



Meet the 2025 Participants

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Serving up to 100 participants annually—and nearly 800 to date over the course of the program—the **Netflix-BANFF Diversity of Voices Initiative** offers a professional springboard for underrepresented creators and producers from across Canada.

The goal of the initiative is to jump-start careers, and help projects move forward, by providing a gateway to the global film and television industry through the **Banff World Media Festival's** renowned conference and marketplace. Over the long term, the festival aims to foster a legacy of greenlights and international sales for program participants, and the partners who work with them.

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Pitch Program Participants 2025



Susan Bayani

Writer/Director/Producer

Anahita Arts

Susan Bayani is an Iranian Canadian film director, writer, producer, and lecturer based in Toronto. She holds an MFA in Film Production from York University and is also a graduate of film and TV directing from Luchino Visconti School in Milan, Italy. She's also an alumna of 2024 WIDC Story and leadership program.

Susan's life and studies have made her an international filmmaker with a transnational perspective. Her art focuses on political issues and women's rights. Susan's films have been screened internationally, and garnered accolades from various festivals. She has also served as a jury member and programmer for multiple festivals and institutes, including; the BCEFF Film Festival (2024), Cinema Politica (2022-2024) and the 29th Toronto Jewish Film Festival, (2021). Susan is a winner of Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Award (2018-2019), "*Gender Apartheid in Iran*" was selected for the Filmmor Feminism Workshop (Istanbul, Turkey, 2014), and the pitch for the short documentary, *Less & More* was selected for the BBC Trust Documentary Workshop (Istanbul, Turkey 2008).

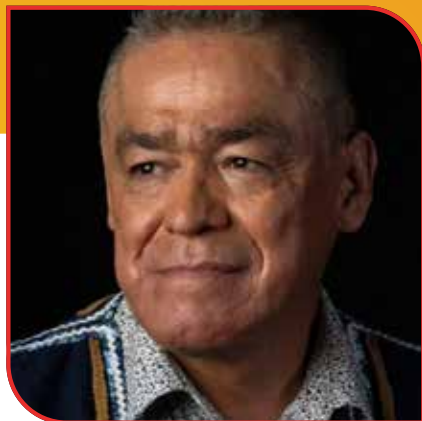
Susan's latest works include; co-directing the feature drama, *Papa Sierra*, which is in post-production. She was the writer for the animated film, *Soul Compass* (2024), which has just started its festival run, and Supervising Producer for the documentary *752 Is Not a Number* (2021), which was the runner-up for the 'People's Choice Award' at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2022.

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Lewis Cardinal

Creator/Producer/Director/Writer

Red Earth Blue Sky Productions

Lewis Cardinal is a Woodland Cree communicator and educator from the Sucker Creek Cree First Nation in Treaty No. 8 in northern Alberta, Canada. Over three decades, his leadership has spanned local, national, and global advocacy roles, particularly in promoting Indigenous rights, cultural revitalization, community-building, and interfaith relationship building. His contributions have been recognized with honours such as two Queen Elizabeth II medals (Diamond and Platinum Jubilee), the Indspire Award for Public Service, the Alberta Centennial Medal for human rights and diversity, and an honorary doctorate of Sacred Letters for his work in bridging cultural and faith divides.

These experiences inform every facet of his consulting and media production work, where he specializes in Indigenous education, filmmaking, media communications, and strategic project development. Above all, he remains guided by a lifelong commitment to nurturing sacred relationships among diverse communities and worldviews.

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Rohan Fernando

Creator/ Writer/Producer

Sutram Pictures

Rohan Fernando was born in Jaffna, Sri Lanka and immigrated to Canada. His career as a visual storyteller has spanned numerous mediums, with a common grounding in observation and his outsider perspective on the world around him. In 1997 and 1998, NBM Publishing published Rohan's graphic novel series, *Shelter* and in 1999, volume one was turned into a television pilot for CTV Television, which Rohan wrote and directed.

Rohan's first documentary, *Cecil's Journey* won 'Best Film' and 'Best Music' at the Atlantic Film Festival in 2002, and was nominated for a Gemini that same year. Rohan followed up with *Trudeau's Other Children* for the National Film Board, re-creating Pierre Trudeau's early travels around the world as a young man. *Blood and Water* chronicled the tragic story of a man coping with the loss of his entire family to the 2004 Tsunami. The documentary feature film, *The Chocolate Farmer*, had its world premiere at the 2011 Hot Docs Festival and enjoyed high popularity on its five-year run on Netflix.

His first independent feature film, *Snow*, which he produced, wrote and directed, premiered at the prestigious Cinequest Film Festival, was the opening night film at the Reelworld Film Festival, and won 'Best Music' at the Atlantic Film Festival. The film was released in theatres across Canada by Kinosmith. Rohan Fernando joined the National Film Board of Canada as a producer in 2018, and was named Executive Producer in September 2022, where he produced and executive produced numerous award-winning shorts and features.

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Sandy Hudson

Writer/Producer

Motion & Memory

Sandy Hudson is a producer, best-selling author, activist, podcaster, public speaker, and most recently, a lawyer. She is a co-executive producer on Leslie Norville's, *Black Life: Untold Stories*, an eight-part docuseries about Black history in Canada which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) in 2023, and is available on CBC Gem. She also produced the short film *Aftercare*, which also premiered at TIFF in 2023.

Along with creative partner Rodney Diverlus, Hudson has several film and television projects in development. Hudson is also co-founder of the Wildseed Centre for Art & Activism, a Black-owned and operated art-based community centre in Toronto, and Black Legal Action Centre, a specialty legal aid clinic. Her second book, "*Defund: Black Lives, Policing, and Safety for All*" was released in April of this year.

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Patrice Jecrois

Producer/Screenwriter

Les Productions Provado

Creative and curious, Patrice Jecrois is a producer who has led multiple interview series in recent years, including; *Écho-Entrepreneurs.tv*, which aired on Natyf TV. His artistic journey began in the music industry, where he was first introduced to audiovisual production through music video projects.

Today, his work explores the behind-the-scenes realities of pressing social issues and societal challenges through documentaries, docuseries and feature films. Patrice holds a Bachelor of Science in Marketing, Advertising, and Communication from Université de Montréal and HEC Montréal. His creative expertise was further refined at l'INIS, where he received in-depth training in television production and documentary writing. As a producer and screenwriter, Patrice also serves as the executive director of Coalition M.É.D.I.A., a nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for diverse producers within the audiovisual production industry.

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Rosie Johnnie-Mills

Producer

House of Copper Films

Producer Rosie Johnnie-Mills co-owns her film production company, Likinskw Productions Inc., with her Nisga'a husband, Dustin McGladrey. She is a cisgender IndigiQueer lover of story, belonging to the Skidegate Eagle Clan from Haida Gwaii and Xinipsen of the Cowichan Tribes. Rosie may seem far away from where she grew up on the reservation in the Cowichan Valley; however, at heart, she's dedicated her life to serving Indigenous innovation within the Indigenous community in Canada.

The National Screen Institute Indigidocs greenlighted her first production in 2022, *Living Weaving*, a story about Debra Sparrow and her journey of knowledge-sharing Musqueam Weaving, which was broadcast on APTN and is now streaming within Canada on APTN and CBC Gem. She was an executive producer for *The Cowichan Sweater*, *Our Knitted Legacy* directed by Mary Galloway, previously broadcasted on CBC, and is now streaming on CBC Gem.

She is currently optioning a narrative TV show with MMIW themes, an IndigiQueer romantic comedy and producing a short docu-series celebrating four Indigenous Nations within British Columbia, to be broadcast and streamed by Knowledge Network.

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Reamonn Joshee

Creator/Producer/Director/Writer

HBHWRH Show Corp

Reamonn Joshee is a versatile and award-winning talent in Alberta's film industry. He has appeared in popular TV series such as, *Heartland*, *Wynonna Earp*, *Billy the Kid*, and *Guilty Party*, as well as TV movies; *Finding Mr. Right* and *Team Bride*. His feature film credits include; *Jonesin'*, *Ditched*, *John 3:16*, and *Markings of Murder*.

As a writer and director, Reamonn has created award-winning shorts; *If Walls Could Talk*, *Guns of Purgatory*, and *A Memento of Life*, and has directed multiple episodes on the acclaimed series; *Abracadavers Seasons 2 and 3*.

He is also a voice actor in animated series; *Cardfight Vanguard*, *Tobot: Galaxy Detectives*, and *Metalions*. Previously, Reamonn contributed to storytelling and character development as a concept creator for Rocky Mountain Pictures and First Degree Films. He currently resides in Cochrane, Alberta, with his wife and two children.

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Seydou Kane

Producer

Seyka Production

Seydou Kane came to the cinema after studies in economics and journalism. *Au pays des aveugles* is his fifth film. After serving as an assistant director on many feature films, he directed his first short film in 1994 entitled, *L'engin*. This short was followed by two others; *Fakastalu* in 1995, and *La guitare à huile*, in 2000. These three works were presented at festivals throughout the world including at Vues d'Afrique, Fespaco, Festival des films du monde, Yorkton Short Film Festival, among others.

In 2002, he directed, *Au royaume du politiquement correct*, a medium length documentary. Working within the constraints of a small budget, Kane used an intimate approach to denounce the increasingly widespread phenomenon of political correctness. In addition, Neas editions has recently published his novel about a hostage taking at the fiftieth Cannes Film Festival. Seydou Kane is also the chief organizer of two festivals: the Canadian Film Festival in Dakar (Senegal) and FACT-Dakar (African Women in Communication and Television Festival).

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Nauzanin Knight

Producer/Writer/Director

1844 Studios

Nauzanin Knight is a Canadian writer, director, and producer of Iranian and Barbadian heritage. Her work explores pressing social issues, reflecting her unique background and international experiences. She holds an MSc from University College London and began her career in creative writing, publishing “*State Terrorism in Iran: Understanding the Case of the Iranian Bahá’í Community*” before transitioning to film. Nauzanin has since written, directed, and produced acclaimed projects, including; *My Lyric I Never Knew* (CBC Canadian Reflections, American Indian Film Festival), *ColorBlind*, and *#ShadesofWorth*. She is currently directing, *White Sands* (National Film Board of Canada) and *The Forbidden University*.

She is an alumna of Netflix-Banff DOV Initiative, WIDC, Whistler Doc Lab, Reelworld, and Whistler Film Festival Doc Lab. A leader in advancing diversity in film, she is a member of the Racial Screen Leadership Committee, founder of BE Collective, and the author of, “*Building Inclusive Networks in the Film and Television Industry*” published by Telefilm and Canada Media Fund. As Executive Producer of 1844 Studios, Nauzanin is committed to fostering international artistic collaborations and telling powerful stories that highlight the universality of human emotion and resilience.

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Tania Koenig-Gauchier

CEO/Producer

Wapanatahk Media

Tania Koenig-Gauchier is the Director and CEO of Wapanatahk Media. Tania is a Métis (Cree heritage) television producer with two decades of experience in broadcasting and independent production. She worked as a Producer for major Canadian broadcasters, and has a background in business management, as well as marketing and promotions for television. She spent five years as a Programming Executive for the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network.

In 2020, Tania started a production company called Wapanatahk ('morning star') Media and she has a service partnership in place with Great Pacific Media – a leader in factual television. The vision for her company is to produce entertaining content that is sold around the world while also elevating Indigenous characters, stories and media creatives. The company has produced two seasons of *Wild Rose Vet* with Dr. Savannah, a documentary series that follows Savannah, an Indigenous veterinarian, for APTN and Blue Ant Media. The series has received three Canadian Screen Award (CSA) nominations for 'Best Lifestyle Program or Series' including; 'Best Photography' and 'Best Direction' for a Lifestyle or Reality/Competition. Tania is Producer and Executive Producer for the documentary series, *Wild Rose Vets*: Season 1 and 2, as well as for two upcoming paranormal documentary series set to air in 2026.

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Jessica Landry

Writer/Director/Producer/Showrunner
Familiar Films

Jessica Landry is a Métis screenwriter, director, producer, and Bram Stoker Award-winning author. Her projects have been developed through TIFF, the NSI, the CFC, Whistler Film Festival, Blood in the Snow, and Series Mania. Jessica has several projects in active development including; *Anatomy of a Seance*, a horror series for which she received IPF development funding; *We Shall be Monsters*, a docuseries about women in horror; and *The Night Belongs To Us*, a feature adaptation of her Shirley Jackson's award-nominated novella. She's currently in post-production on an Indigenous-led paranormal documentary called, *Ghost Lands*, as creator, producer, writer, and director. Her most recent original film, *Killer Body Count*, is currently streaming on Tubi; while her film, *List of a Lifetime*, was nominated for a Critics' Choice Award. She co-wrote and co-executive produced the Banff Rockie-nominated feature documentary, *True Story*; has written and directed multiple episodes of factual series *7th Gen* and *Taken*; worked as a story editor on the CBC sitcom, *Strays*; as well wrote, directed, and produced her own short films, *Testament*, a drama, and *I Fall to Pieces*, a dark comedy currently on its festival run.

She also released her debut collection of short stories, *The Night Belongs To Us*, in 2023; co-edited the award-winning Spiritualism-themed anthology, *There is no Death, There Are No Dead*; and wrote an original story for the anthology, *Aliens vs. Predators: Ultimate Prey*.

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Alexander Lasheras

Producer/Writer/Director

Soler Pictures

Alexander Lasheras is a filmmaker based in Vancouver, B.C., whose films often focus on themes of survivalism, resilience, and the fragility of life. As a proud member of the Métis Nation of B.C., he runs his production company, Soler Pictures, where he has led the creation of significant films such as; *The Beehive* and *Cadence*, with the latter receiving the Audience Award at the Vancouver International Film Festival in 2016. His work has involved partnerships with Telefilm Canada, CBC Films, APTN and Hollywood Suite.

Currently, Alexander is working on several projects supported by the Canada Media Fund. These include *Wetiko*, a psychological thriller series, and *Lii Ptii Bonheur*, a sci-fi thriller that reimagines Métis history within an alternate dystopian universe. Alexander remains active in the film community, advocating for Indigenous representation in media and participating in key industry events.

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Gunjan Menon

Producer/Director

Beyond Premieres

Gunjan is a Producer-Director, National Geographic Explorer and co-founder of Beyond Premieres, a Vancouver-based creative studio dedicated to making impact-driven films at the intersection of biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and Indigenous stewardship. Her work brings global attention to human-wildlife relationships, with a strong focus on ecofeminism. Selected titles she has worked on include; *Underdogs* (Nat Geo Wild), *Sentient* (Disney+), *The Letter* (PBS), *The Firefox Guardian* (Seeker/ShortsTV), *On the Brink* (Discovery).

Beyond her role as a field director, she has created independent films that have earned more than 50 laurels across 20 countries. She received the prestigious *Jackson Wild Rising Star Award in 2020*, is a “Re:Generation Climate Leader”, supported by Prince Albert II of Monaco, and was featured in the “Rebel Girls: Animal Allies” children’s book. In 2025, she was named a member of *The Explorers Club EC50* as one of the “50 People Changing the World”.

Gunjan is dedicated to making filmmaking more accessible by mentoring emerging creators and scientists and leading workshops on photography, storytelling, and science communication through organizations like NEWF in Africa, the Green Hub, in India and Girls Who Click. She holds a Master’s in wildlife filmmaking from UWE Bristol and BBC-NHU. Gunjan continues to push the boundaries of storytelling, leveraging film to influence policy, amplify scientific impact, and foster deeper public empathy for the natural world.

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Motion

Writer/Producer

MotionLive Entertainment

Motion is an award-winning screenwriter, playwright, poet and emcee, fusing word, sound and drama for the screen and stage. Her work has been screened, performed, published and featured across Canada, the U.S., the Caribbean, in Europe and Africa, garnering recognition internationally.

She is co-writer of the award-winning feature film, *Akilla's Escape* with director Charles Officer, which debuted at the 2020 Toronto International Film Festival, and garnered five Canadian Screen Awards including; 'Best Original Screenplay'. In television, Motion is a Canadian Screen Award nominated writer, working on hit drama series such as; *Coroner* (CBC/CW), *Diggstown* (CBC/FOX) and *The Porter* (CBC/BET+). She's been a writer and co-executive producer on the award-winning digital series, *Revenge of the Black Best Friend* (CBC Gem), as well as a writer on *Robyn Hood* (Corus), and the animated music series, *Behind the Beats* (TeamTO/France TV).

An alumni of the Canadian Film Centre, she is also writer of *A Man's Story*, which won the Impact Award for 'Best Short Film' at the ReelWorld Film Festival, going on to screen in London, Ghana, Belgium, and Zanzibar. Her recent productions for stage and screen include; the Dora-nominated, *Oraltorio: A Theatrical Mixtape with DJ L'Oqenz* (Riser/Obsidian/Soul Pepper), and *Rebirth of the Afronauts: A Black Space Odyssey* and was in the award-winning series, *21 Black Futures* (Obsidian/CBC Gem).

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Milton Ng

Creator/ Producer/Director/Writer

Dear Hero Studios

Milton is a Chinese-Canadian that was destined to take over the family restaurant, but chose a career in film. Milton moved to Vancouver in 2009, directed short films like *Next Like* nominated for 'Best Canadian Short' at Vancouver Asian Film Festival. He starred & directed in *Towel Boy*, which won 'Best Action/Comedy Short' at New York's Urban Action Showcase and the web-series, *Followers* won 'Best Directing' and 'Best Comedy Web Series' at Utah Web-Series Film Festival. His horror short, *Tumble*, was a finalist at Tokyo International Short Film Festival, Seoul International Short Film Fest, LA International Horror Fest.

He also produced *Reverse*, which won 'Best Action Film' at Los Angeles Film Awards and won at the Mighty Asian Moviemaking Marathon in Vancouver. Milton has also produced more than 250 comedy sketches online, garnering over 10 million views + performs stand-up comedy in Vancouver. He recently won Whistler's Power Pitch in 2024 for his upcoming feature film, *New Diamond Restaurant*.

newdiamondrestaurantmovie.com

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Raj Panikkar

Producer, Partner

Fifth Ground Entertainment

Raj Panikkar is an award-winning Toronto based producer, who also operates and functions as an independent writer, filmmaker and creative consultant for film, television and digital media. With his outfit, Fifth Ground Entertainment, his productions have included; the documentary series, *Reelside* (The Movie Network); the half-hour comedy series, *Rent-A-Goalie* (Showcase); the music documentary series, *The Rawside Of...* (IFC); and *Players' PlayBook*, a digital documentary series with over 9 million views, in association with BlackBerry and the NHLPA.

Currently he's writing and developing the horror drama series, *Dark Hall*, with support from the CMF, and a science docuseries about de-extinction called, *Bringing Back the Lost*. As well, through Fifth Ground Raj is producing series for kids, including live-action science adventure series, *Leo's FishHeads* and *Leo's Pollinators* for TVOkids. The new series, *Secrets of the Forest* (TVOkids) is currently on air, while *The Screen Team*, *Cloudy* and *The Booligans* are in development.

He was nominated for a Canadian Screen Award for 'Best Direction in a Documentary Series' for *Reelside*. Raj executive produced the award-winning feature film, *At Home By Myself... With You*. He is also producing Fifth Ground's socially conscious documentary productions.

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Dr. Kamala Parel-Nuttall

Director

Floating Lotus Films

Dr. Kamala Parel-Nuttall is a filmmaker based in Calgary, Alberta. Kamala was educated at McGill University and the University of Cambridge, U.K., supported by a Commonwealth Scholarship for the United Kingdom. She taught at universities in the U.S. and Canada before focusing solely on documentary film. Kamala has since written, produced, and directed short films for broadcast, commercial and non-profit clients, and is currently developing two feature length documentaries.

Her work explores the ways in which personal experiences shed light on broader social issues. She believes that film can be a tool to spark dialogue, create connections, and promote understanding across cultures and communities.

Kamala's short documentary, *The Gateway*, screened at festivals around North America including the New York Hip Hop Film Festival, the Calgary International Film Festival, and the Vancouver International ShortFest, where it won 'Best Canadian Documentary' in 2024.

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Kenya-Jade Pinto

Director/Producer

Compy Films

Kenya-Jade Pinto is an Indo-Kenyan-Canadian documentary photographer, filmmaker, and lawyer. She grew up chasing crabs on the Kenyan coast, before moving to Alberta's foothills as a teen. Her hyphenated worldview informs her work where she focuses on non-fiction and narrative projects that navigate the tricky little nuances of our shared human experience in a simultaneously interconnected and isolated world. Kenya-Jade blends her creative eye with thoughtful precision, and supported Shasha Nakhai and Rich Williamson as an associate producer on *Scarborough* – all the way to Toronto International Film Festival, and beyond. She will further support Compy Productions as a producer on their next fiction feature film, *Mandaragat*.

Kenya-Jade's training as a human rights lawyer has deepened her practice as a documentarian on projects like; *Not Yet Home*, *Level Justice*, and more recently, *The Sandbox*. She has participated in DOC Institute's 'Breakthrough Program' as well as Hot Docs' Emerging Filmmaker Program and the Hot Docs Incubator. In 2021, she was named a National Geographic Explorer. Kenya-Jade's work has earned her the 'Barbara Spears Award for Best Visual Research' for the film, *Black Liberators WWII* at the 2023 Canadian Screen Awards. She is also a member of Women Photograph and Diversify Photo, and holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations as well as a Juris Doctor with a specialization in International law. She is a member in good standing of the Law Society of Ontario. Kenya-Jade is currently working on directing her first documentary feature.

compyfilms.com

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Tamiko Potts

Producer

Unicorn Power Media

Tamiko Potts (she/they) is a Toronto based Emmy-nominated Japanese Canadian television producer and independent filmmaker with over twenty years of experience in television production. Tamiko has worked in all aspects of the industry in both unscripted and animation production for such award-winning companies as; Brown Bag Films, Associated Producers, Yap Films and Bell Media Studios.

In 2023, Tamiko founded their production company, Unicorn Power Media, whose mission is to support diverse storytelling and produce projects that shine a light on underrepresented and marginalized groups. One year later, their first project was funded by the Japanese Canadian Legacies Society. *When The Blossoms Fade*, is a short documentary about Tamiko's mother's experience in the Japanese internment camps in British Columbia and how her trauma impacted their relationship.

In 2024, Tamiko was selected as one of four producers from across Canada to participate in the line producer stream of the Reelworld Training Lab by Amazon MGM Studios, as well as one of eight producers selected nationally to participate in the BIPOC TV and Film + Bell Media's Unscripted Producer's Lab. Tamiko has completed the Award of Achievement Program in D&I from the University of British Columbia as well as the D&I Influencer Certificate from the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion and the Sustainable Production for Entertainment Certification from the Green Building Council.

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Mahza Razavi

Director
Mehr Films

Mahsa Razavi is a Toronto-based writer and filmmaker from Iran. Mahsa studied Social Sciences and Communications at the University of Tehran before moving to Canada where she earned her MFA in Film Production from York University. She has written and directed films that have been supported by Canada, Ontario and Toronto Art Councils and showcased in numerous countries across the world. Her short films; *A Celebration* (2019), *Roj Means Sun* (2016), and *Ahu* (2021) have been featured on CBC, exhibited at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and screened at the Tehran International Short Film Festival and the Iranian Short Film Association Awards.

Mahsa is a TIFF 2022 'Talent Accelerator Fellow' and a member of the Canadian Academy of Film and Television. She is currently working on her first feature film, *The River Will Carry Us*, which has been selected to be produced under the Telefilm Canada 'Talent to Watch' Program.

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Tim Riedel

Filmmaker

Michif Koonteur

Tim Riedel is a Métis filmmaker from the Red River region in Manitoba, who has developed powerful storytelling primarily in the unscripted and documentary genres, such as 2019's award-winning, *Jackstones* and 2021's *Pressure Baby*. Starting as a writer on the 3D animated cartoon series, *Eddy Unleashed*, airing first on YTV and later on Teletoon, as well as internationally on TV3, Tim eventually took on director duties before becoming the showrunner for the series. By 2009, Tim had shifted his focus from children's entertainment to factual filmmaking and, in that realm, developed ethical story excavation and storytelling practices to improve the representation of marginalized people in media with honesty and integrity.

Working in partnership with non-government organizations (NGOs), Tim traveled the globe to document under-represented stories covering a variety of topics, including rehabilitating child soldiers in Northern Uganda, gang violence in El Salvador, child exploitation and sex trafficking in East Asia, child and maternal health in Myanmar, animal welfare during the war in Afghanistan, and the plight of displaced Syrians in the Middle East. Since 2020, Tim refocused his attention to his homeland, where he has remained to develop and share Indigenous stories, uncovering lost histories, reconnecting fractured heritages, and supporting the growth of the next generation of Indigenous storytellers.

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Christina Saliba

Producer
Misfit Films

Christina Saliba is a queer Canadian-Lebanese producer, who started off her career as a wildlife biologist before falling into the world of film. She wrote pitches for a documentary film production company, looking to venture into wildlife docs. One of her pitch ideas became a five-part mini-series on ARTE and The Nature of Things called *Aging in the Wild*. In 2017, she joined Goldrush Entertainment as a development executive, discovering new intellectual property, creating pitch materials, and providing support in pre- to post-production.

Through Goldrush Entertainment she was an Associate Producer on *A Score to Settle* (Nicolas Cage), *Most Wanted* (Josh Hartnett), and *A Place of Bones* (Heather Graham). In 2021 and 2022, Saliba graduated from the Norman Jewison's Producers' Lab at the Canadian Film Centre, the Whistler Film Festival's Producers' Lab, and the GEMS' Genre Lab. As a producer, her mandate is to place messy, disagreeable, and complex women at the forefront of storytelling, through the lens of horror, as well as highlighting both queer and BIPOC stories. She won the Whistler Film Festival's Power Pitch Competition (2021) for her psychological thriller film, *White Noise*, and is an alum of the Blood in the Snow Film Festival's Horror Development Lab (2022), the Quebec English Language Production Council Mentorship Program (2024), and EFM Fiction Toolbox Programme 2025.

misfitfilms.ca

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Patricia Scarlett

Creator/Producer

Media Business Institute

Scarlett's early experience in the industry began at TVOntario where she worked primarily in international sales. As a highly successful Sales Executive at TVOntario, she initiated and closed TVOntario's first educational broadcast and educational non-broadcast sales in Brazil. During that time, she developed and nurtured a few valuable relationships with producers and broadcasters which have culminated in several significant professional achievements, including her licensing of *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, (winner of the Camera D'Or at the 2001 Cannes International Film Festival), to the CBC.

She regularly attends industry trade events such as MIP-TV & MIPCOM in Cannes, France. Her company, Media Business Institute is a Toronto-based TV training and production company. Scarlett's production credits Includes the following: *Ray of Hope* (Documentary Feature); *Of Cod & Rum: The Newfoundland Connection* (Documentary Feature); *RasTa: A Soul's Journey* (Documentary Feature); *Rastafari Then and Now* (Documentary); *Mighty Machines, Season 2* (Children's-Live Action Series). Patricia's first novel, "*Blinded by the Brass Ring*", was published by Montreal-based Baraka Books in 2023. It is informed by the journals she has kept over the years about the inner workings of the TV industry. "*Festival Fever*", the second novel in the Jewelle Joseph book series will be available Fall 2025.

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Sandro Silva

Producer/Partner

Dona Ana Films & Multimedia

Sandro Silva is a partner and producer at Dona Ana Films & Multimedia, a production company specializing in unscripted content. His documentary production credits include; *The Perfect Match* (2026), *Retraining the Brain* (2023), the Netflix docuseries, *Rotten: Episode 4*, *Big Bird* (2018), *3 Siblings* (2018), *Beyond the Map* from Google (2016), and *Brazil's Trans Awakening* (2016), among others.

During the 2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Summer Olympic Games, he worked as a producer and production coordinator on various productions in his home country of Brazil. He is a 2021 Hot Docs Doc Accelerator fellow, and was selected for the 2022 Telus STORYHIVE Black Creators Edition. Sandro has various podcasts and documentaries in development. Before working in the arts, he was a copyright lawyer in São Paulo.

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Sid Santiago Zanforlin

Creator/Writer/Director

Goggle Boy Films

Sid Santiago Zanforlin is a Chilean/Canadian director, writer, producer originally hailing from Montreal, now in Toronto. Drawing heavily from his Chilean and Québécois heritage, he is committed to fostering diversity in the television industry. A graduate of the Canadian Film Centre, Sid has an extensive background as an IATSE cameraman, theatre director, and writer/director of award winning shorts, music videos, two indie features, and over 90 episodes of both factual and scripted TV. His directing credits include; *Homicide: Hours to Kill* (A&E Cineflix), *Fear Thy Neighbour* (MAX) and *National Parks* (Travel Channel), among others.

Sid was recently shortlisted for a TV Directing award for the Canadian Screen Award nomination. In a previous chapter of his life, he was a punk drummer and garnered a Juno nomination for his musical work.

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Praneet Akilla

Producer

Akilla Express Ltd.

Praneet Akilla is an award winning Indian-Canadian Actor and Producer best known for his leading roles on The CW's *Nancy Drew*, Disney Freeform's *Motherland Fort Salem*, and Netflix's *October Faction*. He is currently the series lead of the Canadian Screen Award nominated medical drama *Skymed* on CBC Gem and Paramount+. Over the last three years Praneet has made the successful transition into producing a variety of critically acclaimed short films and digital series with his new production company Akilla Express, focusing on telling unique, genre-bending stories from a Third Culture Global Majority perspective. Most recently Praneet produced and starred in the critically- acclaimed short film *Mom vs Machine* which is currently on the film festival circuit with 6 Leo Nominations including "Best Short Drama". With stops at Fantasia Film Festival, Whistler Film Festival, Reelworld Film Festival, and Brooklyn Horror Festival- the short film premiered on the Sci-Fi Streaming Platform- DUST in 2023. Praneet also produced a Telus Funded short film entitled *Not For Us* (Whistler Film Festival Premiere 2023, LA Comedy Film Festival 2023 Best Short film). He is currently in development on a TV adaptation of the celebrated Canadian novel *Junie* with 100 Dragons Media Inc. and a new comedy/musical series called *Raksha* with funding from IPF & Canada Media Fund.

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Flex Aleo

President & Executive Producer
Marvonnay Studios

Flex Aleo is a dynamic Canadian entertainment professional with a rich Nigerian and South African cultural heritage. As an Executive Producer, writer, and actor, he brings a unique perspective and vision to his work.

In 2024, Flex Aleo founded Marvonnay Studios, a production company dedicated to telling culturally authentic and impactful stories. The company's current development slate includes a compelling business TV series and two insightful wine documentaries.

Flex Aleo's diverse professional journey has shaped his expertise in the film and television industry. His six years of corporate marketing experience provided him with a solid foundation in business strategy and audience engagement. Concurrently, his six-year tenure as an ACTRA actor, with appearances on notable shows like *Star Trek: Discovery* (Paramount+), honed his on-screen presence and understanding of the acting craft. Additionally, his production and business affairs internship on shows such as *An Optimist's Guide to the Planet* (Prime) offered him valuable insights into the operational and financial aspects of the industry.

Flex Aleo is also a talented writer currently participating in the prestigious Reelworld Screen Institute E20 Writers Program. He holds an MBA from the Schulich School of Business, where he was recognized with over \$28,000 in awards from the school and the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA) for his exceptional acumen and dedication to the film and television industry.

Flex Aleo's overarching vision is rooted in the belief that cultural storytelling can foster empathy and understanding among diverse communities, leading to a more harmonious and peaceful world.

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Başak Bağırkan

Producer
Cinema Bureau

Başak Bağırkan is a Turkish-Canadian filmmaker with over 18 years of experience in the film industry. He is now transitioning into producing and directing, with a focus on creating historically significant, socially relevant, and genre-spanning stories. His extensive experience in visual effects, cinematography, and large-scale filmmaking stems from his work on notable productions such as HBO's *The Last of Us* and the *Ghostbusters* franchise.

Başak's expertise also lies in screenwriting and story development, with a keen eye for narrative structure, character arcs, and audience engagement. His time on *The Last of Us* provided invaluable insights into screenplays, adaptation, showrunning, and high-level decision-making in television storytelling.

In addition to his filmmaking pursuits, Başak founded Cinema Bureau, a Web3 production company that merges traditional filmmaking with emerging technologies. His entrepreneurial background in business development and marketing allows him to adeptly navigate both the creative and financial facets of production.

Driven by a passion for pushing creative boundaries and highlighting underrepresented stories, Başak is dedicated to developing impactful and globally relevant projects that resonate with audiences and industry professionals alike.

cinemabureau.com

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Rodrigo Bascuñán

Producer

Scenario Media

Rodrigo is an award-winning writer, producer, and director, with a rather serendipitous path... In 1998, Rodrigo founded Canada's largest hip-hop magazine, *Pound*, which he ran for ten years. He co-authored *Enter The Babylon System*, a look at gun violence through the eyes of the hip-hop generation. Before launching Scenario Media under which he wrote and produced Netflix's docu-series *Hip-Hop Evolution*. The series won a Peabody Award (2016), an international Emmy for "Best Arts Documentary" (2017), a Canadian Screen Award for "Best Art Series" (2017).

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Anish Bhalla

Creator/Writer

212 Productions

Toronto-based writer and producer Anish Bhalla is known for his authentic and humorous perspective. In 2022, his adult animation family comedy series, *Bhalla* won the Just For Laughs TV pitch contest and placed second at the Ottawa Animation Festival. *Bhalla* is currently in development with Kavalry Productions and Wind Sun Sky Productions. Anish currently has three projects in development with Kavalry Productions. Selected to participate in Netflix's Diversity of Voices Initiative in 2023, Anish is looking forward to returning for the 2025 cohort.

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Kevin Bourne

Producer/ Writer/ Director
SHIFTER Entertainment

Kevin Bourne is a Toronto-based TV/film producer, screenwriter, and TEDx speaker. He has appeared nationally as a correspondent on CBC News Network and host on CBC Music, locally on CTV, CBC Radio, CityNews, and Newstalk 1010, and in the United States on Fox Soul. Kevin is also the founder of the Black digital media platform, SHIFTER. His years of work as an entertainment journalist led to him being named one of only 340 Golden Globe® Awards voters in the world and a Rotten Tomatoes Tomatometer-Approved critic. Kevin went on to co-found SHIFTER Entertainment, alongside his wife, Koliah, and has produced narrative short films, two digital series with CBC, and the Bell Fibe TV1 unscripted reality series, *A Date In The Life*, serving as showrunner, writer and co-director. Along the way, he completed a number of professional development programs, including the CaribbeanTales Black Incubator and Studio Access Project, Black Screen Office Office Hours Mentorship Program where he was paired with a CBC executive, Diversity Showrunner Bootcamp (Canfro x Warner Bros Access Discovery Canada), and Intro to Writing for TV (Second City) Now, with a number of pilot and feature film scripts written and projects in development, Kevin is poised to continue to be a champion for BIPOC entertainment and culture.

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Jessica Brown

Producer/ Director

Ujarak Media

Jessica Brown is a Nunatsiavut Inuk artist and entrepreneur from Newfoundland and Labrador. As the owner of Ujarak Media, a registered Nunatsiavut Inuit production company, she produces content that celebrates Indigenous cultural heritage. In 2024, she achieved significant milestones, including producing and directing three television series. As the founder of the Northern Film Initiative, Jessica amplifies Indigenous voices and supports emerging talent in the film industry.

Her commitment to authentic storytelling has earned her numerous accolades, including Emerging Television Talent from Women in Film and Television (Atlantic) and Emerging Artist from the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council. Additionally, Jessica founded St. John's Fashion Week, and coordinated the province's first Indigenous Fashion Show. Outside of her professional endeavors, Jessica is a dedicated single mother of two boys. She enjoys traveling, spending time with her family, and exploring nature.

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Vanessa Caceres

Producer

Righteous Pictures

Vanessa Caceres was born in Colombia, where she studied industrial engineering before moving to Canada in 2003 to pursue a career in film production. Her first short film, *Carjacking* (2005), was an official selection at the Montreal Film Festival. She later worked as Line Producer on *Transit* (2009), released theatrically by eOne Films. Her debut feature, *Generation Wolf*, won “Best Latin Film” at the Borrego Springs Film Festival and was acquired by Samuel Goldwyn Films in 2016. Her second feature, *The Office Games*, was distributed by Quiver Distribution. Vanessa has participated in prestigious industry programs, including the Sundance Collab Producing Program (2020), the Reelworld Producer Program (2021-22), and the SODEC Lab at Hot Docs (2023). She also represented Reelworld at Content Canada (2022) and Primetime Ottawa (2023). In 2024, she completed the Reelworld Training Lab presented by Amazon MGM Studios. Her latest dramatic feature, *Undocumented*, which she wrote and produced, explores the struggles of migrant workers and is currently on the festival circuit. She also produced *Our Friend Omar*, a documentary supported by CMF, Radio-Canada, and CBC, which premiered on television and digital platforms in 2024.

righteous-pictures.com

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Sara Caspian

Creator

The Caspian Sea Productions

Sara Caspian is a Vancouver-based Iranian-Canadian filmmaker. In 2019, she wrote, directed and produced the short narrative *The Separated*. Her screenwriting credits include *Vartoosh School of Maneating*, *Family Dinner* and her most recent feature film project—the psychological thriller *Love Me There*. Sara took her first acting workshop in England at the age of 21. After her move to Canada, she pursued her acting career full-time by enrolling at Toronto Film School. Sara has appeared in more than a dozen films and commercials. Her screen credits include the lead role in the feature 'Baby Fever' premiered at San Francisco Independent Film Festival in February 2025, and the council-funded short film *Farzana*. As the finalist of GEM's Vancouver's 2024 Genre Film Lab Accelerator Program, Sara was selected to pitch her film *Love Me There* at Frontiers International Co-production Market as well as Chilliwack Independent Film Festival. Sara's commitment to women-centered storytelling has always been at the core of her projects. Sara is a trained bellydancer and has studied under world-renowned masters such as Rahel, Nourah and Lana.

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Priscilla Cherry

Creator
The Oratory

Priscilla Cherry, a soul born of the vibrant confluence of Trinidadian and French Canadian roots, is a free-spirited force of nature—a social artist, broadcaster, and peer support specialist whose presence echoes with purpose. From a tender age, Priscilla sensed the absence of her reflection within the folds of media and mental health, a silent void that called to her. This recognition ignited a lifelong mission: to weave her lived experience navigating mental health concerns into the fabric of creativity, storytelling, and play. Her living story has led her to collaborate with renowned platforms like ET Canada, MTV Canada, LIVE! with Kelly, and TED.

Yet it is on the airwaves of CJSW 90.9 FM and CKUA 93.7 FM, where she serves as a voice and producer, that her true essence shines. Her dynamic energy also graces courtside as the in-game host for Calgary's professional basketball team, the Calgary Surge, injecting infectious energy and fostering connection among fans. Priscilla's heart beats with a deep love for hosting, and in her latest creation *The Oratory*, she brings to life a childhood dream talk show. Here, she believes storytelling is sacred and that sharing our narratives are both an art and a healing. Through this exchange within the transformative embrace of the arts, Priscilla believes we can honour our collective truth, spark curiosity, and foster understanding that transcends boundaries—empowering us to heal, grow, and find home within ourselves and with each other.

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Patricia Chica

Producer/Director/Writer

Flirt Films

Patricia Chica is an award-winning Canadian producer and filmmaker with over 60 hours of content to her name. She is the founder and president of Flirt Films and ChicArt Productions. She is a member of the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA), the Directors Guild of Canada, the Academy of Canadian Film and Television, Women In Film and Film Fatales. She is an alumna (Cum Laude) of the Film Production Department of Concordia University. Chica's latest independent feature film, *Montreal Girls*, is winner of 5 awards with funding by Telefilm Canada and Sodec and released theatrically in 2023 through Filmoption International in Canada and Level 33 Entertainment in the USA. She was an executive producer and/or co-producer on 4 indie features: *Filtered* (USA), *Somnium* (USA), *Her Choices* (USA) and *Algiers* (Algeria, Tunisia, France and Canada co-production. The Algeria selection for the Academy Awards).

FlirtFilms.net

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Jim Compton

Producer

Wabung Anung Films Ltd.

Jim is a member of the Keeseekoose First Nation in Saskatchewan and Winnipeg- based. He is the President and Principal Producer of Wabung Anung, a Canadian and Indigenous owned, award-winning content creator for film, television and interactive media with offices in Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta. He began his career in media as a journalist for the CBC / Manitoba Television Network, and was Special Projects Officer for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. He was one of the founders of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) where he also served as a member of the Southern Advisory Council, Broadcast Journalism Instructor for the Aboriginal Broadcast Training Initiative and Director of Programming and Executive Producer. Jim was a Director/Producer for Indian Cultural Education (I.C.E.) Productions and later Director of Independent Production and Executive Producer at Chum Television. He became an independent producer when he founded his company Rising Day Media, which is a parent company of Wabung Anung.

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David Cox

Creator/ Producer
CLK Creative Works

David Cox is a seasoned entertainment professional with over 25 years of invaluable experience in the music industry. His journey began as an artist and concert promoter, and since then, he has seamlessly navigated through retail, radio, marketing, and management, leaving an indelible mark on the industry. Currently, David is deeply involved in producing a documentary about King Reign; *King Reign to the World Presents*, a project that exemplifies his commitment to celebrating and preserving musical legacies. At the helm of an entertainment company, he specializes in artist development and offers expert consulting services dedicated to turning his clients' dreams into reality. With a track record that includes; producing the acclaimed TV series, *Ultimate MC* for AUX TV and his recent triumph, the film *The Onyx Experience*, a tribute to black artists performing rock music, David's influence on the industry is profound and far-reaching. His passion and expertise continue shaping the entertainment landscape, ensuring a legacy transcending generations.

clkcreativeworks.com

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Gursimran Datla

Producer

BetterHalf Films

Gursimran is a dynamic filmmaker and producer based in Toronto, Ontario. He runs a production company, BetterHalf Films. Gursimran's dedication to his craft is evident through his diverse body of work. His films have been recognized and screened at various film festivals, including the International Film Festival of South Asia, Toronto, Canada (2022), Emerging Lens Cultural Film Festival (2023) and Nuit Blanche, Toronto (2023). A postgraduate in advanced filmmaking and arts administration, Gursimran honed his skills at the National Screen Institute's EAVE Producers Program and has been spotlighted as one of Toronto's top 52 artists by the ArtWorxTO. His commitment to his craft led him to the Ontario Creates Futures program, where he further developed his series. Gursimran has also participated in the Reykjavik Film Festival's Talent Lab in October 2024. Currently, BetterHalf Films is gearing up for the production of *Masala Love*, a comedy series that revolves around a South Asian restaurant in Toronto's Little India. The series was recently selected for the Export Training Asia Pacific (ETAP) program in Vancouver, Canada. Gursimran is also advancing the development of his feature script, *We Must Now Depart*, which was recently workshopped at the Whistler Film Festival's Producer's Lab. Through these and other projects, BetterHalf Films continues to push creative boundaries, leaving a lasting impact on the screen industry—one story at a time.

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Noor Dhanda

Creator/ Producer/ Writer

Stranger Than You Productions

Noor Dhanda is a filmmaker, comedian, and actor based in Toronto, specializing in comedy directing and producing. She holds a diploma in Film Production from Toronto Film School and trained at Second City's Comedy Conservatory. Noor began her career at MTV Canada and soon moved on to directing commercials and branded content for The Sports Network, where she worked with brands such as the Toronto Raptors. While she built a strong foundation in commercial directing, her true passion lies in narrative and comedic storytelling. An active performer in Toronto's improv and sketch comedy scene, Noor has performed on stages around Toronto and in the GTA including; TO SketchFest and Second City and can also be found creating viral comedy content with her sketch troupe All Sorts. Her ability to wear multiple creative hats—directing, producing, acting, and writing—gives her a unique perspective in crafting comedy that is sharp, satirical, and engaging. With an ever-growing body of work in both scripted and unscripted comedy, Noor's ultimate goal is to develop and helm her own comedic series.

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Kathryn Fasegha

Producer

BalminGilead Movie Productions (Canada)

Kathryn Fasegha is a Canadian filmmaker whose career bridges the Canadian and Nigerian film industries. As founder of BalminGilead Movie Productions Group of Companies, she is dedicated to bringing authentic, underrepresented narratives to the screen. Her filmography includes; *Treacherous Heart* (2012) and *2 Weeks in Lagos* (2021), which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival, earned award nominations, and secured a Netflix release following a successful theatrical run.

Kathryn is currently developing a diverse slate of projects, including *2 Weeks in Calgary*, a cross-cultural romantic comedy exploring the immigrant experience and the conflict between duty and personal desire. She also serves as a producer and line producer with the *Being Black in Canada* series, mentoring emerging Black filmmakers as they navigate the complexities of production.

A recipient of the Global Woman of Vision Award (2012) for pioneering African content in Alberta, Kathryn's films blend cultural perspectives with universal themes of love, resilience, and identity. Inspired by her own immigrant journey, she crafts stories that capture the depth of human experience.

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Bernard Gray

Director/ Writer

MPEG6 Productions

Bernard Gray is a prominent figure in the agency and production industry, boasting over twelve years of experience creating exceptional work for globally recognized brands such as Samsung, Nike, Roots, and the NBA. His current role as a writer/director allows him to further solidify his legacy by crafting captivating stories that resonate with audiences.

Bernard's unwavering commitment to powerful storytelling and authentic characters shines through in his ever-expanding portfolio, establishing him as a masterful storyteller and a future filmmaker to watch. His work is fueled by genuine curiosity and a relentless pursuit of raw authenticity, ensuring that his stories remain grounded and relatable. Bernard's slate includes his narrative feature in pre-development; *Pops*, the short film; *Only A Man* and doc-series, *Mommy*.

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Keenan Grom

Writer

Stunt Nations

Keenan Grom, a passionate writer and actor, hails from the Moose Cree First Nation. His film career began with stunt work in Don McKellar's 2018 feature, *Through Black Spruce*. After early success in acting and stunts, Keenan shifted his focus to behind-the-camera roles, deepening his filmmaking knowledge and earning membership in the Directors Guild of Canada. In the past year, Keenan has produced three short films spanning genres from Western to comedy. His current projects include the partially funded whodunit web-series, *Paradise North Inn*, and a gothic western.

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Rouzbeh Heydari

Creator/ Director/ Writer

Culture & Cinema

Born in Iran and raised in Canada, Rouzbeh Heydari has been directing, producing, writing, and editing award-winning content for over a decade. His work spans feature films, television, and documentary projects, often exploring themes of identity, survival, and societal transformation. Rouzbeh's third feature film, *A Hundred Lies*, starring Rob Raco (*Riverdale*), Humberly González (*Ginny & Georgia*), and Brandon McKnight (*The Flash*), was released theatrically in 2024 and is now available globally on TUBI. In 2023, he directed episodes of Eli Roth's *A Ghost Ruined My Life* for Discovery+. His second feature, *Neon Lights*, starring Sons of Anarchy's Kim Coates, was released in 2022 by eOne and streamed on Netflix Canada and USA. Rouzbeh's first feature film, *Together Again*, was shot in Iran and achieved massive box office success before being banned by the Iranian regime. He has also directed and produced compelling documentary work that delves into untold stories and marginalized voices.

A 2024 Warner Brothers Discovery and Canadian Academy Directors Program alumnus, Rouzbeh is committed to bold storytelling and pushing creative boundaries. He has also been an active mentor, supporting emerging filmmakers through industry programs in Canada and beyond.

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Teresa M. Ho

Producer
100 Dragons

With over 25 years of industry experience in production finance and management, including more than 15 years as a Producer in Canadian Television, Teresa M. Ho is an Emmy and Canadian Screen Award-nominated Producer who continues to broaden her impact across all markets and platforms. Recently, she launched a 9-episode Rom-Com Short-form Series, *Hello (Again)* on CBC Gem and distributed Internationally by Flourishing Films, created by Simu Liu & Nathalie Younglai, with the support of CBC Gem, Bell Fund, CMF, and Ontario Creates. She has recently returned from the Arctic on the first ever CBC/APTN/Netflix TV series *North of North* as Co-Executive Producer. Her previous TV credits as Producer include; the Paramount+/Lionsgate series *Gray* directed by Ruba Nadda and starring Patricia Clarkson, four seasons of CBC's *Frankie Drake Mysteries* and two seasons of Corus and Peacock's, *Departure*. Her expertise in business and finance brings a practical tone to the creative voices while producing quality programming. Currently in development with a robust slate of projects she's recently been selected to participate with such programs as: Banff Spark Producers Edition, NSI-EAVE On Demand Access Program, Building Canada-Asia Pathways (RESO), and many more. When Teresa isn't racing around sets, you can find her racing around the tennis courts working on her service game.

100dragons.com

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Ant Horasanli

Creator/Producer/Director

N5 Pictures

Award-winning and two-time Canadian Screen Award nominated BIPOC filmmaker with over 20 years of professional experience. Ant has written, directed, and produced four critically acclaimed short-form digital series, two feature documentaries, and three feature films. His short-form work includes the award-winning action series *Petrol* (2016) which garnered over 5 million views on YouTube. *Petrol* gained commercial and critical acclaim, being featured in numerous industry trades like Screen and The Hollywood Reporter, as well as mainstream press. The series earned Ant his first Canadian Screen Award nomination for Best Original Digital Program or Series. *Petrol* Season 2 (2018) was produced with the support of the IPF, OMDC, and the CMF and starred Hollywood actress Vivica A. Fox.

In 2019, Ant co-wrote, directed, and produced the Bell Fund digital series, *The Runner* for which he received a second Canadian Screen Award nomination, this time for 'Best Director' in 2021. In 2020, he co-wrote, directed, and produced the short form docu-series, *Auto Aficionado* with the support of the Bell Fund and Ontario Creates. Currently, Ant is in production on *The Runner* Season 2 which received support from Ontario Creates and the CMF.

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Mathias Richard Horhager

Creator/Producer/Director/Writer

M.R. Horhager is an Emmy winning producer, Emmy nominated Director, Award-winning filmmaker and writer from Toronto, Canada. M.R. Horhager's recent work includes producing and directing Nickelodeon's reboot of the hit series *Blues Clues & You* and directing the award-winning series *Dot* -produced by the Jim Henson Company, the pre-school series *Chirp*, and the Christmas special *The Curse of Clara: A Holiday Tale*, which won a 2017 Canadian Screen Award for "Best Animated Program or Series". Beyond his preschool work, M.R. Horhager directed animated specials for two live-action sitcoms: a reboot of Norman Lear's *One Day at a Time* on POPTv/CBS, and an election special for *Black-ish* on ABC/Disney.

In addition to his work in broadcast TV, M.R. Horhager is also a prolific creator of original animated content, with multiple projects in various stages of development. His short film *Three Trees* starring Academy Award winner Whoopi Goldberg is currently touring festivals, and his short film *Shovelling* was greenlit by the National Film Board (NFB), with production starting in fall 2024. He has also written, directed and produced several short films, many of which have appeared in international festivals, including *Extreme Nuts* (2010), *Ball'oons* (2011), *I Hate You Red Light* (2012), *Ringo* (2012), and *Kafka's Little Fable* (2016). In 2017, he was invited to pitch his original project, *The Distinguished Dinosaurs*, at the acclaimed Annecy International Animated Film Festival

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Donia Kash

Creator/Producer

DOBA Ltd.

Donia is a 2024 Whistler Film Festival winning filmmaker and actor, recognized for their dedication to inclusive and bold storytelling. With a background in martial arts, dance, and theater, they bring a unique perspective and a keen eye for movement and performance to their work. Donia's recent projects, including their roles in *SLAY* and Hallmark's *The Holiday Sitter*, have been featured in *Variety Magazine* and *Entertainment Tonight*. Notably, their role in *The Holiday Sitter* made history, as Donia became the first non-binary actor to star in a Hallmark production. As the executive producer of the award-winning short film *Magic Trick*, Donia continues to champion underrepresented voices and create impactful films that resonate with audiences. Their fearless approach to storytelling pushes boundaries, challenges conventions, and shapes the future of inclusive cinema.

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Leila Khalilzadeh

Producer/ Director/Writer

Mise En Abyme

Montreal-based Iranian-Canadian filmmaker Leila Khalilzadeh has written, directed, and produced short films in fiction, animation, and documentary genres. Her films have been showcased at festivals such as the Berlin International Film Festival and Festival du nouveau cinéma. With a background in documentary filmmaking, Khalilzadeh often incorporates influences from this genre into her fictional works. Her ability to work across multiple genres has fostered innovative filmmaking, such as integrating animation aesthetics into real-world settings. Khalilzadeh holds an MFA in Film Production from Concordia University, Montreal, and an MA in Cinema from the University of Art, Tehran. She is an alumna of Berlinale Talents (2021), RIFF Talent Lab (2024), the Reelworld Screen Institute Producer Program (2024), and a member of the Directors Guild of Canada. She currently has fiction and documentary projects in development and is working on her first feature film, supported by Telefilm Canada's development fund.

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Arshad Khan

Creator/Director/Writer/Producer

Gray Matter Productions

Arshad Khan is a celebrated filmmaker and a leading advocate for LGBTQIA rights within the South Asian diaspora, recognized for his significant impact on cinema. His autobiographical documentary, *ABU*, garnered widespread praise for its intimate exploration of identity and belonging. He recently starred in and art-directed *Mustache*, which won the Audience Award at SXSW. Khan's influence also includes his roles on juries for prestigious organizations like the Director's Guild of Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Canadian Screen Awards. His upcoming project, *Purry (Fairy)*, is his first fiction feature—a fantasy-comedy delving into identity, family dynamics among second-generation immigrants, and the pressing issue of climate change. He is also developing his debut comedy series, *Sana's Basement Beauty Solutions*, through the Reelworld screenwriting lab. Khan has received grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, Quebec Arts Council, and Telefilm Canada to support his work.

As a programmer for international film festivals, and a jury member for organizations like the Canada Council, Manitoba Arts Council, and Tasveer South Asian Film Festival, he champions diverse voices from South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, fostering cross-cultural dialogue and nurturing emerging talent. Khan is a driving force for inclusive storytelling in global cinema.

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Mitra Knight

Producer
1844 Studios

Mitra Knight is an Iranian-Canadian Bahá'í producer with a global perspective, shaped by extensive work and travel in the Caribbean and Africa. As a producer at 1844 Studios, she brings a strategic, project-driven approach to filmmaking, drawing on over 20 years of experience in business leadership and project management across the private and public sectors. Holding two master's degrees in management and leadership, Mitra has led large-scale international initiatives, notably, she served as Project Director for the \$31 million Strengthening Distance Education in the Caribbean (SDEC) project, funded primarily by the Canadian Government, which expanded post-secondary education access across the region. At 1844 Studios, Mitra has produced multiple films, including *My Lyric I Never Knew*, *Precarity* as well as the upcoming feature *When I Was George* and animation series *Happy, Pappy?*. With a passion for international storytelling, Mitra is dedicated to producing impactful films that bridge cultures and spark meaningful dialogue.

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Angelique Knights

Creator/Writer/Producer

Knights Group Media

Angelique Knights is a Black, Queer writer/producer from Toronto, Canada. Her career began in the music industry at FLOW 93-5, Canada's first Black-owned radio station, where she worked with Canadian artists such as Drake and The Weeknd. Knights later moved on to work at popular music television channels MuchMusic, MTV Canada and on Canada's longest running music video award show –The MuchMusic Video Awards. After serving ten years in the music industry, Knights transitioned her focus to pursue her passion... screenwriting and producing scripted television series. In 2021 she joined New Metric Media, where she worked as a creative producer committed to championing diverse stories from underrepresented voices. Knights produced the Crave Original comedy-series *Bria Mack Gets A Life* and won the 2024 Canadian Screen Award for best comedy series. In 2024, Knights founded Knights Group Media Inc. (KGM) -- A production company driven by people of colour, telling authentic and relatable stories that teach, inspire and connect with global audiences. KGM is actively developing a slate of projects — including *Been Here*, a scripted web series, created and written by Knights. Knights Group Media is part of the 2025 cohort for the Banff, Paramount+ Spark Accelerator for Women in the Business of Media: Producers Edition. Knights is an alumni of the Academy Of Canadian Cinema And Television's Executive Residency Program.

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Sandra Madu

Creator/ Writer/ Producer

MRKT Africa Media

Sandra Madu is a writer, producer and founder of MRKT Africa Media with over a decade of experience in theatre, media, and entertainment, and a strong background in music and marketing. Driven by a passion for storytelling, she has consistently dedicated herself to creating and amplifying unique African and diasporic stories through television, film, and digital media. She has worked on the sets of *Best Man Holiday*, *Special Correspondence*, *Saving Hope*, *Shadowhunters* and the Nigerian music reality show, *MTN Y'ello Star*. She is also the co-writer of the drama feature film, *The Rebirth of Clara*, produced by Wonda Studios and Rellow Media Inc. Additionally, she is currently co-writing a series adaptation of Jane Igharo's best-selling romantic-comedy novel *Ties That Tether* under award-winning showrunner, Anthony Q. Ferrell, alongside Margaret Lewis (Ijinle Studios) and Temilola Adebayo (Rellow Media Inc), as well as a limited romantic dramedy series under Rellow Media Inc., supported by the Bell Media Fund. She is also developing and producing her own romantic dramedy series, *To Lagos With Love*, in an international co-production partnership with Rellow Media, Inner City Films, Circle Blue Entertainment and Ochre Media Inc. Sandra is an alum of the Realness Institute Episodic Lab in partnership with Netflix Africa (2022) and the Diversity Showrunner Bootcamp led by Canfro Productions in partnership with Warner Bros. Discovery Access Canada (2024).

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Moniquea Marion

Writer, Producer, Creator

Slaw Paw Productions

Moniquea Marion is a Saskatchewan based Métis writer, producer, and director. She's working alongside APTN with her original series, *Kunsi Sherry's Kitchen* and has a slate of scripted and unscripted properties. Marion has been afforded opportunities with Warner Bros Canada, The Academy of Canadian Film and Television, Amazon MGM, Reelworld, Whistler Film Festival and Banff-Netflix DOV. Reach out if you're excited to collaborate as I'd love to see how we can work together!

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Kaveh Mohebbi

Writer

D'scribe Pictures

Kaveh Mohebbi is an Iranian-Canadian screenwriter who received his MA in Screenwriting at the London Film School (UK). Soon after he was a graduate of the Second City writing program where he wrote and produced the mainstage show, *Apocalypse Now, Desert Later*. In 2013 Kaveh was invited into the CFC Writer's Lab, which led to his involvement as co-writer on a number of short films including the Official TIFF Selection, *STILL* and the Official Austin Film Festival Selection, *Life on Juniper*. Writing credits include; *This Hour has 22 Minutes*, CBC Gem's *Communist Daughter*, *Overlord* and *the Underwoods*. Nickelodeon's kids animated *Hamsters of Hamsterdale*, Season 1 and 2 of Amazon's first Canadian scripted comedy *The Lake* and Crave's *Late Bloomer*. Kaveh currently has a hour long detective comedy *Sandcastle* in development with eOne as well as a half-hour comedy, *Laughganistan*, in development with Cameron Pictures and Amazon.

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Mehrtash Mohit

Director/ Writer

Migrant Arts Inc

Mehrtash is an Iranian-Canadian filmmaker with a MFA in Film Production from York University. His documentary and fiction films have been recognized at international festivals for their compelling storytelling and cultural depth. *Retributive Minds* won “Best Foreign Language Film” at NYCSHORTS and earned multiple nominations at Yorkton. In 2022, he honed his craft at the Canadian Film Centre’s Directors’ Lab, directing *The Shave*, a coming-of-age drama exploring male sexuality. His latest short, *Finding Shelter*, a \$100K production supported by multiple arts councils, tackles the global refugee crisis, showcasing his ability to execute ambitious projects. In 2024, he was named one of ten promising Canadian filmmakers by TIFF’s Irving Avrich Fund. Through Migrant Arts Production, the company he founded, he mentors and supports immigrant filmmakers. He is currently in pre-production for his debut feature, *A Simple Solution*, funded by the Canada Council for the Arts and private investors, while also developing *Article of Punishment*, another Canada Council-supported project. At the core of his work is a mission to bridge cultures and amplify underrepresented voices, crafting universally resonant stories that reflect the depth and diversity of human experience.

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Justin Neal

Writer/Producer

Holy Crow Productions

Justin Neal is a dramatic writer of offbeat narratives that weave comedy with high-stakes drama, creating uplifting tales of personal transformation. Neal's screenplays have placed him in over 30 screenwriting competitions, programs, residencies, and festivals across North America. His feature screenplay *The Skins Game* received development from Telefilm and the Indigenous Screen Office. His series, *Boundary Bay* (a 2022 BANFF Indigenous Screen Summit pitch project), and feature *The Traveller*, have received grants from ISO and Creative BC. His series *Hole in the Donut* received Creative BC's Rogers Indigenous Film Funding. As a playwright and founder of Holy Crow Arts in Vancouver, Neal has been awarded grant funding from BC Arts Council, Canada Council, First Peoples' Cultural Council, Squamish Nation, the City of Vancouver, and more, for the successful world premieres of his plays *So Damn Proud* (2021) and *Keepers of the Salish Sea* (2024). From '99-'13 Neal juggled day jobs in marketing and editorial production in San Francisco and New York with amateur theatre at night. He subsequently chose to focus full-time on dramatic writing, moving to his family's traditional Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) lands to pursue a Joint MFA degree in Creative Writing and Theatre from UBC. He is a Canadian Film Centre's Norman Jewison Film Program Writers' Lab alumnus and a 2024-25 Jack and Doris Shadbolt Fellow in the Humanities at Simon Fraser University.

holycrowarts.com/writer

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Adrian Neblett

Producer

Film Producer Adrian Neblett is passionate about championing diverse voices and innovative storytelling. With a portfolio that includes several impactful short films such as *Not for Us?*, *Ketchup with Me*, and *Legacy*, Adrian has shown a commitment to exploring unique narratives that resonate with audiences. The award-winning film *Wytch Craft* has gained significant recognition, screening at over 20 festivals around the globe and earning accolades for its performances and artistic vision. Look for his latest collaborations, *Unfrayed* and *Revenge Body* in the summer of 2025! Adrian believes in the power of cinema to reflect diverse experiences and perspectives, and he actively seeks to collaborate with underrepresented storytellers to help them find confidence and platforms to bring their visions to life. His dedication to fostering creativity and inclusivity within the film community positions him as an ally to many in the industry. As he continues to expand his slate, Adrian Neblett is determined to create films that not only entertain but challenge societal norms inspiring meaningful conversations through our shared humanity.

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Cicy Nie

Creator

CCPineapple Studio

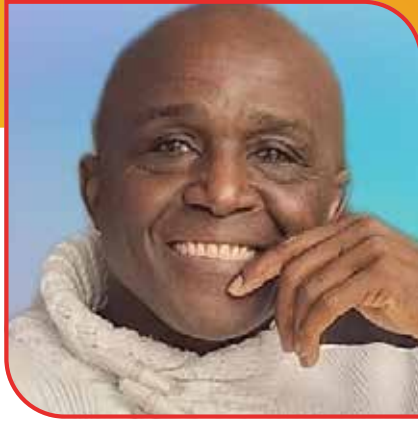
Cicy Nie, a Chinese Canadian filmmaker and former banker, received the CMPA mentorship award and honed her craft at Screen Siren Pictures under award-winning filmmaker Trish Dolman. She continues to work there as a Development and Business Affairs Coordinator, with a diverse portfolio that includes feature, TV series, and web series projects. Cicy's feature film project *Hypermnesia* was a runner-up on the 2025 JETS-Junior Entertainment Talent Slate list, and her web series *It Rains Wherever I Go* was a Runner Up at the 2024 T.O. Webfest Next Up! Pitch Competition. Her feature screenplay *How To Break Your Parent's Relationship* was a quarterfinalist in both the 2022 Final Draft Big Break Script Competition and the 2023 Emerging Screenwriter Screenplay competition. She also wrote and produced the short film *The Uninvited Guest*, which won Best Horror Short at the 2023 Nashville Independent Filmmakers Festival, was nominated for Best Horror Award by the 2023 Toronto Indie Shorts, and was a Semi-Finalist for Best Student Short at the 2023 Calgary Independent Film Festival.

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Ambrose Okundaye

Producer/ Writer/ Director

Dlite Pictures Entertainment

Ambrose Okundaye is a Producer and Writer/Director who focuses on creating high-quality, culturally inclusive, independent Canadian films from the BIPOC Canadian perspective. He has directed numerous short films that have received financial backing from City TV, a division of Chum Television, and have been broadcast on City TV and other Chum stations across Canada. Okundaye is the driving force behind the new Vancouver-based film production company Dlite Pictures Entertainment Inc. In partnership with Broadlens Studios, Ottawa, Dlite Pictures Entertainment is currently in post-production on its first horror feature film, *The Wiccan Girl*, which is scheduled for release in 2025. Dlite Pictures Entertainment Inc. also has two feature film scripts in development, both written by Ambrose Okundaye: *Boiling Point* and *Blinder's On*. *Boiling Point* is currently in development with Telefilm Canada and Creative BC.

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Magdi Omar

Writer/Director/Producer

Legally Here Productions

Magdi's career began in Egypt, where he worked on food and travel shows before joining Al Jazeera to film documentaries around the world. This experience took him to 28 countries and broadened his understanding of diverse cultures and customs.

In 2013, Magdi immigrated to Canada. After initial challenges finding work in the local film industry, he secured a position at a visual effects company. Over three years, he worked as an on-set scanning producer, scanning actors and locations for post-production VFX. During this time, he contributed to acclaimed shows such as *The Umbrella Academy*, *Star Trek: Discovery*, and *The Expanse*.

With the advent of the pandemic, Magdi returned to freelancing. He took on various roles as a director and location scout and manager, working with international productions to find filming locations across Morocco, Egypt, and Jordan. Concurrently, he dedicated himself to personal projects that focused on the refugee and immigrant experience. He wrote and directed three short films that were featured in multiple festivals, including Reelworld and the Canada International Film Festival, receiving the Rising Star award for his film *New Canucks*.

In 2023 and 2025, Magdi received grants to develop his first feature film, *My Journey from Falafel to Poutine*, which is currently in pre-production and set to begin production in September.

magdiomar.com

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Angela Onuora

Creator/Writer/Director/Producer

This Naija Girl Studios

Angela Onuora is an award-winning producer, director, writer, and on-air radio personality with over 15 years of experience in TV, radio, and film. As the Founder and Director of This Naija Girl Studios, she has a proven track record of producing high-impact scripted and unscripted content for global markets.

Angela is a skilled strategic planner and leader with expertise in stakeholder engagement and innovative funding strategies. She is a champion of inclusive storytelling and passionate about developing content that resonates with diverse audiences. Her creative vision aligns business objectives with audience engagement strategies to achieve success in the ever-changing media landscape.

A 2025 York University MFA Film graduate and 2019 Conestoga College Broadcasting Performance and Digital Media Graduate Program alumna, Angela has received numerous accolades. These include the 2023 Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest 'Women of The Year' Arts & Culture Award, a 2023 Premier's Award Nomination in Creative Arts & Design, and the 2023 Conestoga College Alumni of Distinction Award.

Angela is a founding member of Studio D20 Women Media Filmmakers & Artists Collective and founder of The RISE Class, a video production crash course that empowers underrepresented community members. She also serves as a film production mentor at the COVE/COVOX Arts Incubator and MT Space Arts Xchange Mentorship Program.

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Murray Peeters

Director/ Writer/ producer

Mugaliyombo media

Murry Peeters (she/her) is an award-winning actor, director and screenwriter. Her credits include: *Robyn Hood* (Global), *Far Cry 5* and *See*. She was selected to participate in the inaugural class of the WarnerMedia Access x Canadian Academy Writers Program. She is also an alumna of the Canadian Film Center's 2018 Writers' Lab, a 2018 Magee TV Diverse Screenwriters Award recipient and a participant of Netflix-Banff 2019 & 2020 Diversity of Voices, Black Women Film! Big Up Producer's Residency 2023, and Women In the Director's Chair Career Advancement Module 2023. Peeters spearheaded #StartWith8HollywoodNorth, a program aimed at connecting industry leaders and emerging women and non-binary, BIPOC creatives. Her short film, which she wrote and directed, *Woman Meets Girl*, screened at Queer Screen's 30th Mardi Gras Film Festival and BFI Flare, among others. It won "Best Canadian Short" and "Best Performance" at the Vancouver Short Film Festival. In addition, it won "Best Romance" and "Best LGBT" at the Sunday Shorts Festival. It was also nominated for a DGC Award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement: "Best Short Film", and "Best Scripted" at the Yorkton Film Festival. She's currently developing a feature version of *Woman Meets Girl* as well as a dramatic series about a Black female immigrant doctor who opens an illegal pay-what-you-can abortion clinic in rural Prince Edward Island in the 2010s.

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John Alexander Cook Peralta

Producer

Filmscope Pictures Co.

John Cook, a producer and director, who relocated to Canada in 2016. His background includes over four years as a Financial Representative at CIBC and two years as Finance and Business Affairs Coordinator for a Venture Development Company, where he developed expertise in budget management, contracts, and project financing.

In 2024, John established Filmscope Pictures, a burgeoning production company. His portfolio includes directing two short films, producing five, and currently producing a short documentary for Accessible Media Inc. He is a highly motivated film production financial management professional with a passion for impactful storytelling and a unique blend of creativity and business acumen. His areas of expertise include cash flow management, cost analysis, and ensuring productions are completed on time and within budget.

John's focus on responsible financial governance and strategic leadership is enhanced by his film production experience and a keen interest in business and legal affairs, recently culminating in a certificate in Entertainment Law. He is skilled at directing budgets, establishing internal controls, managing tax credits, minimizing risk, and formalizing financial strategies. His excellent communication skills enable him to effectively manage stakeholders and team members, and seamlessly integrate financial operations with daily production activities.

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Louisa Phung

Writer/ Director/ Producer

Clever Bird Entertainment Inc

Louisa PHUNG Suk Yee is an award-winning writer and director based on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, known as Vancouver, BC. Her narrative short films have been screened globally in genres ranging from drama and horror to action. *Hope and Grace* (2020) was nominated for Best Canadian Short Film at the 2021 Regina International Film Festival and Awards, winning Outstanding Screenplay and Outstanding BC Film at the 2022 Pacific Rim Short Circuit Film Festival. Her one-minute horror short, *Day Break* (2019), won the Ultra Short Category at the Mighty Asian Moviemaking Marathon film competition, placed third at the 2020 Minute Madness Festival in Toronto and directed her first short documentary *Pool of Plenty* 余 (2024) with the Looking China Youth Film Project in An Hui province, China.

Louisa was selected for the inaugural screenwriting mentorship with the 2023 Reel Abilities Film Festival Toronto, the Women in Focus Lab at the 2024 Whistler Film Festival, and as a delegate for the 2025 Hong Kong FilmArt film market with the Racial Equity Screen Office (RESO). Louisa is currently in development for her debut feature film, a psychological horror story about an elderly Chinese Canadian immigrant being consumed by her gambling addiction and turning into a *Hungry Ghost*.

louisaphung.com

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Meng Melody Shang

Creator/Producer

Dreameng Studio Ltd.

Meng Melody Shang is an award-winning Chinese-Canadian producer and creator. In the past couple of years, Melody produced multiple short films that premiered at film festivals in North America. Most of these films were supported by the Canadian Arts Council. In 2024, she was invited to produce the ReelWorld Film Festival Award show. Leveraging her Asian background and cultural insight, Melody has crafted solid commercial portfolios and impactful short films. Simultaneously, she collaborates with Canadian mainstream directors, contributing to the rich tapestry of Canadian cinema. Melody is a member of CMPA and Web Series Canada. *The Royals*, a music short film directed by Melody Shang has received 2024 Toronto Shorts International Film Festival screening credit and “The Best Short” of the Ottawa Film Award. She is the creator/producer of the short film, *The Magic Book* which received the “Audience Choice Award” from Toronto Youth Shorts Festival.

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Isabella Shibuta

Creator/Writer

Isabella Shibuta

Isabella Shibuta, a Toronto-based actor and writer of Japanese-Brazilian and Polish descent, has appeared in “Designing Christmas” (Discovery+) and “Right Under My Roof” (BellTV). Her training includes the CBC Actors’ Conservatory at the Canadian Film Centre, George Brown College’s theatre performance program, and Canterbury High School’s dramatic arts program. At the Canadian Film Centre, she honed her acting skills and discovered a talent for writing, leading her to write and star in the short film *Melanie* and star in *Gerry*. She also created the web series *Alice is Asian* and the feature film *Reassessment*. Isabella won the TOWebfest/CMF Next Up! Pitch Competition and the Ideas From I Grant and Fellowship from Ecu Club for *Alice is Asian*. Her theatre credits include writing and starring in *The Letters of Jane Austen* and working with Tarragon Theatre. Isabella is grateful to her immigrant parents for their sacrifices, which allowed her to pursue her passion for the arts.

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Virinder Singh

Executive Producer

Versatile Pictures

Virinder Singh is an accomplished filmmaker with two feature-length documentaries on Punjabi sub-culture and over 20 short films and music videos showcased globally. Recently, he served as production manager for *Get Up Aisha* and *It's My Anxiety*. His latest project, *Jersey Boy*, won the Whistler pitch competition and is in post-production. He has been a member of the Directors Guild of Canada since 2016, in varying capacities from accounting, locations and production. He has worked on established shows and studios including Disney (*Spin*), Paramount (*Rabbit Hole*), Netflix (*Anne with an E*), CBC (*Kim's Convenience*) and Amazon (*The Expanse*). Virinder has a slate of IP's that he is developing including a Sci-fi children's television show. He hopes to bring to life an immigrant story set in 1980's Edmonton - which touches on his family's experiences adapting to Canada. He has stood on the jury of the Toronto International Music Video Festival.

versatilepictures.ca

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Sabrina Spence

Producer

Junction Hammer Productions

Sabrina Spence is a producer and media executive with over 15 years of experience in content development, acquisitions, and programming. As the founder of Junction Hammer Productions, she develops and produces feature films, scripted series, and factual content—securing financing and building meaningful industry partnerships along the way. She has a deep understanding of funding and compliance, successfully securing multiple rounds of government funding for various projects, including the recently released feature film *Boot Camp* and the annual live broadcast *The Countdown*.

Before launching JHP, Sabrina was Interim General Manager at Ouat Media, where she acquired award-winning short films and led sales strategies to maximize licensing revenue. She also served as a Producer for the long-running variety series *Tiny Talent Time* and previously worked in programming and acquisitions for REWIND and Metro14 Montreal, curating premium short films and international content. Sabrina is passionate about championing diverse voices in the industry and has contributed to the programming teams at Cinefest Sudbury and ReelWorld Film Festival and previously managed Special Events for the Toronto International Reel Asian Film Festival. She's a CMPA and WIFT member and an alum of the Banff Spark Accelerator for Women. She holds an Honours BA in Film Studies from Brock University and is committed to fostering inclusive storytelling.

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Ian Tan

Creator/ Director

Vancouver-based filmmaker Ian Tan holds a BFA in Film Production from UBC. He is an alumnus of the VIFF Catalyst program and Blood In The Snow's Horror Development Lab, and his award-winning shorts have screened internationally such as *For Roy* and *Cry Harder*. His Malaysian upbringing inspires Ian to tell stories from his unique Chinese-Malaysian perspective, with a focus on deconstructing masculinity. He is currently developing his horror short 'Karak' into a feature film.

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Emmanuel Teji

Writer/ Director/ Producer

Godspeed Studios

Emmanuel Teji is a South Asian Canadian writer, director, and producer dedicated to innovative and impactful storytelling. His independently produced works have been showcased at festivals such as TIFF and SXSW, earning recognition for their bold narratives and artistic depth. His production company, Godspeed Studios, is building the next major force in film—a company committed to shifting the direction of storytelling in the industry by championing untold stories, marginalized communities, and narratives that shape a better future for humanity. Beyond filmmaking, Emmanuel has been an advocate for underrepresented voices in the industry. As the Executive Director of the grassroots festival Toronto New Wave, he helped launch its first VR and immersive film segment in 2018, pushing the boundaries of experiential storytelling. Through advocacy-driven storytelling, Godspeed Studios remains committed to reshaping cinema into a more inclusive and thought-provoking space, and Emmanuel aims to work with others who share the same vision.

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Latif Ullah

Filmmaker

Renaissance Films

Myanmar-Canadian filmmaker Latif Ullah has a diverse background that includes photography, dance, and writing. He was invited to pitch his first feature film, *Kage No Hana*, at Platform Busan (2024), part of the Busan International Film Festival. The film stars Mako Fujimoto, known for her work on the Emmy-winning television drama *Shōgun*. Ullah was recently selected for mentorship with the American Society of Cinematographers, where he will learn from some of today's most accomplished DOPs. He is currently developing his first feature for international co-production with Tokyo-based producer Akiho Furuichi.

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Naz Sohni Uppal

Creator/ Producer

Sumayyah's World Productions

Naz Sohni Uppal is a former South-Asian Canadian Television and Radio Personality and Producer who has become a household name in the city of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. She has won many awards including: her Top 40 Under 40; two Canadian Ethnic Media Awards; and CTV and Heritage Festival's Heritage Hero Award. She has worked on programs airing across Canada in both Alberta and Ontario, specializing in Culture, Community, the Arts, and Entertainment. She has worked for multiple television and radio stations, including OMNI TV, City TV, and 101.7 World FM. Naz has a deep love and appreciation for South Asian and BIPOC cultures and has built her career around showing stories of people from communities that are finding a space and place for their culture and identity in Canada and she's doing it with heart and soul. Naz is also the founder of a series of short stories about what it's like growing up South Asian in Edmonton. She writes and presents the stories in schools.

nazsohniuppal.com

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Dianne Lopez-Wulf

Writer/ Director

Lopez-Wulf

Dianne Wulf, an emerging Filipino-Canadian writer and director, is a passionate advocate for authentic representation and diverse voices in film and television. A UBCP/ACTRA member, she champions diversity in the entertainment industry and creates compelling stories that amplify underrepresented voices. Wulf's career has been distinguished by significant milestones, including selection for the inaugural cohort of The Hollywood Reporter's Women in Entertainment 2025 initiative. She was also named one of Reelworld Film Festival's Emerging 20 (2019) and participated in the Netflix-BANFF Diversity of Voices Program (2019, 2021). Her screenplay's have received support from the Alberta Media Arts Alliance Society, Women in Film and Television-Alberta, and Canada Council for the Arts. Further, Wulf was honoured as one of eight alumni of the prestigious Women in the Director's Chair (WIDC) program in 2021, a BIPOC TV and Film TIFF Delegate in 2023, and a Racial Equity Screen Office Delegate to Prime Time 2025. Her short film, *The Legend of Mindi*, earned her an AMPPIA Rosie nomination, and she was one of nine finalists in the 2019 CBC Short Film Face-Off for directing short film *Like Right Now*.

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Sepideh Yadegar

Writer/ Director

Dehdeh Films

Sepideh Yadegar is an award-winning writer and director whose filmmaking journey began as a young girl in Iran, captivated by storytelling and performance. Driven by a passion ignited by childhood sketch shows, Sepideh overcame societal expectations and cultural barriers, forging her own cinematic path after relocating to Canada in 2011. Her films thoughtfully explore nuanced themes of cultural identity, displacement, and the multifaceted experiences of young women navigating between tradition and modernity, challenging audiences to reconsider established perceptions through authentic and bold storytelling. Her acclaimed feature film, *One Must Wash Eyes*, has earned numerous international awards and critical recognition, including “Best Canadian Feature” at the Regina International Film Festival, “Best Screenplay” and “Best Cinematography” at the GEM Festival, and “Best Screenplay” at the Hamilton Film Festival. It received additional nominations from the BC Leo Awards and the Calgary International Film Festival. The film’s sold-out premiere in British Columbia further emphasized its profound cultural impact and widespread appeal. Her role as co-producer and writer for a Telus Original feature documentary highlights her adaptability and strength as a storyteller. Guided by her unique journey and rich cultural insights, Sepideh Yadegar continues to create films that resonate deeply, foster meaningful conversations, and inspire audiences globally.

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