







The Vancouver Writers Fest envisions a world in which the transformative power of books and ideas creates the foundation of an empathetic, inspired, and just society. We connect people to exceptional books, ideas, and dialogue through year-round programming that ignites a passion for words and the world around us. Our flagship Festival is one of the largest and most prestigious in North America; every October, we bring acclaimed, established, and emerging writers from across Canada and the world to Granville Island, where they connect with tens of thousands of enthusiastic readers.

The Vancouver Writers Fest carries out our work on unceded xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwəta+ (Tsleil-Waututh) territory.







Left to Right:
Tanya Talaga,
volunteer booksellers,
Marty Chan, Conor
Kerr, Kirsten
McDougall, Jacob
Wren, Michelle
Cyca, Elamin
Abdelmahmoud, Raja
Khouri, Gabor Maté,
audience members at
the 2024 Festival

Our Year in Review

"Thank you for all the work [the Festival does] to support and encourage writers and readers in our city. While this has always been vital work, it is all the more critical in this current time. The voices of diversity, beauty, imagination and alternativity provide Vancouverites with real substantial hope in what seems sometimes a hopeless world."

—Festival Attendee and Donor

In a year that saw us tackling topics of joy and turmoil on our stages, the feedback we received bolstered our commitment to showcasing powerful books and ideas that can transform the way we imagine our world.

We embraced the importance of books, dialogue, and reflective listening, by showcasing authors from across Canada and around the world who spoke to issues both of struggle and resilience, alongside embracing joy. Whether tackling global political issues or talking about poetry's ability to reflect society and our souls, the Vancouver Writers Fest grappled with some of the most pressing topics of our past year. We also had time to bask in the words of some of our favourite and entertaining bestselling-authors. With the help of our 2024 Festival Guest Curator, Kim Thúy, we celebrated the written word and storytelling

by acknowledging the threads of light that wind through darkness.

Our audiences responded with record attendance and book sales across our free Incite series, Special Events, and our flagship October Festival on Granville Island. These events were supported by a record number of VWF volunteers—over 500 throughout the year—who turned up by the dozens to help make each event run smoothly.

We connected writers with students through year-round youth education programming which included our Writers in the Classroom series, our Youth Writing Contests, and the live-streaming of youth events during Festival week. These recorded events reached thousands of students across British Columbia and set the stage

for the recording of multiple Festival events for our internationally-viewed Digital Festival.

With a focus on audience development and support, we built upon lessons from our Accessibility Roundtable and embarked on relationships with organizations across Vancouver like The Chinatown Storytelling Centre and Hogan's Alley Society. We gathered community, and embraced our volunteers and Members through events like our Festival Author Reveal Party and our Volunteer Appreciation night.

It was a year for deep listening, for empathy, for embracing joy, and for reading. We are proud to share our achievements and learnings from the past year, and some sneak peeks at what's in store for 2025.





Leslie Hurtig
Artistic Director

Jenn Milley

Managing Director

Our Year-Round Numbers

32,658

166

107

18,200+

6,000

Individual Tickets

Authors

Events

Subscribers

Books Sold

A Message from Our Board

Now, more than ever, we need the transformative power of books and ideas as a foundation for an empathetic, inspired, and just society. That aspiration—the Vision of the Vancouver Writers Fest—has been on full display through the organization's programming in the past year.

Once again, the organization has connected the world to Vancouver through dozens of stimulating discussions. Led by Artistic Director Leslie Hurtig, with more than 100 events featuring 133 writers from near and far, the flagship week-long Festival convened conversations about issues that matter. The theme for this year's opening event, Finding Joy Amid Turmoil, showed how writing and reading can be a source of strength and build empathy and understanding even in the most challenging times.

In addition to the Festival in October, Writers Fest year-round programming included a diverse collection of writers such as Malcolm Gladwell and Matty Matheson, readings cohosted with the Vancouver Public Library, and youth events such as writing contests and Writers in the Classroom. It is inspiring to see such interest in and enthusiasm for VWF's programming, especially in the next generation of readers and writers.

We would like to thank all our supporters: government and corporate sponsors, donors, volunteers, and festival-goers. It is your commitment and engagement, year after year, which has made the Writers Fest so successful and such an essential part of Vancouver's cultural landscape.

We would also like to thank Interim Board Chair, Alison Broddle, for her dedication through a time of change, including the recruitment of several new board members and the hiring of our new Managing Director, Jennifer Milley. And, we acknowledge with gratitude the work of Susan Jackson, our interim Executive Director, who, along with

Leslie, steered the organization in the leadup to this year's festival.

The Board is committed to the VWF goal of offering open and inclusive events which reflect our city and carry out our Mission of connecting people to exceptional books, ideas, and dialogue. We look forward to welcoming you to all of our events, including the Festival, in 2025 and beyond!





Julian Stork

Jillian Stirk

Co-Chair

Daniel Getz
Co-Chair

Our 2024 Board of Directors

Alison Broddle
Interim Board Chair

Benita Loughlin
Treasurer

Pat Cumming

Secretary

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Avalon Bourne

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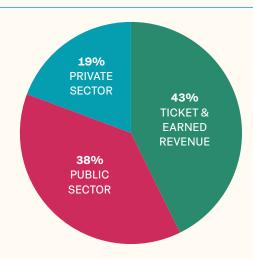
Sonia Wong

Our 2024 Finances

Your support, in tickets and donations, made for another successful year for the Vancouver Writers Fest. As ever, our spending priorities aligned with our mission: to deliver stellar year-round programming (our flagship Festival; extraordinary Special Events; and community outreach that includes Incite, My Roots, and Writers in the Classroom, to name a few) that ignites a passion for words and the world around us.

Total 2024 Income* **\$1,643,897**

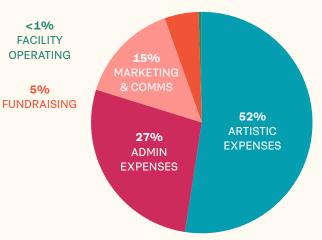
Ticket & Earned Revenue	\$702,255
Public Sector Revenue	\$624,132
Private Sector Revenue	\$317,510



*These are provisional, internal figures. Externally audited financial statements will be available in May 2025.

Total 2024 Expenses **\$1,603,068**

Artistic Expenses	\$840,533
Administrative Expenses	\$438,688
Marketing & Communications	\$236,684
Fundraising Expenses	\$79,753
Facility Operating Expense (Box Office)	\$7,409



Net 2024 Profit **\$40,829**

Every October, Granville Island comes alive with the energy of engaged readers, visiting and local authors, and exemplary new books across every genre at our flagship Festival. The 2024 Festival offered 87 events over one stimulating week. We hosted challenging conversations that asked audiences to listen with open ears and hearts, to approach the dialogue with compassion and curiosity; and, as always, we celebrated storytelling in all its wondrous forms.

Audience members filled our theatres for a highly successful Festival, with over a third of events sold out. Canadian author Kim Thúy joined us as our Guest Curator, alongside returning Musical Director Benjamin Millman and Spoken Word Curator Jillian Christmas, and a lineup of 133 exceptional authors. We were proud to host acclaimed local and international authors such as Richard Powers, Dionne Brand, Anne Michaels, Gabor Maté, Rachel Kushner, Roddy Doyle, Jane Urguhart, Jody Wilson-Raybould, Katherine Rundell, and many more.



Kathryn Gretsinger, Carol Off, and Ian Williams at the Festival.

2024 Guest Curator, Kim Thúy



Our hope for a Guest Curator is that, in addition to introducing a standout selection of books and writers, they will capture the present moment in a way that is unique to their perspective. That's why we're thrilled to have collaborated in 2024 with celebrated Québec author Kim Thúy. The award-winning author of Ru, Mãn, and Em, among other books, Kim was chosen for her immense talent as a writer and advocate; her ancestral scope of vision; and her larger-than-life persona which exudes joy, brilliance, and compassion.

Kim worked with us to curate a slate of six intriguing and uplifting events that explored threads of identity, belonging, migration, hardship, hope—and simply brilliant writing.

Festival Snapshot

Festival Events in 2024

133 Authors & Participants

21,275 **Individual Tickets**

11,620+

K-12 Students Inspired:

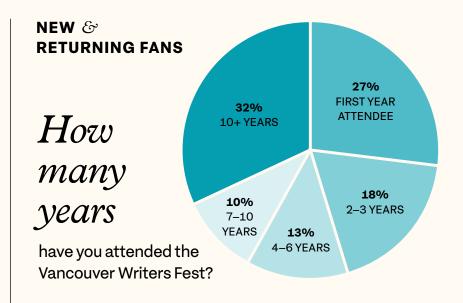
4,843

6,770+

In-Person

Online Across BC







53% of patrons attended three or more events

91% of patrons are "extremely" or "very" likely to recommend future VWF events to their friends and family

*Data collected from survey results

In addition to our flagship Festival in October, we program year-round **Special Events**, connecting Vancouver audiences with the highly anticipated latest works by world-class writers. From intimate discussions in cozy theatres to sold-out cathedrals full of lifelong fans, these year-round events take place on stages across the city, and host some of the most celebrated Canadian and international writers of our times.







Top to bottom: Malcolm Gladwell and Ian Hanomansing, Louise Erdrich and Carleigh Baker, audience members

11 Special Events in 2024

Jen Gunter

Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation)

Wade Davis

Sophie Grégoire Trudeau

David Sedaris

Ali Velshi

Liane Moriarty

Louise Erdrich

Malcolm Gladwell

Matty Matheson

Daniel Levitin with Chor Leoni

Our Year-Round Programming (Continued)



Kudakwashe Rutendo and Téa Mutonji at Incite.

Incite

Incite, presented in partnership with the Vancouver Public Library, provided bi-weekly conversations with authors from January through May 2024. Free and open to all, in-person or online, Incite features anticipated new releases in fiction, non-fiction, and poetry from both emerging and established authors. Our 2024 lineup included Michael Ondaatje, Téa Mutonji, Sheila Heti, Henry Tsang, and Deb Perelman, among many others.



Digital Festival screenshot: Matt Galloway and Timothy Snyder.

Digital Festival

Virtual programming allows us to reach audience members who live outside of Vancouver, or are otherwise unable to attend in-person. The third annual Digital Festival featured a curated selection of 27 professionally-filmed, fully-captioned events from our flagship October Festival. Audiences from across the province and beyond tune in for these events, which are available for viewing over the winter holidays. The release included signature events such as our Lyrics Night and Literary Cabaret.



2024 My Roots writing workshop participants.

My Roots

My Roots is our popular one-day writing workshop for immigrants to Canada, offered for free to writers with origins from across the globe. Participants worked with local writer and returning My Roots instructor Eddy Boudel Tan, a Writers' Trust of Canada rising star, to deepen and enrich their writing through guided exercises and techniques. Their polished pieces, centred around themes of place and home, were later published on the Vancouver Writers Fest website and in our newsletter.

Inspiring Youth

VWF is committed to increasing youth access to free or low cost, high-quality educational programming which expands perspectives and creates space for critical thinking in our venues, online, and in the classroom.

Nearly one third of our 2024 **Festival Programming** consisted of events for youth, which brought classrooms to Granville Island and were also livestreamed for free across the province and beyond. 11,620+ students participated in-person and online in youth events at our 2024 Festival, with 1,639 students supported through Festival ticket and bus subsidies.

Our popular **Writers** in the **Classroom** series brought writers into BC classrooms to engage directly with students on a variety of topics connected to their teachers' curriculum needs. In 2024, WITC brought 25 authors to nearly 900 students, covering topics such as communicating in sign language, biodiversity of fauna in BC and historical hunting and fishing routes used by Indigenous peoples, the importance of diverse stories, the benefits of exploring the outdoors, and the art of debating. Featured authors included Deborah Hodge, Tanya Lloyd Kyi, Janice Lynn Mather, Nick Marino, Trina Rathgeber, Carleigh Baker, Li Charmaine Anne, and Adam Pottle.

We were blown away by the quantity and quality of the submissions to our annual **Youth Writing Contest**, which offers one contest for middle grade students and one for high school students. The contest seeks to foster a love of writing and storytelling by providing a cash prize and public recognition for emerging writers.





Top: Andrea Fritz and Candace Savage at the Festival. *Bottom:* Li Charmaine Anne at a Writers in the Classroom event.

Accessibility



The Vancouver Writers Fest is committed to the ongoing work of making our events low-barrier, accessible experiences for our community. We're grateful to the members of our Accessibility Round Table, which we've worked with over the past three years to audit the accessibility of our programming, and discuss additional practices that could be implemented to further support diverse members of our community in feeling welcome at our events.

We offer free and/or discounted tickets for students and youth under 25, to encourage a lifelong belief in the power of books and storytelling.

Supporting the *Next Generation*

Of Readers, Writers, & Thinkers

- 1,639 students supported by ticket and bus subsidies
- 50% discount on tickets for youth under 25
- Our commitment to education is paramount.
 Recipients of free Festival tickets included SFU
 English, Capilano English, Langara English, UBC
 Creative Writing, UBC School of Journalism,
 and associations like Federation of BC Writers,
 Editors British Columbia, and Society of
 Translators and Interpreters of BC

Some of the accessibility supports we offered in 2024 included:

- New in 2024: CART services offered at four Festival events.
- **ASL interpretation** at select events, chosen in consultation with the d/Deaf community.
- Auto-generated captions at select events, and humanedited captions for all our Digital Festival events.
- Accessibility training for volunteers at two volunteer orientation events.
- **Audio guides** and **visual stories** for each venue, and an annotated map with accessibility information.
- **Simple text versions** of our Festival Program Guide that can be read by a screen reader.
- Reserved seats for audience members with mobility issues or other seating needs.
- Discounted tickets for youth under 25 and seniors, and sliding scale tickets available on request.
- Free livestream access for school-aged youth events, and \$12 tickets to attend in-person.
- **Free tickets** provided to select community organizations, colleges, and universities.
- Two post-Festival Accessibility Roundtable meetings convened to receive feedback about the Festival and develop an actionable accessibility plan for 2025 (and inviting two new members to the Roundtable).
- Recordings of Festival events available online through the Digital Festival from December–January.

4,098

people supported by partially and fully subsidized tickets.

Our Reach

By the Numbers



13,200+ Instagram Followers
9,300+ Facebook Followers
18,200+ Email Subscribers
25,000 Program Guides Distributed
73+ Media Hits for the 2024 Festival
3.1 Million+ Social Media Impressions in 2024

Beginning in 2025, VWF is no longer on Twitter. We're rebuilding our community on Bluesky @writersfest.bc.ca

Digital Platforms

We share anticipated releases, literary news, and important conversations with a wider audience through our weekly **Books & Ideas newsletter**, which provides a digest for VWF's upcoming events, as well as broader community news and events. It has become a trusted resource for educators, librarians, and book lovers across British Columbia, with an email open rate of 52%—well over the industry standard.

The **Books & Ideas Audio podcast** is a diverse, powerful selection of some of the Vancouver Writers Fest's most compelling conversations, released once a month on all major podcast platforms. And in December, the **Digital Festival** makes a curated selection of our events available to an international audience.

Championing the extraordinary work of authors and publishers is at the very heart of what we do. Every book and author we feature is part of an extensive marketing campaign, and publishers have grown to depend on VWF as a reliable partner and platform for elevating the profiles of their authors. Festival participants are spotlighted in our digital Summer Reading List, and our eye-catching Program Guide that is distributed to bookstores, coffee shops, arts organizations, and other venues across Metro Vancouver.



Pop-Up Festival Bookstore





The Festival Bookstore was open from October 21–27 in Origins Coffee on Granville Island, managed by our official bookseller Book Warehouse (a division of Black Bond Books). Vigorously promoted in the Program Guide, online, and in the introductory notes of every event, the Festival Bookstore carries the books featured at the Festival, along with a selection of backlisted titles. We sell books by featured authors at all of our year-round events, with sales managed by Book Warehouse and other local, independent bookstores.

Our 2024 Book Sales Nearly **6,000 books** sold **& \$200,000** in book sales

Who We Are

Our Year-Round Staff

Leslie Hurtig

Artistic Director

Jennifer Milley

Managing Director

Celeste Cadieux-Rey

Senior Operations Coordinator & Box Office Manager

Chelsee Damen

Operations Manager

Leena Desai

Senior Education and Development Coordinator

Joyce Wan

Marketing & Digital Production Manager

Sarah Wang

Programming Coordinator

Ashleigh Withall

Development Manager



The Vancouver Writers Fest is proud to be a certified Living Wage Employer.

Our Festival family grows each year in the months leading up to the October Festival. We are thrilled to regularly welcome back valued team members like Marketing Consultant **Zoe Grams** and Festival Marketing and PR Director **Ariel Hudnall**from ZG Stories, Production Manager **Eduardo Ottoni** and his team at EventLAB, Festival Hospitality Manager **James Tyler Irvine**, Catering Manager **Elizabeth Glancy**, and many more valued collaborators. We'd also like to thank **Susan Jackson**, our Interim Executive Director from February to July 2024.

We honour and deeply miss our longtime Night Manager, **John Sullivan**, who passed away in 2024. John was a beloved member of our team, as well as many other festivals and arts organizations.

Our Volunteers

The Vancouver Writers Fest is powered by the time, energy, and expertise of our extraordinary volunteers. In 2024, our volunteer team continued to grow, resulting in a whopping new record of **450** Festival volunteers—45% of whom were new.

Vancouver Writers Fest volunteers are high school students, retirees, and everything in between. They represent a diverse range of skills and backgrounds. Together, they contributed an astonishing total of **4,957 hours** in 2024.









450

volunteers in 2024



89%

of volunteers surveyed indicated plans to return

nmnuni

In the vibrant cultural landscape of Vancouver, we take immense pride in being part of an interconnected community that thrives on collaboration and shared creativity. Our partnerships are a testament to this spirit. In 2024, we continued to work with esteemed organizations including the Vancouver International Film Festival (VIFF), Indian Summer Festival, Talking Stick Festival, Vancouver Art Gallery, Alliance Française, Chinatown Storytelling Centre, and Hogan's Alley Society. These connections not only amplify our outreach and accessibility efforts, but also support the essential work of other non-profit organizations, enriching our collective mission.



Special events created opportunities to partner with specialised organizations that support dedicated communities, like the Period Pantry, which we promoted alongside our event with Dr. Jen Gunter: The Science, Medicine, and Mythology of Menstruation.

2024 also provided a unique opportunity to partner with members of the Squamish Nation on our Tiná7 Cht Ti Temíxw: We Come From This Land: A Walk Through the History of the Squamish People event, which featured Chairperson Khelsilem, author Stephanie Wood, and Squamish Nation Elders. We collaborated with the Squamish Nation again for our Indigenous welcome video, which screened before almost every Festival event. In the video, Rebecca Duncan speaks about the importance of Granville Island or Seňákw to the Squamish People, giving a distinct sense of place to an established protocol.



As proud members of the Canadian Association of Literary Festivals, we remain committed to fostering a culture that celebrates literature and the arts.

Vancouver's Poet Laureate

We're proud to continue our partnership with the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Public Library in supporting the Poet Laureate program. In 2024, Vancouver Poet Laureate Fiona Tinwei Lam completed her 3 year-term. Her 4-stage City Poems Project encouraged the generation of new poems and poetry videos, fostering greater understanding about significant historical, cultural, and ecological sites on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples now known as the City of Vancouver.

We were honoured to announce the incoming Poet Laureate (2025–2027) Elee Kraljii Gardiner, whose forthcoming project for the Vancouver Poet Laureate Legacy Project is called "Here, Hearing". The project links sounds with presences, inspired by the origins of poetry and Vancouver's exceptional history of music, recording, and soundscape.

City of Vancouver Book Award

We also partnered with VPL and COV to present the City of Vancouver Book Award at a ceremony held during the 2024 Festival. Since 1989, the award has recognized an author of merit in any genre who contributes to the appreciation of Vancouver's history, unique character, or residents. Author and artist Henry Tsang won for *White Riot*, a book that explores the conditions that led to the 1907 anti-Asian riots in Vancouver.



Photo: City of Vancouver



Our Home on Granville Island

Granville Island remains a cornerstone of our cultural partnerships. We contribute to the vibrancy of this hub through strategic collaborations with local businesses and organizations. Our partners on the Island, including the Granville Island Hotel, Dockside Restaurant, JJ Bean, and many others, engage in cross-promotions that support our fundraising efforts and enhance the Festival experience. These relationships are essential, providing raffle and giveaway prizes, and various forms of support to both our authors and volunteers.

Among the Granville Island based non-profits we work with are Coastal Jazz and the Vancouver Fringe Festival, with whom we share a particularly close relationship. This collaboration allows us to make the most of the available space in Festival House and streamline production logistics, benefiting all festivals involved, including the Vancouver International Children's Festival, PUSH Festival, and Carousel Theatre for Young People.

Thank You to Our Donors



The Vancouver Writers Fest serves as a vital space where literature meets community. Rising operational costs and diminishing support from corporate and government funders have led to significant financial challenges recently across the arts, culture, and events sector in BC. We are more grateful than ever for the support of our donors, who help ensure that Vancouver readers can continue to engage with authors, books, and ideas that transform our world. Learn more at writersfest.bc.ca/support-us.

Susan Adams Caroline Adderson

Valerie Alber Janet Allwork

Marisa Alps

Deborah Armour

Andrew and Wynne Armstrong

Zoe Bake-Paterson

Martha Baldwin

Karen Bartlett

Birgit & Robert Bateman

Trevor Battye

Gillian Beattie

John Bechhoefer

Barbara Bilsland Kelli Bodnar

Renate Boorman

Tanya Boteju

Eddy Boudel Tan

Avalon Bourne

Cathleen Boyle

Steven Brekelmans

Alison Broddle

Julia Brown

Jonathan Burke
Donald Campbell

Ann Carroll

Claudia Casper

Angela Champ

Emma Chang

Janie Chang

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Sean Cranbury & Carleigh Baker

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Jane Davidson

Jill Davidson

John Dawson

Carol Anne de Balinhard

Charlene De Faye

Lauren Dembicky-Polivka

Leena Desai

Rachel Dick

Laura Dochtermann

Sharon Dos Remedios

Judy Dowler

Katherine Doyle

Cathryn Duerksen

Brian Duncan and Rebecca Kennedy

Anne Elliott

Erica Ellis

Sarah Ellis Sonja Embree

Kyla Epstein

kyla Epstein

Tanya Fairweather

Catherine Fallis Allison Felker

Yvonne Finley

Gregory Fitch

Gregory Fitch

Holly Flauto

Anne Fleming

Don Forsyth

Asha Fraser

Janet Fretter

Irene Fritschi Nelin

Sandra Garossino

Crissy George

Erica Gilbert

Ian Gill

Karen Gilmore

Genevieve Goggin

Erica Grant

Don & Leaellen Gurney

Vicki Hamill

Sarah Hamilton

Alison Hart

Karin Hartner

John and Catherine

Harvey

Julia Hedley

Michael Hilton

Lynda Hird

Stephanie Hollis

Karen Howe

Ariel Hudnall

Violet Hughes

Leslie Hunt Linda Hunt

Valerie Hunter

Leslie Hurtig

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Valerie Jerome

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Sonia Wong
Thomas Woods
Patricia Young
Karen Zeller
Sam Znaimer

William Watt

*And all those who wish to remain anonymous, or who donate through Canada Helps, Benevity, United Way, and other giving platforms.



Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. Please get in touch with us to make any corrections.

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Radosevic

Euan Ramsay

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We'd like to thank all of the artisans and vendors of Granville Island who donate food, goods, and services to us during Festival Week and throughout the year.













We hope you will be inspired to join our celebration of books, storytelling, ideas—and the possibilities they infuse.

Please contact us to learn more Main Office: 604.681.6330 Email: info@writersfest.bc.ca

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