

2023

Activities Report

For the year ending
December 31st, 2023



2023 Activity Highlights

GOVERNMENT AND FUNDER ADVOCACY

In November 2022, Books BC submitted a [Supply chain briefing and subsidy request to the Provincial Government](#), calling on government to assist the BC publishing industry in facing these extraordinary cost pressures by implementing a subsidy to assist publishers in meeting these challenges. 2023 saw follow-up meetings and conversation around this proposal, resulting in a positive response from the government with \$600,000 of emergency funding allocated over three years. The announcement came at BC Book Day on April 17, 2023, where book publishers were also invited to attend a roundtable discussion with Minister Popham with promises of a follow-up roundtable six months later.

The initial \$200,000 from the Province was granted to Books BC via an agreement with Creative BC, and Books BC undertook the project of dispensing the funds to the 27 publisher recipients in Summer 2023.

In June 2023, Matea presented to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services on Budget 2024, where she advocated for Books BC's three priorities at that time:

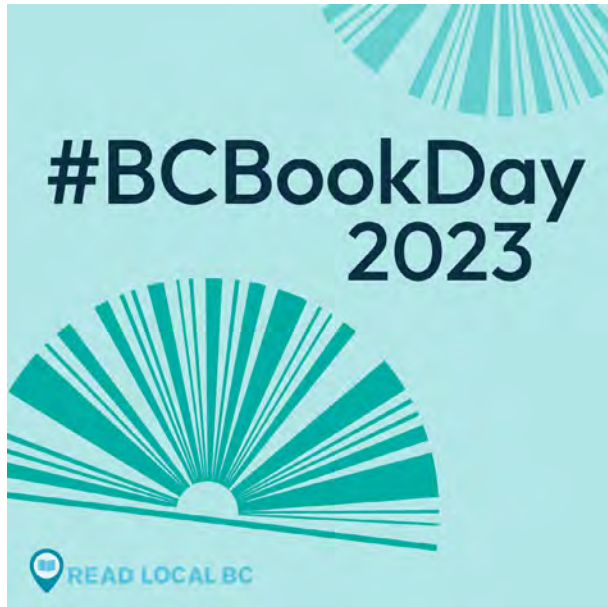
1. Renew the BC Book Publishing Tax Credit and remove the sunset clause
2. Recommit to fairly paying creators and publishers for the licensing of their content and use of copyrighted material in classrooms
3. Incentivize the purchase of BC books in public schools, as per the 2022 Budget Consultation report.

Fall 2023 saw the striking of an Advocacy Committee to revisit our industry priorities in advance of our follow-up roundtable with the TACS Ministry on Dec. 5, 2023. In November, when the Canada Book Fund grant letters began to circulate, it became clear that we were dealing with an unexpected federal funding shortage. Thanks to the quick action on the part of our membership to provide us with information and testimonials, we were able to put together several iterations of updated briefing notes for our TACS ministry in advance of this follow-up roundtable to keep them apprised of the situation. Our efforts were mirrored by the staff at the Creative Sector branch of the TACS ministry, with whom our relationship solidified. We also issued a letter to the Minister of Education and Child Care on Dec. 4, 2023, regarding compensation for use of copyrighted works in British Columbian classrooms.

Our consolidated advocacy efforts in the latter half of 2023 yielded results in early 2024, such as the letter that Minister Popham wrote to Minister St. Onge, Canadian Heritage, on our behalf on Feb. 14, 2024. We also know that the clear communication of our advocacy team led to the 2024 announcement of \$500,000 in end-of-year funding that will be coming for book publishers in summer 2024.

BC Book Day and Creative Industries Week

For BC Book Day on April 17, 2023, we organized a hybrid digital-physical campaign, providing text and visual assets for [sharing on social media](#). Additionally, with the help of Graphite Public Affairs, we curated individualized book bags highlighting BC titles, promotional materials,



and our advocacy priorities that were delivered to MLA offices on April 17.

We also had an in-person showcase at the BC Legislature on April 17 as part of Creative Industries Week, with exhibits from several members and other industry partners. The event included a reading and performance by TouchWood Editions author Anny Scoones.

We promoted the campaign widely to an audience of booksellers, librarians, and readers, and enlisted the support of our members to spread our messaging. We had #BCBookDay mentions in posts by publishers, libraries, bookstores, festivals, authors, and government officials. We also ran a social media engagement campaign for the Day in partnership with the Georgia Straight.

We also participated with our creative industry partners in an in-person showcase at the BC Legislature aimed at highlighting our work for a government audience. The Association's contribution to the event was a reading and performance by Rocky

Mountain Books author Nathalie Chambers.

BC Book Day is a day highly regarded by government officials, and it is fantastic to see the support for it widening among the public. We feel this is a campaign that we can build on especially since the launch of Independent Bookstore Day by CIBA (which typically falls on the last Saturday of April) and the return of an in-person presence at the legislature.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The association's activities continued to be guided by the [2021–24 Strategic Plan](#) and its five strategic pillars: advocating for BC's diverse published content; marketing and promotion of BC publishers; member development and engagement; building a strong association; building a strong sector.

In the fall of 2023, Executive Director (ED) Matea Kulić departed on a 14-month maternity leave. The Books BC board's hiring committee offered the interim ED position to Leslie Bootle, MPub, a 15-year publishing veteran and former Marketing Director at Orca Book Publishers. The leadership transition went smoothly; Leslie and Matea worked together in September, with Matea's 14-month leave beginning in October 2023. Leslie is working out of Victoria, BC, but travels to work in-person with staff in Vancouver every 4-6 weeks.

Organizational Retreat | Non-profit Life Cycle Assessment and Capacity Planning

In addition to our regular programming, in 2023 we continued the consultation program begun in October of 2022 with professional consultant Alison Brewin. This

work was undertaken in an effort toward building alignment around the key purpose of the association’s work amidst industry changes, internal and external transitions. The consultation work with Alison was completed during a May 2023 organizational retreat where the results of the assessment and next steps were outlined.

Through this process, our organization assessed how we are reaching our organizational goals as defined in our Strategic Plan, and considered our organization’s development from the non-profit life cycle approach. This allowed us to get staff and board aligned on organizational priorities and to consider how we might focus our efforts on specific targets, while reducing resources in areas that are no longer serving us. Finally, through this process and targeted sessions with our consultant, we recommitted to our strategic plan in a way that also highlights a capacity planning framework. We have continued to develop plans and campaigns to meet our strategic goals through the year and will continue on in 2024.

Association Rebrand

In 2023, we completed the first phase of an association platform rebrand which had begun in the fall of 2022, including refreshing our operational name, logo, messaging, and visual identity, to raise the profile of our diverse and vibrant community of publishers, authors, and illustrators. The new association brand was deployed in the spring of 2023 as part of a public awareness campaign and in support of our existing programming, including our Read Local BC, BC Ferries, and Poetry in Transit campaigns. We have initiated the second phase of this rebrand which includes a website overhaul of Books.bc.ca as a professional portal for publishers and other industry partners. The rebrand and new visual identity was



strategized through a rebrand committee made up of committee chairs, Teddy Anderson (Publisher at Medicine Wheel Education) and Matea Kulić (Books BC), and members Andrew Chesham (Associate Director, Creative Writing Program at SFU Continuing Studies), Lisa Escudero (Brand Lead, Creative BC), Rachel Page (Lead Designer, Orca Book Publishers), and Curtis Samuel (Publicist & Social Media Coordinator, TouchWood Editions).

Governance committee | Organizational EDI Audit

Committee chair: Nadine Pedersen (UBC Press)

Committee members: Jennifer Gauthier (Greystone Books), Karen Green (Anvil Press), Melissa Pitts (UBC Press); Matea Kulic (Books BC)

In 2022, we began the process of reviewing our governance manual through an EDI lens with the support of Bakau Consulting. In the spring of 2023, the governance committee completed its work developing a robust governance manual outlining the organization’s guiding policies. A completed draft of the manual was shared with an EDI consultant for review and the finalized governance manual was presented to the new board after the 2023 AGM in May.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Overview

In 2023, we stayed on course with our regular marketing and promotional activities re-evaluating and improving programs and services. We continued to explore new and expanded opportunities for online promotion, program delivery, and cross-sector collaboration.

Educational marketing

The educational marketing program was on pause in 2021-22 in order for us to undertake a detailed internal review of our educational marketing activities in consultation with industry experts. Due to multiple staff turnovers at Books BC, this review was postponed until 2023.

In March-July of 2023, we conducted a review process with a marketing committee composed of educational marketing experts in BC book publishing from member companies. The review focused on marketing ideas, ROI, website development, and funding and revenue opportunities. We are in the process of developing and executing a robust marketing campaign in early 2024 to address these concerns in order to increase the value of this program for both educators and publishers.

Educational catalogues: Having now explored many approaches for compiling, producing, and distributing this content, as well as for assessing its reach and impact, Books BC made the shift from print to a digital-only database in 2023. We resumed title intake for our digital catalogues only, and we plan to add previous titles to our digital database dating back to 2018. This decision was reached through consultation

with publishers, librarians, teachers, and other industry stakeholders on how they are discovering titles, and through an assessment of our own internal capacity to continue to deliver this program.

In conjunction with the title intake, we prioritized making upgrades to our online database website BooksForSchools.ca in order to improve user experience of our target audience, primarily K-12 educators. We continued to work with contracted web development company Turner & Riggs to highlight BC books and Indigenous-themed books on the homepage of the website, and provide comprehensive information to users about our unique annotation process and Authentic Indigenous Voice evaluation process developed by our lead education consultant Jackie Lever. We continue to work on website upgrades, including setting up Google Analytics, adding user account functionality, and adding advanced search functions.

Educator outreach: We developed new marketing materials (postcards, posters) for our educational database website and our unique Authentic Indigenous Voice evaluation process for immediate distribution at the BC Library Association Conference in April 2023, but keeping longevity in mind so these materials could be leveraged in other promotional opportunities for our Books for Schools program, such as at in-person display events such as Word Vancouver, and the FNEESC conference. We continue to promote the database website through a highlight section in our Read Local BC newsletter.

Read Local BC

The Read Local BC campaign encompasses our public-facing marketing efforts: it includes our web presence (ReadLocalBC.com).

ca, editorial coverage including interviews and profiles, weekly blog content, and social media profiles on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram); the weekly BC Bestseller list; the monthly Read Local BC newsletter; print and digital advertising; events and festival partnerships; collective exhibits at trade shows and conferences; and promotional material for bookstores, schools, and libraries.

Editorial and content marketing: We renewed our contract with ZG Stories to execute the Read Local BC content strategy we created with their support in 2020 and have since refined at regular intervals in response to engagement and analytics. The strategy includes weekly blog editorial content and regular social media content on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#). We continued the established process of soliciting title submissions from members via quarterly coverage surveys. We continued to publish a monthly Read Local BC newsletter, which began as the weekly “Read Local BC At Home” newsletter in the early months of the pandemic.



We expanded our editorial calendar in response to opportunities. For instance, we published a conversation between BC-origin authors Chelene Knight and Wayde Compton, an interview with Corinna Chong for her short story collection *The Whole Animal*, and a bookseller profile on Upstart Upstairs. We also published a Fraser Valley Writers Festival feature.

We implemented process improvements that would benefit the team as well our target audiences. We continued the work of developing and improving our content process by updating our style guide, social media graphics style guide, and content templates. Working with ZG Stories, we created a hashtag bank of publisher and author social media account handles for online promotions. We also launched a public-facing [events calendar](#) on the Read Local BC website. We are pleased to report that uptake for the event calendar has been high, and this is quickly becoming a go-to resource for sharing BC-based publisher and author events.



When you produce writing about a place you know well, or a place you have a direct relationship to, it becomes an active subject in your work. I think readers sense that. — Wayde Compton

Cruise along with local reads this summer!
Find these and other BC books in the Passages on-board store.

READ LOCAL BC

MR. MINDBOMB: Eco-Hero and Greenpeace Co-founder Bob Hunter
by Bobbi Hunter
A collection of personal essays detailing the life and achievements of renowned environmental hero and activist Bob Hunter.
Rocky Mountain Books

GRAZIE
by Lucia Frangione
A gritty and spiritual story of transformation, forgiveness, accountability, and rebirth. Grazie takes us from Red Deer to Rome, and from the Amazon to Andromeda.
Talonbooks

HEAVEN ON THE HALF SHELL
by David George Gordon
A richly illustrated history of the Pacific Northwest's beloved bivalve, the oyster, and how it shaped the environment, cultures, and economies of the region.
Touchwood Editions

A SEASON ON VANCOUVER ISLAND
by Bill Aronoff
A beautiful collection of images and short travel essays highlighting the fun, eclectic, and unique nature of Vancouver Island and the attraction it has for travellers and tourists from across Canada and around the world.
Rocky Mountain Books

Capturing the Summit: Hamilton Mack Loring and the Mount Logan Expedition of 1923 by Trevor Hare Hughes
In this classic adventure story, the diaries of two men, a scientist and a mountaineer, reveal their distinct struggles in the unforgiving wilds of the northern landscape. **IN STOCK! June 12**
Roundtable Press

Galena Bay Odyssey: Reflections of a Hippie Homesteader by Ellen Schwartz
A writer and educator reflects on the idealistic, tumultuous, and eye-opening time she spent as a back-to-the-land hippie homesteader in the Kootenays in the 1970s.
Heritage House

Books BC acknowledges the support of
Canada, Creative BC, and the City of Vancouver.

Advertising: Our advertising program offered Books BC members placement in collective advertising at a subsidized cost. In 2023 we ran collective advertising in the Vancouver Writers Festival program guide (print), *The Tyee* (digital), and *The Globe & Mail BC* section (print). These four ads represented a combined 32 books from 11 publishers. Additionally, we ran print and digital house ads for Read Local BC in the BC & Yukon Book Prizes gala program and newsletter, the Victoria Festival of Authors program and newsletter, the Sunshine Coast Festival of the Written Arts, on *The BC Review* website and the *Room Magazine* newsletter.

In February 2023, we relaunched our BC Books on BC Ferries campaign since its

hiatus in 2020. Our “Cruise Along With BC Books” campaign included two collective poster ads that ran between June and August on the Tsawwassen-Victoria route, a social media engagement campaign, bookmarks to be distributed in the Passages gift shop, and a collective print ad in *BC BookWorld’s* summer issue.

Librarian and bookseller outreach:

In partnership with British Columbia Library Association (BCLA), we initiated a pilot project offering a series of online presentations consisting of short pitches of 20-30 titles by publishers’ sales reps. The goals of this project are to:

1. Get more BC books in front of librarian selectors
2. Grow the Read Local BC audience
3. Strengthen the relationship between Books BC and BCLA

Our first “Read Local BC Book Blast!” took place on December 7, 2023, with a topic of new Adult Non-fiction published in BC. There were 50 librarians registered and the link to the recording was shared afterwards. Books BC hosted 20 books presented from 11 different BC publishers, and there are plans to continue this project in 2024.

Events and festival relationships: We hosted one in-person event at Word Vancouver, namely “The Launch of Poetry in Transit” featuring eight BC authors. We sponsored the BC & Yukon Book Prizes gala in September. We continued to develop relationships with festival partners and look for opportunities to support BC-published programming wherever possible. Event organizers continued to get in touch with us to be added to our [Literary Festivals and Reading Series](#) dedicated landing page on Read Local BC, and to submit events for inclusion in our monthly Read Local BC newsletter.



Website upgrades: We worked with our contracted web developer Jen Gfeller to make certain upgrades to ReadLocalBC.ca in order to make it more accessible and privacy compliant, as well as making it more user-friendly for the team. Most notably, we updated the website to be compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, making it more navigable to users with accessibility needs. We also installed social sharing buttons to make our blog posts more interactive for users. We updated the “shop local” widget to work appropriately based on a user’s privacy preferences.

Poetry in Transit

Annual campaign: For the 2023-24 [Poetry in Transit](#) campaign, we received 151 submissions highlighting 74 poets from 34 Canadian-owned publishers. Jury members (poets Evelyn Lau and Rob Taylor and TransLink representative Adam Bale) met in May to make the final selections of 10 poems by BC poets. We launched the campaign with an in-person Poetry Bus! event that was well attended at Word Vancouver. To promote the campaign and launch event, we secured bus shelter ad space through the City of Vancouver’s Transit Shelter Advertising Programs. Ten posters featuring the selected poems were on display for three weeks in September and October. We also ran a #PoetryinTransit contest encouraging readers and transit goers to post pictures of their buscard sightings. The contest was highly engaged with and the winner received a selection from Poetry in Transit authors.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2023, Books BC continued to seek ways to provide our members with professional development (PD) to educate, inform, and support BC publishers.

In June, Books BC hired Breathing Space Creative founder, facilitator and author Chelene Knight to offer our members an online workshop focusing on author care. Chelene shared how she has helped other presses implement author care and why this work is important with all authors, but especially for emerging, first-time, and BIPOC authors. The session provided resources for how to develop an author's kit, and how to support authors in discovering and communicating their unique non-negotiables, and time management strategies.

In the fall, we partnered with eBOUND Canada to offer a series of three PD sessions to support our membership and publishers across Canada with their endeavours to create accessible ebooks for readers with print disabilities. They focused on how to strategize and improve accessibility metadata, increase content discoverability, and create born-accessible workflows so that publishers can offer ebooks with fewer barriers and more accessibility features for their readers.

We also hosted two membership roundtables: one for Small Presses and one on Funding.

MEMBERSHIP

Tidewater Press rejoined as Associate members in August 2023 after receiving a Supply Chain subsidy, with the agreement

that they would renew as an Active member in 2024.

Royal BC Museum's Active membership was never renewed after a change in staff.

Due to flatlining overall membership numbers, the Board put forward a motion to run a "Friends Drive" in 2023 to boost overall membership numbers. As a result, nine new Friends joined in 2023. Two Friends did not renew their membership.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL INITIATIVES

Job Board Incentive

In early 2021, we launched a pilot program, the Job Board Incentive that offered Books BC members support and resources for creating and advertising job postings, with the aim of promoting greater equity and inclusion in the BC book publishing industry. In 2022, the Board voted to extend the program until the end of 2023. More information on the Job Board Incentive [can be found here.](#)

BOOKS  BC

