

WP PUPPET THEATRE SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT For 2023-24

Experiment and Exploration: New Directions



OVERVIEW

WP Puppet Theatre faced significant challenges in 2023-2024, including declining audiences, funding reductions, market shifts, and rapid technological changes. Throughout this period, we were buoyed by the dedication of our staff, volunteers, donors, and clients, and we actively sought opportunities to turn these challenges into avenues for growth and innovation.

GOVERNANCE

This year's challenging operations has prompted our Board of Directors to begin strategic conversations about the viability of WP Puppet Theatre continuing as a not-for-profit charitable organization. We are taking a hard look at how we need to adapt to meet the future programming, operating and governance needs in the current ecosystem.

The board is considering how the gradual cutback of our Artistic/Executive Director's role over the next few years, will impact the Society. Specifically, we are considering the creation of a paid Managing Director role.

Board roles and responsibilities have been defined so as to provide greater member support to WPTS and recruitment will include these understandings.

OPERATIONS

Our Puppet Power Arts Series, consisting of three major public events and two Puppet Pop Ups dominated our activities in 2023-24. We also continued the push to move our content assets onto our website to sell as courses or one-off projects. Libraries and daycares bookings of our live puppet shows "Why the Rabbit's Nose Wiggles" and "Walter the Water Droplet" grew while school engagement declined.

Ezgi Turker was contracted in September as our Puppet Power Arts Series manager. On a steep learning curve Ezgi, closely assisted by Kira, worked hard to produce Festival of Ideas November 25-26, Puppets Plus on February 17 and Family Puppet Festival Day on June 8. (see her report in the appendix)

Behind the screen the children danced their shadow puppets, completely unselfconscious. It was wonderful to see them have such fun!

Shadow puppets are one of my favourite kinds of puppets; the language of light and shadow intrigues me, as it does the hundreds of children that I've done workshops with.

I've seen their faces beam with understanding as they figure out their puppet is opaque, and delight as they see the colored plastic inserts glow. As they crouch behind the white screen they have the power of invisibility, so even the shyest kid fiercely growls his bear puppet or gracefully flies her bird to music.

Every child is successful when they create a shadow puppet, no matter the journey with tape, scissors and mistakes, because their creation, the shadow image, rules!

Crystal Ink was contracted in August 2023 to develop our new website on Squarespace, allowing an easy interface for on demand courses, an online shop, sending and archiving of newsletters, event calendar and an updated look. In July 2024 we announced the official launch of our new website.

Geraldine Ysselstein’s contract was renewed to research homeschool potential and to upload Bakster and Bird to our new Square Space website.

Erin Bacon was contracted to develop community partnerships and lead fundraising efforts. (resigned May 2024)



PROGRAMMING - KEY ACTIVITIES

- Frans Hakkemars from UNIMA Internationale and outgoing VIEW manager Barb English, show off the article on VIEW from the Inside published in NVP-UNIMA's journal
- Barb presented our VIEW program online at the CATA (Canadian Art therapy Association) conference. This is a great organization to be associated with. However, we haven’t had much traction of the VIEW or VFTC in 2023 -24.
- Kira and Ksenia attended CADA’s Living a Creative Life celebration.
- Wendy, Ezgi and Youth Central volunteers make 100’s of puppets at the Calgary Cat Festival and Market. Meow! Pop Ups with partners is a good strategy for us.



Puppet Power Conference - Festival of Ideas: Material Puppets - two days of performances and workshops exploring how puppets “Metaphors of Matter” can help address our material world. Featuring Puzzle Theatre from Montreal, Riku Laakkonen (online from Denmark) Intermissions from Iowa with Amanda Petefish – Schrag and Intermissions from Singapore with Frans Hakkemars, and Tea Kovse online from Austria. Attendance was low and we are reviewing our approach to the event. Our next event is not until Fall 2025.



- Puppet Pop Up - creating and animating magical dragon puppets at the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre.



- Puppets Plus! as part of Chinook Blast - a unique collaboration with Calgary kids and Matricia Bauer, Jasper singer, songwriter, musician, drummer and artist. Very low turnout that has led us to permanently cancel this event.
- Wendy curated the Learning Component for the Festival of Animated Objects with workshops:
 - Liminal Beings Movement Workshop with Glenn Taylor
 - Shadow puppets and Crankies by Monica Ila
 - Pop up books and puppet stages with Tia DeLauria
 - Varied puppet workshop for young people with Jenn Stables
- Puppet Pop Up - delving into the world of marionettes with a sold-out workshop at The Alcove and Chinese dragon rod puppets at the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre
- Wendy attended the Foundations for the Future trade show (Jasper) and Kira was online at the Calgary Teachers convention. Neither of these events were successful in making connections with educators, as we'd hoped.
- Wendy and Gil presented a short talk about our Bakster and Bird project at a Creative Calgary meeting.
- Wendy presented a well-received professional development seminar at Mount Royal University Child Studies "A dozen plus ideas for early learners"
- Spring Bliss Mini Mental Wellness Festival - Showcasing our VIEW from the Inside Facilitator Training course, highlighting the positive healing effects that can come from creating a self-portrait puppet.
- Celebrating Mother's Day at The Hangar Flight Museum by offering a successful puppet shows as part of their Planes, Puppets and Pancakes event.
- FREE Family Puppet Festival Day at North Haven Community Association - sharing the magic that is Indonesian shadow puppetry with over 200 guests! We were thrilled to host Sustrisno Hartana, an arts educator, ethnomusicologist, researcher of shadow puppet theatre (Indonesian wayang kulit), and a Javanese performing artist (dalang, gamelan musician/composer). Other partners included the Calgary Public Library, the Indonesian Social Club, The Haven Coffee Shop, The Little Brown Jug Brass Band and others.
- The Heritage Park Children's Festival in June saw many budding junior puppeteers drop by our puppet making area.



- WPTs casino took place June 13 and 14. Special thanks to everyone who participated. This funding event is crucial to our operations.
- School Residencies took place at Andrew Sibbald School and Riverbend School.
- Geraldine successfully uploaded Bakster and Bird course to our website and is in the process of testing it with homeschool families.
- We have also uploaded 2 Puppet Provocation courses to the website.



	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
<i>Performances</i>			
Rabbit's Nose	3	4	13
Walter the Water Droplet		3	6
WHY		2	0
Presenting other companies	2	1	6
<i>Screenings: Bakster and Bird</i>		8	0
<i>Exhibitions VIEW</i>		1	0
<i>Workshops & Residencies</i>			
Activities where children create: Community/Schools/Family events	30	44	55
Adult – PD, VIEW, Puppet Power	63	15	7
Youth Workshops	0	1	0
Total number of events	99	79	97
Of which these were online events	0	5	8
Total number of hours of workshops	155	108	129
Total audience number	1853	5074	2384
Total number of distinct clients	29	43	41

BOARD MEMBERS 2024- 25

- President: Kyle D. Mack
- Treasurer: Damon Leong (October – December)
- Secretary: Mirza Beg (moved to this role in May 2024)
- Director: W. Passmore-Godfrey
- Director: Karen Morley
- Director: Urouj Rashid
- Director: Ksenia Artemova
- Director: Tina Jensen (Joined December 2023)
- Director: Amy Chen (joined June 2024)



Our board members logged 134 hours of volunteer time for WPTS, excluding their casino shifts. Our total volunteer hours equal 946 hours.

KEY CONTRACTORS, STAFF & COLLABORATORS 2024 – 25

- Kira Kulicki Marketing and Communications Mgr.
- Ezgi Turker Puppet Power Arts Series Manager
- Nik Harrinarain Bookkeeper and Finance
- W. Passmore-Godfrey Artistic & Executive Director
- Kyle D. Mack VIEW Manager
- Gil Ngai Bakster & Bird Video & Editing
- Geraldine Ysselstein On demand research & development



Thank you everyone, volunteers, staff, board members, teachers, students, participants, funders, peers and mentors for continued support though 2023-24.

FUNDERS, SPONSORS AND DONORS

Special appreciation for City of Calgary Friends of Chinook Blast, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Calgary Arts Development, Government of Canada Canadian Heritage.
We also want to thank individual donors, Tom, Linda, Susannah, Bethany and Barb.



Canada

WPTS YEAR	TOTAL EQUITY	NET OPERATING	TOTAL REVENUE	TOTAL EXPENSES
2024-25 BUDGET	47,320	23,259	175,826	152,567
2023-24	24,058	(126,209)	44,740	170,950
2022-23	150,268	43,248	226,982	183,734
2021-22	107,020	(77,868)	190,495	268,364
2020-21	184,888	83,194	266,589	183,395

PUPPET POWER ARTS SERIES - EVENT MANAGER REPORT – Ezgi Turker

Festival of Ideas

November 24th -25th 2023

cSPACE, Calgary

Festival of Ideas was held with online and in person components. The theme of this year was “Material Puppets” which was about how puppets ‘metaphors of matter’ help us address our Material World?

Events:

- Online/live presentations from international presenters from all over the world
- Tea Kovse (Slovakia), Amanda Schrag (United States), and Frans Hakkemars (Netherlands)
- Two different puppet shows by Puzzle Theatre from Montreal (“Plastic” and “Disposable”)
- Two workshops for adults facilitated by the Puzzle Theatre and Jennifer Stables
- (Unveiling Post-Consumer Paper's Potential with Puppets)
- A DIY puppet making workshop, “Puppets with Joy” was facilitated by using recyclable materials
- The campaign, “Refine your Riches” to call our participants to reduce consumption and invited them to change their behaviours with calls for action

The tickets were sold at Eventbrite. There were 9-10 audience at the online presentations, around 30 online and live audience members for both shows, 5 workshop participants. We had in total 10 volunteers from Youth Central and Winston Churchill High School.

Overall, all the events were successful with a diverse audience and all the programming was run efficiently and smoothly. For the next Festival of Ideas, it would be better to make in-person shows more attractive by offering dinner/reception. It would be more convenient to host the participants and presenters in a hotel to allow for mingling and networking.

Puppet Pop Up: Dragons!

December 9th, 2023

Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre

This workshop was facilitated by the artistic director, Wendy Passmore Godfrey. The theme was dragons to celebrate the upcoming year of dragon. Families made rod puppets made from card stock paper and wood and they animated them flying through the air, twisting and twirling. The tickets were sold at Eventbrite. There were 9 participants and the event was successful overall.

Puppets Plus!

Chinook Blast Festival

February 17th, 2024

La Cité des Rocheuses

For this event, we invited the collective Warrior Women, indigenous Cree musicians from Jasper Matricia Bauer (Isko-achitaw wacy / ᐃᓃᐃ ᐃᓃᓃ ᐃᓃᓃ, She Who Moves Mountains) and Mackenzie Brown from Calgary (Kamamak, which means Butterfly) to accompany the stories by Dr. Seuss' "Many Coloured Days" with a shadow puppet show.

Events:

- Puppets Plus! Puppet Making Workshop by the artistic director of WP Puppet Theatre,
- Wendy Passmore-Godfrey-10:30am-3:30pm
- Shadow Puppet Performance & Concert - Workshop participants & Matricia Bauer and
- Mackenzie Brown- 4:30pm-5:30pm
- Loom Beading Workshop 10:30am-12:30pm
- Drumming and Singing Workshop 7:30pm-9:00pm
- Hot chocolate and cookies in the lobby

The tickets were sold at Eventbrite and the event was promoted by the Chinook Blast Winter Festival. We had 12 volunteers from Youth Central, Mitra Samavaki for photography and Cagri and Tugce Cakir for videography. We had donations from the Glamorgan Bakery and Ola Luna Bakery. Overall, the event was successfully produced although the number of participants were low for the overall event. For the upcoming events, volunteer coordination will be handled better to make sure that volunteers have things to do during their shifts and they will be recruited for shorter periods.

Refund policies will be stricter and it will be communicated at the event description. The event duration will be programmed shorter to make the event more accessible.

Puppet Pop Up: Scarf Marionette Workshop

April 6th, 2024

Alcove Centre for the Arts

This workshop was facilitated by the artistic director, Wendy Passmore Godfrey. The theme was marionettes made out of scarfs.

The tickets were sold at Eventbrite. This event was sold out and there were 16 participants. The event was successful overall. To be more inclusive and accessible, we tried pay what you can and it seemed to resonated with the audience. We had our board member Ksenia Artemova volunteering for photography.



Family Puppet Festival Day

June 8th, 2024

North Haven Community Association

WP Puppet Theatre hosted Family Puppet Festival Day with the theme "Puppet Penumbra," in partnership with the North Haven Community Association celebrating shadow puppetry inspired by the penumbra of an eclipse.

Highlights:

- Javanese Shadow Puppet Shows by Sutrisno Hartana featuring stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata
- Little Brown Jug Brass Band concert
- Puppet-Making Stations
- Special guests shared Indonesian culture, science behind our perception of shadows
- Food Trucks and Activities: Delicious food options and various fun activities for all ages
- Puppet Exhibition and Sale

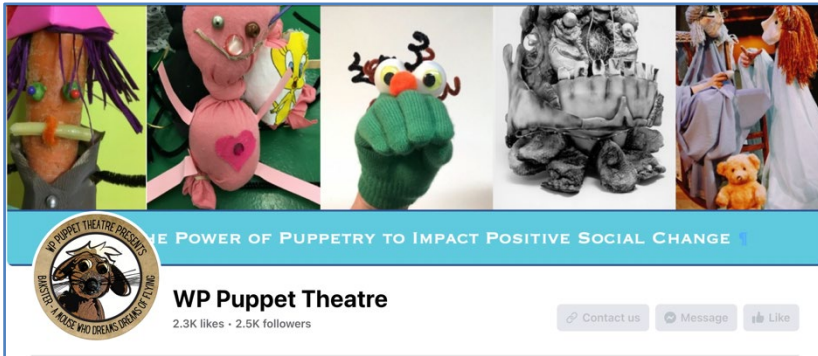
The event was free of charge with free tickets to make it accessible to audience. Tickets were available at Showpass and both shows were sold out. \$40 donations were collected.

We had 16 volunteers from Youth Central, Rangers from the community and another volunteer to support WP Puppet Theatre.

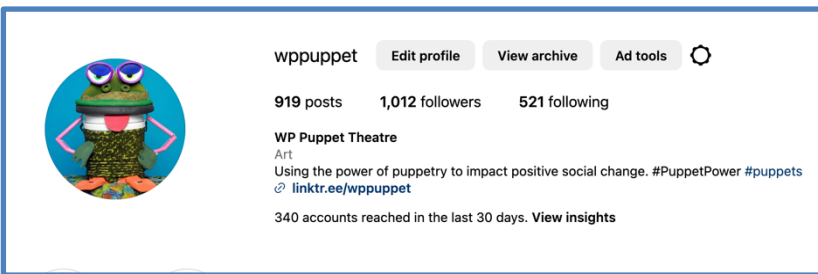
The Family Puppet Festival Day was a delightful event for families, blending art, culture, and education in a memorable experience. Despite the windy and chilly weather, we had 144 participants joining for the shows and the event. For the next event, we will have more vendors and exhibitors to make it more appealing and we will have more partnerships to bridge more community connections.



MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS REPORT – for 2024 – 25 - MANAGER - KIRA KULICKI



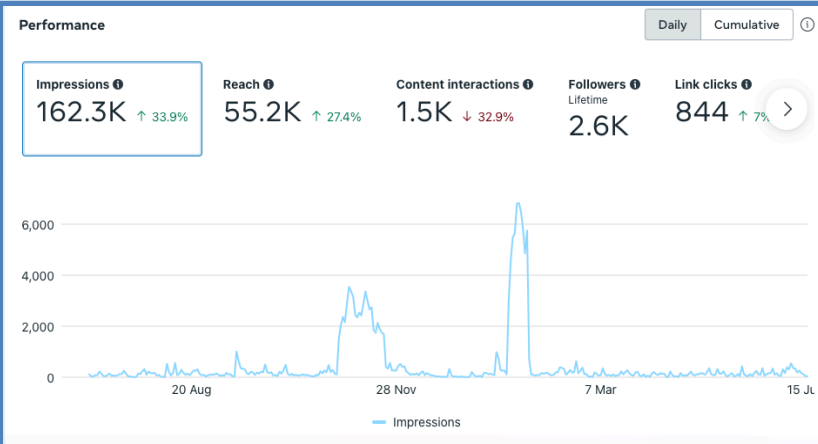
34% increase in impressions
 28% increase in reach
 7% increase in link clicks
 89 new followers on Facebook
 112 new followers on Instagram



Overview

WP Puppet Theatre (WP) has engaged in comprehensive marketing efforts over the past year to enhance brand visibility, audience engagement, and overall reach. These efforts have focused on digital marketing, community outreach, event promotion, and strategic partnerships, ensuring a diverse and dynamic approach to increasing attendance and participation.

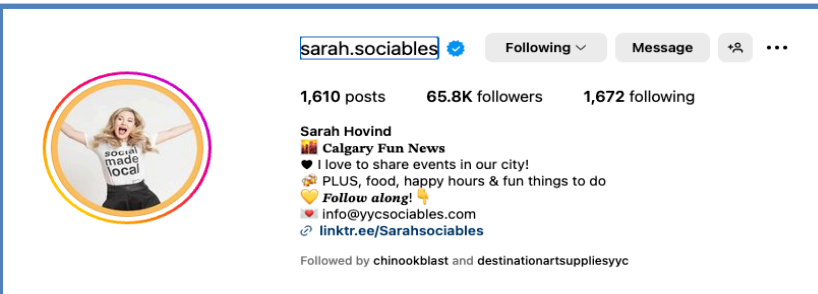
Website Overview 2023-24



Digital Marketing

Website Revamp: WP’s website was redesigned to be more user-friendly, mobile-responsive, and visually appealing. This included an updated events calendar, an integrated membership program, and an archive section for newsletters.

Influencer engaged for FPF



Social Media Campaigns: WP intensified its presence on Facebook and Instagram. We deleted our Twitter (X) account. Regular posts, stories, and live sessions were utilized to engage with a



Meta (Facebook) Insights 2023-24

Page overview Create a post Last 28 days
 Followers: 2,557

Post reach	2,019
Post engagement	276
New Page likes	5
New followers	8

[See Details](#)

broader audience. WP also used a social media influencer for the first time, which was successful in drawing an audience to the June Family Puppet Festival Day.

Email Marketing: The monthly newsletter keeps subscribers informed about upcoming shows, workshops, and special events. Personalized email campaigns targeted specific audience segments based on their past interactions and preferences. In July we sent an inaugural newsletter from our Square Space site to 2141 people, it was opened by 946 people and clicked by 174.

Newsletter metrics specifically for FPFJ

Time Sent ↓	Campaign Name	Sends	Opens	Clicks
Wed, Jun 12, 2024, 10:48 AM	Family Puppet Festival Day - Thank You Follow Up	1,986	792 41%	29 1%
Fri, May 31, 2024, 9:32 AM	June 2024 Newsletter	1,884	756 41%	25 1%
Wed, May 22, 2024, 1:51 PM	Family Puppet Festival Day - SPECIAL INVITATION	80	36 46%	2 3%
Tue, May 7, 2024, 11:07 AM	Family Puppet Festival Day - FREE fun for the whole family!	74	20 27%	2 3%
Wed, May 1, 2024, 9:16 AM	May 2024 Newsletter	2,154	1,147 55%	246 12%

Community Outreach

Educational Programs: In January did a mailout to all Calgary schools followed by a dozen or so phone calls. However, this didn't yield any bookings. A teacher did volunteer to

meet and advise us on how to approach schools

Free Community Performances: Addressing our accessibility mandate, our FPFJ was free, building community goodwill and allowing more promotional opportunities i.e.: local media, library bulletin boards, school board.

Event Promotion

Collaborative Events: WP partnered with local festivals (Chinook Blast), art shows, and cultural events (Heritage Park Children's Day) to co-host performances and workshops. These collaborations helped reach new audiences and provided mutual promotional benefits.

Media Relations: Press releases were regularly distributed to local and regional media outlets prior to major events, however we received very little traditional media attention – we need to build out media relations.

Strategic Partnerships

Corporate Sponsorships: WP did not secure any cash sponsorships from local businesses or larger corporations; this is an ongoing process.

We did have in kind support, or discount support from i.e. Tim Hortons, Artist Susannah Windrum, Haven House, Glamorgan Bakery and Ola Luna Bakery and others.

Arts Organizations: Collaborations with the arts organizations who were involved in our programming such as cSpace, Cité De Rocheuses, Sparrow Art Space were fostered to cross-promote events and share resources.

