

Denise Balkissoon
Ontario bureau chief
The Narwhal

Thursday, September 28, 2023 - 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.

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One of the best ways to spread the word about your important work is to get your organization's expertise covered in the media. And journalists are always looking for smart people to offer real insight into the stories of the day. The problem is, they're also inundated with irrelevant emails that get deleted without being opened — which is why it often seems like press releases disappear into a mysterious black hole. So how do you match your needs with media interest? Denise Balkissoon, Ontario bureau chief for The Narwhal, explains how she identifies stories and sources, both when she's in need of new ideas and when she needs fast commentary for a story with a looming deadline.

Denise Balkissoon is Ontario bureau chief for The Narwhal, a non-profit investigative newsroom focused on the natural world in Canada. Prior to that, she was executive editor at Chatelaine and a columnist, editor and podcast host at The Globe and Mail. She was also a co-founder of the Ethnic Aisle, a groundbreaking publication about race and ethnicity in the Greater Toronto Area and beyond. Her work has won awards from the Canadian Association of Journalists, the National Magazine Awards, the Digital Publishing Awards, the Urban Alliance on Race Relations and the Association of Ontario Midwives.



Five Good Ideas

1. Know what you want
2. Know what your contacts want
3. Be specific and clear
4. Time it right
5. Keep in touch



Resources

- The University of Waterloo Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation has great, specific press releases, like this one about flooding: <https://uwaterloo.ca/climate-institute/news/homes-sell-82-cent-less-after-catastrophic-floods>. When I wrote about flooding a full year later, I immediately thought of Waterloo when sourcing experts: <https://thenarwhal.ca/ontario-development-floods/>
- Here's another set of researchers that send out good press releases: <https://www.healthyheadwaterslab.ca/>. Not only that, but one of the main researchers sent us a note directly. Here's the eventual story: <https://thenarwhal.ca/windsor-ojibway-national-urban-park/>
- This is an example of a story that was published long after we first started chatting with a group that sent us a press release. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture got in touch with us a full year before this came out, which is what put that group on our radar. <https://thenarwhal.ca/ontario-farmland-development/>
- This is an example of both late effects and using the idea but not quoting the group. The Wildlands League sent us a press release with its criticism of Ontario's draft legislation on caribou in March 2022, and we published this in September: <https://thenarwhal.ca/lake-superior-caribou-conservation/>
- And now for something completely different: Dr. Jen Gunter is a gynecologist who is now on every reproductive health journalist's radar because of her pithy, no-nonsense, funny, straight-talking Tweets (and now books!) on a topic that too many people treat with prissiness or shame: <https://twitter.com/DrJenGunter>

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FIVE GOOD IDEAS

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Edited by **ALAN BROADBENT AND RATNA OMIDVAR**

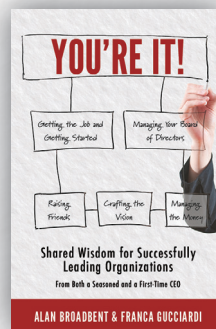
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