

Indigenous Working Group Meeting October 23, 2019
Meeting and Brainstorming- Session Notes

Working Group Meeting - Takeaways

Regional Representation

- Keep focus on inclusivity and ensure that regional considerations are factored into programs and initiatives that impact Indigenous creators, including funding streams, juries, outreach, and consultations

Telefilm’s Community Engagement Documentation Requirement for the Indigenous Stream

This documentation was introduced last year to help the **jury better understand** the context of a project and its relationship to community. This is an extra document requirement for the Indigenous Stream (requested by a previous Indigenous jury) that asks the filmmaker to describe their plan for the responsible handling of the project. It is also a protocol referenced in the new *Pathways*. It is not required in the main application stream where applicants can discuss their projects directly with decision-makers.

Concern: If Indigenous filmmakers are to take on additional responsibilities re: community engagement, could there be additional funds allocated to Indigenous projects to address this? To follow then, could there be flexible budget line items to address community engagement costs? There are currently additional funds available for *Capacity Building* projects, but none for community engagement activities. Could these be incorporated into the general project budget?

Although this documentation goes to the Indigenous jury, there is a level of discomfort expressed that an Indigenous creator’s engagement with their community *is assessed* for funding. Although the Working Group felt that the current practice is better than when Telefilm *did not ask filmmakers* to speak to their relationship with community, there needs to be an evolving conversation to improve these best practices:

- Suggestion: could there be flexibility to add a line items to the budget to track community engagement and capacity-building initiatives during prep, production, post, and distribution
- Suggestion: Could Telefilm look at including a section, in the main production application form, that addresses the applicant’s connection to the content (e.g. producer’s statement, etc.)

Capacity Building - Producers

- Currently, Telefilm’s Indigenous Stream is aligned with some other funds requiring 2/3 key creatives be filled by an Indigenous person, and that the production be 51% owned by Indigenous persons

- A common challenge is to find an experienced Indigenous producer. The 2/3 allows flexibility for filmmakers to find an appropriate producer, however a 3/3 requirement would ensure that Indigenous producers are being trained (i.e. capacity building)
- There are currently no parameters/protocols for score-sharing between producers. This is a concern for Indigenous and non-Indigenous team members working together. If a filmmaker gets a producer credit, but no score/track record, they no longer have *emerging status* so they cannot access Telefilm’s targeted group Development support, nor can they access Development support with their track record
- **How can the industry** provide better training on business affairs, impact producing, distribution, legal, unions, etc.? The Indigenous community does not have relationships with banks. There is a gap in knowledge on how to close financing, and a need for more time to close
- Suggestion: Could veteran, national budget-level companies in mainstream programs be required to have an Indigenous producer trainee on their productions? Could there also be mentorship requirements for other Indigenous key creatives?
- Suggestion: Review score-sharing rules and consider making a minimum 51% Indigenous score-share requirement for projects in the Indigenous Stream
- Suggestion: Consider creating a producer trainee incentive/requirement on Indigenous productions
- Suggestion for Industry: Support or create Business Affairs training sessions in regions throughout the country. Consider an online module?
- Suggestion for Industry: Investigate ways to improve the relationships between banks and Indigenous producers

General Concerns

- Concern noted over the underspending in 2018/2019 fiscal which was explained and accounted for by Telefilm (jury decisions and project withdrawals). Moving forward Telefilm advised that Indigenous funding allocations will be given additional consideration to go towards other Indigenous productions, top-ups, post financing, or development
- Telefilm’s allocation to the Indigenous stream: Telefilm confirmed its commitment to continued support of Indigenous Content creation, and Indigenous creators. In the absence of any new information on Telefilm’s overall budget, no further details could be provided at the time

Brainstorming – Observations and Suggestions

Capacity Building – Crew & Cast Concerns

- Often, when Indigenous below-the-line crew get opportunities to work on a single project (usually outside a production centre), there is no opportunity to continue to build on those skills and develop a real career path in production. Main barriers are a lack of access to working on union productions, a lack of mentorship, and the concentration of production in urban areas

Capacity Building – Writers and Directors

- There should be an expectation of pay equity among collaborators. Jury and decision-makers should look at budgets and the fees paid to co-directors and co-writers where one is Indigenous, and one is non-Indigenous
- Can jury also prioritize projects where the 2/3 does not include an Indigenous director?
- Short film filmmakers want to go to the next level, but the jump is a big one. They need development funding so they can write without being side-tracked by a day job. Telefilm’s guidelines now deem filmmakers of short films, that have screened at certain festivals, eligible to apply for development. This was received as very positive
- Need young people to see film as a career option despite the barriers. Need to build a pathway over the barriers to a career in production (See crew capacity building and community screenings below.)
- Suggestion: Increase portion of Indigenous Stream reserved for development (not at expense of production support)

Distribution and Audiences

- Community screenings are important because they are one of the only ways of targeting Indigenous audiences for Indigenous films. They are often the only way for Indigenous people outside of Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal to see Indigenous theatrical feature films. There are usually no admission fees. Could Telefilm look at accepting reports from distributors and venues about how many nights it plays (or how many people attended)? Indigenous audiences should count as part of viewership (this data is not currently captured by MPTAC). Indigenous films might be released in commercial theatres, however few communities have access to these venues
- Can we look at how impact organizations do “scoring”? Consider giving a “cultural” score to films that have completed a minimum number of community screenings, or if it was shown to a minimum number of people at community screenings
- Distributors appear not to have money for community screenings in their marketing budgets. Marketing funds appear to support *either a theatrical release OR a community release*. And even if there is money for community screenings, these don’t count towards the film’s score. In this way, filmmakers often feel that they must choose between what is good for their community, and what is good for their career
- Suggestion: Make more funding available to support community screenings. Measure the community screenings and count them in a film’s score/success index

Ideas from Brainstorming:

- Can unions help facilitate allowing Indigenous crew to work on union productions, perhaps providing a pathway to membership?
- Could industry look at implementing Indigenous trainee positions on projects receiving funding that focus on northern communities?
- Could industry look at tax credit incentives for hiring Indigenous crew; add mandatory minimum Indigenous hires in order to qualify for tax credits?
- Could industry look at paid trainee positions on TV series that could ensure sustained income and training for 1 year? This could provide the necessary experience and stability to continue to work in the industry. Internships need to be paid and trainees need to be able to use those hours toward union membership
- If funding for training is provided by an agency, there needs to be better/more reporting on it. Training, to be effective, needs to be one-on-one
- Could there be top-up funding to productions for Indigenous trainees? Could there be training/shadowing opportunities on productions supported by funders, or mandated by a funder?
- Could there be help to cover cost of bringing in crew trainees/cast from remote areas to work in urban production centres? The opposite of current "remote region" allocation now
- Could there be *blue sky agreement* with unions for Indigenous performers? Could this be an option? Who could reach out to unions to advocate for some of these suggestions?
- Could there be support for travel of northern trainees to southern productions?
- Could the Industry provide a list of productions coming up, so people are aware of potential opportunities?
- Could there be a budget section to the standard budget for knowledge keepers, translators, elders, counselors? Make these line items flexible in order to reflect diverse production practices
- Could we consider the possibility that capacity-building funds are held back until the final drawdown so that companies can report on their training initiatives