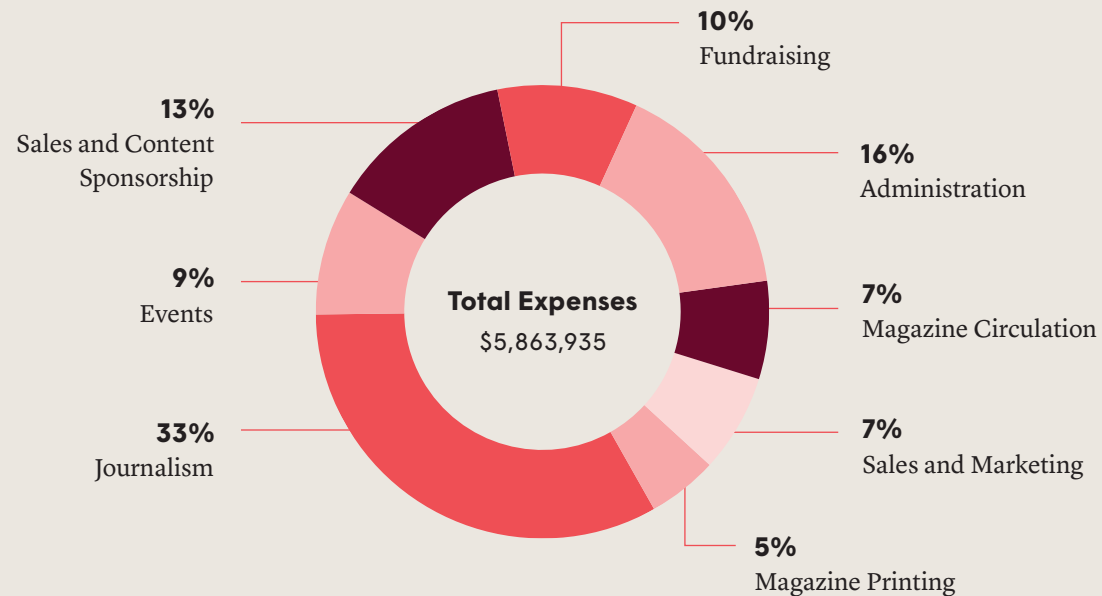
The Walrus 2023 Financials

THE WALRUS IS A REGISTERED CHARITY with an educational mandate. Over two decades, The Walrus has evolved a mixed-revenue model, which allows us to raise revenue from philanthropy and sponsorships, benefit from government grants, earn from paid client services through The Walrus Lab, as well as through circulation and advertising. Below is a snapshot of our revenue and expenses in 2023.

REVENUE



EXPENSES



We thank the following individuals, foundations, and organizations for their visionary commitment to advancing two decades of Canada’s conversation in 2023.

For a full list of 2023 supporters, please visit thewalrus.ca/donate and scroll down to our 2023 donor listing.

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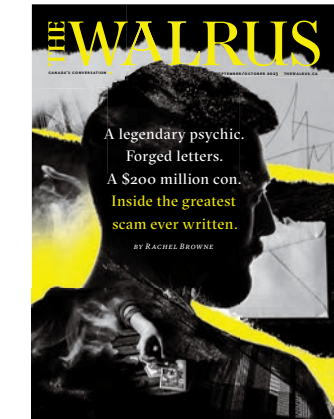
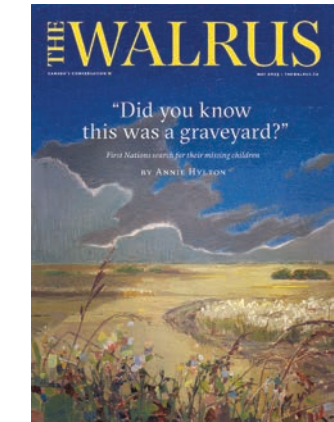
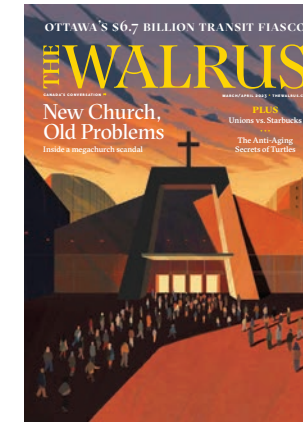
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♦ ♦ ♦
Board and committee listings reflect the 2023/24 year.



The Walrus 2023



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



For more information,
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