

POETRY
in VOICE

2023
Annual
Report

les VOIX de
la POÉSIE



“PIV/LVP
has become
**a cultural
force** in
Canada.”

— MARGARET ATWOOD



Poetry matters

Youth, our communities, and our society need more poetry now more than ever. Poetry has the power to inspire, unite, and provoke. Yet, in classrooms across Canada, arts education is diminishing. Many teachers tell us they don't feel trained to teach poetry well and that poetry is a tough sell to their students.

Teachers need resources and support to integrate poetry into their classes. Students deserve to experience how poetry can enrich their lives. Poetry In Voice/Les voix de la poésie (PIV/LVP) speaks to today's youth by bringing poetry — and poets — into schools in a meaningful and impactful way.

National Finalist Olivia Bridgman (Toronto, ON) spreading her wings during the National Finals show in Calgary.

Mission

Poetry In Voice/Les voix de la poésie aims to ensure all Canadians speak poetry. We strive to be the essential resource for teaching and learning poetry in Canada — and beyond.

Vision

We provide educators with engaging content and experiences in English and French to inspire students to read, recite, and write poetry. Our programs and projects are written and delivered by renowned Canadian poets who connect directly with students.

“I discovered poetry [with PIV/LVP]. Reading poems used to be boring.”

— MARIANNE VERVILLE, ACTOR & FORMER STUDENT AT CÉGEP DU VIEUX MONTRÉAL, QC

“Poetry In Voice is a shining tribute to the creativity of youth, to the power of poetry, to the tremendous visceral experience audiences encounter at spoken word events in both French and English.”

— CHRISTINA BRAID, WRITER & EDUCATOR

FutureVerset Justine Ramos (Winnipeg, MB) looking at the FutureVerse posters at Calgary Public Library.

“While many literary institutions seem to have woken up last week surprised to discover a need to support Black writers, **PIV/LVP was already doing that work.**”

— STEPHANIE ROBERTS,
QUÉBEC POET & AUTHOR



“With [PIV/LVP], we are able to plant seeds and harvest results right away. From the moment the students get a taste of poetry, **they don’t want to stop.**”

— SOPHIE GAMACHE, TEACHER
AT COLLÈGE DE LÉVIS, QC

Values

Youth

If given the opportunity to read, write, and discuss poetry, the next generation will be more curious, creative, culturally sensitive, and empowered.

Compassion & Care

We believe poetry’s beauty and power can inspire and galvanize people, communities, and society. Learning a poet’s words by heart builds empathy and connection.

Community

We support arts-based community building and aim to unify students, teachers, and poets nationwide through love and communal poetry sharing.

Equity

Poets must be respected for the value they bring to society and be paid well for their work.

Diversity

We are committed to reflecting the rich diversity of experiences and perspectives of students across Canada and amplifying marginalized voices. We create our best work when we braid diverse ideas and opinions with guidance from our communities.

Bilingualism & Promotion of Indigenous Languages

We believe that Canada’s two official languages are fundamental to Canadian identity, and we aspire to promote Indigenous languages through our work, including our developing Indigenous Voices in Poetry (IVP) program.

FutureVersers and National Finalists smiling for a group photo during a walk along the Bow River in Calgary.

Message from our Founders

In 2000, the Griffin Poetry Prize was founded to raise and enhance the profile and permanency of poetry in the mainstream of our cultural lives. Poetry mirrors the soul of a nation, and in Canada, it was in danger of becoming simply a fringe activity. Poetry was, with a few exceptions, no longer being taught as part of the school curriculum.

The Griffin Poetry Prize has raised the profile of poetry within Canada and internationally; however few people were purchasing poetry, fewer people were reading poetry, and virtually no one was reciting it.

In 2011, the trustees of the Griffin Poetry Prize, Krystyne and I, initiated a nationwide bilingual student recitation contest entitled Poetry In Voice/Les voix de la poésie (PIV/LVP) to introduce students to the beauty of language through poetry. The poems memorized by students will remain with them for life and create a lifelong interest in and appreciation of poetry, building a strong foundation for the readership of poetry. In addition, participating students have gained immeasurable confidence and public speaking skills after reciting in front of their peers, a paying audience, and judges.

In the last ten years, PIV/LVP has grown — with the help of donors and grants — into a national bilingual program involving over 2,000 schools across every province and territory in Canada. The program has been extended to include poets' visits to the classrooms, journals of students' written poetry, and lesson materials for teachers. PIV/LVP has fostered future generations of poetry lovers in Canada, which has exceeded all expectations.

—Krystyne & Scott Griffin



Krystyne and Scott Griffin showing their passion for poetry at the National Finals show in Calgary.

“If [Scott] Griffin’s hope was to nurture a new generation of poets across the country, it’s working.... **The program has exploded.**”

— THE VANCOUVER SUN

Numbers

2.2M

Canadians have visited
poetryinvoice.ca and
lesvoixdelapoesie.ca

9,471

teachers are active
PIV/LVP members

297

Canadian poets
in our network

28M+

poems read

1,183

poems published

75,000+

students have met a
poet in their class

340,000+

have learned a poem by heart

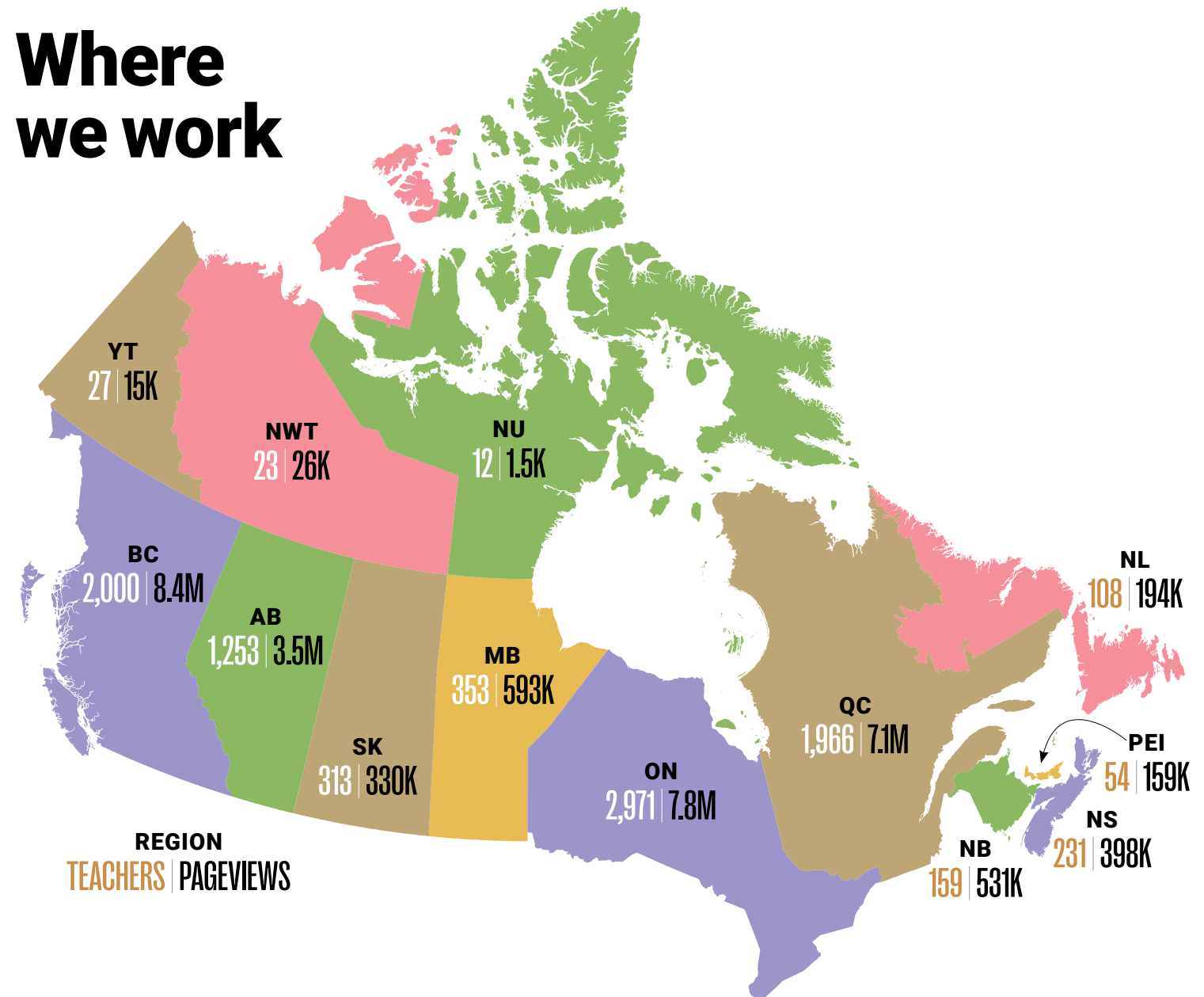


A poetry workshop during the first edition of FutureVerse in Calgary, run by Richard Harrison.

“Poetry is hardly taught in high school. **But PIV/LVP makes it so easy to bring it into the classroom.**”

— MARIE-ANDRÉE ARSENAULT, MONTRÉAL TEACHER & AUTHOR

Where we work



“When I was Poet Laureate here in Sudbury... I wanted to dispel the stereotypes and misconceptions around poetry as a genre — in the classroom and in my community at large — about how poetry “is hard to understand” and that it’s elitist. It is neither thing, in my opinion, and **the work that PIV/LVP does is crucial to breaking down those preconceived and archaic notions.**” — KIM FAHNER, ONTARIO POET, AUTHOR & EDUCATOR

Message from our team

Our collaboration with McCall MacBain led to the launch of FutureVerse, an impactful four-day poetry intensive. Coinciding with our 2023 National Finals in Moh'kinstiss/Calgary, this event brought together literary experts and students with exceptional talent. FutureVerse emerged as a distinctive national arts event, marking a significant milestone in celebrating and cultivating the literary arts.

Sixteen students whose voices resonated powerfully in our bilingual poetry journal, *VOICES/VOIX*, were chosen to join the program. Participants honed their craft under the guidance of acclaimed mentors like Wakefield Brewster, Rita Wong, and Richard Harrison. They concluded the program with a showcase of their work, enriched by the mentorship they received and ready to make their mark in the world of poetry.

We've broadened the scope of our board, achieving more excellent regional representation and cultural variety alongside enhanced professional acumen. The board now includes Scott Griffin and a team from diverse locales and backgrounds: Sepideh

Anvar (QC), Marie-Andrée Arsenault (QC), Johanne Blais (QC), Moe Clark (QC), Andrew Heintzman (ON), Anne Michaels (ON), Pierre Nepveu (QC), Hector Ruiz (QC), Evan Solomon (USA), and Cooper Skjeie (SK).

In early 2023, Cooper Skjeie (/shay/) joined PIV and began the critical groundwork for our Decolonial Initiatives and Indigenous Programming (DIIP). In the Summer of 2023, Cooper moved to a board member role. Diana Hope Tegenkamp joined as the Decolonial Initiatives and Indigenous Program Coordinator. Diana advanced the program's mission, renaming it to Indigenous Voices in Poetry (IVP) and eventually becoming our Indigenous Poetry Director.

IVP's goal is to open doors for Indigenous students in poetry. We want them to see their own stories, hear and react to Indigenous poets, and grow their reading, writing, and performing poetry skills. IVP supports Indigenous educators and students with digital content, classroom activities, and writing tools. We aim to inspire their creativity and honour Indigenous voices.



David J. Smith
Executive Director



Sarah Tsiang
Creative Director



Tessa Griffin
English Event
Coordinator



Ariane Tapp
Director of Development
& French Programming



**Diana Hope
Tegenkamp**
Indigenous Poetry
Director/Communications
& Media Strategist

Creative Director Sarah Tsiang sharing a laugh with the students during a workshop activity in Calgary.



Programs

Read

Our online anthology now includes 1182 poems in English and French. The poems are curated by an editorial board that rotates annually.

Recite

We enable thousands of classroom, school, regional, and national recitation contests in three streams: English, French, and Bilingual. We engage poets as judges and award students over \$40,000 in prizes.

Write

We publish an annual student poetry journal, *VOICES/VOIX*, edited by two renowned poets. Poet classroom visits, poems in our anthology, or poet-authored writing prompts on our website inspire all submitted poems.

Teach

We send poets to hundreds of classrooms across Canada to work directly with students. We also offer engaging online resources, including poet-authored lesson plans and guided questions. All resources and visits are free. We are also creating a new program for teachers who serve First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities: Indigenous Voices in Poetry.

Reach

The cultivation of our social media community has led to millions of visitors to our websites and views of our recitation videos. Our National Finals earn national media coverage each year, and our strongest student reciters perform at major literary events and festivals nationwide. Partnerships with other organizations expand our reach.

National Finalist Chloé Simard (Saint-Lambert, QC) explains her creative process at poet Clémence Dumas-Côté's workshop in Calgary.



“With their creative use of Internet, the addition of programs to allow poets to visit schools and to allow students to write poetry, a supply of relevant educational tools, the expansion of the contest to include younger grades — **the artisans behind this program have shown great dynamism and a true passion for poetry**, and have initiated youth to the poetic world.”

— PIERRE NEPVEU, POET, NOVELIST
& PROFESSOR EMERITUS AT
UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL

“There is an array of stimulating and relevant contemporary and 20th century poems selected for students to read that goes way beyond the usual high school textbooks to include poems on profoundly relevant themes, such as violence against women, the mistreatment of immigrants, bullying, racism, and more.”

— FIONA TINWEI LAM,
VANCOUVER POET & AUTHOR

Read: The Anthology

Our online poetry anthology is the essence of our work and underpins all of our programs. In 2023, students read poems on poetryinvoice.ca and lesvoixdelapoesie.ca 2.2 million times.

Our mandate is to develop our junior (grades 7-9) and senior (grades 10-12) anthologies by identifying the work of diverse contemporary Canadian and international poets. This year, 41 English poems were added to our anthology. These include “Breakup” by National Magazine Award winner Selina Boan, “The Lammergeier Daughter” by Pascale Petite, “My Mother Found Herself” by Di Brandt, “Forgiving my Father” by Lucille Clifton, and “Where the Sea Kuniks the Land” by Ashley Qilavaq-Savard.

Our Mixtapes remained a popular conduit into our anthologies. Each Mixtape provides a playlist of poems centred on a single subject, idea, or theme, including queerness, disability, community, and ethnic and racial identity. In 2023, we added collections about mothers, fathers, Indigenous languages, the wild, the city, and even spellcasting!

Illustrations for poetry Mixtapes on the Poetry In Voice / Les voix de la poésie website.



“Reciting poetry in high school gave me the confidence to speak up — **and that confidence is still with me.**”

— KHALIL MAIR, GRADUATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD & FORMER STUDENT AT TORONTO FRENCH SCHOOL, ON



Recite

We are the only Canadian organization running regional and national poetry recitation competitions. The poems students find in our anthology, learn by heart, and convey to their audience will be with them for life. By standing and delivering someone else’s work, our students put themselves in the poets’ shoes, creating empathy for others’ perspectives. Poetry recitation is an excellent, scaffolded public speaking experience. It is also excellent practice for improving additional language skills, and our bilingual contest is just as popular as our French and English contests. Reciting poetry builds confidence, community, compassion, and a lifetime of poetic memory.

This year, we estimate twenty thousand students learned and recited at least one poem for our contests. Contests are held yearly in thousands of classrooms across the country in January and February. Student triads compete in our Team Regional contests held in February and March. In 2023, Team Regional contests were held in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary (in French and English), Winnipeg, Toronto,



Left: National Finalist Aaronsaul Negre (Calgary, AB) at the 2023 National Finals show. Above: The team from Collège Jésus-Marie de Sillery placed 1st at the Québec Team Regional

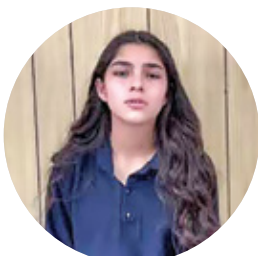
2023 Junior National Champions



ENGLISH STREAM
Taran Ly
Ottewell School
Edmonton, AB



FRENCH STREAM
Anaëlle Herve
Collège International
Marie De France
Montréal, QC



BILINGUAL STREAM
Eden Simhon
École Maimonide
Ville St-Laurent, QC

French judges Evelyne Gagnon, Clémence Dumas-Côté and Rodney Saint-Éloi having a good time at the 2023 National Finals show in Calgary.



“The National Finals is a great show. These students dig really deep and add a unique texture and weight to each poem they recite. Their performances blew me away.”

— DAVID USHER,
MUSICIAN & AUTHOR

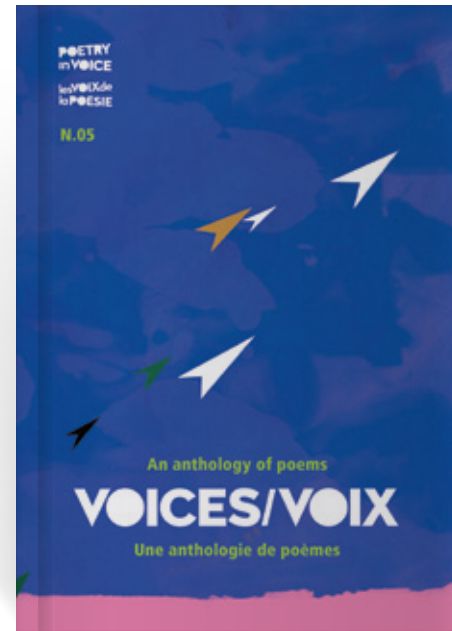
Etobicoke, Ottawa, Essex County, Lanaudiere, Montreal, and Quebec City. \$600 in prizes were awarded at each event, and PIV/LVP covered the host's expenses and paid for our Poet Networkers to judge the contest.

Also, in March, school champions in grades 7-9 compete in the Junior Online Finals, and school champions in grades 10-12 compete in the Senior Online Qualifiers. Junior competitors win up to \$500 in prizes, and the top 24 senior students each win \$250, with the top 9 advancing to the National Finals. After three years of online-only events due to COVID-19, this year's National Finals were held in person. The nine finalists, along with their teachers, were brought to Calgary on an all-expenses paid week-long trip that included not only the National Finals poetry contest but also the FutureVerse poetry intensive (read more about FutureVerse in the Write section of this annual report).

The National Finals, held at the Calgary Public Library on April 20, were an enormous success. The nine finalists in the French, English, and Bilingual contest language streams received \$18,000 in prizes, bringing the total prize money awarded to Junior, Senior, and Team Regional competitors to over \$40,000! Our Poet Networkers were also paid over \$30,000 to judge the events!

Since premiering on YouTube on April 20, the 2023 National Finals and recitation videos from the semifinals and finals have been watched over 31,000 times. The first-ever youth poetry recitation International Invitational will be held on July 2, 2024 at the Globe Theatre in London, England. Poetry Out Loud (USA), Poetry By Heart (UK), Poetry Aloud (IRE), and Poetry In Voice (CAN) will participate. Next year, we hope to invite poetry reciters from many other countries with burgeoning poetry recitation programs.





Write: **VOICES/VOIX**

Each year, we encourage students in grades 7-12 to write and submit original poems inspired by:

- a poem in our anthology,
- one of our writing prompts or poetry workshops,
- or a poet who visited their school from our Poet In Class/ Poètes à l'école program.

Under the skillful guidance of two poet editors, the strongest poems are published in *VOICES/VOIX*. Hard copies are mailed to the published writers and their school libraries, and a digital version lives on our websites. This year, poets Brandon Wint and Annie Lafleur worked closely with the 40 students whose work was selected, including the 16 FutureVersers. In September, we proudly published the journal's fifth issue.

Every month, we award a Poetry Prompt Prize for a French and English poem by a student in grade 7-12. Each month's winner receives \$100, and their poem is published in *VOICES/VOIX*. The prize is very successful, with 1186 submissions in 2023.

FutureVerser Batool Ali
(Edmonton, AB) writing during the first
poetry intensive program in Calgary.

"These poems don't just
reflect the world — **they try
to imagine a better one.**"

— JONATHAN ROY & CATRIONA WRIGHT,
EDITORS OF VOICES/VOIX, ISSUE #2



“I loved FutureVerse so much!!!
Everything was so thoughtful and well-planned, and the organizers were so wonderful.”

— VIVIAN SUN

“FutureVerse has been one of the most fulfilling opportunities I have ever experienced.”

— TYLER-ROSE ARDEN



Write: FutureVerse

Following our partnership with McCall MacBain, Poetry In Voice/Les voix de la poésie launched FutureVerse, a four-day poetry intensive that pairs authors, publishers, and writers/activists with students of exceptional potential.

Presented in conjunction with our 2023 National Finals in Moh'kinstiss/Calgary, FutureVerse is a national arts leadership experience to discover, create, and celebrate the power of literary arts. Sixteen students were selected from submissions to our bilingual poetry journal VOICES/VOIX. Workshops included such topics as Writing Change into the World: Equality, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Eco Poetics Writing, A Talk and Walk on the History of the Bow River, and How Poetry has Changed the World, as well as a panel discussion on Publishing and Professionalizing. Participants worked under the mentorship of professional award-winning authors such as Wakefield Brewster, Rita Wong, and Richard Harrison.

Additionally, following the FutureVerse event, participants had the opportunity to engage in monthly workshops over the next year, where they continued to develop as poets.

Above: FutureVersers and National Finalists completing an extra challenge during the “Fill your boots! Poetry Hunt” across the city of Calgary.
Right: Finalist Aaronsaul Negre (Calgary, AB) and FutureVerser Ella Bachrach (Smithers, BC) playing with words during a workshop on translation in Calgary.



Teach: Poet In Class / Poète à l'école

While artist-in-class programs are fairly common across Canada, a school's arts funds are rarely prioritized for a local poet's visit. In 2017, in partnership with the Canada Council for the Arts, PIV/LVP launched the Poet In Class/Poète à l'école (PIC/PAL) program. The program is provided free of charge to schools, and we pay poets fairly for their time and expertise.

Poet visits this year were held both virtually and in person. Funding from Heritage Canada has allowed us to offer 100 classroom visits in English and French minority and additional language settings. The demand for poet visits greatly outweighs our budget for them. We continue to seek more funding channels to expand the program and reach as many students as possible, with the vision that every student should be visited by a poet at least once during their school years.

"Thank you for providing this amazing opportunity. It was important for the students at my school to have a woman of colour come [so that they could] see that **poets can be ethnically different and have a diverse life story.**"

— BAL PANESAR, TEACHER AT ERIC HAMBER
SECONDARY SCHOOL IN VANCOUVER, BC

Above, right: Students at Prince of Wales Secondary School in Vancouver, BC, react to poet Benjamin Hertwig. Below, right: Wakefield Brewster runs a poetry workshop during the National Finals in Calgary.



"It's typical of Poetry In Voice that they figured out a way to continue to get poetry into the classroom during this time of the pandemic, and it's typical that they knew many poets would need assistance to make their online visits effective. **I know of no other organization that so quickly and gracefully pivots, assesses the needs, and then offers performers and teachers the educational resources required to make the visits a success.**"

— LORNA CROZIER, POET & PROFESSOR EMERITA
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

“Poetry In Voice has helped me bring poetry and joy into my classroom, into the homes and lives of my students, their families and our school. It is truly an incomparable treasure.”

— RYAN RUDDICK, TEACHER AND VICE-PRINCIPAL AT WESTMOUNT HIGH SCHOOL IN MONTRÉAL, QC

Teach: Our Website

Most of the website pageviews are from Canadian teachers and students. Given our mission to provide exceptional content and experiences that foster an appreciation of and connection with poetry, we worked with scores of poets and teachers this year to craft:

Dive Ins: guided questions that help students delve deeply into a poem

Mixtapes: mini-anthologies of poems centred on a single subject, idea, or theme

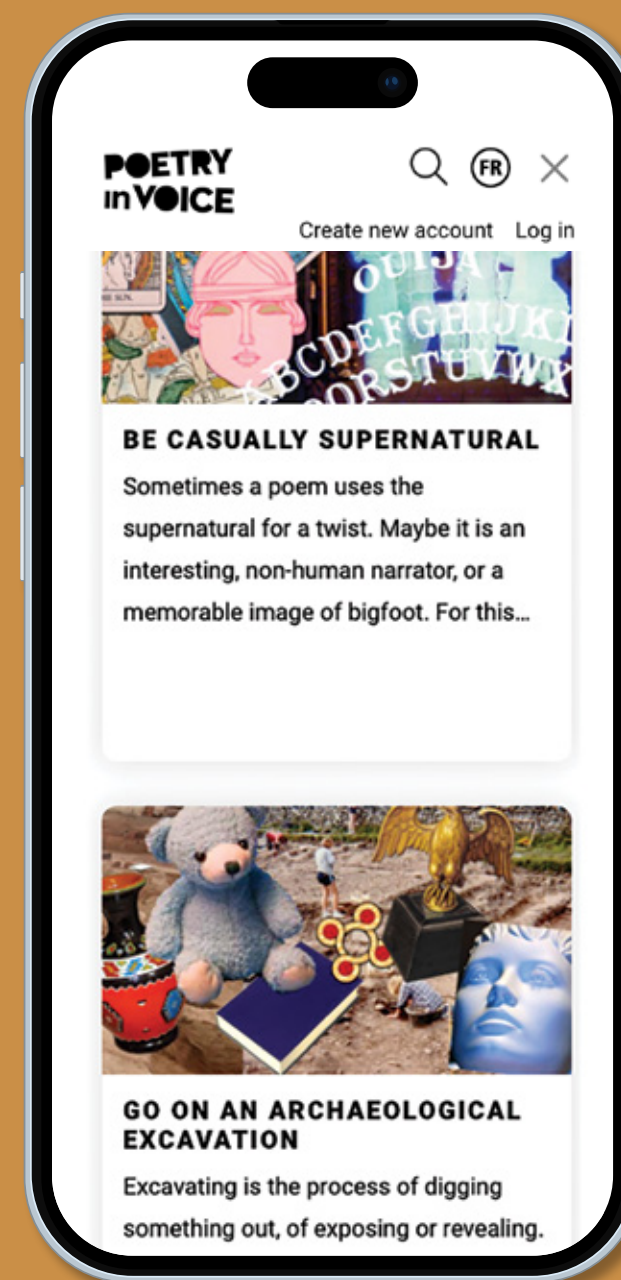
Writing prompts: pithy challenges to encourage students to start a poem

Poet profiles and bios: poets respond to our interview questions and tell us their stories so that students can connect to them and understand that they, too, could choose to be a poet

Lesson plans: written by poets or teachers to help teachers imagine and integrate new ways of connecting their provincial or territorial curricula to poetry

For our K-6 program, Poetry is Elementary, 12 videos were completed and ready for a fall 2024 launch. Poets read their work and then outline a classroom activity. Each poem is animated to help create dynamic videos for our youngest students. Lesson plans will be developed around these poetry videos, and printable poetry-based activities will be provided on our website.

We also publish dozens of recitation videos yearly based on footage from our Junior Online Finals and the Senior National Finals. These serve as excellent pedagogical and promotional tools.

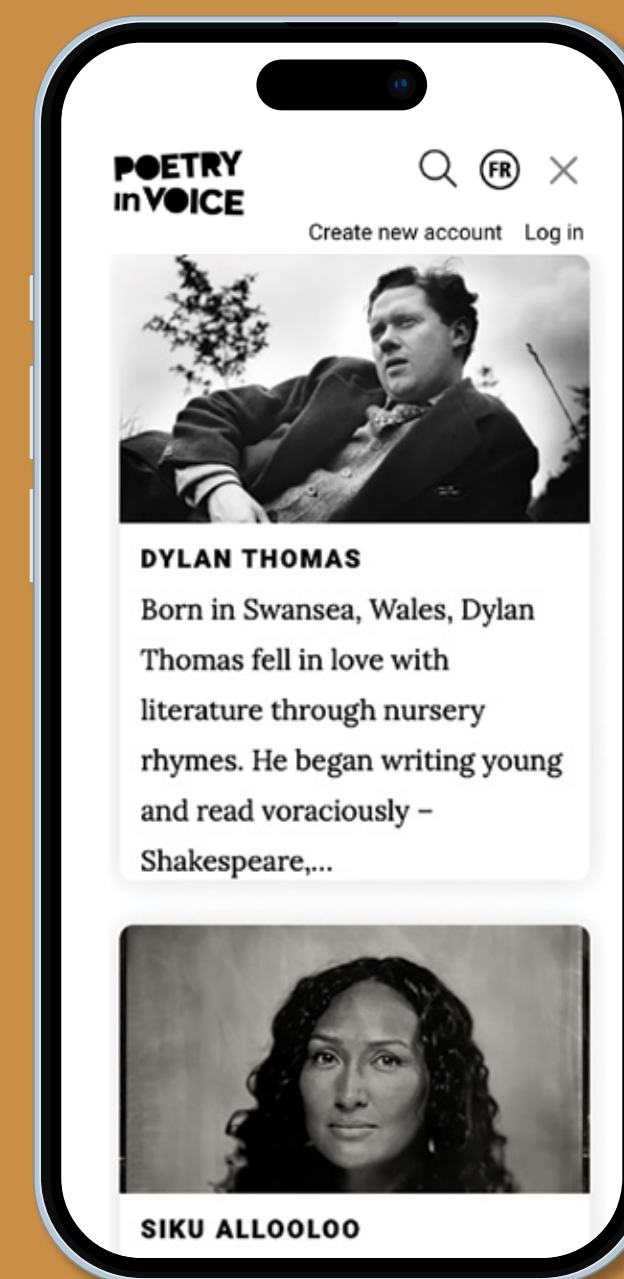


“Through their creation of high quality web content, PIV/LVP positions itself as a vital link among the various initiatives for younger generations.”

— ANNE-MARIE DESMEULES, QUÉBEC POET

“Our staff agrees that PIV/LVP is an enriching program for our school. We have all benefited from this experience and the support materials.”

— LOIS LORIMER NUNN, POET & RETIRED TEACHER-LIBRARIAN AT R. H. KING ACADEMY IN SCARBOROUGH, ON



Teach: Indigenous Voices In Poetry

Indigenous Voices in Poetry (IVP) is envisioned and led by our Indigenous staff and board members and includes consultations with Indigenous community members to ensure cultural integrity. The program utilizes the transformative power of poetry to celebrate Indigenous culture, language, and connection to the land, fostering culturally resonant youth voices. Importantly, IVP focuses on traditionally underserved Indigenous students in rural and remote areas.

IVP employs Indigenous methodologies to create an educational environment emphasizing interconnectedness, cultural engagement, and experiential learning. While the program is in its early development stages, planned vital components include:

Constellations: Tailored online poetry resources and lesson plans focusing on themes of land and language

Kitchen table visiting: Virtual and in-person workshops that enable students to explore and express their personal and cultural narratives

SPEAK: A class-specific poetry journal and an online Indigenous student poetry anthology that celebrates and publishes student voices

Poet In Place: is an Indigenous poet residency designed to deepen connections between Indigenous poetry, community, and creative expression

Métis FutureVerser Tyler-Rose Arden (Edmonton, AB) sharing her poetry at the Cabaret event in Calgary.

Reach

In service of our vision to ensure all Canadians speak poetry, we leverage our work in schools to promote poetry to the broader national and global communities. The National Finals are an excellent opportunity to attract media attention for our organization. In 2023, CBC, CTV, and numerous local media outlets covered us extensively. Student recitation videos from the National Finals were watched 445,000 times in 2023. Since 2010, our recitation videos have been viewed 3.1 million times. Our recitation champions are commissioned each year to recite at literary festivals and celebrations such as the Frye Festival (Moncton), Blue Met Metropolis Bleu (Montréal), Mois de la poésie (City of Québec), Festival de la poésie de Montréal, Edmonton Poetry Festival, Vancouver Writers Fest, Kingston Writers Fest, Thin Air Winnipeg International Writers Fest, the Saskatchewan Festival of Words, and the Governor General's Literary Awards Gala. A student reciter is also featured yearly at The Griffin Poetry Prize (GPP) Awards. We manage our bilingual social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram) daily and share stories that appeal to our students and teachers and all poetry lovers.

English Stream Champion Catricia Hiebert (Sexsmith, AB) recites at the 2019 Governor General's Literary Awards Gala in Ottawa, ON.



Support

We are grateful for the support of The Canada Council for the Arts and the Government of Canada. McCall MacBain's support allowed us to create the FutureVerse program. The Griffin Trust for Excellence in Poetry has been our foundational supporter since our inception. We are also grateful for the literary festivals, publishers, poets, teachers, schools and school boards, and educational advocacy groups who have assisted and championed our mission.

"Poetry In Voice/Les voix de la poésie is **one of the most vitally important literary programs in Canada** — it is invaluable and has an astonishing reach."

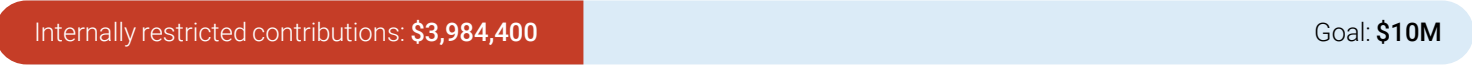
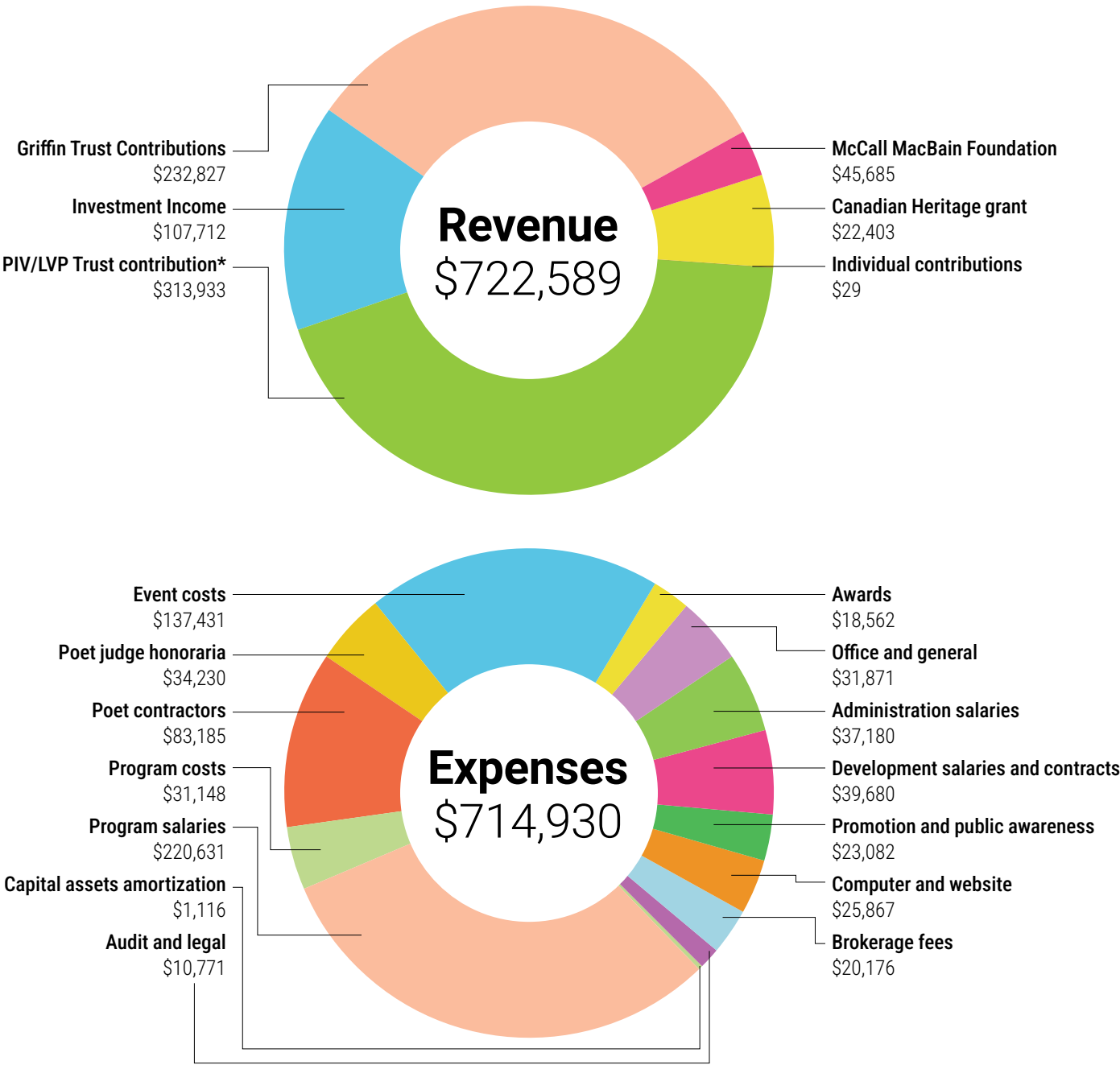
— ANNE MICHAELS, TORONTO POET & AUTHOR

"Poetry In Voice is an astonishing tribute to poetry — **one of the greatest ideas to emerge in the world of literature in Canada in recent years!**"

— THE RIGHT HONOURABLE ADRIENNE CLARKSON

Mireille Proulx (Montréal, QC) recites for a captive audience during the 2017 National Finals.

Financial Overview



* Note: this is not revenue per se, but rather gains on our restricted funds contributed to fund programs.
For more information, please consult our audited financial statements at poetryinvoice.ca/about/PIVLVP_2023_Financial_Statement

The Mt. Stellar Trio being filmed for the live-stream during the National Finals show in Calgary.



La Grande finale 2023

“Participating in PIV/LVP allowed me to acknowledge my true identity and to **discover my absolute love for words, stories, poems.**”

— GHADA CHARKI, FORMER STUDENT AT
CHAMPLAIN REGIONAL COLLEGE – SAINT-LAMBERT, QC



Krystyne & Scott Griffin and Johanne Blais joining Finalists and FutureVersers as they release all the energy accumulated throughout the week in Calgary.



We ♥ poetry
On ♥ la poésie

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