



# ASSESSMENT OF INDUSTRY SURVEY ON AUTHENTIC STORYTELLING

By AndHumanity Inclusive Marketing, in collaboration with Dorothy Alexandre, for Telefilm Canada's Subcommittee on Authentic Storytelling | November 2022

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## PROJECT OVERVIEW

### Purpose

Earlier in spring 2022, Telefilm Canada [announced the creation of an industry subcommittee](#) focusing on Authentic Storytelling. The announcement was made following a meeting with its external Diversity and Inclusion Working Group.

Telefilm continues to work together with the industry in building more representative screen-based storytelling. In collaboration with a third-party agency - [AndHumanity](#) - and independent consultant - [Dorothy Alexandre](#) - Telefilm launched a survey. The purpose of the survey was to learn more about what members of our industry are currently doing to further authentic storytelling, as well as receive feedback on roles that Canadian institutions like Telefilm can play in establishing best practices.

As shared via this document, through this exercise Telefilm aimed to:

- Get an understanding of how those in the industry perceives authentic storytelling;
- Learn more about how Canadian filmmakers are currently practicing authentic storytelling;
- Invite feedback on how existing best practices could or should be adapted and/or applied to Telefilm; and
- Invite innovative new ideas around authentic storytelling that Telefilm could further investigate in the Canadian film industry.

Participants were able to provide invaluable feedback on what authentic storytelling could look like in the context of the Canadian film industry.

The feedback will help inform how Telefilm approaches authentic storytelling in the future and how it can support the Canadian industry in their evolution and education.

## Methodology

In total, **150 survey respondents** participated in the survey with a breakdown of **20 respondents for the French survey** and **130 for the English surveys**. Outreach was done by Telefilm Canada through their industry advisory and via email to their subscriber list in both English and French. The surveys were sent to about 60 organizations, which included: Telefilm Canada's Equity and Inclusion Working Group, Telefilm's Industry panel advisory group, and film-focused organizations in Canada that represent and advocate for equity-deserving groups. It was also sent directly to individual people that reached out about the project.

We had 12 respondents represent organizations, which included lenses with a focus on race and ethnicity (Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour) as well as gender (those who identify as women) in the English surveys. For Francophone participants, 4 respondents represented organizations focusing on equity-deserving groups more broadly. Beyond organizations, individual creatives included a range of lenses in terms of age, ethnicity, ability, gender, and gender diversity.

Overall, the organizations who participated in the survey and disclosed their organization details include those who are **general digital media, independent media, and production companies** along with **organizations who are specifically advocating for equity-deserving groups**.

Most participants (more than half) were located in **Ontario**, with the next highest number of participants (slightly less than a quarter) located in **British Columbia**. The survey also received responses from **Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Saskatchewan, and Yukon**.

For organizations in the survey from French-speaking organizations, a majority of them are located in Quebec (see Appendix B) and are also mainly those who are general production companies along with a few organizations representing equity-deserving groups.

You can find a breakdown of participants' geographic locations by primary language in Appendices A and B.

As well, due to an outside influence where the survey is shared beyond the film industry, AndHumanity observed that data collated on August 15, 2022 (with responses between August 11, 2022 to August 15, 2022) involved harmful responses. These came in the form of spamming and an influx of responses that do not appear to reflect the views of industry (in comparison to responses received on other dates). In addition to and beyond these results, there were around 200 responses for the English survey and around 30 for the French survey that AndHumanity couldn't include into the overall results. This is due to non-response from those who started but didn't proceed with the survey and, thus, are not counted into the overall respondents list.

## Survey Limitations

Prior to presenting these valuable findings, we also need to note some limitations of the research.

**Low Response Rate:** A key limitation here is the low response rate for Francophone participants. Telefilm speculates that the lower response rate is potentially because of external events occurring for Francophone industry members at the same time as data collection for the survey. As such, attention may have been taken away from being able to fill out the survey or having the time to do so.

**Screening Questions:** Another limitation to the research is the omission of screening questions for participants, mainly because of time constraints. Due to this, there is a possibility that participants who are either not involved in the Canadian film industry or have not engaged with Telefilm in the past and/or currently are also included into the results.

**Self-Identification:** Lastly, the results from the survey include very limited demographic information on participants beyond their location, affiliated organization (if any), and whether they are Francophone or Anglophone. Thus, it is only when someone self-identifies as equity-deserving within the comments or is part of an organization that advocates for equity-deserving groups is AndHumanity able to infer demographic information outside of those mentioned above.

**Telefilm's Limitations:** With a desire to move this work forward, Telefilm acknowledges that the limitations above are also due to time constraints (e.g. a secure method for collecting self-identification data within the survey environment).

# OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

The surveys had a total of 150 respondents with a breakdown of 20 respondents for the French survey and 130 for the English survey. Across these surveys, AndHumanity observed general consensus around the following themes:

## What Makes a Story Authentic

Most survey respondents feel that those with lived experience should be involved in telling their own stories. There is a spectrum of responses around how and to what extent this should happen, with general consensus of this theme among participants - especially as it relates to the impact of authentic storytelling. However, a minority of participants feel that authentic storytelling should be determined by creators, regardless of identity, and is dependent on the outcome alone.

### Authenticity as ‘Truth’

There is overall consensus among participants that, by approaching authenticity from the perspective of telling honest and true stories, storytellers can increase positive representation, which has both audience benefit and reach beyond one’s own group.

### Authenticity as ‘Normalization’

The majority of participants, particularly those who explicitly share their equity-deserving lenses but also those who do not, indicate that authentic storytelling positively shapes people’s lives. Again, while there is consensus around this theme, it is a spectrum. For some, that ‘normalization’ happens through diversity alone, where others feel both diversity and inclusion are necessary, through which there is an emphasis on being actively supported and treated equitably.

## Equitable and Sustainable Funding

Most participants believe funding has a role in authentic storytelling. They express a desire to see larger structural changes, with a spectrum of opinions around what these changes could look like and how they might be applied. The majority of respondents believed that being able to have authentic storytelling in front of the screen requires change to funding approaches behind the scenes (e.g. from access to that funding to all the way to how people are involved and who is/isn’t included in the process).

## Training

The majority of participants agree with wanting training, with variation around what that training should look like and who it should be directed to (e.g. those in the

dominant culture and/or those who are equity-deserving). As well, the survey suggests that there is a lack of understanding of what authentic storytelling entails for some respondents.

## Best Practice Implementations

The majority of best practice implementations from participants are around systemic change within the industry to amplify those who are equity-deserving. In general though, respondents shared a wide spectrum of best practice implementations that span from systemic approaches to those relating to diversity specifically.

## THEMES OF SURVEY RESPONSES

This section summarizes the themes and key recommendations from survey participants. For clear and immediate information that the themes cover, they're **broken down by the questions** they're referencing as well as any **breakdown per demographic** as applicable.

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### What Makes a Story Authentic

How would you define authentic storytelling? What is the role and responsibility of content creators? What are some ways in which you are currently practicing authentic storytelling? What are the current gaps or challenges to ensuring authentic and inclusive storytelling in the Canadian film industry? What are some ways the Canadian film industry can further support authentic storytelling?

*Most participants agree that those with lived experience should be involved in telling their own stories. This theme especially resonates with equity-deserving participants across multiple lenses, including those who explicitly shared that they self-identify as disabled/persons with disabilities, women, 2SLGBTQIA+, and Indigenous, Black, Person of Colour (IBPOC).*

*Some participants also indicate that there are nuances to this approach in terms of the level of connection that one has to the community that the story is about.*

**Lived Experience:** When asking how participants define authentic storytelling and what the roles and responsibilities of content creators are, lived experience is a major theme that comes up (and is also touched on throughout other questions). In other words, participants are stating that **stories should be written by community members of the same lived experience** rather than having someone else tell it. There is a sentiment that those involved in the creative process should understand the responsibility they have to portray underrepresented groups and people in particular. Participants state that, when there is a **lack of lived experience**, harm is caused through **culturally incorrect storytelling** and **perpetuating stereotypes**.

In addition to this, participants suggest that lived experience itself varies significantly. This comes up in responses that indicate there are different ways of experiencing dimensions of identity and different degrees of closeness to various communities that impact authentic storytelling. For example:

- Direct **lived experience with a strong connection** with one's community (e.g. born and raised and self-identify with a specific culture before settling in Canada, hence, creating a nuanced sensitivity to diversity that's specific to that culture)
- Direct **lived experience, but weak connection** with one's community (e.g. second generation person born in Canada who may view and interpret the world from a Eurocentric or 'Canadian' lens)
- Without direct **lived experience, but informed** about the community

Similarly, for other participants, there is a level of nuance that comes with lived experience around how intercultural sensitivity relates to authentic storytelling. For these participants, who are largely creatives or organizations advocating for IBPOC groups and people, **intercultural sensitivity with lived experience consists of:**

- **Self-awareness**
  - Taking time to ask yourself why you should be the one to tell the story and if you're even the best person to be doing that telling while also looking at who has authorship/credit over the content and if they are someone of lived experience
- Learning and actioning upon **social change** concepts in the storytelling process (e.g. structural issues, power, privilege)
- Understanding how both oneself and others are **represented**
  - For example, is the representation happening in a way that creates harm?
- **Accountability** and **responsibility** to the story that one is telling and the communities it impacts

Additionally, organizations that advocate for and collaborate with IBPOC groups and organizations mention **nuances in community** as it associates with lived experience. These participants are particularly responding to questions around their own approach to practicing authentic storytelling as well as gaps that they see in the industry, which include:

- **Community Connection:** For some participants, the story needs to be supported by and resonating with the equity-deserving group who have the

specific lived experience presented. However, they noted that having connections and a commitment to the specific community that they are focusing on is not homogenous. For example, someone who is Cree can't authentically tell the story of someone else who is Coast Salish, especially if they have no connection to the Coast Salish Nation. As such, lived experience **connections should be specific.**

- **Inequities within Community:** For other participants, recognizing inequities that occur within a community is also a key part of lived experience that considers diversity within the community itself. For example, organizations talk about this in the context of Black groups and people as well as race in general. They highlight that there continues to be privilege based on skin tone within the communities themselves (i.e. colourism/shade-ism) in terms of who gets opportunities and who doesn't. Thus, these participants state that Telefilm Canada needs to **amplify the voices and experiences of those often erased within a community** when considering how to approach working with those of lived experience in creative work for authentic storytelling.

**In-depth Research and Consultation:** When participants are asked how they practice authentic storytelling, many who have created content on other people's lived experience (e.g. non-disabled creatives making content on disabled people) mention **exhaustive research.** For them, research is a role and responsibility that content creators have, a practice they apply themselves to achieve authentic storytelling, and overall a component of how authentic storytelling is defined. These participants state that this step is particularly important when lived experience is not present in the process of the storytelling. As such, the purpose of strong in-depth research on a topic is to make sure that all the nuances are captured in the storytelling that one might not have otherwise known about. Being able to **tell stories that are from another perspective,** not necessarily within the community itself but from an outsider lens for these participants also provides further diversity in how stories are told than if all stories were only ever told from one's own personal lived experience. However, a gap to this in the industry that participants found is considering **how one goes about researching a good story** and what that standard looks like.

As such, some participants suggest that, **beyond research, there needs to be involvement of lived experience via consultants.** For them, such involvement is needed to ensure that there is still some level of rigour to the research that includes first-person lived experience. Other participants also suggest potentially **embedding consultants with lived experience into creative work** so that there are overall shared values related to inclusion and authentic storytelling. As is suggested by the following quote:

*"We should continue to develop authenticity as a cultural value within the industry and give it the necessary attention and funding."*

In line with that, participants also suggest that consultants with lived experience should have specialized roles in the industry, similar to roles like intimacy or privacy coordinators. However, participants who shared they were equity-deserving also suggested there needs to be enough budget in place to ensure consultants receive equitable compensation and are provided with ownership of the story itself. Thus, many participants state that working with consultants should not be treated as a tokenistic gesture, but one that involves deep involvement with the production and is **equitable in its approach**.

**Co-Creation:** Despite the important role that research and consultants play, the majority of participants who self-identify within the survey as equity-deserving or in organizations that advocate for equity-deserving groups consistently bring up co-creation. For them, co-creation with those who have lived experience is an important practice that they themselves use to practice authentic storytelling, but it also comes up as a role and responsibility that funding institutions and content creators have.

Additionally, co-creation comes up as a gap/challenge in the industry by participants. For example, an organization that self-identified as representing Black filmmakers and filmmakers of colour states that they believe the industry is currently limited to **freelance consultants who don't have right of veto** to the creative work. Thus, participants share that it's important to have co-creation that provides equity-deserving groups who are informing the work from their lived experience with intellectual property rights.

These participants describe co-creation in terms of:

- Building **relationships** with the community
- Creating a **collaborative** environment that doesn't create harm, including giving credit and rights as applicable to all those collaborating (e.g. via intellectual property rights)
- Inclusion of **equity-deserving groups at all levels**, in front of and behind the scenes, along with a focus on inclusion within decision-making roles

**The Story Itself:** A minority of participants, skewing largely to participants with data collated on August 15 (during which an outside influence resulted in an influx of harmful survey responses), felt that authentic storytelling should be determined by creators and relies completely on the story itself.

For these participants, authenticity is about the creator and creative process, so a **story created by anyone is in itself authentic**. Rather than increase positive representations, they feel that authentic storytelling fulfills a political agenda and anyone should create any story that they want to. These responses indicate that authentic storytelling needs to only consider the quality of the story, rather than whether it involves lived experience or not.



A small number of respondents who explicitly self-identified as equity-deserving also emphasize the quality of the story. These respondents, who prefer a focus on the story versus lived experience, state that they also do not want to solely write or stay limited to stories about their own lived experience.

Further, a nuance is surfaced around how **lived experience is necessary when it comes to equity-deserving groups**, but not as necessary when it comes to representation of the dominant culture. For example:

*"I don't think that if you are female you can only write female characters, and you need a male to consult if you want to add a male character to a cast. But I think if you are representing...[an equity-deserving] community...you should...have members of that community included in the creative elements, and/or ownership of the project. You should be able to answer the question 'why should YOU be the one to tell this story?'"*

Additionally, there is a sentiment that people with lived experience **should not be required to create stories about their own trauma or personal experiences**, but rather have the opportunity to tell stories in and of themselves.

Notably, this is specifically a theme that comes up often from some individual equity-deserving creatives as well as those who haven't explicitly self-identified in their survey responses. From their lenses, it's important to tell any story if it is of interest due to **freedom of expression** and not wanting censorship or policing of their content as highlighted with the following quotes:

*"In my opinion, a creator does not have, a priori, any responsibility, except that which consists in being authentic with himself and consequently with what he says. Afterwards, his work will be destroyed or celebrated, and it is the public and the critics who will decide. Be careful that by wanting to do well, we end up creating a censorship police: creators, who are neither journalists nor documentary filmmakers, must be able to express themselves freely."*

*"I think we risk losing a diversity of not just voices but also freedom of expression when we disallow others from showing a curiosity in exploring cinematically a subject matter that is of deep interest to them."*

How these participants perceive authentic storytelling is from thinking of it as something where there are no barriers, limits, or prohibitions around subjects that one can broach and address. For example:

*"...there is no barrier, no exclusion, or limit to what a creator can approach on any subject."*

*“People get to write what they want, imagine, desire without any [restrictions] on their creative imagination. A person does not have to identify as one identity to be able to write about it.”*

There is a significant difference in perspective between these respondents, who perceive authentic storytelling as a potential restriction or mandate and those respondents who perceive authentic storytelling as a concept, opportunity, or best practice.

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## **Authenticity as ‘Truth’**

How would you define authentic storytelling? How can authentic storytelling increase positive representations about historically underrepresented groups and communities? Do you think authentically-told stories can further a project's audience reach and international potential? If so, how?

*There is overall consensus among participants that, by approaching authenticity from the perspective of telling honest and true stories, stories can increase positive representation. This has both audience benefit and reach beyond one's own group.*

Truth in association with authentic storytelling comes up in different contexts among participants across the majority of the questions. Authentic storytelling in itself is considered as representing truth. It's also a concept that increases positive representation, which has both audience benefit and reach beyond one's own group. Telling the truth is also seen as the responsibility of content creators and a practice that many participants are implementing themselves. Additionally, it's important to note that truth is a subjective concept, and there are different understandings among respondents of what truth is and how it relates to authentic storytelling.

### **Fiction and Nonfiction**

Authentic storytelling is often defined in relation to non-fictional storytelling. While that's not the case with all the participants, with many acknowledging that **fictional works are also authentic storytelling**, it may indicate that there is potentially a **perception that ‘truth’ can only be shown when it is non-fictional**. For example, one participant highlights that,

*“A key component [of authentic storytelling] involves an obsessive striving for hyper-realism. Examples include documentary filmmaking, representative*

*filmmaking (key creatives representing their own stories and/or cultural stories), biopics, docudramas, etc.”*

## **Multidimensional Truth**

Many participants also indicate that it's important to have positive representations of equity-deserving groups. For these participants, positive representation helps move away from harmful stereotypes and create space where one is able to know of other options, and provide a new, respectful perspective. However, some participants shared that it's also important to depict equity-deserving groups as **multidimensional with their own flaws and positive traits**, rather than depicting only a binary or one-sided perspective. This is discussed in more detail later in the document.

## **Specific is Universal**

The majority of participants agree that truth in storytelling also involves being able to extend one's reach beyond the specific group that one's story is about. This is the case among participants expressing a need in the global community for diverse stories while entailing that Canada is behind in this space. Many express that stories including universal human experiences, no matter how specific they are, further a project's audience reach and international potential. Participants also mention **emotional resonance** as playing a role in reaching broader audiences. As well, participants suggest that, rather than trying to approach stories from a formulaic and 'standard' way that prioritizes the lens of the dominant culture, stories should be **interculturally sensitive and culturally diverse**.

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## **Authenticity as 'Normalization'**

How can authentic storytelling increase positive representations about historically underrepresented groups and communities?  
How can audiences benefit from seeing authentic and inclusively told stories?

*Participants indicate that authentic storytelling positively shapes people's lives.*

*The majority of participants suggest this from a lens of diversity (being present alone) while other participants' responses are on a spectrum of looking at this theme from a lens of diversity as well as inclusion (also being actively supported and treated equitably).*

When it comes to the impact of authentic storytelling, the majority of participants feel that it can increase positive representation. However, these participants also acknowledge that many equity-deserving groups may feel the need to ‘normalize’ their stories to resonate with the dominant culture due to historical and current systemic oppression. Thus, they express that achieving true authenticity will be a complex and ongoing process, reliant on challenging systemic oppression.

With that said, participants suggest that authentic storytelling challenges a viewers’ perception of equity-deserving groups through:

### **Shaping Minds**

Respondents believe that people’s reality and how they perceive things are shaped by what they see in the media. When stories are inauthentic, they perpetuate further harm as highlighted by the following quote:

*“Humans believe much of what they see in film to be true. If we continue to parrot harmful stereotypes, our daily lives will continue to be rife with discrimination, judgement and fear.”*

However, when authentic storytelling does happen, participants believe it can benefit the audience by creating space to **heal, educate** others, and become familiar with the current **realities of equity-deserving groups**.

### **Nuance and Complexity**

Participants also express that authentic storytelling **normalizes seeing diverse and nuanced storytelling**. This happens through multidimensional representation that tells a full nuanced, complex, and true story. By only looking at the positive:

*“...we end up striving for stories that are safe or unproblematic representations that depict the community in a nice way...an authentic story does not need to be positive, and in fact we should never limit a marginalized artist’s ability to tell their messy, negative, and perhaps problematic story as the inverse of that diminishes the realities of underrepresented communities and tokenizes them as people without agency or dynamism.”*

As such, these participants are concerned with the use of the term “positive” in the question phrasing. They don’t believe that sharing truth only means showing positive representation, but rather the whole and complete truth. They emphasize that having **equity-deserving characters who are flawed, controversial, and imperfect** contributes to spaces where people can truly also be their **full selves** beyond the screen.

## The Impact of ‘Normalization’

There are **three levels of impact that participants suggest authentic stories can have** in relation to positive representation and the benefits that audiences experience. These include:

1. **Empathy (i.e. the window effect):** Some participants emphasize creating empathy about the realities of stories that aren't often told or may be different. This helps to humanize the stories and characters on screen from the perspective of the audience. This is particularly the case for those who are outsiders to a community or those part of the dominant culture to understand, empathize, and open up to worldviews that are different from their own.
2. **Validation (i.e. the mirror effect):** Other participants suggest that, for those who are equity-deserving, being able to see representation that is authentic to one's own lived experience or community is validating. Such representation also creates a sense of pride for one's own identity or the community that one is part of.
3. **Opportunities to Uplift:** For the remainder of participants who brought this theme forward, authentic stories can create spaces to actively change the realities of equity-deserving groups. In this way, the creation of authentic stories can have **reciprocal benefits** in enabling more opportunities to **uplift the community** itself.

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## Equitable and Sustainable Funding

What is the role and responsibility of funding institutions regarding authentic storytelling?

*The majority of respondents who discuss funding agree that funding institutions have some role and responsibility in authentic storytelling. Most talk about funding institutions in relation to how they operate/function, emphasizing opportunities for change at a structural level. These participants include organizations whose work consists of advocating for equity-deserving groups, focus on production from a culturally competent lens, or are independent content creators. While consensus is generally that funding relates to authentic storytelling, those who believe funding institutions should not have a role or responsibility in authentic storytelling are cautious about ‘policing’ and censorship by the government and overall want minimal involvement.*

For most participants, authentic storytelling is generally considered a responsibility and role for funding institutions to take on. They believe it's important to provide equitable funding and access to tell diverse stories from creatives of diverse communities and through their own lived experiences. As well, participants want access to budgets that acknowledge and encourage the application of inclusive principles that many equity-deserving groups and creatives are already engaging in. These participants also point out a need to consider the system from different angles.

### **Systemic Inequity and Lack of Intercultural Sensitivity**

Participants state that there are systemic attitudes and hidden bias towards valuing the **dominant culture's storytelling**, which is generally **deemed more marketable**. They suggest that producers, distributors, and broadcasters need to have an open-minded and wider understanding of what is marketable and valuable. For them, that awareness comes with also needing to be cognizant of their own biases and the way that bias impacts their work and the choices they make around which stories are marketable.

*"Authentic storytelling is not just about including different voices in the same old formats - let the form change too."*

In this way and for these participants, authentic storytelling means being very intentional about creating inclusive spaces from the ground up that foster and amplify equity-deserving groups at all levels within an organization, including in the funding process.

### **Change in Decision-Making**

Participants state that there is a **need for diversity and representation in senior and management roles** to support in creating spaces where diverse stories can be told. For example, many participants find that there are people traditionally in positions of power, and it is these perspectives that tend to be taken seriously and into account when funding stories. Oftentimes, decision makers are also not from the communities represented in the content they are making decisions on.

### **Token Hires**

Participants also encourage providing equity-deserving groups and people with **creative control**, rather than just being part of a project for tokenistic purposes to get the funding. These participants express that how current funding is structured relies on tokenism over meaningful influence. Additionally, participants find that it can be difficult to have main lead characters who are equity-deserving since the requirements for funding and how it's able to be accessed can make it both acceptable and accessible to have secondary equity-deserving characters on screen who are not the lead perspective. In this way, equity-deserving characters support the main lead's stories, rather than bringing their own diverse perspective.

## Inaccessible Funding

Many participants also indicate that **getting into the industry is difficult**, particularly for those who are equity-deserving. The current funding model requires having a certain number of produced content, broadcaster interest, etc., which can be a barrier to access. These participants generally observe that the focus ends up on mid-level creators rather than those who are emerging, making it difficult to support the growth of new underrepresented talent when opportunities are more accessible to those already within the industry.

Additionally, participants felt **erasure of their specific lived experience** in the current funding model. For example, they shared that immigrant experiences are not validated or acknowledged in current funding opportunities, as proof of experience in Canada is often needed to get funding in the first place. Similarly, funding opportunities for specific demographics are not provided or are very minimal. For example, participants expressed that women over 50 or middle-aged women have minimal to no specific funding or initiatives that prioritizes this lens, which they share is a concern in an industry that tends to treat older women as disposable.

## 'Safe' Storytelling

There is a predominant perception among participants that funding limitations lead to a lack of ability to take risks in storytelling. This is particularly experienced by those who explicitly shared that they self-identify as women and/or Black. These participants state that the current funding structure is embedded with a **fear of taking risks**, fear of experimentation, and overall fear of going beyond what is considered to be a 'safe' and convenient storytelling format. These respondents specifically reference Telefilm's current approach as occurring from a place of **box-checking**. They express that a desire for representation has instead led to situations where stories are predictable, with a similar approach. They feel that even when stories are meant to be diverse, the same stories are being told despite surface level diversity. These participants state that **untold stories involve going beyond what is comfortable and convenient**. In particular, venturing into stories that may be risky, but are incredibly truthful and honest is important.

## Unsustainable Funding

Additionally, participants experience that funding doesn't consider the specific budget and time requirements necessary to maintain **respectful cultural protocols**. This also comes up more specifically when participants work in collaboration with Indigenous peoples. Following cultural protocols that prioritize relationships requires resources, but funding and time are limited. In this case, it can become difficult to manage inclusive approaches within creative production when the system itself doesn't prioritize it.

## Assumption of 'Canadian'

Some participants, particularly those who shared that they self-identify as being immigrants, feel that appealing to the dominant 'Canadian' culture is embedded within funding opportunities - specifically at Telefilm. These participants find that funding opportunities create an **assumption that being 'Canadian' is being white** and default to this lens. This ends up erasing the experiences of those who are immigrants and/or refugees with specific stories that go beyond the context of Canada and to a more international context.

## Lead by Example

Lastly, another common theme among participants is that funding institutions have a responsibility to set the standard, create accountability, and be the change they wish to also see in the industry. They suggest that by **role modeling inclusion** through approaches like being fair and transparent in how they operate and going beyond merit-based policies, funding institutions will encourage others in the industry to also be inclusive in their own work.

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## Training Needed around Best Practices

### Would you benefit from training or guidance in best practices for authentic storytelling?

*The majority of participants believe they would benefit from training or guidance around best practices related to authentic storytelling. Due to previously mentioned outside influence, AndHumanity believes results received skewed the survey in a way that is not reflective of overall industry perspectives. It is also AndHumanity's responsibility to present data transparently. Among participants, there is a skew of responses collated on August 15 with almost half of participants (47%) not interested in training or guidance. If responses from this time period are removed, the overwhelming majority of participants (85%) think they or others in the industry would benefit from training or guidance. With the inclusion of all responses, a little over half (53%) still agree that they would benefit from training.*

Overall, there is a general interest in getting training for best practices around authentic storytelling. For organizations who identified as representing equity-deserving filmmakers, and answered that they already engage in authentic storytelling, the benefit of training would come if:

- It's something that **other people in their community take** along with **those who are part of the dominant culture**.



- It is specifically **directed at those in power in the industry**, with equity-deserving organizations leading the training. Generally this is because these organizations express they have diversity, equity, and inclusion understandings already and that they already apply authentic storytelling approaches in their work.
- It is **actionable in their work**, where equity-deserving organizations would rather be provided the financial support and sustainability to further build upon the authentic storytelling practices that they were already doing.

Additionally, there is interest in training that covers a wide range of equity-deserving groups, such as those who are disabled, various People of Colour lenses (e.g. Asian), 2SLGBTQIA+, etc.

It is also important to note that, among those who disagreed with benefiting from training, there is an overall sentiment of fear and distrust around the government teaching the public about authentic storytelling, requiring people to learn what authentic storytelling is, and leading these types of sessions.

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## Best Practice Implementations

Do you have any suggestions for how Telefilm could best implement new or existing practices? What are some ways in which you are currently practicing authentic storytelling? What are the current gaps or challenges to ensuring authentic and inclusive storytelling in the Canadian film industry?

*A majority of participants' best practice recommendations are around systemic change within the industry to amplify those who are equity-deserving. However, in general, there is a spectrum of best practice implementations and suggestions around how to implement authentic storytelling at all levels.*

## Consultation

Consultation is a significant component of the work that many participants are doing to practice authentic storytelling. Among respondents, several participants practice consultation in their creative work, most of whom have shared equity-deserving lenses including, Black, Person of Colour, 2SLGBTQIA+, women, and disabled. These participants suggest creating a **consultation pool** where creators can work with those who are equity-deserving to find ways to best support them and make sure that protocols and equitable ways of working can be implemented into stories.

However, there is a caveat with this implementation as highlighted through the following quote:

*"[We need to be] encouraging industry members to hire disabled writers – not consultants. Lived experiences and [points of view] are fundamental to getting that authenticity into the room and onto screens -- at all levels."*

Again, the theme comes up that working with consultants should not be tokenistic, but ensure **deep involvement, equitable processes, and meaningful influence**.

## Representation among decision makers

Participants repeatedly mention the importance of representation in leadership. This representation includes the diversity of lenses who are equity-deserving and underrepresented in the industry. This theme is consistent across the majority of equity-deserving participants (e.g. those who share that they self-identify as IBPOC, disabled, women, 2SLGBTQIA+).

Where there is consensus that representation matters, participants consider representation among decision makers in different ways:

- **Institutionally:** Participants suggest that funding institutions need **representation across all levels**, and particularly among the executives who are in charge (e.g. within senior management and board levels).
- **Decisions:** Participants also think that, in decisions where projects are evaluated (e.g. for authentic storytelling), **those from the community with the specific lenses need to be involved** in the evaluation and decision-making process. Some examples from participants of how this looks in application is having 50% of decision makers identifying with the specific lived experience included in the project. Another example is involving leaders recognized within a community as decision makers during any assessment of authentic storytelling involving that community.
- **General representation:** While the majority of participants specify that representation is necessary in leadership and influential decision-making roles, some respondents also emphasize the need for people from diverse backgrounds to be hired in general.

## Specific or Broad

Across many participants, there is a recommendation to address the **specific needs of multiple intersecting groups** within the funding model with recognition that **people aren't a monolith**. For example, participants mention that Telefilm is not funding all Indigenous realities because of their homogeneous perception of Indigenous people. These respondents believe Telefilm needs to be able to pivot in changing funding parameters that are consistent with the requirements of diverse Indigenous production.

Participants also suggest **specialized funding and programs** that are specific to their community (e.g. Black and racialized community arts organizations, Transgender Screen Office, etc.). As well, participants are looking for increased funding access for equity-deserving groups that recognizes the complex diversity among these groups. In other words, they suggest that it is important to meet the nuanced and distinct needs of various people and communities in funding approaches. As well, participants who do not explicitly share that they identify as equity-deserving suggest creating a singular stream that monitors and manages the percentage of different groups that are and aren't receiving funding, and can make adjustments accordingly.

## Amplification of Equity-Deserving Groups

Participants who explicitly share that they are equity-deserving find that they tend to be **required to meet an impossible standard** that even those in the dominant culture don't meet. This is especially a common sentiment among IBPOC organizations.

*"BIPOC creators must be afforded an equal opportunity to fail and not be discouraged when institutionalized success does not occur immediately. The privilege to learn from one's mistakes has not been afforded to BIPOC creators."*

Thus, participants are suggesting that amplification of equity-deserving groups occurs by taking risks on stories and being open to creators, even when they may not fully meet standards or may fail.

In addition, these participants suggest **nurturing and fostering underrepresented creators in their growth** through reparative and sustainable funding for programs to build growth of underrepresented talent. For example, participants suggest providing opportunities for growth that support equity-deserving creatives from starting out within entry-level roles all the way to management and board of director roles. Thus, these participants recommend supporting new and emerging equity-deserving creators initially through low barriers to entry that are flexible with inclusive application and eligibility process, rather than only targeting mid-level creators.

As such, some equity-deserving participants encourage building a system and funding approaches that are **intentionally created with inclusion**, accessibility, equity, and accountability in mind, with implementations like:

- Building in safe and inclusive workspaces for creatives
- Requiring mandated equity targets
- 360 approach assessments for broadcasters
- Accountability for projects that aren't inclusive or authentic

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## Conclusion

Overall, there is a spectrum of understanding, experiences, preferences and nuances among those in the Canadian film industry when it comes to authentic storytelling. From fear and hesitation around getting started in the space all the way to regular implementation of authentic storytelling approaches in the work. Yet, despite some divergence, there is a general consensus that authentic storytelling matters, that authentic storytelling is rooted in truth and normalization, that funding institutions play a role in authentic storytelling and that further training and guidance are necessary. There are a spectrum of ideas around how to conceptualize and apply authentic storytelling in the context of the Canadian film industry. And among virtually all participants, there is an underlying love of creating film and storytelling that resonates.

The results of this survey represent a diversity of voices and perspectives within the industry. Next steps with this research will include continuing to support the industry and innovating within authentic storytelling to ultimately ensure that we can work to intentionally include everyone's stories within the film industry.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Anglophone Participants' Location

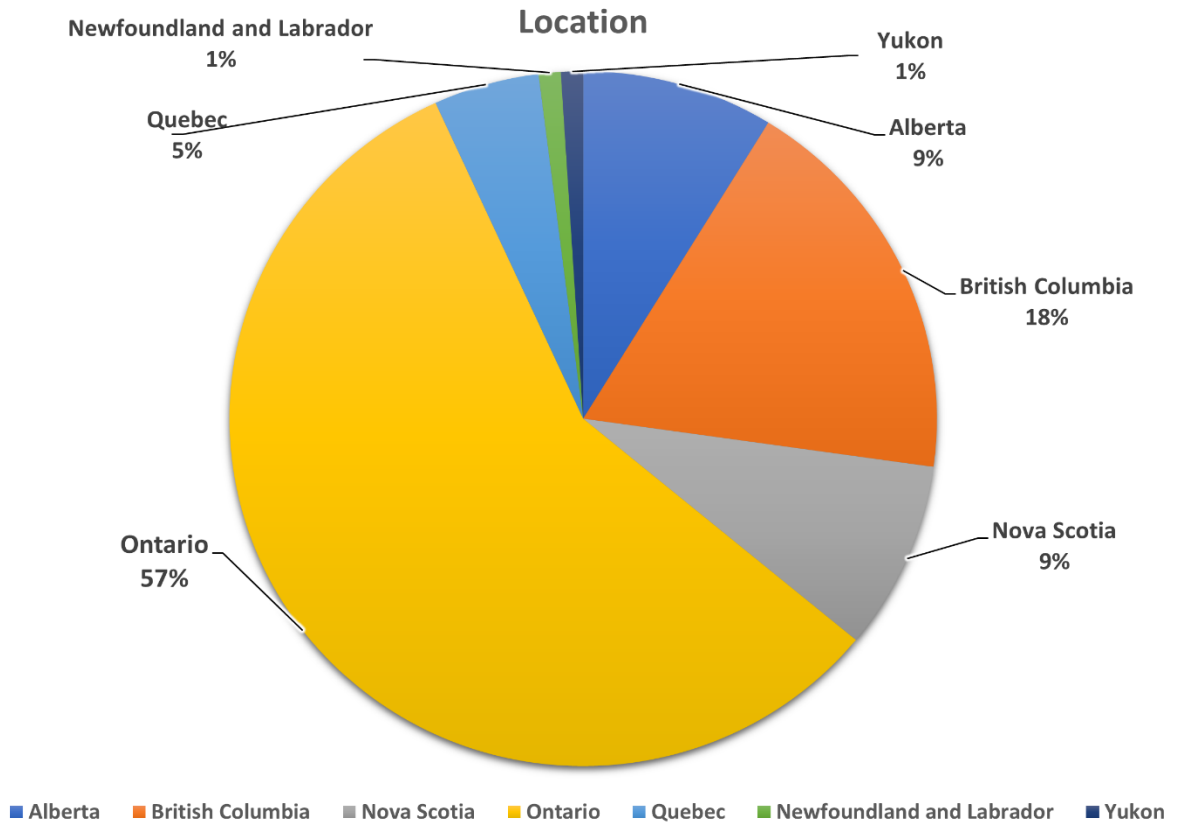


Image Description: Pie chart illustrating location of Anglophone participants. Ontario is 57 percent, British Columbia is 18 percent, Nova Scotia is 9 percent, Alberta is 9 percent, Québec is 5 percent, Newfoundland and Labrador is 1 percent, and Yukon is 1 percent.

# Appendix B: Francophone Participants' Location

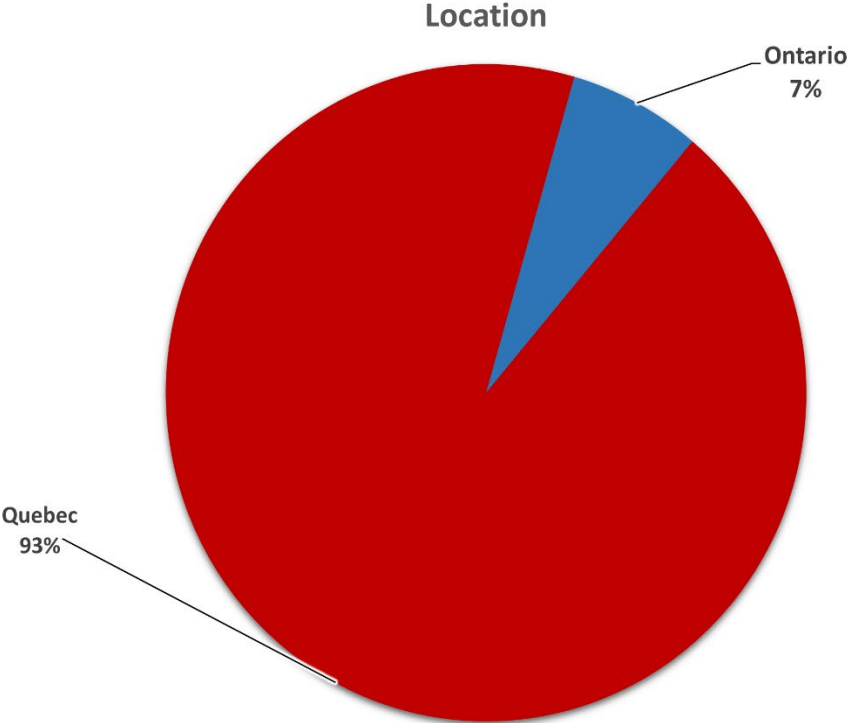


Image Description: Pie chart illustrating location of Francophone participants. Québec is 93 percent and Ontario is 7 percent.