





# OPENING LETTER

## *The Tyee turned 20 in 2023!*

That's an amazing testament to our thousands of loyal readers. Without you, we wouldn't exist. As an act of gratitude and accountability, we publish this impact report yearly to give you a sense of how we operate and what we've been able to accomplish.

If you are a Tyee Builder, take a bow. Members like you provide the bulk of our financial support, guaranteeing our independence. We don't require a subscription to get past a paywall.

Instead, we took a chance on asking folks to contribute what they can to help our non-profit news outlet create impactful journalism that's available to all. Would enough people respond? Yes! In 2023, nearly 10,000 did!

That is just one of many valuable lessons we've gleaned in the lifetime of The Tyee. And so, this year, we present this report as ***20 lessons from 20 years.***

We hope you enjoy it.



Top: The Tyee's publisher, Jeanette Ageson.  
Bottom: The Tyee's founding editor and current editor-in-chief, David Beers.



## LESSON 1

# STABILITY USED TO BE BORING. NOW IT'S RADICAL.

When The Tyee launched in 2003, we took for granted that journalism was a robust, expanding industry. If our little start-up could just stay alive, we'd nip at Big Media's heels by adding original commentary, investigations and solutions reporting. And so, for the first many years we bobbed and weaved to adapt to sudden gamechangers like social media and mobile phones.

Fast forward to today, a scenario we did not envision. Canada's news chains are reeling, shrinking and folding their newsrooms as Google and Meta decimate their ad market. Yet The Tyee is often cited as a model of solid stability.

We got here by growing slowly, responsibly, gradually adding members to our fairly paid staff but not overreaching like many venture capital-fuelled, failed experiments.

**We started out thinking we were the hare but it turns out we're the tortoise!**



## LESSON 2

# DON'T BUILD ON RENTED LAND.

Social media can be great for publications, and for a while it did help The Tyee find new readers, seemingly with no strings attached. But we've learned you're foolish to depend on the whims of tycoons like Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk.

They'll pretend to be our friends as long as our content is shared by users they can harvest data from and pinpoint with ads.

But they'd just as soon evict The Tyee and our readers, as Meta proved by blocking Canadian news on Facebook and Instagram rather than pay for journalism shared there.

## **We took a hit, but we'll survive.**

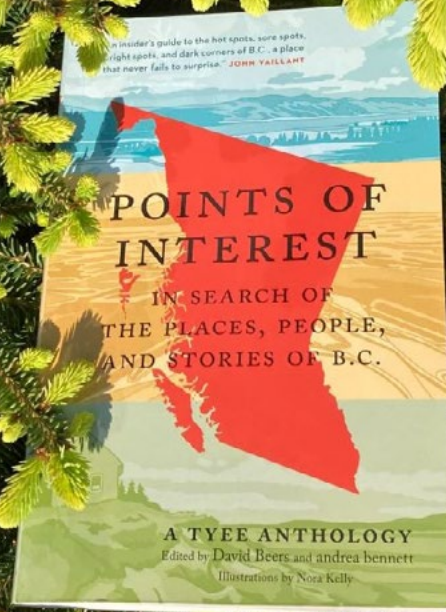
Because over the years we've learned to never stop building direct relationships with readers who care about our work. We do this using old-fashioned methods like a homepage that people want to visit, and email newsletters that we control.

## LESSON 3

# EMBRACE YOUR ROOTS.

When we proudly declared The Tye to be B.C. based and focused, most news media in the province was owned by corporations back east. We saw a powerful hunger for regional coverage and believed we'd be rewarded for meeting that need. Readers have proven us right.

B.C. is itself such a big, complicated province that we've had plenty to report on. We've also had the privilege of sharing diverse voices from all corners of this place only recently named British Columbia. It's been a bit like assembling, piece by piece, a beautiful mosaic of perspectives.



In our 20th year, we gathered some of the best essays sharing these perspectives into an anthology called *Points of Interest: In Search of the Places, People, and Stories of BC*, now out from Greystone Books. [Get yours here.](#)

## LESSON 4

# GET TO KNOW THE NEIGHBOURS.

Lives in B.C. are touched by what happens elsewhere, which is why we regularly report on Alberta next door and the power corridors of Ottawa and have sent reporters as far afield as Washington, D.C., and Norway.



*Noble Ocean Farms co-founder Skye Steritz, left, shown with Amber Morris, middle, and Madison Perlick, celebrating the kelp farm's first ever harvest in 2022. Photo by Mark Titus.*



This year we contemplated the fact that B.C. is situated in a coastal bioregion, extending from Alaska to California, that's in need of a new low-carbon, locally resilient economy to meet the climate crisis. Our new section What Works finds and tells these green business stories with support from Salmon Nation Trust and Magic Canoe.

*Farmer Michelle Week, founder of ʌast s̄it Good Rain Farm, stands among her crops in Oregon's northern Willamette Valley. Photo by Jamie Thrower.*

## LESSON 5

# BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF THE BEAT.

When newsrooms were well stocked with reporters, they had beats — specific areas they covered day to day. As newsrooms thin and reporters shift to “general assignment,” many beats are vanishing. At The Tyee, we believe in the beat because it enables **the reporter** to deepen source networks and expertise.

*From left: Tyee reporters Christopher Cheung, who reports on urban issues; Michelle Gamage, who reports on health; and Jen St. Denis, who reports on housing and civic issues. Photo by Christopher Cheung.*



It’s a key reason The Tyee breaks stories, wins awards and makes impacts — turning loose talented reporters to cover what matches their training and passions.

In 2023, our reporters kept readers informed on municipal politics, housing, education, healthcare, labour, B.C. politics, Northern B.C, climate, forests, and more.



## LESSON 6

**YEARS  
× QUALITY  
× VOLUME  
+ NO  
PAYWALL  
=  
REACH +  
IMPACT**

There's a reason The Tyee is widely read by influentials and cited in classrooms, academic journals, on the floor of legislatures and around tables where decisions are made. Our journalism is not only consistently credible, it's widely read. In fact, the number of original stories we publish each week, and the many years we've been at it, combine to deliver overall traffic to our site that places it amongst the most-read independent digital news publications in Canada.



Last year we sent our stories by email to approximately 70,000 newsletter subscribers and our site received over 9 million page views. Since our inception we estimate total visits to The Tyee top 60 million.

*Francesca Fiorda interviewing Owen Collings, who escaped the immolation of Lytton in 2021, as part of a collaboration between the Climate Disaster Project and The Tyee. Photo by Jen Osborne.*

**When your stories are read by many, they have a better chance of making an impact. Ours do, again and again. Here are just a few examples from recent years.**

## 2017

B.C. bans bosses from forcing restaurant and bar servers to wear high heels. Premier Christy Clark credits Rachel Sanders' [reporting on the issue](#) for inspiring the new regulations.

## 2019

"We would not know what we know about [TransLink data sharing](#), RCMP [social media snooping](#) or the B.C. [connection](#) to the Facebook scandal" without investigations by The Tyee's Bryan Carney and Andrew MacLeod, says the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Association as it gives the duo an award.

## 2020

Jen St. Denis brings impact [from Day 1](#), helping to [spark](#) a BC Housing conflict of interest probe and a [coroner's inquest](#) into a deadly single-room occupancy hotel fire.

## 2021

When Alberta's government backed down on plans, hatched in secret, to open the Rockies to open-pit coal mining, much credit for the reversal went to Andrew Nikiforuk's [relentless exposés](#).

## 2022

A petition to review B.C.'s child palliative care system was launched following Katie Hyslop's [heartbreaking story](#) about Darwyn Danesh.

## 2023

Tyee editor-in-chief David Beers delivered the prestigious annual [Harvey Stevenson Southam Lecture](#) at the University of Victoria. His talk titled "The War on Journalists" issued a wake-up call as the ranks of journalists are thinned by layoffs, burn-out and ideological attacks by politicians and tycoons who thrive on disinformation.

## 2023

A report by B.C.'s ombudsperson calls on the province to provide a more equitable response for those displaced by extreme weather events as the "complexity of large scale and compounding disasters" increases with climate change. The report cites the extensive reporting done by Francesca Fionda for her Tyee series "[Bracing for Disasters](#)."

## LESSON 7

# REPORT ON SOLUTIONS.

Most news stories are about what went wrong yesterday and who is to blame. But for citizens in a democracy to be empowered to imagine and seek positive change, reporters need to investigate a different question: What might go right tomorrow and who is showing the way?

**We call that solutions-focused journalism.**

*We reported on BC's Vitacore, which figured out how to recycle difficult plastics, such as the respirators it manufactures by the millions. Photo by Christopher Cheung.*



The Tyeer was a [solutions journalism innovator](#) and you will find a Solutions section on our site. By solutions journalism we don't mean op-ed spin. We mean solid reporting on, perhaps, a small scale experiment in our midst that is yielding positive

results. Or a rigorous look at other cities or countries that have tried something different that's bearing fruit. We've applied this frame widely, from affordable housing, to fossil fuel development, to an award-winning series on local food resilience.

## LESSON 8

# HAVE A GREAT LAWYER ON SPEED DIAL.

If you seek to publish the truth about powerful people and organizations, be prepared for pushback. Defamation law in Canada is strict and cases can be costly. The Tyee is fortunate to have had as our legal counsel, since day one, libel and labour law expert Leo McGrady.

Leo has countless times provided guidance and protection by sharing invaluable legal advice with reporters and editors before publication.

And when we've been challenged on legal grounds — as the B.C. government once did before backing down — Leo has invariably charted the right path. We salute Leo McGrady for his career-long commitment to social justice and vital contribution to The Tyee's success.

*The Tyee's legal counsel,  
Leo McGrady*



## LESSON 9

# WHEN THEY ZIG,

Many times, people have scratched their heads at choices we've made for The Tyee. Early on, we were told people wouldn't scroll in-depth pieces on the web. Don't put in hyperlinks, they said, because they'll just lead readers off the site. People must be forced to pay, so where's our paywall? Way more people live in Ontario than B.C., so why not be national? Drop your social justice values and you'll rake in ads from corporations. And so on.

Fine. Call us idealistic or stubborn or both. Twenty years of zags while others zigged, we're still here, going strong.

# WE ZAG.

## LESSON 10

# IT'S OKAY TO BE NEWS NERDY.

The rules are always changing in digital media, posing a temptation to blow things up and race off in a new direction. Remember when Facebook told its traffic-dependent publications to “pivot to video” and tweaked its algorithm to try and force that approach? We just shrugged and carried on with the kinds of articles our readers had proven they wanted.

The Tyee today offers more such articles than it did in its early days, and overall quality is better, no doubt. But the DNA has remained the same. A commitment to old-fashioned journalistic standards, including fact-checked reporting that seeks multiple perspectives and withstands harsh scrutiny. We're proud to call ourselves news nerds.

## LESSON 11

# HIGH STANDARDS ATTRACT TOP TALENT.

From the beginning, The Tyee has been blessed with top-notch journalists willing to invest their energy, time and skills here.



Christopher Cheung photographs Angela Gordon on E. Hastings Street on Jan. 11, 2024. Gordon spoke to The Tyee about her experience dealing with the BC Coroners Service for the story "The Coroner Called Them Overdoses. What Really Happened?" Photo by Jen St. Denis.

Some are veterans who seek a place where they can practice journalism the way they want. Others, young and looking for a place to fulfill their promise, have benefitted from opportunities to stretch out under the mentorship of seasoned pros.

What our reporters have in common is they've been drawn to The Tyee's independence and rigour, and our workplace culture which respects creative initiative. We've learned that good work creates a positive reputation that makes recruiting a breeze.

## LESSON 12

# AIM TO REFLECT THE COMMUNITY WE SERVE.

We strive to improve inclusivity in our pages and in our newsroom. That includes people underrepresented in media including, but not limited to, women, Indigenous people, racialized people, people of various gender identities, LGBTQ2S+ people and people with disabilities.

The Tyee has been recognized as a leader in this space. Our newsroom's diversity committee is now in its seventh year. Tyee writers have won awards for their intersectional journalism, and reporter Christopher Cheung is publishing a book based on his series for the Tyee, *Under the White Gaze*, on how to make news coverage more inclusive. This year, Cheung and senior editor Jackie Wong spoke on diversity-focused panels for the Canadian Association of Journalists, and social media manager Sarah Krichel

attended a symposium on online abuse and how to build a more respectful digital world, hosted by Governor General Mary Simon.

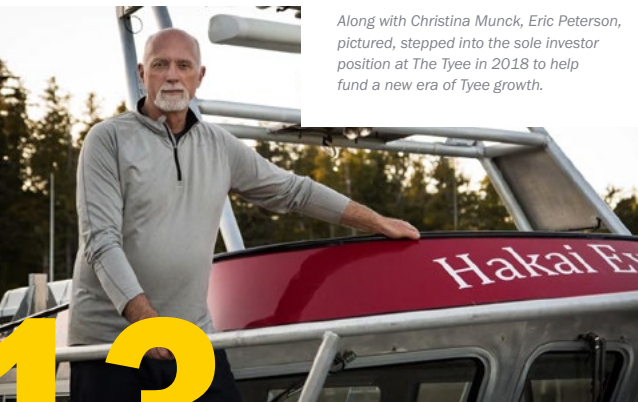
For members of our audience who are blind or low-vision, or have other disabilities that impact their ability to read text, every Tyee story includes an audio version, and alt text descriptions of all photos, charts and diagrams.

*The Tyee team gathers at the Canadian Association of Journalists' 2023 conference in Vancouver.*



## LESSON 13

# HAVE WISE, PRINCIPLED INVESTORS.



Along with Christina Munck, Eric Peterson, pictured, stepped into the sole investor position at The Tyee in 2018 to help fund a new era of Tyee growth.

These days The Tyee is mostly funded by our readers. But only because of the early and ongoing support of visionary backers. First up were innovators among B.C.'s labour movement. We launched with investment by Working Enterprises, a holding company owned by the BC Federation of Labour and several unions. Working Enterprises continued its vital financial underpinning for 15 years, as The Tyee grew its budget by attracting reader member support, more investment and other revenue.

When Working Enterprises bowed out in 2018, Eric Peterson and Christina Munck, who earlier had jointly held a minority investor position, stepped in as sole investor to fund a new era of Tyee growth, our pivot to non-profit status, and our progress towards gaining qualified donee status. The duo are B.C.-based [philanthropic founders](#) of [Hakai Institute](#), which pursues scientific research related to coastal zones.

Eric Peterson and Christina Munck remain supporters of The Tyee; however, by plan, The Tyee's dependence on any single funder is being whittled down to represent a small fraction of our overall budget.

We salute the Working Enterprises team and Eric Peterson and Christina Munck for their history-making roles as patrons of public interest journalism. Their importance cannot be overstated. By sticking with The Tyee for a long time and providing substantial funds to help build a solid organization, they enabled us to build a consistent track record which, in turn, attracted a loyal audience.

Our investors did so while fully trusting the editorial team to make decisions about what to publish and who to bring onto the team. We hope their rare examples act as a case study for how to fund for longevity and long-term growth.



## LESSON 14

# IT'S NOT ABOUT THE IPO, BABY, IT'S THE NPO.

For the first 18 years of The Tyee's life, we were structured as a private company. But the intention was never to build a business to make massive profits or to sell it. All investments and revenue earned were put towards publishing more journalism.

In 2022, we officially transitioned to operating in a non-profit structure with an independent board of directors to more accurately reflect how we do business.

In 2019, the Canadian government established a new type of classification for non-profit newsrooms — the Registered Journalism Organization. Newsrooms with this designation have the ability to issue tax receipts to their donors. It's been a long time coming, but we project that in 2024 we'll gain this designation.



*Readers who donate to The Tyee receive a Tyee lapel pin — and our heartfelt thanks.*

Our ultimate goal is to create a long-standing institution of quality public interest journalism that is funded by people who believe in our mission.

## LESSON 15

# SET YOUR SIGHTS HIGH AND RECOGNITION WILL COME.

The Tyee has won just about every major journalism award in Canada, and some internationally. Thanks to the support of our Builder members, we were able to produce **this prize-winning journalism** in 2023:



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION  
OF JOURNALISTS

## Written News Award

Jen St. Denis, who covers civic issues for The Tyee, won for her reporting on the Winters Fire.



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION  
OF JOURNALISTS

## APTN/CAJ Reconciliation Award

The Tyee's northern B.C. reporter, Amanda Follett Hosgood, won for her series "[70 Years after the Flood: Cheslatta's Fight to Reclaim Its Territory](#)," which details the devastation a dam wrought in the 1950s — and the work being completed today to undo it.

*Brandy Mingo lost everything she owned, including photographs of her daughters and her late husband's ashes, in a fire that gutted the Winters Hotel. Photo by Jen St. Denis.*



#### WEBSTER AWARDS

## Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Reporting

Amanda Follett Hosgood also won this award for her series on the decades-long struggle to repair the devastation wrought by the establishment of the Nechako Reservoir.



#### INDIGENOUS MEDIA AWARDS

## Excellence in Beat Reporting, Print and Online

Odette Auger won for her coverage of the RCMP killing of a Wet'suwet'en man. Her stories appeared in The Tyee as well as Ricochet Media, Windspeaker.com and AMMSA.

*Mike Robertson, senior policy advisor with Cheslatta Carrier Nation, looks out over a waterway impacted by the establishment of the Nechako Reservoir. Photo by Amanda Follett Hosgood.*



#### CANADIAN ETHNIC MEDIA ASSOCIATION AWARDS

## Best Online Articles

Christopher Cheung won for "[Fresh off the Shelf](#)," a series that explores the vital work of ethnocultural communities in our local food systems.



#### DIGITAL PUBLISHING AWARDS

## General Excellence

The Tyee has won this prize twice and been nominated several other times — including in 2023.

*Beef balls, tortillas, paneer and tofu produced in the Lower Mainland. Photos by Christopher Cheung.*



## LESSON 16

# HAVE A DIVERSIFIED BUSINESS MODEL THAT ALIGNS WITH THE ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITIES.

Our model is super simple: We've had a core steward who provides foundational funding to our operations. We bring in some money through advertising, government funding and grants, and contracts for journalism fellowships and projects. And the rest, around half of our budget, comes from readers.

Last year, 9,196 people gave monthly, annual or one-time contributions ranging anywhere from \$2 to several thousand dollars.

In 2023 we partnered with Salmon Nation Trust and Magic Canoe to launch a new project called What Works, featuring business stories about sustainable businesses in our bioregion.

We were also pleased to receive support from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation for reporting on Indigenous Marine Protected Areas. Grants were awarded by the Institute for Journalism and Natural Resources.

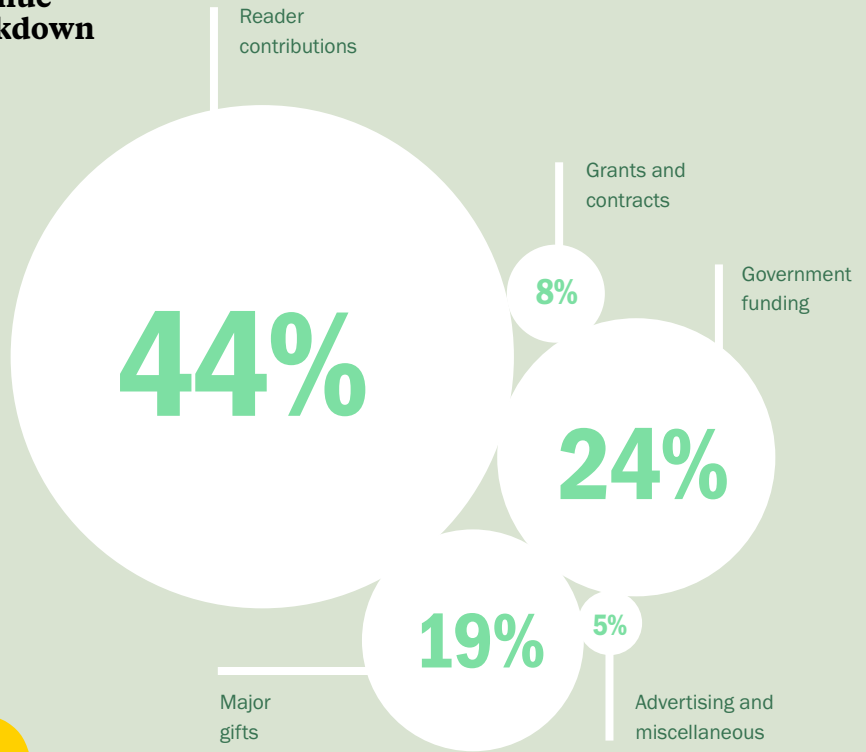
We were honoured to offer the second Hummingbird Immersion Journalism Fellowship, supporting a six-month paid opportunity for an emerging journalist with support from Rick and Della Strooboscher.

The Tyee is proud to host an innovative project, "[Spotlight: Child Welfare](#)," helmed by journalist Brielle Morgan. In 2023, this project was supported with grants from Inspirit Foundation, McConnell Foundation, and the Law Foundation of B.C.

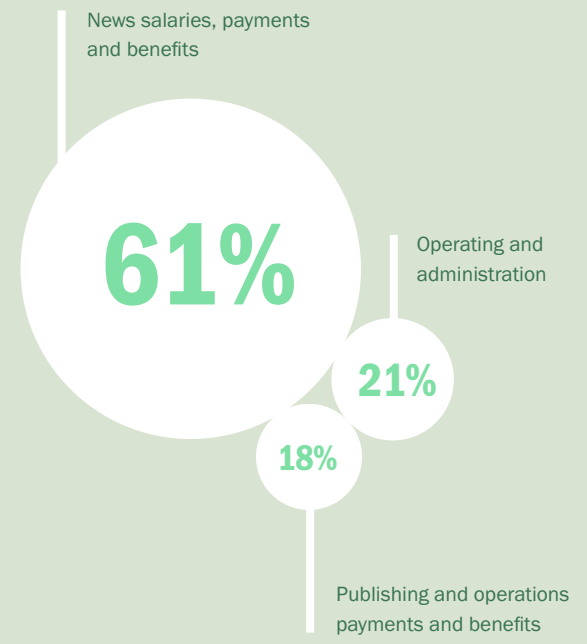
The Tyee is a Qualified Canadian Journalism Organization, which means we have access to a refundable labour tax credit for part of our editorial salaries.

The Tyee's health reporter and labour reporter are supported through the Local Journalism Initiative, a program funded by the Government of Canada.

## Revenue Breakdown



## Expenses Breakdown



## LESSON 17

# EVERYTHING IS FOR THE READERS.

The Tyee's broad reader support via our Builder members locks in our priorities. The journalism we publish is not to please advertisers, hedge fund owners or political powers. Our first and last obligation is to our readers, and so we keep the communication lines open a number of ways. We have tackled elections together, equipped with guidance from our readers on what issues they want covered. We post polls and curate lively comment threads after every story and sometimes we feature articles and art by our readers in our pages.



New York University media professor Jay Rosen, who refers to “the people formerly known as the audience” to highlight the need for news organizations to create such two-way exchanges in order to earn loyal readership, has cited The Tyee as an example of how to do things right.

## LESSON 18

# SHARE THE LOVE, GIVE HIGH FIVES.

Journalists who hold people accountable and stand up for the vulnerable face an increasing torrent of toxic harassment online. At The Tyee, we work hard to support the mental well-being of our team. We are big believers in sharing high fives and providing emotional support. And here's a saving grace: any hate mail is far exceeded by the love notes we receive daily from our readers. We post all of them on an internal channel we call "high fives" and they really give us a boost. Thank you to everyone who takes the time to compliment our work and encourage us to keep at it. **Know** that each message sustains our energy and sense of commitment. We love you too!

To Whom It May Concern:

Please find enclosed my donation of \$50. I have been reading and appreciating your online news and editorials for several years. It is a real pleasure to read something that is not biased towards corporations or pundits. Thank you for giving us information that we trust.

Yours truly,  
D. Williams

Greetings,  
Please accept  
this donation. 0010  
Keep up the good  
good work! love  
M.M. 0

Thank you  
to all Tyee  
writers and editors  
- you are amazing!

Kate  
♥

A small donation.  
Excellent reporting-  
especially with the  
UCP scoundrels.

Excellent job, Gang!

Thanks,

Barry Halliwell

Hello  
I am a repeat  
donor and would  
like a pin.  
Keep up the great  
work  
Ed Chernor



I look forward  
to my daily "dose"  
news that I feel I can  
trust.

Thank you.

Janie

## LESSON 19

# CELEBRATE MILESTONES.



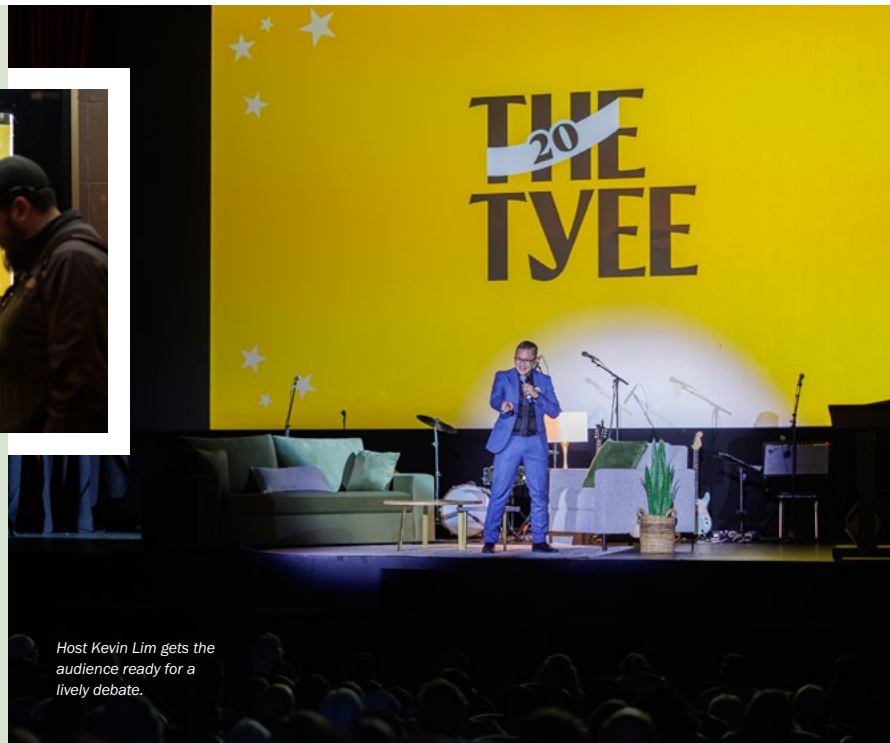
To celebrate our 20th anniversary, The Tyee held a Debate-O-Rama to duke out the future of journalism.

We couldn't let our 20th anniversary pass without a big party. So we went all out and hosted a bash at the Rio Theatre in Vancouver with about 400 of our closest friends.

The evening included a look back by publisher Jeanette Ageson and founding editor David Beers, and

a freewheeling debate — hosted by Kevin Lim and featuring Jen St. Denis, Mo Amir, Eden Fineday, Em Cooper, Steve Burgess, and Harrison Mooney — about whether journalism will survive or is doomed.

Spoiler: the audience voted thumbs down. 🙄



Host Kevin Lim gets the audience ready for a lively debate.



Here are a couple of videos to give you a taste of the evening:  
[Summary video](#) | [Debate video](#)



And here's an article we published the day before, listing [50 Tyee milestones over the past 20 years](#).

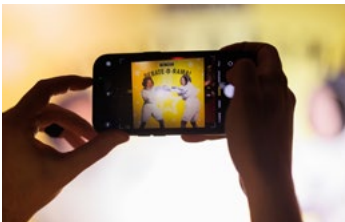


**LESSON 20**

# THANK THOSE WHO'VE MADE IT HAPPEN.

That's you! Our readers and builders.  
We couldn't do it without you.

Special thanks to Eric Peterson  
and Christina Munck, and Rick  
and Della Strooboscher.



# THANK YOU!

*This team depends on your support. 🧡*



Sarah Krichel, social media manager  
 Jacob Boon, newsletter editor  
 Meg Yamamoto, web and copy editor  
 Bryan Carney, director of web production  
 Hina Imam, supporter engagement manager  
 Shubhalaxmi Patil, audience development analyst  
 Kimberly Sayson, operations manager  
 Marianne Bos, bookkeeper

Andrew Nikiforuk, contributing editor  
 Crawford Killian, contributing editor  
 Michael Harris, contributing editor  
 Steve Burgess, contributing editor  
 Ian Gill, contributing editor  
 Christopher Pollon, contributing editor  
 Francesca Fionda, regular contributor  
 Harrison Mooney, regular contributor  
 Zoë Yunker, regular contributor  
 Andrea Smith, regular contributor

Michelle Hoar, board member  
 Peter Klein, board member  
 Melody Ma, board member  
 Deblekha Guin, board member

Jeanette Ageson, publisher  
 David Beers, editor-in-chief  
 Paul Willcocks, senior editor  
 andrea bennett, senior editor  
 Jackie Wong, senior editor  
 Tara Campbell, managing editor  
 Olamide Olaniyan, associate editor  
 Dorothy Woodend, culture editor  
 Andrew MacLeod, legislative bureau chief  
 Katie Hyslop, reporter  
 Christopher Cheung, reporter  
 Jen St. Denis, reporter  
 Amanda Follett Hosgood, reporter  
 Michelle Gamage, reporter

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