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MEDIA RELEASE

Capilano University launches Assistant Director program for Indigenous filmmakers

Delivery model allows students to live and work in their communities while they learn

NORTH VANCOUVER B.C. March 17, 2023 – Capilano University’s (CapU) [Indigenous Digital Accelerator](#) program has launched an Assistant Director training workshop for emerging Indigenous filmmakers in response to an identified skills need in the film industry. The program provides students with an Indigenized curriculum, on-set experience, and certifications required to prepare them to enter the [Directors Guild of Canada](#) Trainee Assistant Director program.

“Programming like CapU’s [Indigenous Digital Filmmaking](#) program and [School of Motion Picture Arts](#) tend to graduate students who want to be writers, directors, producers, in the camera department, or grip and lighting. There is a severe underrepresentation of Indigenous filmmakers working as assistant directors in British Columbia and Alberta. To my knowledge, there are only two Indigenous assistant directors in B.C. working on unionized film productions,” said program creator Doreen Manuel, director of the Bosa Centre for Film & Animation and Inclusive Community Projects at CapU.

Participants learn script breakdowns, set protocols, call sheets, daily production reports and logistics training critical to the assistant director role. Participants also receive additional training in order to receive their Motion Picture Industry Orientation, Set Safety and WHMIS certifications.

“It’s important to me that Indigenous stories be told by Indigenous key creatives,” said program participant Rosie Johnnie-Mills (Skidegate Haida & Xinipsen Cowichan). “This program empowers me to transition from being in front of the camera to behind the camera, allowing me to control the narrative of my life and world views.”

Working with a cohort of 14 students from Nations across B.C. and Alberta, training takes place over three weekends to accommodate those currently working in the film industry. The first two weekends involved virtual classes and the final session, March 17–19, take place at the Bosa Centre for Film and Animation at CapU.

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“I see this program as a first step towards creating my own original film content. I hope to gain a better understanding of the on-set protocols and specific duties of different members of a film crew, as well as a big picture understanding of the whole filmmaking process from start to finish,” said program participant Allen Belcourt (Métis Nation of Alberta). “There is a growing Indigenous film community in Alberta and I want to play a greater role in Indigenous storytelling as a film director and producer.”

The program is sponsored by [REEL CANADA](#), with support from Warner Media, Alberta Media Production Industries Association, the James Golick Fund, and the Indigenous Digital Accelerator matching funds initiative, with cooperation from the BC and Alberta District Councils of the Directors Guild of Canada.

The goal of this partnership with Reel Canada is to pilot an assistant director program and branch into additional specialize training programs for other underrepresented roles in the film industry.

About Capilano University

Capilano University is a teaching-focused university based in North Vancouver, British Columbia, with additional programming serving the Sunshine Coast and the Sea-to-Sky corridor. With industry-leading instructors, small classes and over 100 programs across five distinctive faculties, CapU is a unique place where students are encouraged to make their mark, in and out of the classroom. Capilano University is named after Sa7plek (Chief Joe Capilano), an important leader of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nation of the Coast Salish Peoples. We respectfully acknowledge that our campuses are located on the territories of the Lííwat, xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), shíshálh (Sechelt), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

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