

## Indigenous Working Group Meeting October 27, 2020

### Key Takeaways

#### Working Group Meeting – Presentation of Support for Indigenous Creators

##### 2019-20

Telefilm presented the fiscal results of 2019-20 for the Indigenous Stream. In addition, Telefilm also reported on the presence of Indigenous writers and directors in the Main Programs (now reported in the Annual Report)

- For the meeting, Telefilm also provided more intersectional data and cross-referenced the support for Indigenous creators with gender identification and regions. Moving forward, Telefilm will be looking to provide more intersectional data
- Items raised:
  - Could Telefilm look to provide hyperlinks in Dialogue to the Indigenous webpages for reference?
  - Could we look at ratio of successful applicants versus the other programs

##### 2020 – 2021

Telefilm presented the preliminary findings of the support for Indigenous creators to date (see presentation)

#### Low Level of French-language Indigenous Applications

The Working Group members expressed concern over the low-level, or non-existent presence of French-speaking Indigenous creators in the pipeline. A conversation addressing challenges and potential solutions was had.

- Although an Indigenous French-language production was supported this year through the main stream, there have been little to no French-language projects supported in either the Indigenous Development Stream or through the Indigenous streams in the production programs
- The French-speaking Indigenous community do not feel included. The perception is that they feel there is a language barrier preventing them from being part of the bigger Indigenous community. There is no feeling of “belonging”
- There were concerns expressed as to whether there is a systemic issue in hiring Indigenous persons in the French market. Is Indigenous talent being hired in writing rooms, on crews? How can we better understand the challenges in order to help address the issues?
- Certain stakeholder groups have been actively seeking to address this issue. However more effort and understanding is needed. Wapikoni has seen more interest from the community in supporting creators to apply to funding bodies
- Group felt a French-speaking Indigenous liaison at the funding agencies would be beneficial. Wapikoni has been functioning as a “translator” between creators and funding programs

- The indigenous Screen Office (ISO) advised it offers translation services. ISO has a French-speaking staff member from Eastern Canada. ISO is seeing a slight increase in demand from French-speaking applicants
- Telefilm advised that it will be announcing a new staff member in the position of “Chargé des initiatives d’inclusion et analyste au contenu.” Along with Adam Garnet Jones, this person can help be a liaison to Indigenous creators

### Revisiting the Definition of Indigenous Production: Indigenous Control of Projects

The current guidelines for Telefilm’s Indigenous stream indicate that: Indigenous persons must be in two of the three key creative lead roles, and the applicant company must be 51% owned by Indigenous persons. **In the case where there are multiple people in the key creative roles, the creative control by Indigenous persons can be diluted, particularly in structures with co-writers, co-directors, and co-producers.**

- One suggestion to ensure Indigenous control, and also to build capacity in producing, **is to require that three out of three roles be held by Indigenous persons**, but allow non-Indigenous co-writers/directors/producers
- Three out of three was previously tabled at this working group for the launching of the Indigenous Stream. At the time, there was concern that there were not enough knowledgeable/experienced Indigenous producers to support all the active Indigenous writers and director. In addition, it was felt that capacity of Indigenous producers was not at the level that the talent required and needed to get their projects done and distributed. But how can we build a pipeline of strong producers if we don’t start requiring Indigenous producers on all projects? What comes first? Could funders create an incentive to build this capacity? Could three out of three help achieve this simply by demanding it?
- **Another suggestion was a percentage approach - so keep two out of three positions** in place, but in the case of multiple people in the key roles, 67% must be held by Indigenous person/persons
- **Another recommendation is to require three out of three and then also a %.** This would allow for collaboration with non-Indigenous talent, but ensures Indigenous control over the vision
- The two out of the three are almost always the writer and director as they are the ones that create the story and support the vision. There appears to be no shortage of talent in these roles
- In earlier consultations, the concept of two out of three key creatives was supported by most, although there has been an ongoing interest to revisit this conversation as the needs of the community evolve
- Indigenous producers are necessary in protecting the agency and sovereignty of the project. They have the control in dealing with broadcasters and distributors, and overseeing the protection of the IP. The protection of voice is echoed in *Pathways and Protocols*. Indigenous creators want agency
- Some Indigenous creators however do not want restrictions on who they can work with, nor what they must provide in terms of applying for funding. It should be solely in the hands of the creators and how they want to define their project. Why do we need a definition of an Indigenous production?
- TV - Three out of three may not translate to TV where there are multiple directors and writers. Broadcasters would have to approve an all-Indigenous writer and director roster. The % approach might work well across different platforms

- It appeared that many in the group saw that a new definition could include a combination of a ratio and a percentage, and consultation on this definition should continue. **ACTION:** Indigenous Initiatives Lead to draft and present new definitions for next working group meeting (to be provided in advance for review and comment)
- **Capacity:**
  - Some Indigenous producers are out-sourcing their business affairs. It's a "rare unicorn" who is a skilled writer/director *and* producer
  - NSI and IndigiDocs are great training programs, but many participants do not go on to produce. Could business schools and law schools be a source of future Indigenous producers?
- **Concerns:**
  - The interpretation of the **intent of Indigenous control** is a concern. We do not want Indigenous producers to be tokenized, however, there is concern that some Indigenous producers cannot meet demands of being the lead producer on feature film projects without deeper business affairs knowledge
  - Three out of three would not work for French-language Indigenous projects nor for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick where they are often struggling to get to two out of three
  - Concerns raised that if we go to three out of three, it may result in a short-term drop off in applications. We could see a drop in the presence of Indigenous creators and there could be a decline in progress
  - Need screen sovereignty (Indigenous control and ownership of project) + trained producers with better help/support in business affairs. Making a film is difficult enough; no one wants the challenges of business affairs to overtake the project

### The Challenges of Capacity Building – Producers, and More

Currently, applicants to the Indigenous Stream in production may ask for an additional \$100,000 for capacity-building initiatives tied to the film project. **In practice, the Indigenous Stream jury tends to prioritize investing in another film over a capacity-building initiative.**

- ISO has the Partnership Program with \$500,000 to support applications for training. There is also below-the-line training through the Netflix fund, which is a departure from the traditional focus on above-the-line training
- Screen Australia has invested in a different model of funding – that of corporate support. This core operations support allows established and emerging companies to hire people and train them in producing, and in distribution
- Some Working Group members have hired interns who have successfully moved on to bigger productions. Others point out that with their hands already full, it is difficult to take on interns and mentor them properly on a one-off production
- What might yield bigger gains could be four to six-month internships with production companies where interns could experience the life-cycle of a project from development through to distribution
- Emerging producers see the need for mentorship, but mentors need to have a minimum level of experience for that relationship to be valuable
- The business affairs company Bizable has reported that they will hire and train emerging producers

- We need to consider capacity-building along the value chain, we need to look at distribution and marketing. Indigenous publicists will better know how to reach Indigenous audiences
- With the pandemic shutting down many exhibitors, could Telefilm consider an incentive in the Marketing program for drive-ins and pop-up exhibition with Indigenous involvement?
- Need to also start looking at building capacity on other platforms – interactive, gaming, etc.

### **Other Concerns**

As APTN does not support POV documentaries, there may be lower demand to the Theatrical Documentary program. There is a desire to see better support for Indigenous creators in this genre. What can be done to better support this genre for Indigenous creators?