

NextVoice Sarnia Editorial & Program Standards

A Mastermind Youth Foundation x The Sarnia Journal Collaboration

Purpose

These standards ensure that all work created under *NextVoice Sarnia* upholds the integrity, ethics, and editorial quality expected of *The Sarnia Journal* while providing a safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environment for emerging storytellers.

1. Editorial Conduct & Accuracy

All participants are expected to:

- Report accurately, fairly, and responsibly.
- Verify facts before publication, using reliable sources.
- Attribute information properly and use direct quotes only when accurate.
- Avoid plagiarism and fabrication.
- Use AI responsibly, reasonably, and professionally.
- Respect privacy, consent, and confidentiality—especially when interviewing minors or vulnerable individuals.

Reference:

Participants are encouraged to review *The Canadian Press Stylebook* and *Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) Ethics Guidelines* for additional guidance on professional journalism standards.

2. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

The Sarnia Journal and *Mastermind Youth Foundation* are committed to fostering an equitable and inclusive newsroom. We value representation and strive to highlight stories from all backgrounds, including but not limited to:

- 2SLGBTQIA+ communities
- Indigenous peoples
- Newcomers and immigrants
- Racialized and ethnic minority groups
- People with disabilities
- Women and gender-diverse individuals

All participants must demonstrate respect, empathy, and fairness in both their storytelling and peer interactions.

Reporting on Indigenous Peoples

For all references to Indigenous communities and individuals:

- Use **Indigenous** as the preferred umbrella term for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

- Capitalize terms such as Indigenous, First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and Indigenous Peoples in Canada.
- Avoid outdated or harmful terms unless they are the stated preference of the person or community concerned.
- “Indian” should never be used except when specifically preferred or included in a formal title.
- Avoid constructions that imply ownership, such as “Canada’s Indigenous Peoples”; use “Indigenous Peoples in Canada” instead.
- When possible, reference the specific community name (e.g., Aamjiwnaang First Nation, Cree, Mohawk, Inuit community names).
- Use a community’s preferred spelling and terminology.
- Recognize that not all Indigenous people on reserve have status, and not all non-status Indigenous people live off reserve.
- The term tribe may appear in some contexts but should be replaced with *nation*, *community*, *people*, *band*, or *language group* unless otherwise preferred.

Responsible Reporting on Race, Ethnicity, and Diversity

- Identify a person’s race, ethnicity, or national origin only when it is directly relevant to the story.
- Reflect the diversity of Sarnia–Lambton naturally in reporting; avoid tokenism or limiting minority voices to stories about conflict or culture.
- Avoid assumptions based on personal background, religion, or cultural familiarity.
- Do not use descriptors such as “exotic” for foods or customs, and do not assume what readers do or do not know.
- Avoid highlighting someone’s ethnicity in crime reporting unless essential for identification.
- When race or ethnicity is significant—for example, in stories about discrimination, immigration, language policy, or representation—ensure clarity and balance.
- Do not rely on a single “community spokesperson” repeatedly; seek a range of perspectives.

3. Appropriate Content

Content published through *NextVoice Sarnia* must align with the Journal’s editorial mission and community standards:

- **Encouraged:** Local sports, arts, culture, innovation, youth issues, community events, positive social change, and human-interest storytelling.
- **Not permitted:** Hate speech, discriminatory or inflammatory language, defamatory material, explicit sexual content, or partisan political campaigning.
- **Sensitive topics:** When covering issues such as mental health, substance use, trauma, homelessness, or poverty, writers must approach subjects with sensitivity and obtain editorial approval before beginning the writing process.

4. Mentorship & Editorial Oversight

All submissions are reviewed by *The Sarnia Journal* editorial team. Feedback will be constructive and educational, with a focus on developing reporting, writing, and ethical judgement. Published stories may be edited for clarity, accuracy, and tone.

5. Professionalism & Conduct

Participants represent *NextVoice Sarnia*, *Mastermind Youth Foundation* and *The Sarnia Journal* in the community.

- Dress and act appropriately when attending events or interviews.
 - Treat interview subjects, peers, and mentors with respect.
 - Obtain photo and interview consent when required.
 - Disclose conflicts of interest (e.g., family, school, or business connections).
 - Maintain confidentiality of unpublished stories and internal communications.
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6. Credit & Ownership

All published work remains the intellectual property of the creator but may be used, shared, and archived by *The Sarnia Journal* and *Mastermind Youth Foundation* for educational or promotional purposes with proper credit.

7. Recruitment & Hiring Practices

- *The Sarnia Journal* and *Mastermind Youth Foundation* follow fair and transparent hiring and selection processes.
 - All applicants are considered without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or socioeconomic status.
 - Participation in the program is voluntary.
 - Participants will be notified of a successful or unsuccessful application within 7 days.
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8. Support & Safety

- We maintain a zero-tolerance policy for harassment, bullying, or discrimination.
- Concerns can be reported confidentially to program mentors or *The Sarnia Journal's* editorial lead.
- For all participants under 18 years old, parental consent is required either through *Mastermind Youth Foundation* or through *The Sarnia Journal* directly.
- Peer mentoring for youth shall occur in public locations, in group settings, or on site at *Mastermind Youth Foundation* on Lochiel Street.
- Youth mentorship in private residences is strictly prohibited.
- One-on-one mentorship with Journal staff may occur online, with parental permission and in recorded sessions.
- Program coordinators, including Jacques Villeneuve and Robynne Hay, will be notified of all mentorship meetings, that occur between Journal staff and program participants. The dates, times, location, and format of these meetings will be recorded.
- If a minor wishes to interview an adult member of the Sarnia-Lambton community, a secondary support person (i.e. parent, teacher, family member, or program mentor) known to the youth must be present.

9. Contact & Resources

For questions, feedback, or story approvals, contact:

General Inquiries and Sales: info@thesarniajournal.ca

News: editorial@thesarniajournal.ca

Obituaries: content@thesarniajournal.ca

Community Lens: communitylens@thesarniajournal.ca

Billing & Payments: admin@thesarniajournal.ca

NextVoice Sarnia Journalism Program: robynnne@thesarniajournal.ca