



THE MARTLET

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Workshop: How to Survive and THRIVE as a new journalist

With Hugo Wong, former Martlet Editor-in-Chief and local reporter

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Current Greater Victoria media scene

- Black Press (six publications, in approx. order of size: Victoria News, Goldstream News Gazette, Sooke News Mirror, Saanich News, Oak Bay News, Peninsula News Review)
- Others: CHEK News (employee-owned TV station), Victoria Buzz, Times Colonist (hasn't hired a reporter in 10-ish years), CBC (often short-term contracts), CTV/CFAX 1070 (Bell Media)

My Black Press experience

- Black Press in Victoria: high output (3-5 stories per day @ 250 words each, often press release rewrites), high turnover (but therefore more opportunities for entry and lateral movement if desired). Bring your own car, camera, and smartphone. I was paid \$19.50/hour + health/dental + \$200/month for fuel + \$30/month for cell phone bill. About \$40k/year.
- Some journalism experience is a must (Martlet counts), some photo/video experience (iMovie-level) a must. Print design used to be required in Greater Vic Black Press papers, but now only required at rural papers and Sooke.
- Their magazine group always needs freelancers (Boulevard in Vic, Tweed in Oak Bay, Pearl, Soar, etc.). Pay isn't high (\$60-90 per 400-ish word story), but it does give you references.
- Old Victoria workflow (still applicable for rural papers): 1-2 stories per day, print layout Monday and Wednesday. New workflow: 3-5 stories per day for web, a central editor will post online.
- If you're okay to move around, get into the Black Press chain and move laterally when something better comes up. Postings come up often. You'll be acquiring clippings and experience while losing fear all the way. Some (Yukon News, Abbotsford News, etc.) have strong reporters.
- Huge culture difference between Victoria and other BP outlets (e.g. Yukon News). Ask around.
- Limited advancement (local editor is highest position other than publisher/executive level, which requires business/ad sales experience)
- A strong support network (family, friends, professional help) can really make a difference

My journalism career advice

- "Glamorous" internships at national papers aren't the only way. "Working your way up" is sort of possible from rural paper to staff at national newspaper, but not as direct a pipeline as in years past. If that's for you, have good clips: file FOIs, investigate, write meaningful features.
- Black Press might not get you directly to the Globe (it could!), but it will get you to the Glacier papers in Vancouver (e.g. Squamish Chief) or News 1130, Star Metro. That gets you to the big market, and maybe a national if you do well.
- I hear National Post likes "unique voice," pitches on fun, light subjects (Mr. Floatie? Sidney town crier?). Consider this when pitching or applying as an intern. If applying to the Globe, highlight the serious investigations or features you've done.

- Locally, CFX always needs casual fill-ins (writers, tech desk, on-air announcers) and you can stitch together okay working hours. Their News Director, Ryan Price, is always open to chatting. CFUV experience helps, but not critical.
- Job resources: Jeff Gaulin's Job Board, cdnmedia.slack.com, FB groups like Canadian Journalists of Colour, Twitter.
- List of Canadian newspaper reporter salaries from 2016: <http://j-source.ca/article/how-much-do-newspaper-reporters-earn-in-2016/>

While in school

- Take some courses in political science or philosophy. Ethics for journalists, like in the CP Stylebook, are precedent-based, which fails when faced with novel situations. A working theoretical knowledge of political science, philosophy will bolster your moral compass. Post-enlightenment political thought, the Canadian Constitution, and especially Indigenous politics were highly influential for me. Find something that might shift your worldview.
- Hone your raw skills in photography, video, audio, print design. It makes you eligible for more jobs, but also a more holistic understanding of journalism & greater appreciation for what stories suit a podcast or a feature. Learn how the eye wanders down a page (user interface design).
- School is the BEST PLACE to experiment and learn all these skills. You have time to try breadth AND depth. Just one of these is not enough.

Leaving journalism for the B.C. public service

- The raw skills of journalism aren't just for PR, but for policy analysis, program analysis, internal communications and more. Sometimes they also hire videographers. Apply to those.
- Four stages: Resume/cover letter & (maybe) questionnaire; written assignment, interview, reference check. Process takes at least 4-6 weeks. Their process/expectations are quite different from the private sector.
- Resumes (3 pages) and cover letters (1.5-2 pages) are places to match keywords, not to be artful. Breadth doesn't impress, depth does. External job postings (half of what's offered internally): <https://bcpublicservice.hua.hrsmart.com/hr/ats/JobSearch/search>
- Leave 1-2 sentences in your cover letter for "passion statements" and why you want the job, but the rest should clearly and aggressively address how you meet the job requirements as listed in the posting.
- Written assignments, done at home, can vary ("design a poster" or "write a briefing note")
- Interviews are based on "competencies," personality traits that are deemed important for the job (e.g. analytical thinking, flexibility, cultural agility).
- In general, interview responses should state intent, have a system/plan to solve problem, describe how your actions would affect people. Thank and accept feedback from your colleagues. There are precise marking guides they grade you on that are inaccessible to the public.
- This goes for any interview: if your scenario is too complicated, and they don't know the hero/villain, the clear arc from conflict to resolution, you won't do well. Tell only relevant parts of your story. Make mostly "I" statements, not "we" statements. They don't care what the organization or group did. They care how YOU influenced the GROUP. Use the STAR technique.
- I'm currently a temp "Communications Officer 18": \$29.49/hr/~\$54 k/year. B.C Gov salary chart: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/careers-myhr/all-employees/pay-benefits/salaries/salarylookuptool