

# WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

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DIRECTORS AND GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE CANADIAN  
SCREEN-BASED PRODUCTION INDUSTRY

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Purpose of the report

*The budget-challenged Canadian screen sector will win not on generating look-alike productions, but on specificity of voice. Anyone who believes that the director's unique voice is a critical part of a production's identity is bound to believe in opening our screens to Canada's brilliant diversity of voices.*

*Tim Southam, National President, Directors Guild of Canada, 2016*

Our screens are a place where Canadians tell stories to each other and the world beyond our borders. Canada has a thriving screen-based production sector that is deeply valued by Canadian audiences. According to the 2015 evaluation report of the Canada Media Fund, "Canadians feel that there are many unique Canadian stories that should be told, that a strong Canadian television and film production industry will strengthen Canadian identity, and that production of unique Canadian programs is important to the development of Canadian culture."<sup>1</sup>

Directors are at the core of the key creative positions that define Canadian content. Directors are leaders; effective directors work in collaboration with the full range of creative, technical, administrative, logistical talent that is required for making content on screens large and small. Being a director, by definition, requires advanced communication and interpersonal skills, an ability to operate efficiently and effectively in a high-pressured environment, juggle competing demands and balance financial and creative imperatives.

Forging a career as a director has many rewards, both creative and financial for those who succeed. The anticipation of those rewards also means that a career as a director is highly competitive, and for the few who succeed there are many who struggle. As the current global debate around gender inequality in the screen-based industries clearly shows, that struggle is not gender-neutral.

*What's wrong with this picture? Directors and gender inequality in the Canadian screen-based production industry seeks to explain the root causes of the systemic*

discrimination and exclusion women face from key creative and leadership roles in the Canadian screen-based storytelling landscape. It advances a sophisticated understanding of the resilience of gender inequality. The report builds on the growing body of statistical evidence that is available through an analysis of qualitative data based on interviews with 18 Canadian directors in providing a comprehensive evidence-based body of research.

Key to understanding the issue of gender inequality is an analysis not just of discrimination against women, *but of systemic advantage for men*. Gender inequality in the film and television production industry is a systemic problem that *affects* women. Nonetheless, as this body of research clearly shows, the issue is not one created *by* women. Consequently, solutions to an issue of considerable economic and social significance require an industry-wide effort.

## THE BIG PICTURE

Four key aspects of the screen-based production industries serve as critical context for developing solution-oriented approaches to promoting gender equality. Of note, the way the sector organizes and operates has significant political, social, economic and cultural impacts.

- 1 The screen-based production industry in Canada is a major economic and employment driver. Consequently, the issue of gender inequality must be understood as an employment equity issue for a major sector of the Canadian economy.

- 2 Precarious employment is a defining feature of work and life for the talent pool that is the core infrastructure of the screen-based production industry. The absence of a stable workplace; inconsistent employment and income insecurity for the workforce, intensely competitive labour markets, and highly mobile, transient employers pose serious challenges for developing a gender equity strategy on an industrial scale.
- 3 The screen-based production sector in Canada is by definition both national – in terms of the funding and regulatory frameworks that shape the domestic production sector, and international – as the significant investment, financing and hiring decisions that are made internationally affect labour markets and industry dynamics in Canada.
- 4 Fourth, film and television production in Canada is highly subsidized by significant public investments. The communication of a diverse and dynamic Canadian national identity is a driving policy rationale for significant public investments in the Canadian screen-based production sector. The other key policy rationale is to support Canada’s creative economy by stimulating investment and jobs in the digital age. However, the content supported by significant public investment does not currently serve the public interest in terms of a diversity of stories from a range of voices. The impact of federal and provincial public investment and funding outcomes in the screen-based industries supports systemic gender inequality in key creative positions.

## LABOUR MARKET – SUPPLY AND DEMAND

While there are more male directors than female directors in the Directors Guild of Canada, men disproportionately benefit from the directing opportunities that are available. Across domestic and foreign-service production sectors, in both feature film and television production, male directors are engaged to direct 84% - 100% of the available work. In the words of a director-producer, the problem is that, from the list of “the usual suspects that are sought after in Canadian directors,” the ratio of women to men on the studio/

network approved list is, “handfuls versus *hands* full for sure.” There are not only more male directors working than female directors; male directors also work more often on average than their female colleagues.

## “CASTING” DIRECTORS – GENDER AND LEADERSHIP

Directors are one of several important leadership roles in the film and television production industry. Directors spoke of the need to be collaborative, engaged, flexible and accommodating of diverse talents, skills and personalities with which they work in the production process. However, the leadership role that directors play in the rigidly hierarchical work-model of independent film and television production is filtered through deeply discriminatory gender stereotypes. The social construction of directing as a masculinized profession underpins the systemic advantage that male directors experience throughout their careers. The interpretation of behaviours and approaches to directing advantages men (visionary, creative) and disadvantages women (demanding, difficult) as directors. This narrative is consistent with widespread research on the gendered dimensions of leadership across multiple industries.

## PATHWAYS AND PIPELINES

Film and television directors come from all parts of the media, arts and entertainment industries, and across a range of occupations within the film and television industry itself, such as writers, performers, on-set technicians and editors. Multiple feeder occupations means there are a diversity of pathways into the director’s chair. The diversity of the pathways into the director’s chair thus, in principle, presents an opportunity for diversity *in* the director’s chair. However, there are two key aspects to the career pathways into directing that reproduce male privilege in directing, namely:

- Key occupations that are gateways to directing, including editors, cinematographers and first assistant directors, are themselves male dominated.
- The advantage that male performers enjoy in their careers as compared to their female colleagues continues to advantage men in transitions into directing careers

## Training

Key training institutions and industry stakeholders are playing a role in creating career development opportunities for female directors. Significantly, many leading training institutions run programs specifically targeting women in the directing profession. However, there is no evidence to support claims that diversifying the training pool will substantially improve labour market outcomes for female directors.

## Negotiating networks

Film and television production is project-based work. Interpersonal networks and professional relationships play a central role in the ability of a director to “acquire allies” and advance their career. A substantial body of research clearly shows that white male privilege is a systemic feature of exclusionary networks in the film and television industry.<sup>2</sup> Those are the same networks upon which freelance film and television professionals rely in negotiating their careers.

## RISKY BUSINESS AND SAFE BETS: HIRING AND FINANCING

The film and television production industry is risk-intense, and paradoxically, risk-averse. Risk management is deeply tied to financing, which involves a complex range of public and private investors. Each film and television project is subject to a complex risk-assessment by the various investors. The investment in key creative positions – and the director in particular – is seen as critical to minimizing risk. Evidence clearly shows that these risk assessments are not gender-neutral.

As production budgets get bigger, moving from shorts, to independent features, episodic television and feature films, the number of female directors drops dramatically. The inverse relationship between budget size and the likelihood of a female director being attached to a project is described by Smith et. al. as the “fiscal cliff.”<sup>3</sup> The fiscal cliff phenomenon is an effect of the justification of systemic gender discrimination as a risk management strategy through hiring practices.

Networks and reputations drive decisions about who, or who not, to hire. In the absence of transparent hiring

processes, contracting of above the line creative roles largely occurs through a system that operates through informal power and privilege to produce an environment that is measurably hostile to female directors. Even after female directors are attached to a project, discriminatory attitudes and practices in project financing continues to challenge their career progression.

There is no economic justification or empirical evidence to support gender discrimination as a useful risk-management tool in film and television production. The under-representation of female directors in the film and television production industry is simply a product of widespread bias against female directors.

## THE ISHTAR EFFECT – ATTAINING AND RETAINING CAREER MOMENTUM

Making film and television content is a notoriously unpredictable creative and business enterprise. All directors are highly committed to create screen-based content that is successful. Failure, at some scale, is similarly both a threat and often a reality for *all* directors at some point in their careers – reflected in the industry-wide axiom, ‘you’re only as good as your last job.’ Yet directors experience success and failure differentially by gender. Success for male directors is ascribed (even if implicitly) to their gender. When male directors underperform either on set or in the box office, their failures are individualized. The converse is true for female directors. When a female director succeeds, it is a happy accident. A poor performance for female directors is generalized and gendered. Axiomatic amongst the *female* directing community is the phrase, “We’re ahead, you’re behind.”

Female directors reported that, compared to their male colleagues, professional recognition for their work was both harder to *attain* and harder to *retain*. Success as a director is not primarily based on an objective evaluation of the quality of a director’s work. Similarly, we must also reject the notion that male directors succeed because their work is better than that of their female colleagues. Female directors consistently report that they have to work harder and perform at a significantly, and consistently, higher standard than their male colleagues.

## CARING AND CAREERS

Comparatively speaking, a career as a director has the potential to offer greater personal flexibility with regard to work and household/caring demands than other roles in the film and television production sector. Similarly, it is critically important to understand that the gendered imbalance of unpaid work, particularly in relation to caring work, poses obstacles to women's equality in the directing profession. This may be particularly sharp for women at multiple points throughout their careers. They are often, although not always, primarily responsible for balancing the demands of an intensely demanding career with unpredictable schedules, work patterns and locations of work, with equally intense demands of caring for dependent family members.

Nonetheless, the gendered nature of unpaid caring work is not in itself an explanatory factor for the systemic exclusion of women from directing. There are many female-dominated occupations in the film and television production industry. Many of those occupations enjoy *less* flexibility than directors. Moreover, women's access to paid work is central to women's autonomy and independence, and must be understood as central to socio-economic equality.

## INCLUSION, REPRESENTATION AND BELONGING: AN IMMEDIATE AGENDA

The lack of diversity on our screens is a missed opportunity that fails to capitalize on the diversity of the Canadian population's stories and experiences. A diverse, representative storytelling landscape is a cornerstone of the socio-cultural objectives in Canadian cultural policy for the screen-based industries. Furthermore, a diversity of stories from a diversity of storytellers serves the commercial interests of various investors (both public and private) for rapidly growing, and highly internationalized, audiences.

At present, the Canadian screen based production sector is built on inequality. A small minority of the population gains significant economic benefits from work and employment patterns, as well as substantial social and political benefits as primary gatekeepers of an important source of power – our stories. Canada not only deserves, but requires, a world-class screen-based production industry built on the principles of *inclusivity, representation and belonging*.

There is appetite for change. A number of efforts by unions, producers, broadcasters and policy decision makers add to the growing momentum on addressing the lack of diversity in the screen-based industries across the globe. The recommendations build on these developments.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

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## RECOMMENDATION 1

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**Adopt gender equality as a core principle in policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation for the Canadian screen-based production industry.**

Bold leadership by federal funding and policy bodies is a first step towards establishing gender equality as an industry priority. Urgent reform of the various policy, regulatory and funding mechanisms should focus on:

- The distribution of public funds as a key mechanism to support gender equality outcomes in key creative positions
- Public policies and programs, such as Canadian content regulations, that shape labour markets and industrial development
- The degree to which outcomes of key cultural policies and programs serve the public interest in relation to gender equity and cultural citizenship – namely, the right to be seen and heard in the cultural landscape.

### Recommendation 1.1

Canada Media Fund policy priority: Gender equality in the production sector is essential to “enabling a diversity of voice” from a “point of view” perspective.<sup>4</sup>

### Recommendation 1.2

Telefilm Canada policy priority: A diversity of writers, directors, producers, craftspeople and screen performers is key to developing innovative, globally competitive, high quality audio-visual content.

### Recommendation 1.3

CRTC policy priority: Gender equality in the key creative positions that shape content production is an essential element of the ability of the Canadian broadcasting system to meet its social and cultural objectives.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

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**Recognize that the implementation of equality and diversity practice is good for business.**

### Recommendation 2.1

The Canadian film and television production industry requires a significant, long-term equity investment strategy from private sector stakeholders to:

- produce content across a range of genres in which women and other under-represented communities hold key creative positions
- eliminate gender bias in financing

## RECOMMENDATION 3

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**Address implicit bias across the Canadian screen-based production industry by prioritizing inclusivity and diversity as core industry values.**

### Recommendation 3.1

Public and private industry stakeholders – including policy and regulatory bodies, producers, broadcasters, investors, financiers and unions should launch mandatory, accessible, ongoing educational and training program to promote inclusive, diverse workplaces and work practices.

### Recommendation 3.2

In particular, industry leaders should be required to demonstrate an ongoing personal and organizational commitment to effective, measurable change.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

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**Record and report annual industry diversity metrics .**

### Recommendation 4.1

Key regulatory and funding bodies should report annually on the degree to which public funds support storytelling by under-represented communities.

### Recommendation 4.2

At minimum, this reporting would include data on gender and racialized populations in key creative positions.

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1 Evaluation Services Directorate, “Evaluation of the Canada Media Fund 2010-2011 to 2013-2014,” 21.

2 Christopherson, “Beyond the Self-Expressive Creative Worker An Industry Perspective on Entertainment Media”; Grugulis and Stoyanova, “Social Capital and Networks in Film and TV”; Handy and Rowlands, “Gendered Inequality Regimes and Female Labour Market Disadvantage within the New Zealand Film Industry”; Jones and Pringle, “Unmanageable Inequalities”; Lutter, “Do Women Suffer from Network Closure?”

3 Smith et al., “Gender & Short Films: Emerging Female Filmmakers and the Barriers Surrounding Their Careers.”

4 Canada Media Fund, “Canada Media Fund 2014 - 2015 Annual Report.”

# THE REPORT

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## Introduction

In 2013 the Canadian Unions for Equality on Screen (CUES) published their first report, *Focus on Women: a report on gender inequality in the screen-based industries*. The report identified and explained the deeply gendered division of labour that underpins systemic gender inequality, both on and off screen, in the Canadian film and television independent production sector.

Since the publication of the 2013 report, the issue of gender inequality in the screen-based production sector has received international attention. An overwhelming body of evidence unequivocally demonstrates that the content we consume on our screens, in markets around the world, in all languages, is predominantly generated by men – and Canada is no exception.

Our screens are a place where Canadians tell stories to each other and the world beyond our borders. Canada has a thriving screen-based production sector that is deeply valued by Canadian audiences. According to the 2015 evaluation report of the Canada Media Fund, “Canadians feel that there are many unique Canadian stories that should be told, that a strong Canadian television and film production industry will strengthen Canadian identity, and that production of unique Canadian programs is important to the development of Canadian culture.”<sup>1</sup>

*Focus on Women* clearly showed that the talent pool for most of the key creative positions that define Canadian content is overwhelmingly male dominated.<sup>2</sup> Canadian screen-based content is made by a highly skilled workforce of creative, technical, logistical and administrative professionals that make up what the CRTC refers to as the “creative community.”<sup>3</sup> Canadian content is defined by the number of Canadians working in key creative positions: producer, director, writer, first and second lead performer, production designer, editor, composer and cinematographer.

*Women in View on Screen 2015* reveals that to a large degree the Canadian stories seen on screens are overwhelmingly told by men. The robust statistical report clearly establishes that, “...women are not only an unacceptably small minority of those employed in [key creative positions], but they are least present where the financial power is the greatest.”<sup>4</sup>

### **There is something very, very wrong with this picture.**

*Women In View On Screen 2015* concludes by calling for further research that begins to address questions of ‘why’? *What’s wrong with this picture?* seeks to explain the root causes of the systemic discrimination and exclusion women face from key creative and leadership roles in the Canadian screen-based storytelling landscape. It builds on the growing body of statistical evidence with focused qualitative research to advance a comprehensive understanding of the resilience of gender inequality.

Representation of women both on and off screen is a matter of major social, political, economic and cultural importance. Our screens are a critically important space for telling stories. Such stories help us learn about our world and each other. Stories are a means by which we share our individual and collective experiences in a rich, complex, diverse social landscape. The film and television industry is both a workplace, and part of our public sphere. The systemic exclusion of women from full and equal participation either at work or in our public life is a problem that requires immediate action.

## The Focus: Directors

*The budget-challenged Canadian screen sector will win not on generating look-alike productions, but on specificity of voice. Anyone who believes that the director's unique voice is a critical part of a production's identity is bound to believe in opening our screens to Canada's brilliant diversity of voices.*

*Tim Southam, National President, Directors Guild of Canada, 2016*

This report focuses on directors. As the core of the key creative positions involved in the production of on-screen content, directors have a broad influence on the entire production process. Being a director requires artistic vision and a deep, enduring commitment to making creative, compelling content. Directors are leaders; effective directors work in collaboration with the full range of creative, technical, administrative and logistical talent that is required for making content on screens large and small. Being a director also requires considerable business acumen. Being a director, by definition, requires advanced communication and interpersonal skills, an ability to operate efficiently and effectively in a high-pressured environment, juggle competing demands and balance financial and creative imperatives.

A career as a director is also very challenging. Being a director in the film and television industry means a career as a freelancer, with no job or income security. Directors go where the work is, and the precarious nature of work as a director requires a high degree of personal mobility and flexibility. Forging a career as a director has many rewards, both creative and financial – for those who succeed. The anticipation of those rewards also means that a career as a director is highly competitive, and for the few who succeed there are many who struggle. As the current global debate around gender inequality in the screen-based industries clearly shows, that struggle is not gender-neutral.

Women, or the astonishing lack thereof them, in the director's chair is now an internationally recognized issue. Reports from Europe, North America and Australia unequivocally demonstrate that women direct less than 20% of the content we consume on our screens, big and small.<sup>5</sup> We know the numbers are grim. What we know much less about is *why* the numbers are so grim for women.

To address the issue of gender inequality in the Canadian screen-based production industry effectively, we need to understand the complexity of the issues, decisions and structures that have led to a serious gender imbalance in the director's chair. Fundamental to understanding the issue of gender inequality is an analysis not just of discrimination against women, *but of systemic advantage for men*. Gender inequality in the film and television production industry is a systemic problem that *affects* women. However, as this body of research clearly shows, the issue is not one created by women.

The report proceeds in three main sections. The first section draws on the qualitative data from interviews with 18 male and female Canadian directors. Analysis of interviews examines the ways in which gender presents both opportunities and barriers for directors. The focus is on five key phenomena that are central to our understanding of the complex, highly gendered terrain of being a director in the Canadian screen-based production industries.

- “Casting” directors – stereotypes and women’s leadership
- Pipelines to the director’s chair – Trickle of women, flood of men
- Risky business and safe bets – gender and financing
- The Ishtar effect – attaining and retaining momentum
- Caring and careers – negotiating work and life

The second section draws on industry data to identify the important roles that the screen-based production

industry plays: first, as a key economic and employment driver; and second, as an important element of our public sphere where national identities and cultures are both represented and created.

The third section turns to important initiatives in both private and public institutions in Canada (and internationally) in advancing a series of recommendations to address a pressing issue of considerable social, political, economic and cultural significance.

## SECTION ONE: THE BIG PICTURE

To understand how gender operates in film and television production labour markets, we need to understand the basic structure of the industry overall. The following section establishes why the economic contribution of the sector, organization of work, labour market differentiation, and public investment are central to developing a solution-oriented pathway towards gender equality.

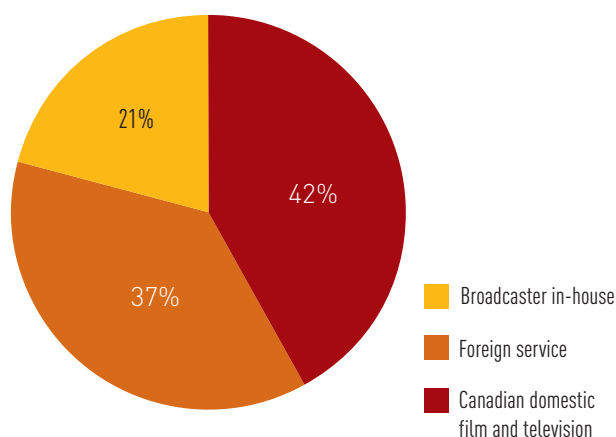
First, the screen-based production industry in Canada is a major economic and employment driver. According to the Canadian Media Producers Association, the total volume of film and television production in Canada in 2014-2015 reached \$7.1 billion in production volume, generated \$3.2 billion in export value and generated 148,500 full-time equivalent jobs.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the issue of gender inequality must be understood as an employment equity issue for a major sector of the Canadian economy.

Second, the film and television industry in Canada is driven by the independent production model, which in 2014-15 accounted for 79% of total production volume in Canada.<sup>7</sup> Independent production relies on a large pool of highly skilled freelance professionals who work on a project-by-project basis. Thus, precarious employment is a defining feature of work and life for the talent pool that constitute the core infrastructure of a labour-intensive industry. The absence of a stable workplace; inconsistent employment and income insecurity for the workforce, intensely competitive labour markets, and highly mobile, transient employers pose serious challenges for developing a gender equity strategy at an industrial scale.

Third, the independent sector comprises three sub-sectors, two of which are key for this analysis: Canadian domestic production, and foreign-service production. While both sub-sectors draw on a shared talent pool of highly skilled freelance professionals, the distinctiveness of the internal labour markets provide differential access to employment.

**Figure 1**

Film and television production sub-sectors in Canada by production volume, 2014-15<sup>8</sup>



Source: Canadian Media Production Association. "Profile 2015: Economic Report on the Screen-Based Media Production Industry in Canada," 2015.

The Canadian or domestic, independent film and television production sector is the largest segment of the film and television production sector in Canada, providing 42% of total production volume.<sup>9</sup> The Canadian domestic production sector offers the largest number of work opportunities for the full range of on and off screen Canadian creative, logistical, administrative and technical professionals involved in film and television production. Television programming accounted for just over 88% of the total production activity in the domestic sector, the majority of which is television series production.<sup>10</sup> Importantly, 78% of Canadian television production in 2014-15 received the maximum amount of allowable Canadian content points – a full 10/10.<sup>11</sup> Findings from the *2015 Women In View on Screen* report indicate that most of those points were awarded to male Canadian content creators in key creative positions.<sup>12</sup>

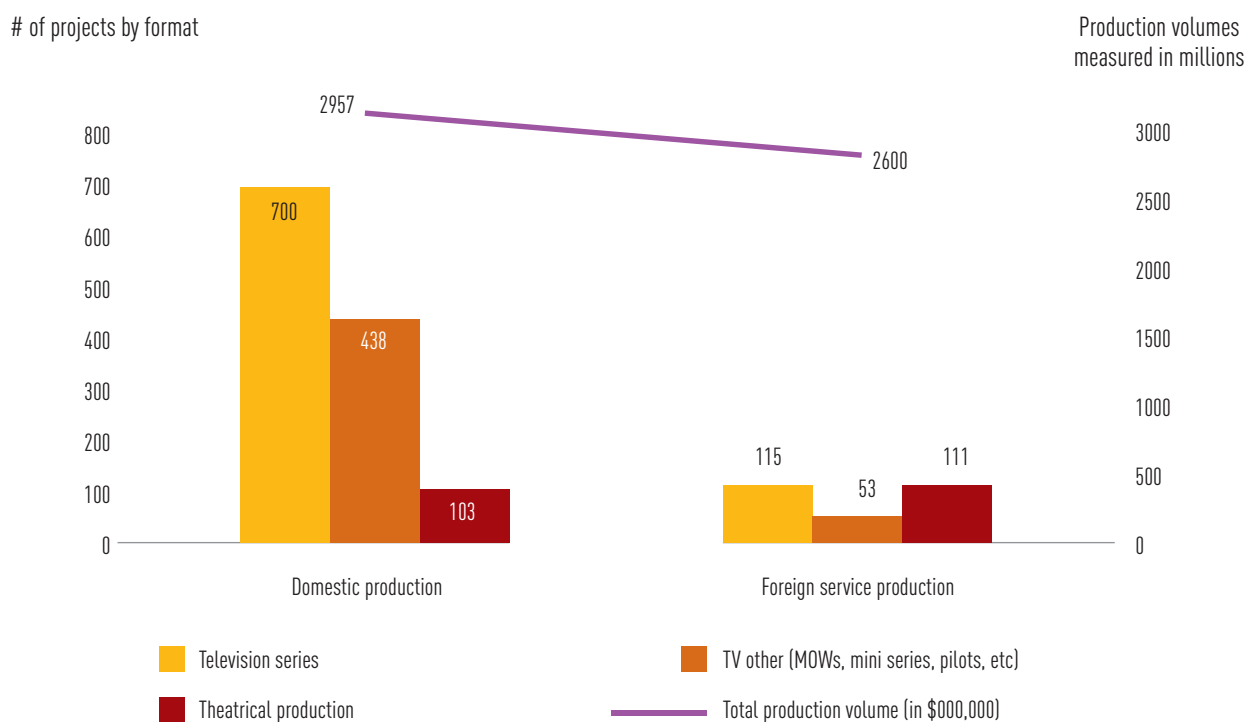
The film and television production sector in Canada is also deeply tied to the US film and television production industry. Many of the Hollywood blockbuster feature

films and hugely popular American television series are shot in Canada. In 2014-15, foreign-service production accounted for 37% of the total production volume, and included 111 feature films, 115 television series and 53 movies of the week, mini-series, single episode programs and television pilots. Seventy-one percent of foreign-service projects had their copyright in the United States. Thus, the foreign-service production sector is an important source of employment for the film and television workforce, offering the opportunity to work on projects with large budgets and complex creative and technical demands. While the foreign-service sector has high production volume (as measured in dollars) the number of projects is significantly lower as shown in figure 2 below. Furthermore, many of the key creative positions - notably directors, performers and writers, on foreign-service shows are filled by foreign (often American) cultural workers.

Fourth, and critically, film and television production in Canada is highly subsidized by significant public investment. There are two key policy rationales for the host of provincial and federal programs, regulatory frameworks, and agencies that support film and television production in Canada. First, this sector has economic significance. Film and television, as a lynchpin of Canada’s creative economy, is a key driver for technological innovation, trade, investment, jobs and economic growth. Of equal importance are the social and cultural rationales for public investment and support of the film and television production sector. Film and television production is highly valued as a means whereby national identities and cultures are both represented and created. As the *Telefilm Canada 2015-2018 Strategic Plan* argues, “Canadian films and television programs have become part of the national cultural fabric.”<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 2**

Number of projects by format, Canadian and foreign service production, 2013-14<sup>13</sup>



Source: Canadian Media Production Association. “Profile 2015: Economic Report on the Screen-Based Media Production Industry in Canada,” 2015.

The public-interest aspect of the stories we see on our screens is also reflected in section 3(d) of the *Broadcasting Act (1991)*, that states the Canadian broadcasting system should:

- (i) serve to safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada,
- (ii) encourage the development of Canadian expression by providing a wide range of programming that reflects Canadian attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity, by displaying Canadian talent in entertainment programming and by offering information and analysis concerning Canada and other countries from a Canadian point of view,
- (iii) through its programming ***and the employment opportunities arising out of its operations***, serve the needs and interests, and reflect the circumstances and aspirations, of Canadian men, women and children, including equal rights, the linguistic duality and multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society and the special place of aboriginal peoples within that society [emphasis added]<sup>15</sup>

In the interests of developing a world-class film and television production sector that is both the destination of choice for major US networks and studios, as well as one that tells a diversity of Canadian stories to Canadians, federal and provincial governments make substantial investments in support of the Canadian film and television industry.

The Canadian film and television production sector benefits from significant public expenditures through federal and provincial film and television tax credits, the Canada Media Fund (CMF), Telefilm Canada, the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office (CAVCO) of the Department of Canadian Heritage, and the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). In 2014-15, Canadian domestic film and television production received over \$1.55 billion from public broadcaster licence fees, federal and provincial tax credits, the Canada Media Fund, the Canada Feature Film fund and other public financing from governments, departments and agencies.<sup>16</sup> In 2014-15, the province of Ontario alone reports investing over \$400,000,000 tax credits to support film and television production in the province.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, we need to interrogate the degree to which the public investments made in our screen-based industries serve the public interest in terms of a diversity of stories, as well as the degree to which the public investments support gender equity in employment.

Finally, the screen-based production sector in Canada is by definition both national and international. It is national in terms of the funding and regulatory frameworks that shape our domestic production sector. It is also international insofar as the significant investment, financing and hiring decisions that are made internationally affect labour markets and industry dynamics in Canada. While the screen-based production industry in Canada is thriving, evidence shows that access to the types of work, and the volume of work for professionals in the film and television production industry, exhibits a deeply gendered imbalance.

## SECTION TWO: FINDINGS

The analysis is based on qualitative interviews with 18 Canadian directors – 7 men and 11 women. All interviewees were members of the Directors Guild of Canada, the professional body representing Directors across Canada. Interviewees were selected based on career status; 5 emerging directors, 4 mid-career directors, and 9 established directors. Selecting participants by career status as directors allows for an examination of the complexity of the interactions between gender and career paths, training, mentoring, networks, and caring and family responsibilities. Mid-career and established directors commented on industry changes over time, bringing an historical dimension to the analysis.

The body of work produced by the directors who participated in the study includes award winning material across genres and formats: shorts, documentaries, feature films, mini-series, episodic television and web-series. All the interviewees are Canadian, either by birth or immigration, although their careers as directors mean they work internationally on a regular basis, and/or on foreign-service productions in Canada. Two of the directors are not actively directing at present, focusing on other professional and personal priorities.

The interviews investigated career paths into the director's chair; training and professional development; personal and professional networks; career progression strategies; the social and creative aspects of storytelling; work-life balance; and employment and income (in)security.

The analysis identified 5 key themes that provide important insight into the world of being a director in the Canadian film and television industry:

- "Casting" directors – stereotypes and women's leadership
- Pipelines to the director's chair – Trickle of women, flood of men
- Risky business and safe bets – gender and financing
- The Ishtar effect – attaining and retaining career momentum
- Caring and careers – negotiating work and life

The findings from this research mirror similar findings from qualitative research that has been conducted elsewhere, while pointing to some challenges and opportunities that are particular to the Canadian industry.

### Interviewee sampling methodology

#### Emerging:

0-5 years as a Director on long format scripted film and television projects. Work as a Director on long format scripted film and television is uneven; may be supplemented with an alternative income source (either within the screen-based production industry or elsewhere). May be transitioning from another role in the industry (writer, performer, for example) or another genre (from documentary or music videos to long format scripted, for example).

#### Mid-career:

5 – 10 years as a Director; work as a Director on long format scripted film and television is fairly consistent. Majority of annual income comes from work as a Director in long format scripted film and television. Recognised by industry peers as a Director as their primary occupation.

#### Established:

10+ years as a Director working in long format scripted film and television. High degree of recognition in the field; may include nominations for awards. An active participant in "the craft" of Directing; may include leadership or governance roles in industry events or associations. Directing is primary source of income



## 2.1 “CASTING DIRECTORS” – GENDER AND LEADERSHIP

*If you're an actor on a show, which I've been many times, they say, "Oh we're getting a woman director this week." They never say, oh we're getting a straight white guy to come in next week. We just assume there's a straight--right? We're going to get a straight white guy with a baseball cap and he's probably wearing Levis. That's next week's hire....*

Directors are one of several important leadership roles in the film and television production industry. There is a large body of work that analyses the degree to which leadership roles are dominated by men across industries and sectors.<sup>18</sup> Central to this issue is the ways in which leadership qualities are deeply gendered – and the film and television production industry is no exception.

Interviewees were asked to comment on what makes a good director. Despite the rigidly hierarchical nature of the organization of work in film and television production, where directors sit near the top, the responses from directors overwhelmingly spoke of the need to be deeply collaborative with the full range of personalities and skill sets of the on- and off-screen talent. All directors spoke of the need to be highly organized as a key function of doing the job well. The role of a director was widely referenced as being an enabling leadership role – one that required advanced knowledge of the financial, logistical, technical, narrative and visual elements that often function as a set of competing demands. The job of a director is to negotiate these competing demands and to empower the talents of the professional teams involved in the production while maintaining the central elements of the story itself. Directors referenced the need to be “nimble and adaptable to circumstances and personalities” and to “[make] people feel comfortable... so that everybody feels they can do their best work.” Yet the evidence shows that the perception of the role of the director in the rigidly hierarchical work model of independent film and television production is embedded in broader social norms and gendered leadership stereotypes.

One male interviewee described the organization of work and decision-making on a film or television project as a “military command chain,” and noted that, “Women are

less historically engaged in a military command chain than men.” Another interviewee commented that being a director was “like a captain of a ship in a stormy sea” – another highly masculinized image. Male and female directors consistently reported that the attributes considered assets for male directors were seen as shortcomings for female directors, and that this produces a systemic disadvantage for women. One well-established male director reflected on the ways in which the same leadership qualities for which he is lauded when he walks on set operate to marginalize his female colleagues:

*I can't tell you how many times...they go "Oh [male director] we heard you were coming in this week, we're so happy. Because last week we had what's her name here, Christ. Why, what was wrong with her? Oh she's such a..." --all the clichés right, she's a ball buster, she's this, she's that, whatever, and they would go on a list of everything. I would listen, and it's like wow, it's everything you guys say about me in a positive way. But when she does it, she's demanding, she's not cooperative, she's not--like her expectations of her, you're looking at her as a woman and me as a guy. Instead of looking at the two of us as directors. I mean, my heart goes out to women directors because even for me as a guy it was exhausting, because even I gave up correcting them. Because, at first, I would point this out to the crew and the producers, and anybody who brought this up. You know, you're saying the same thing about her that you said about me in a positive way. But as the years go by, you just get tired of that, so when they bring it up, you just go yeah, what are you going to do, and you move on because it's just exhausting, and I'm a guy. So I can imagine how exhausting it is for women to go up that hill.*

This reflection is consistent with findings from other studies. Interviews with industry leaders and gatekeepers in the US film and television industry led Smith et. al. to conclude that, “beliefs about women and the stories they tell may be incongruent with perceptions of the role of the director...”<sup>19</sup>

Age also shapes perceptions of what constitutes a qualified director, with both male and female directors commenting that being “too young or too old” was seen as a disadvantage. The following quotes from two emerging female directors highlight ways in which social perceptions of authority interact with age and gender in the directing profession.

*...her agent in Canada had told her that you can't break a TV director before 40... and it seems to be true because you never see anybody under 40. I think particularly with women because if you're a big guy and you're 6'2 or something and you might be 38 but you have the authority, I don't know but I think with a woman when you look younger you just don't come across as having the authority to be able to handle it or something. I don't even know exactly why but it just seems to be the case because I look around and it is the same people on every show I go to...and everybody seems to be 50 plus.*

*...and it seems to me like it's sort of an older game. I haven't met too many episodic directors under the age of 40, so most people you see on the sets seem to be men in their 50s. There's not very many women and from what I've seen in Canada, the number of women I've seen that are under 50 directing is maybe two. So it seems like they're willing to trust if you've done it for a long time but not so much taking a chance both on youth and just being different.*

This observation was confirmed by a number of well-established female directors who commented that the momentum for women in the director's chair appears to have stalled in recent years. One interviewee reflected that in the late 1990s there appeared to be a critical mass

of female directors emerging in the Canadian film and television production industry:

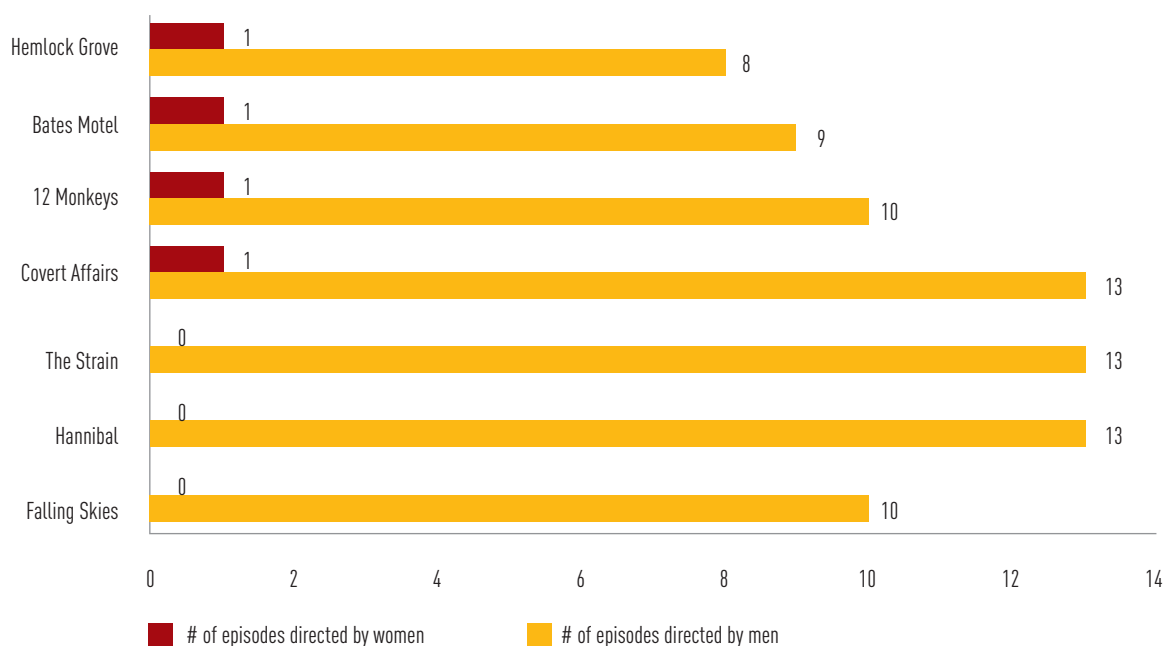
*"And I thought, oh, we were the front edge of a wedge of women. That was '98. And now I go, I look behind and I go, oh, there's nobody behind us. It's all still us.*

This set of observations leads into a consideration of the pipeline into the directing profession. Female directors face markedly more blockages into and throughout the pipeline than their male colleagues. In contrast, the pipeline to directing for men seems to flow freely. First, however, it is necessary to consider the labour market.

## 2.2 LABOUR MARKET SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Male directors benefited from 84% of the directing work on 29 Canadian television series, which received \$97,637,939 from the Canada Media Fund in 2012-13. A closer analysis of the data from *Women in View* reveals that men directed 100% of the episodes on 17 television series. This means that nearly 40% of the CMF funding for television series - \$38 million in public expenditures - supported Canadian television which was exclusively directed by men.<sup>20</sup>

The situation is no better in the foreign-service sector. Generally, Canadian directors have limited access to directing U.S. television shows shot in Canada - a factor that was identified as a major issue by many directors interviewed. Nonetheless, even if the foreign-service sector regularly employed Canadian directors, there is little evidence to suggest that they will hire female directors. A recent report by the Directors Guild of America includes data on television series that are shot in Canada and supported by federal and provincial tax credits. The data from select major shows reveals that men directed 87% to 100% of the episodes on these leading television series.<sup>21</sup> Several of these US series employed no female directors at all.

**Figure 3**Directors by gender, select major US television series shot in Canada, 2014-15 <sup>22</sup>

Source: Directors Guild of America. "DGA Episodic Television Diversity Report." Los Angeles, 2015.

Arguments persist that there are fewer women directing because women do not want to direct. As one male interviewee mused,

*"Are there just not that many, or are they not being given jobs? Because, I could- if you asked me who are all the Canadian directors that are women, I'd probably be able to list, I don't know, 12, maybe- 10 or 12 that are directors. I don't even know if there's any more. Are there more? I don't think there's anything saying, like- I don't think anybody's saying, oh, well, you wouldn't want to give it to a woman."*

Yes, there are female film and television directors in Canada, and yes, they want to direct. Yet in the words of a director-producer, the problem is that, from the list of

"the usual suspects that are sought after in Canadian directors," the ratio of women to men on the studio/network approved list is, "handfuls versus **hands** full for sure." Tim Southam, National President of the Directors Guild of Canada, identifies the entry points into the profession as the problem.

*The problem isn't so much what's going on in the top two percent. The top two percent of our female directors are the most working directors in our organization. It's what is happening at the bottom of the pyramid... The power to introduce greater diversity into the ranks of our business lies entirely with the engagers. It doesn't mean the responsibility to produce change in the way people are hired rests only with them but the power to actually make a change rests with engagers.*


As noted by the female directors interviewed, no one is expressly saying, “well, you wouldn’t want to give it to a woman.” The issue, as they expressed it, is much more subtle. One mid-career female director reflected on her experience:

*... I don’t feel like I’m going into a meeting and it’s quantifiably, oh, they’re trying to be chauvinistic or it’s because I’m a woman. What ends up happening, I find, is that guys I know that are maybe around the same generation or whatnot, they make a first feature, what happens to them and the opportunities they’re given out of that is completely different than what happens with women.*

One highly regarded Canadian female director identifies the problem not as a supply-side issue, but one of demand:

*It really is scary, it hasn’t changed. Most shows that I work on if they have a woman it will be me and maybe one other woman, or often it was just me. If you hire a woman they don’t hire other women, they’ve got their woman now and everyone can piss off.*

A growing body of research supports this observation. The task is to understand the pathways into the director’s chair, and the gendered nature of the pipeline to the top.



As the 2013 CUES report *Focus On Women* showed, membership in the directors category of the Directors Guild of Canada (DGC) is male dominated by a ratio of over 6:1.<sup>23</sup> The DGC is actively taking steps to diversify the talent pool of professional directors, including an open membership threshold, active recruitment strategies, and sponsoring a number of leading career development industry initiatives.

In early 2016, Women in View announced **2X More**, a path-breaking program in collaboration with the DGC. The program brings together “...decision-makers and industry leaders across the media landscape – directors, producers, broadcasters, public and private agencies – to work together to double the number of women directing scripted television in Canada from the current 17% to 35%.”<sup>24</sup>

The DGC is also exercising leadership at the bargaining table with the Canadian Media Producers Association. Collective agreements are important instruments through which industry unions and guilds can shape industry practices and working conditions. The DGC/CMPA 2016-2018 Standard Agreement includes an agreement to create a **Joint Diversity Committee** where Directors, Producers and Broadcasters, through consultation with industry stakeholders, will “make recommendation and establish best practices with respect to issues of diversity through engagement with industry decision makers.” The agreement also includes a commitment to report back to the industry on findings.<sup>25</sup>

2X More and the DGC/CMPA Joint Diversity Committee agreement are important cross-industry initiatives designed to create opportunities for the diversity of talents of in the pool of Canadian directors to be fully utilized in the telling of stories on our screens.

## 2.3 PATHWAYS AND PIPELINES

The leaky pipeline is a metaphor commonly used to explain the lack of women in senior leadership roles. The metaphor proposes that there are cracks in the pipeline which cause women to leak out at various points before reaching the end – in this case, the director's chair.

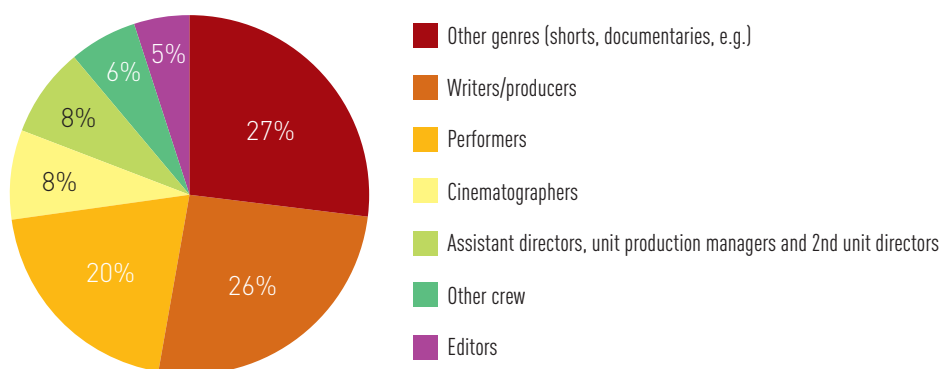
Film and television directors come from all parts of the media, arts and entertainment industries, and across a range of occupations within the film and television industry itself, such as writers, performers, on-set technicians and post-production. To illustrate, research from the Directors Guild of America shows that of the 611 directors who directed episodic television for the first time between the 2009/10 and the 2014/15 seasons, 28% had previously directed in other genres; 26% were writers/producers; 20% were performers; 8% were cinematographers/camera operators; 8% were assistant directors, unit production managers and second unit directors; 5% were editors, and 6% were "other crew."<sup>26</sup>

Multiple points of entry create diverse avenues through which people find their way into the director's chair.

The diversity of the pathways into the director's chair thus, in principle, presents an opportunity for diversity in the director's chair. Importantly, moves into the director's chair are tied to the labour market power and reputational prestige of the individuals in their primary occupations, both on-and off-screen.

### Figure 4

Career path for first-time episodic directors, US television series, 2009-2015<sup>27</sup>

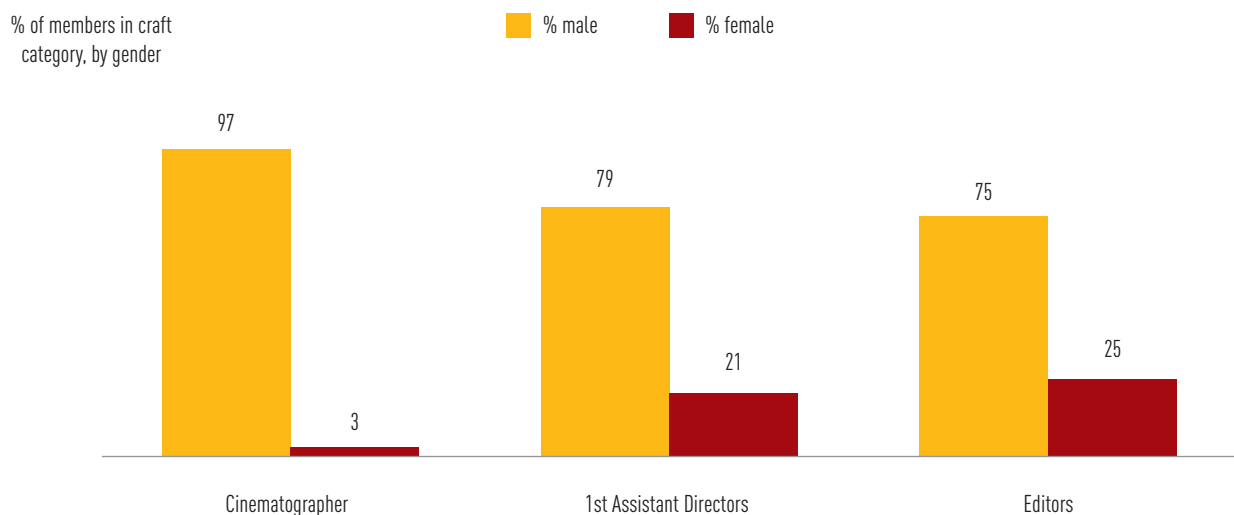


Source: Directors Guild of America. "DGA Episodic Television Diversity Report." Los Angeles, 2015.

As the 2013 CUES report demonstrates, the key creative behind-the-camera positions that are major gateways to directing are also male-dominated in Canada.

### Figure 5

Gender as a percentage of occupational categories in off-screen key creative pipeline occupations to directing<sup>28</sup>



Source: Coles, Amanda. "Focus on Women: A Report on Gender (In)equality in the Canadian Independent Screen-Based Production Industry." Toronto: Interuniversity Research Centre on Globalization and Work, 2013.

As figure 4 above also shows, 20% of the directing pool comes from on-screen talent. Research clearly shows that male performers continue to dominate in lead roles, earn more on average, and have longer careers than female performers.<sup>29</sup> Male privilege in front of the camera continues to advantage men in transitions into directing careers. Reflections by a female performer-director provide a sharp example of the gendered flows into directing:

*I thought, well why can't I do what the boys do? Can't I be on a TV show as an actor and then direct some episodes? That's what guys do, right? Why can't I do it? Clooney did it. Clint Eastwood is doing it. Why can't I do that? ... Season 3 is when I asked the executives at [a major studio] if I could direct. It was the same day my male counterpart asked if he could direct. And he directed in the next season, and I directed four seasons later.*

The various points of entry into directing thus mean that we need to understand gender inequality in the director's chair as a product of a *systemic gender inequality across the film industry as a whole ecosystem*. Furthermore, evidence suggests that the issue does not necessarily stem from a lack of formal training.

## Training

Leading training institutions can play an important role in launching a director's career, providing hard skills and networking opportunities for emerging directors. A number of interviewees, particularly those who have launched their careers in the last ten years, commented on the value of formal training and opportunities to develop their filmmaking expertise offered by training providers such as the Canadian Film Centre, the Banff Centre, the National Screen Institute and the National Film Board of Canada. In addition to skills development and networking, these institutions also play an important role in distribution and exhibition of films, and awards recognition for filmmakers, all of which are central to establishing a director's portfolio and reputation. Significantly, many of these institutions run programs specifically targeting women in the directing profession. Leading examples include the Shaw Media Diverse Director course at the National Screen Institute in partnership with the Directors Guild of Canada and DGC Ontario, and the Women in the Director's Chair program by the Creative Women Workshops Association, presented in partnership with the Banff Centre and ACTRA.

Consequently, it is important to understand that the under representation of women (and non-white communities) in the Canadian directing pool is not tied to a lack of training opportunities. Furthermore, there is little evidence to demonstrate that diversifying the training pool will substantially improve labour market outcomes. According to a 2012 workforce survey on the Canadian film and television industry,

There appears to be a disconnect between the education and training supply pool and the screen-based industries' workforce...merely increasing the number of members of [underrepresented groups] in the pool of graduates is not a sufficient strategy on its own for increasing diversity among new recruits in any given industry."<sup>30</sup>

Many interviewees supported this claim. One interviewee reflected on the sharp difference between her experiences in film school compared to her experiences as a professional director. Early in her career, a female executive producer asked her whether she found it difficult to be a female director:

*... I was like "No, not at all." I had come out of film school where it was a very structured academic environment and come into grad school where it was also very fair and very politically correct environment, but if she'd asked me that question years later I would've had a much different answer.*

Another interviewee supported the assertion that the issue of gender inequality for female directors becomes much sharper as their careers progress.

*I totally agree actually with what Kim Pierce was saying is that at the film school level, and then in the indie level, you're not equal but you're close to where there's not that big of a difference, and it's after that that the problems come.*

Much of the craft of directing is also learned on the job.<sup>31</sup> Job shadowing is important, and common. One well-established male director explained the value of shadowing, and his commitment to supporting emerging directors in the craft. His comments, however, also speak to the highly competitive nature of directing as a freelance, reputation driven profession:

*I always have shadows on everything I do, always, always, always. Most of the time they're women, they're young women who want to break in to the business, and then become directors, or television directors or filmmakers or whatever. I do everything I can to help them. On the other hand, there's that great Fellini story, where somebody was starting a film school and said to Fellini "Do you want to come and lecture and help me train young filmmakers?" Fellini said, "Young filmmakers, that's exactly who we should be strangling in their cribs."*

Job shadowing also plays a critically important role in exposure for directors. Shadowing gets directors in the room with executives and producers. Shadowing allows key decision makers to get to know directors and to see them work on set. It is important to then understand the important role shadowing plays role in networking. Networking is a critically important aspect of acquiring allies and accessing power in the film and television industry. To paraphrase the observations of one interviewee, there are many ways in which power is acquired over a director's career that has nothing to do with delivering what is on screen.

## Negotiating networks

Film and television production is project-based work, with each production requiring a different mix of creative, logistical and technical expertise. Key creative positions are hired based on a range of factors including budget, rates, skill sets, script requirements, availability and personal relationships. Nonetheless, it is the last point that should be elaborated: project based work means that interpersonal networks and relationships play a central role in career development for directors, as well as in management's hiring practices. As one established male director commented:

*...your capacity to acquire allies in an expensive medium made by lots of people, is crucial. Careers end as allies fall away. Careers build as allies gather around you and unless you are truly remarkable those allies have to be kind of wooed into the adventure. Even if you are truly remarkable you know you have to build some kind of basic support system, and anything good that's ever happened to me has happened as the result of having very strong allies... creative allies but some of them are also very powerful financing and producing allies.*

Acquiring allies and negotiating networks is a challenging task. A substantial body of research clearly shows that white male privilege is a systemic feature of exclusionary networks in the film and television industry.<sup>32</sup> This is supported by another observation by a mid-career female director:

*I think there's a natural affinity between anyone who's not white on sets because you're just so rare. The number of times I've seen an Asian on set...they're so few, it's less than five the number I've seen in my whole life. Then black, it's so few. I don't know where that starts because it's a career that...it just seems like this old boys white club, that it doesn't seem like something that's open and so much of the film business is word of mouth and you get started as a grip or something because somebody brought you in. So you're not in that circle because you're not part of that group to start with so you don't get brought in, so it just ends up being the same white people over and over again bringing their friends in.*

It is essential to understand that these same exclusionary networks are critical to accessing work. Thus, the networks, which support and reproduce white male privilege, are the same networks upon which freelance film and television professionals rely in negotiating their careers. Challenging the systemic discrimination that operates within exclusionary networks is made even more difficult by the precarious nature of the work. The comments of one male interviewee are symptomatic of the ways in which the complexity of project-based work interacts with networks and relationships to produce an industrial environment in which issues of employment equity are all but completely ignored.

*We have a very strong view that no whiners need apply. We don't believe in whining. And I don't mean that with regards to diversity, I mean regards to everything. The film industry's full of whiners, it's full of people who think that they're owed a living and that they should have a chance to do this and they should have a chance to do that, and our view is nobody asked you to do this.*

Ironically, the same interviewee used an example of male privilege to argue that creative excellence should be the key factor in hiring. He had been advocating on behalf of a female colleague who wanted an opportunity to direct an episode of the television series on which she was the First Assistant Director. When queried about whether his discussions with the executives were going to yield a directing opportunity for her, he commented,

*I don't know. I hope so. I mean, it almost happened last year, but they wanted to hang onto the DP and he wanted a slot, so that was that.*

Although networks and allies are key in reputation economies, the final decision about who to hire or not – and thus the exercise of male privilege – rests entirely with the engagers. If the pipeline to the director's chair for women is leaking, evidence suggests that the biggest cracks exist in the various stages in which networks are leveraged and hiring decisions are made. As a step to understanding the gendered dynamics that underpin hiring decisions, we must first understand the risk-intensive nature of making film and television content.



## 2.4 RISKY BUSINESS AND SAFE BETS: HIRING AND FINANCING

*And I swear, when I started directing, they tried every guy in the city before they would give the job to me. I mean I remember going "Why are they bringing...? Like, here I am. I've been working here. I write. I produce." And they bring in this guy to direct and he didn't do a very good job and then they bring in some other guy from, you know, the theatre, out in the theatre world and I'm going, "Hey, hey!", because I'm right here.*

Making film and television is a risky business. Film and television products are labour and capital-intensive, with little guarantee of a return on investment. The small size of the Canadian domestic market exacerbates the risk involved in making film and television, as a consequence of what Grant and Wood refer to as the "small country problem."<sup>33</sup> The authors make three critical observations about the economics of cultural production that typify the challenges associated with producing Canadian content for the domestic market.

The first is that *most cultural products fail to achieve commercial success, and it is virtually impossible to predict ahead of time which products those will be...* The second observation, however, is the converse of the first. *If they are successful, cultural products can produce a much higher reward than any ordinary commodities can...* But a third observation is [sic] *cultural products that are attractive to consumers in a large geographical market have a lower risk and a much greater potential reward than do those that are produced for a smaller market...* If a product is culturally specific to consumers in a small country or society [sic], and its cost is comparable to that of a product produced for a larger market, it is much more difficult to reach a break-even point even if the product is quite popular in the smaller market... [emphasis in original]<sup>34</sup>

This creates a Canadian broadcasting landscape in which "risk-averse television broadcasters are failing to back talent in a culture that too quickly turns to airing U.S. television rather than demanding better from its own."<sup>35</sup> Risk management is deeply tied to both hiring and financing, which involves a complex range of public and private investors. Each film and television project is subject to a complex risk-assessment by the various investors. Evidence clearly shows that these risk assessments in relation to financing are not gender-neutral.

Smith and colleagues compared the participation of female directors at the top ten international short film festivals<sup>36</sup> with narrative features at the Sundance Film Festival, US episodic television in the 2014-15 season, and 1300 top grossing films from 2002-2014. Left to right, each category represents a rise in project budgets, as well as earnings and reputational prestige for directors. The data is a stark visualization of the inverse relationship between budget size and the number of female directors, what the authors refer to as the “fiscal cliff.”<sup>37</sup>

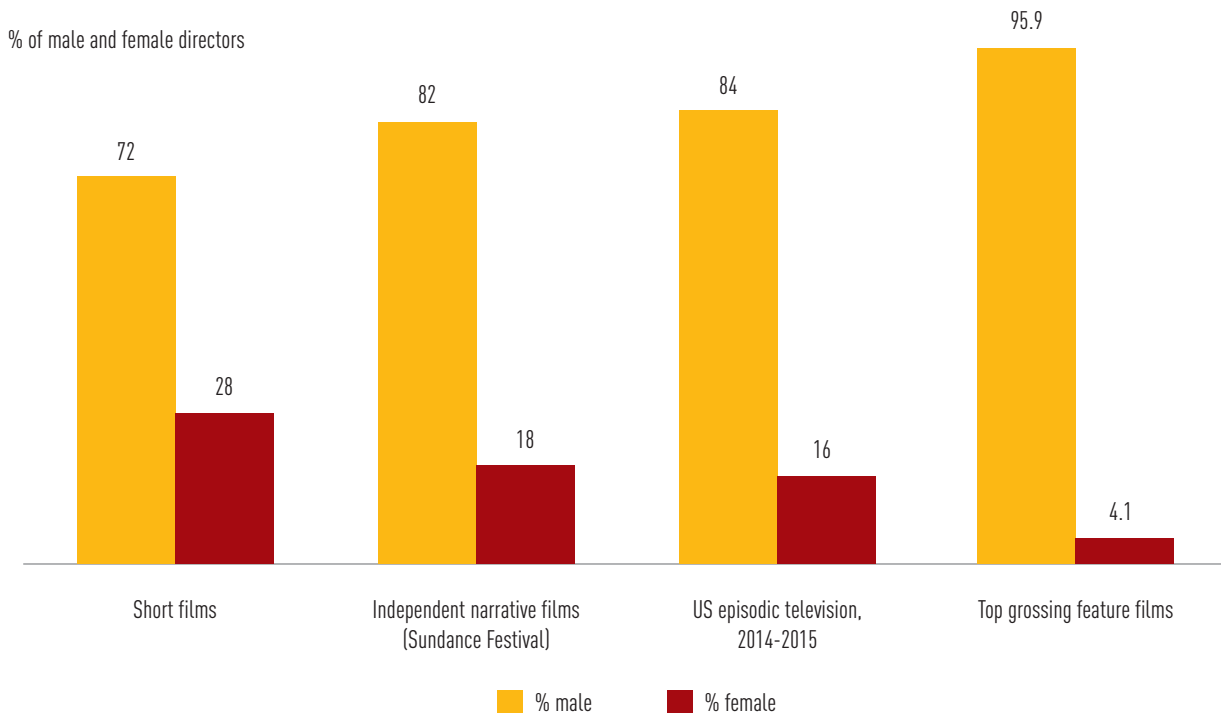
Figure 4 (section 2.3) shows that, according to Directors Guild of America data, 27% of the pool of first time episodic directors in 2014-15 came from “other genres,” namely documentaries, shorts, independent features, etc. The outcome of the fiscal cliff is preferential access for male directors coming from “other genres” to episodic

television and feature films. According to research from the Directors Guild of America, of the 128 engagements of first-time directors (i.e. those who had never directed episodic television before) in 2014-15, 84% were male – up from 80% in the 2013-14 season.<sup>39</sup> The fiscal cliff phenomenon is an effect of systemic gender discrimination as a risk management strategy through hiring practices.

Hiring processes are informal and unregulated. There are layers of approvals required to attach a director to a project, including studios, networks and broadcasters, financing partners, and producers. The decision-making structures are opaque, and the decision-making gatekeepers are often far removed from the directors themselves, meaning that networks and reputations drive decisions about who, or who not, to hire.

## Figure 6

Gender, film financing and the fiscal cliff<sup>38</sup>



Source: Smith, Stacy L., Katherine Pieper, Marc Choueiti, and Ariana Case. “Gender & Short Films: Emerging Female Filmmakers and the Barriers Surrounding Their Careers.” USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism; Lunafest Short Films, October 5, 2015.

The investment in key creative positions – and the director in particular – is seen as critical to minimize risk. One director-producer spoke of the process of hiring directors as follows:

*I had come from BC, this was the first project I'd done in Ontario and we really did have to almost exclusively hire Ontario based directors, so I did rely a lot on my studio's opinions and thoughts about people and also vetting people myself and watching material and even calling producers that have hired those directors in the past that I may know or have relationships with and talking to them about their experience with those individuals.*

In the absence of transparent hiring processes, contracting above the line creative roles largely occurs through a system that operates through informal power and privilege. It produces an environment that is measurably hostile to female directors. One director recounted a conversation she had with a highly experienced first assistant director about the hiring process for directors:

*...she's in the room when they're discussing potential directors and she said when a woman's name would come up, people would roll their eyes and they'd move on. She said that's how easy it is. Right? That it's a room full of people who go ...hmmm. And they don't have to say "Oh she's difficult. Oh she's this. Oh she's that". They just...it's now a shorthand "Ohhhh". And she said..."And the woman would be dismissed."*

The evidence is unequivocal. More male directors are hired overall, and work more often, than female directors. As research from *Women In View* shows, in 2012-13, 70 men directed 260 episodes of Canadian television supported by the CMF, for an average of 3.71 episodes each. In contrast, 14 women directed 33 episodes – or an average of 2.35 episodes each.<sup>40</sup>

Even after female directors are attached to a project, the process of project financing continues to challenge their career progression. One female director recounted a particularly blunt example of how deeply gendered the process of financing a project can be:

*I remember the producer pitching me as, "It's okay, she's just like a guy." And I was like, "Whatever." We need to do that to sell the movie to get investors or distributors. But distributors would say, "How come a woman is directing this? There's fart jokes in it, why is a woman doing this? This is more like a guy's thing isn't it?" And he was like, "No, she's fine. She gets the fart jokes, she's just like one of the guys."*

The trend toward "fewer, more commercial, international projects" has led to an overall increase in the average budget of Canadian feature films, with two major positive impacts: first, higher-budget films are more attractive to international financiers, and second, prove "more effective in terms of leveraging public financing to secure private investment."<sup>41</sup> This is good news indeed for Canadian filmmakers, as budgets are a strong predictor in box office success. In turn, success at the box office is a major factor in the career trajectory of directors. Thus bigger budgets for Canadian film are a reasonable proxy to estimate the international reach and profile of Canadian stories told by Canadian directing talent. However, research again shows that male privilege is a determining factor in gaining access directing opportunities that lead to the higher reaches of the industry.

*Women in View* reports that in 2013-14, Telefilm Canada invested \$63,323,534 in feature-length films. Two-thirds of that funding (\$42,036,218) was allocated to 21 feature films with a budget of over \$1 million. Men held 96% of the directing credits on the feature films with budgets over \$1 million. Only 1 of the 26 directing credits on the feature films that had budgets of over \$1 million was held by a female director.<sup>42</sup>

Female directors fared slightly better when the budgets dropped. In 2013-14, Telefilm Canada also supported 70 feature films with budgets under \$1 million, which were allocated one third of the total production funding, for an average of just over \$300,000 per project. Women held 16 of the 77, or 21% of the directing jobs on films with budgets under \$1 million.<sup>43</sup>

This pattern directly mirrors trends in the US feature film industry. In 2015, the Directors Guild of America released a report that shows the shocking degree to which directing wide-release, big budget features is a white man's world. The analysis uses box office figures as a key indicator of project size, number of theatrical screens and studio marketing support. Of the 212 feature films released in 2013 and 2014 films with a box office greater than \$10 million, 97% were directed by men.

Worse yet, two major studios – Disney and Warner Bros, hired not one single female director for the films they released in 2013-2014. Men – overwhelmingly white – directed 100% of the 56 feature films released by these two studios in 2013-14. To argue that faint praise should go to 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox and Universal for hiring the most female directors – at 6%, is simply setting the bar too low.

If female directors are perceived as a risk, men are perceived, in the words of one interviewee, as “a safe bet.” One female director, who regularly works both in Canada and internationally, queries the risk management rationale of industry gatekeepers that is used to justify gender inequality:

*But what I don't understand is this: it must be just as scary and just as, “Oh my God I hope I don't lose my job” hiring an unknown white male director with no experience as an unknown female director with no experience. So, why is the preponderance the boys? ... So if you get a level of experience, why are the boys going first? Why are they being hired first? As if you are somehow less blamed if they don't do it right, or you have a greater confidence in an assumption that they're going to do it right, or what is it that says your arse could be hung out to dry, if you hire a female and it goes badly?*

Answers to the questions posed by this interviewee are found in the growing body of literature on implicit bias. The Equality Challenge Unit in the UK explains the subtle, but important difference in the language we use to address bias as either unconscious or implicit:

Unconscious bias refers to a bias that we are unaware of, and which happens outside of our control. It is a bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making quick judgments and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences.

Implicit bias refers to the same area, but questions the level to which these biases are unconscious especially as we are being made increasingly aware of them. Once we know that biases are not always explicit, we are responsible for them. We all need to recognize and acknowledge our biases and find ways to mitigate their impact on our behaviour and decisions.<sup>44</sup>

In a sharp reflection of the degree to which implicit gender bias operates in relation to risk management in the film and television production industry, one interviewee commented on the director roster for the first season of a television series in which she also played a producer role.

*We didn't get a lot of female directors, as many as I would have liked. I would have liked to have had ten a season, you know? It didn't happen and it was very interesting to me because I remember in the first season, **first season we played it safe**, we went with people we knew and one of our executive producers is a really good director, in fact, the director that I mentored under in [television series]. So, it's a very long relationship for the three of us and so he did a lot of the episodes in the first season and its like, “Let's see if [established male director] is available and let's see— you know, people we know and people who we know get the vibe.” Directors - a lot of it was, did they get the show? Can we trust them to bring it on time and on budget?...” And then the aesthetic of it, do they get the style? So it was a very intellectual decision, in terms of the view of the show. [emphasis added]*

It is important to note that while directors exercise considerable power in feature films, in episodic television many of the key creative, technical and financial decisions are beyond the director's control, as reflected in the comments of a highly experienced director in Canadian and US television series production:

*You come to a TV job and you didn't pick the costumes, you didn't pick the cast, you didn't pick anything, you have no input really into the script, you're just kind of there as a director...you don't really have any power, but the good thing in some ways is that it is a job and you just go in and purely direct and step out, you don't have the responsibility or the anguish of the feature.*

It is important to understand that there is no business case that supports gender discrimination as an effective risk management strategy. A 2008 study by Martha Lauzen for the Women's Media Centre concludes, "Overall, when women and men filmmakers have similar budgets for their films, the resulting box office grosses are also similar. In other words, the sex of filmmakers does not determine box office grosses."<sup>45</sup>

Paradoxically, not only is gender discrimination an unjustifiable rationale as a risk management strategy; business increasingly acknowledges that bias operates *against commercial interests*. Google is conducting unconscious bias training for its employees as a core element of its business strategy on the premise that:

Unconscious bias ... can cause people to overlook great ideas, undermine individual potential, and create a less than ideal work experience for their colleagues. By understanding unconscious bias and overcoming it at critical moments, individuals can make better decisions - from finding the best talent (no matter what the background) to acknowledging a great idea (no matter who it came from) - and build a workforce and workplace that support and encourages diverse perspectives and contributions.<sup>46</sup>

The under-representation of female directors in the film and television production industry is simply a product of widespread sexism. Systemic bias is filtered through the decision-making capacities of a complex terrain of industry gatekeepers. The absurd logic behind connecting the gender of the director with the success, or failure, of a project is neatly summarized in the words of one female director:

*I heard this story. Somebody said that a woman director directed an episode and she shit the bed, didn't go very well and the word from above was, "yeah we tried hiring a woman and it didn't work out." It's like, "We tried hiring a person and it didn't work out, so we're not hiring people anymore."*

## 2.5 THE ISHTAR EFFECT – ATTAINING AND RETAINING CAREER MOMENTUM

In addition to exclusionary networks, fiscal cliffs, negative stereotypes about women's leadership, systemic bias and informal, opaque hiring decisions involving a number of public and private gatekeepers, female directors are further subjected to double standards in relation to their professional accomplishments, what Keegan refers to as, "The Ishtar effect."

The Ishtar effect is an extreme example of how gender inequality has a markedly differential impact on what success and failure means for directors over the course of their careers. Ishtar is emblematic of a failed film, with terrible box office returns and broadly panned by critics. Notably, after making Ishtar the film's director, Elizabeth May, never directed again. As Keegan notes, "The film's two actor-producers, who shared final cut with her, emerged unscathed, with [Warren]Beatty going on to make "Dick Tracy" and [Dustin] Hoffman "Rain Man."<sup>47</sup>

As noted above, making film and television content is a notoriously unpredictable creative and business enterprise. All directors are highly committed to create screen-based content that is successful. Failure, at some scale, is similarly both a threat, and often a reality for *all* directors at some point in their careers – reflected in the industry-wide axiom, 'you're only as good as your last job.' Yet directors experience success and failure differentially by gender.

Female directors reported that, compared to their male colleagues, professional recognition for their work was both harder to *attain* and harder to *retain*. Axiomatic amongst the *female* directing community is the phrase, "We're ahead, you're behind.":

*If the day is going well, it's because it's been produced well and the whole team has come together in a glorious way to buoy you across the finish line. If the day is going shitty, you're behind, you did it. You. The director. You, the **female** director. We're ahead, you're behind. [emphasis added]*

The following comments by female directors reflect a range of perspectives on both the pressures and challenges that female directors face throughout their careers, simply as a consequence of being female:

*I don't know that we're held to a higher standard, but I do feel like it doesn't stick.*

*I know that for me I feel like I probably have to be twice as good and I think most women directors probably feel that way, maybe three times as good. I think you feel like you don't have the latitude to screw up at all and I think that's actually true because you're sort of written off, whereas a guy can screw up and they'll still work again, I feel like women probably wouldn't as easy.*

*Yeah. Oh yeah. Absolutely. We have to do it five times as good. We do.*

It is time to dismiss the notion that success as a director is primarily based on an objective evaluation of the quality of a director's work. Similarly, we must also reject the notion that male directors succeed because their work is better than that of their female colleagues. The injustice of setting a bar for female directors which is measurably higher than that for their male colleagues is reflected in the words of one well established male director:

*I do feel like a lot of the female directors that I work with did features, and they might not have been genius, but they were certainly respectable and as good as a lot of other guys and then what's happened is not the same by any means.*

None of the female directors interviewed spoke of being surprised at their career trajectory in the way one male interviewee did:

*I went and did one episode that I still look at and just think, oh my God, it's brutal. Like, it's not great. Performances are great, 'cause they're great actors, but I was still finding my- you know, I wasn't the best director yet. But, for some reason, it got nominated at Banff for an award...[the executive producer] asked me to do the finale of the whole entire series because I was all of a sudden his golden boy, and so I did the finale.*

This is not to suggest that this particular director did not deserve the Banff award nomination, or that he did not deserve the opportunity from the executive producer that was pivotal in getting his career launched. The important point is that, as Manohla Dargis, Chief Film Critic for *The New York Times*, pointedly observes, "...while individual men struggle in the industry, women struggle as a group."<sup>48</sup>

## 2.6 CARING AND CAREERS

Working in the film and television industry is notorious for its bulimic employment patterns, irregular schedules and excessive hours. The idea of work-life "balance" in the film industry is thus much more accurately framed as "work-life interference." The degree to which life interferes with work, however, has markedly gendered dimensions. Two key points are important to understand: first, that work-life interference in the film and television production industry varies between occupations. Second, paid work-life interference is closely linked to the gendered division of unpaid work in the home.

A career as a director has the potential to offer a more balanced lifestyle than many other freelance jobs in the film and television industry, including those which are female-dominated. Directors enjoy high wages which helps to mitigate employment and income insecurity. Episodic directors also work comparatively 'regular' hours when they are not shooting which provides a better work/life balance. Higher wages can also allow directors to be more selective, at certain points in their career, about when and where they work to facilitate and accommodate family and other caring responsibilities. As one director observed:

*As a director, especially with the TV stuff, I'm lucky as hell, I can work for three weeks and check out and I can work as much as I want or not, but those crews, the people that are doing a 22 episode show for nine months every single day, 13 to 15 hours, I don't know how you have a life, I don't even know how you keep your sanity. Honestly, it's crazy. No it really is true; directors, we're really lucky, we come in and we can make more money than probably they make, you know. We make a bunch of money really quickly and we can get out and we can then have two months off if we want, they can't.*

Closer analysis of the narratives reveals that while directors as an occupational category may be afforded a greater deal of flexibility in negotiating the work/life nexus, the career trajectories of male and female directors with caring responsibilities vary considerably.

All directors with children spoke about the challenges of working on location at great distances from the household. A common strategy for both male and female directors with children, particularly young children, was to attempt to work closer to home whenever possible, whether that meant working in their home towns, or in comparatively nearby-locations (i.e. Toronto - New York as opposed to Los Angeles or Europe, for example).

However, none of the male directors reported any career interruptions as a direct consequence of having young children. Several male directors spoke of the supportive role their partners played in their careers, in effect providing the social infrastructure to allow male directors to have successful careers *and* families - the breadwinner model. The following quote from a well-established male director exemplifies the endurance of breadwinner model as a social norm, and the ways in which this is deeply tied to gendered dimensions of social relations.

*When I work, the minimum I'm working is a 12 hour day. A 12 hour day is actually a 14 hour day because it's an hour for lunch, during which time I'm working, that's 13, an hour to prep the next day is 14 and then if there's travel that's another hour or two, so I'm working 15, 16 hours a day. That's like being a prize fighter, right. That's all I do. I don't do anything else, right. So I cannot be in a situation where I'm expected to then come home and participate in the way that somebody who's working an eight hour day would, or somebody who is not absolutely totally obsessed with their work would. So now, that doesn't mean that I'm an asshole husband. There's lots of times when I'm not working and then I participate. But a film maker, whether it's a man or a woman, if they want to have a family they need a spouse that understands that the person that they're married to, man or woman, is engaged in a pretty obsessive way with what they do...*

The ability for directors to engage with their careers, "in a pretty obsessive way" is deeply influenced by household circumstances. All female directors with children spoke of the challenges they faced as a consequence of being wage-earners and caregivers. One female director reflects on how the age of her children shaped her career choices:

*Well, you know what, I was very careful because when my kids were young I did not take any work out of town and if I did a movie which was not that often, I didn't work that much, my parents would move in and [my partner] was there but he needed - my mum needed to be there so I was lucky they did that. When my son was 16 people started to say your career is really taking off and I said yeah my son's 16 now so I can go to Vancouver for four months and do two movies but I was really careful and what it gave me was a large chunk of time in between jobs because when you work you make a lot of money but there's a lot of downtime right, so it actually was good I think for me that way, I spent a lot of time with my kids...I work from home like phone calls and meetings and writing scripts and that kind of stuff but I was there for lunch and picked them up after school.*

Another female director spoke of the autonomy she now enjoys as a consequence of having no partner and no children living at home, and the ways in which this allows her freedom in her career decisions.

*I realize I have never lived like that and I'm going to be 50 this year. It's the first year in my life that I am deciding solely for myself, for better and for worse, but it's only up to me. It affects nobody around me...I don't have any regrets about how I lived my life, but my manager, says, the men clients don't live this way. They live the way I'm living right now, all the time. It's the female clients who've traded all along.*

Several directors spoke of how career interruptions for caring responsibilities had a negative impact on their career trajectories. The following two quotes speak to the challenges both male and female directors face in re-entering their careers after taking time away from paid work to perform unwaged care work. The first quote is from a female director speaking about maternity leave. The second quote is from a male director speaking about caring for an aged parent:

*When I took maternity leave with my first daughter six years ago my agent called and she was like "Okay, so how long do you want to be with your kid?" and I said "I want to take a year. Everybody takes a year, I want a year. I want to be with this baby. I don't know if I'm going to have another kid." and she was like "Okay." And that was probably not a good idea on my part but it was important to me. I don't regret it from a family standpoint but I kind of regret it career-wise because I think that was... I haven't been on set in a couple years.*

And

*I felt very much like my life had been completely changed by having to care for a terminally ill parent for two years and I felt very much like I was the only person in the world that suddenly was saddled with this. I had to exit my profession and basically be that caregiver and I felt very, very special in this position until I realized that's the story of every single mother or parent in some respects, and that I hadn't had to do that. I hadn't had to take time out to produce and then raise a child so I don't know why I felt so special all of sudden but I certainly...I think we all at different times in our life gain an insight into just how rough exiting a freelance profession can be if you want to get back into it.*

It is thus important to understand that comparatively speaking, a career as a director has the potential to offer greater personal flexibility in juggling the demands of their professional and personal circumstances. Similarly, it is necessary to understand that the gendered imbalance of unpaid work, particularly in relation to caring work, poses obstacles to women's equality in the directing profession. This may be particularly sharp for women at multiple points throughout their careers, as they are often – but not always – primarily responsible for balancing an intensely demanding career with unpredictable schedules, work patterns and locations of work, with equally intense demands of households and caring relationships.

However, the gendered nature of unpaid caring work is not in itself an explanatory factor for the systemic exclusion of women from directing. As the 2013 CUES report clearly showed, there are many female-dominated occupations in the film and television production industry, and as our interviewees note, many of those occupations enjoy *less* flexibility than directors.

Additionally, women's access to paid work is central to women's autonomy and economic independence, and so must be understood as central to social equality. Furthermore, the representation of women in key creative and leadership positions plays an important role in shaping our broader understandings of women's equality as an intergenerational political project. One director commented on the challenges and rewards of being a director and a parent, and why her professional identity was deeply tied to her ability to be a positive, powerful role model for her daughter:

*...when she asks me why I work, its because I want her to understand that having a fulfilling career and doing something that you love and that you're passionate about, makes you a better Mommy. It makes you a better person, it makes you a better human. I said, and I say this to [my daughter] all the time, "I'm fulfilled and creatively I'm fulfilled and you fulfil me creatively and it's beautiful, but then I go to work and I do this and you're proud of me." She says, "What are you doing today Mommy? Are you directing or acting today?" "I'm directing today, honey." "Okay Mommy, go get 'em."*



## SECTION THREE: INCLUSIVITY, REPRESENTATION AND BELONGING

The drive and commitment of female directors is grossly underleveraged in relation to our capacity to tell high-quality stories in a diverse and inclusive storytelling landscape. We know that those who hold the key creative positions that define Canadian content, and shape our public sphere, do not represent Canada as a nation.

The lack of diversity on our screens is a missed opportunity that fails to capitalize on the diversity of the of the Canadian population's stories and experiences. As one interviewee in our study commented,

*Difference is not bad; difference can actually be good, and there's something broken with Canadian television, in particular, so maybe it is time to actually take a different approach and have different voices. Maybe the problem is that it's always the same old white guys telling the same old white guy stories, I don't know...*

Studies by the Ralph J. Bunche Centre at UCLA show that, year over year, greater representations of women and non-white communities on screen yields positive returns in ratings, box office and overall and return on investment. The 2015 report is blunt in its conclusion that, "America's increasingly diverse audiences prefer diverse content created with the input of diverse talent."<sup>49</sup>

MPAA data shows that women constitute a larger proportion of moviegoers than men, and they drive market success for major films. The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part I was one of the top five grossing films of 2015 – and 57% of the film's box office revenue came from women. Non-Caucasian audiences in the US/Canada market accounted for 44% of frequent moviegoers in 2014. The Asia-Pacific region drove international box office increases for the second year in a row, with a 34% increase in China alone in a year-over-year analysis. According to MPAA data, in 2014, the Chinese box office became, "...the first market outside

the U.S./Canada to exceed \$4 billion in box office revenue." On television, Colombia-set *Narcos* is among Netflix's biggest shows, in part due to its popularity among the US's sizeable Hispanic community.<sup>50</sup>

Yet the stories on our screens, and the workers who make the content, consistently fail to reflect our richly diverse society. The recent outrage in the US film and television industry over systemic discrimination against women and racialized groups is emblematic of the demands for change in an industry in which the stakes are not only economic, but fundamentally social, political and cultural as well. In the words of one director,

*Genuine voice comes from experience and comes from culture and comes from nature and nurture and there's no way for it to exist in any genuine way without it being manifest in a very large variety of human beings engaged in the creative process. There is absolutely no argument in favour of only having one kind of person in the director's chair or one kind of person in the writer's room. It's ridiculous and no one makes that argument anymore. It just happens to be the way it is and that's the problem. We don't have diversity of voices yet and we certainly don't have a diversity of voices in the screen industries at any level in any way reflective of the diversity of voice in the viewing public. As long as that dissonance exists we've got a huge opportunity ahead of us. It's a challenge but it's also a huge opportunity.*

Canada is a nation which prides itself on valuing equality and diversity as a source of strength for Canada's cultural, political and economic success. Prime Minister Trudeau underscored these principles in an address in November 2015 when he stated, "Canada's success as a diverse and inclusive nation didn't happen by accident, and won't continue without effort. The future is never certain. It depends on the choices we make today."<sup>51</sup>

The Canadian screen-based production industry requires a fundamental culture shift in the perception of (or blindness to) issues related to systemic exclusion of women and racialized minorities. Fundamentally, the issue needs to be understood as one stemming from a system which operates through (white) male power and privilege. To fail to understand and effect meaningful change in systems which operate on male privilege runs the risk of an 'add women and stir' approach to equality, in which the power relations that underpin the root issue of the system remain unchallenged. Such an approach would serve to provide a surface scaffolding of the appearance of diversity, rather than that of an industry built on the principles of *inclusivity*,

*representation and belonging*. Next steps in advancing equality must be filtered through a wholesale questioning of a system in which a small minority of the population gains substantial economic benefits from the ways in which the industry functions, as well as substantial social and political benefits through their role as primary gatekeepers of an important source of social and political power – our stories.

The following section on recommendations addresses the key issues identified in this report with a particular focus on existing initiatives both within Canada and abroad that specifically target gender inequality in the film and television production industry.

# RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES

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Promoting gender equality in the Canadian screen-based production industry requires action and commitment from all industry stakeholders. No single action will, in itself, remediate a problem that is deeply rooted in long standing industry structures, practices and power relations. Action requires a solid, well-resourced commitment and accountability framework from across the film and television production ecology – and in particular the engagers, the workforce and governments – to ensure foundational change.

## RECOMMENDATION 1

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### **Adopt gender equality as a core principle in policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation for the Canadian screen-based production industry**

National public institutions play a key role in shaping industry dynamics and development. Bold leadership by federal funding and policy bodies is a first step towards establishing gender equality as an industry priority. Urgent reform of the various policy, regulatory and funding mechanisms should focus on:

- The distribution of public funds as a key mechanism to support gender equality outcomes in key creative positions
- Public policies and programs, such as Canadian content regulations, that shape labour markets and industrial development
- The degree to which outcomes of key cultural policies and programs serve the public interest in relation to gender equity and cultural citizenship – namely, the right to be seen and heard in the cultural landscape.

### **CANADA MEDIA FUND**

The Canada Media Fund’s mandate is to, “guide Canadian content towards a competitive global environment through fostering industry innovation, rewarding success, enabling a diversity of voice and promoting access to content through industry and private sector partnerships.”<sup>52</sup>

### **Recommendation 1.1**

Canada Media Fund policy priority: Gender equality in the production sector is essential to “enabling a diversity of voice” from a “point of view” perspective.

### **TELEFILM CANADA**

The first of six strategic priorities in the Telefilm Canada 2015-18 Strategic plan is to, “markedly increase awareness levels of our great writers, directors, producers, craftspeople and screen performers...”<sup>53</sup> As the key public funding body for Canadian feature film production, Telefilm Canada plays an essential role in exercising industry leadership on equitable and responsible administration of public funds that support Canadian storytelling and Canadian storytellers.

### **Recommendation 1.2**

Telefilm Canada policy priority: A diversity of writers, directors, producers, craftspeople and screen performers is key to developing innovative, globally competitive, high quality audio-visual content.

### **CRTC**

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, through its regulatory powers invested in it by the *Broadcasting Act* (1991) has the potential to be central in advancing gender equality in the Canadian screen-based production industry. Prioritizing gender equality as a component of the Canadian content points system would be a significant step toward making meaningful progress in the ability of the *Broadcasting Act* to meet the objectives of section 3(d)(iii):

(iii) through its programming *and the employment opportunities arising out of its operations*, serve the needs and interests, and reflect the circumstances and aspirations, of Canadian men, women and children, including equal rights, the linguistic duality and multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society and the special place of aboriginal peoples within that society [emphasis added]<sup>54</sup>

### Recommendation 1.3

CRTC policy priority: Gender equality in the key creative positions that shape content production is an essential element of the ability of the Canadian broadcasting system to meet its social and cultural objectives.

#### Good practice example

### SWEDISH FILM INSTITUTE

The Swedish Film Institute sets an excellent example in valuing gender equality as central to its organizational mandate and funding strategy:

*The gender equality perspective permeates everything that is done at the Swedish Film Institute: from production funding to the choice of films to promote from the archive, from funding to the screening sector to the recruitment of new personnel. The Film Institute's goal is to be a gender equal workplace, and also to lay the foundation for gender equality in film production.*

*Gender equality has been brought into stronger focus in the 2013 Film Agreement, which means that production funding is to be divided equally between women and men. By the end of 2015, the total amount of funding awarded during the agreement period shall be allocated 50% to women and 50% to men in each of the three professional categories: director, screenwriter and producer.*

Notably, Sweden reached the goal of 50% funding to women in only two and a half years. They did so with a great deal of political will and a firm commitment to change from the leadership of the Swedish Film Institute. When Anna Serner took the CEO position of the Swedish Film Institute in 2011, only 26% of the funding went to female directors – a situation that Serner called “a catastrophe.” By 2014, female directors received 50% of the funding, female scriptwriters received 55% of the funding, and female producers 65% of the funding.<sup>55</sup>

#### Good practice example

### SCREEN NEW SOUTH WALES

Screen NSW is the state development agency supporting the Australia's largest film and television production centre. Screen NSW's mandate is to, “to promote Australia's cultural identity, encourage employment in all aspects of screen production, encourage investment in the industry, enhance the industry's export potential, encourage innovation and enhance quality in the industry. On July 28, 2016 Screen NSW announced that “all TV drama series must now include female key creatives on their team in order to receive development or production finance.” Courtney Gibson, CEO of Screen NSW explains the rationale for this groundbreaking initiative:

*This is an equity issue - of course it is - but for Screen NSW, it's principally about supporting and enabling the very best work. And if females are so poorly represented, it means that we, as an industry, aren't exploiting all we have to offer. The long game of this target is, for us, about leveling the playing field to ensure that women get the same opportunities as men and that the strongest work gets supported. And it can't be achieved unless we just decide that we're going to do something about it.*

Screen NSW also announced that it will not “sponsor, support or participate in any initiative, event, conference, market or festival which include all-male panels and don't foster female participation and diversity more broadly.”<sup>56</sup>

#### Good practice example

### NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

The National Film Board has committed to full gender equality as a core organizational value. The NFB has publicly committed to ensuring that women will direct at least half of its productions, and that half of all production spending will be allocated to films directed by women. The NFB further demonstrates organizational leadership in gender equality, with women holding 66% of upper management roles and 70% of the Board of Trustee positions.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

### Recognize that the implementation of equality and diversity practice is good for business

Diversity on screen is, simply put, good business. A diversity of stories starts with a diversity of storytellers in leadership roles. Based on analysis of data from range of industries across Canada, Latin America, the United Kingdom, and the United States, McKinsey and Co. firmly conclude that, "When companies commit themselves to diverse leadership, they are more successful. More diverse companies, we believe, are better able to win top talent and improve their customer orientation, employee satisfaction, and decision making, and all that leads to a virtuous cycle of increasing returns." According to their 2015 report, *Diversity Matters*, companies in the top quarter of rankings for gender diversity in the top leadership outperform their competitors by 15%.<sup>57</sup>

#### Recommendation 2.1

The Canadian film and television production industry requires a significant, long-term equity investment strategy from private sector stakeholders to:

- produce content across a range of genres in which women and other under-represented communities hold key creative positions
- address gender bias in financing

Private funding is essential to the success of Canadian screen-based storytelling in an increasingly globalized market. Telefilm Canada acknowledges that its partners – "storytellers, writers, directors, actors, financiers, artisans and technical experts and innovators – want the sources of funding for their work to be more diverse."<sup>58</sup> Private equity investors must also commit to diversity in key creative positions as an essential ingredient for commercial and creative success.

#### Good practice example

##### GAMECHANGER FILMS

Gamechanger films is "...the first equity fund that exclusively finances narrative features directed by women." The explicit rationale of the firm is to overcome the significant career barriers female filmmakers face as

a consequence of gender bias in financing. Gamechanger invests in emerging and more experienced female directors, "...no matter what kinds of stories they choose to tell, so films do not have to be female-themed or have female protagonists. Male directors are not restricted in the kinds of stories they tell, so neither should female directors be."<sup>59</sup> Now that's progress.

Investor education for their "socially conscious and commercially minded impact investors" is a key element of Gamechanger's operations. The company is path-breaking both in its equity investment strategy, but importantly, in its desire to fundamentally address gender bias in the financing sector overall. Gamechanger's aim to, "cultivate a new community of sophisticated and empowered film financiers" is, well, a game changer.<sup>60</sup>

In the words of equity investment company Gamechanger Film founders, "We all recognized a great business opportunity when we saw one and so did our 30-plus investors. There are great women filmmakers who make terrific, commercially viable films, and the moviegoing audience is predominately female. So all anyone needs to do is the math to know change is in the air."

#### Good practice example

##### TRIBROS STUDIOS

In 2015, Tribros Studio in Ontario announced a novel financing incentive program to address gender bias in the Canadian screen-based production sector. In an effort to reduce the "false perception of risk" associated with hiring females in key creative roles, the studio will "cut studio fees in half for any female-helmed productions at their existing studio in Toronto and at their future studio at Durham Live in Pickering." As director and Academy Award nominee Lexi Alexander argues, measurable, concrete efforts dismantle practices that justify gender discrimination as risk management tool such as the Tribros Studios program are "all too rare", and that this type of program "really is fantastic."<sup>61</sup>

## RECOMMENDATION 3

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**Address implicit bias across the Canadian screen-based production industry by prioritizing inclusivity and diversity as core industry values.**

### Recommendation 3.1

Public and private industry stakeholders – including policy and regulatory bodies, producers, broadcasters, investors, financiers and unions should launch mandatory, accessible, ongoing educational and training program to promote inclusive, diverse workplaces and work practices.

### Recommendation 3.2

In particular, industry leaders should demonstrate an ongoing personal and organizational commitment to effective, measurable change.

### *Good practice example*

#### **GOOGLE**

Google’s Unbiasing program is a core component of the company’s re:Work project, a “multi-year journey to understand how decisions are made at work, how inclusive organizational cultures are built and sustained, and how individuals can take conscious control of their actions, behaviors, and cultural contributions.”<sup>63</sup> With Google doing important industry leadership on unconscious bias training, other major companies are following suit, including Facebook, Microsoft and Apple.<sup>64</sup> The evidence on unconscious bias training is still in early stages. However, the first step in addressing a problem is acknowledging the root of the problem. Google receives two thumbs up for recognizing that the development of an inclusive, diverse talent pool begins by addressing the gatekeepers and decision-makers who have power over who gets hired, in which jobs, and when.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

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### Record and report annual industry diversity metrics

Tracking progress on the gender equality issue in the Canadian screen-based production sector is an essential component of success. There is a great deal of potential data available from an industry that is highly subsidized and consequently, accountable to a range of federal and provincial agencies. A lack of reliable data is an obstacle to measuring and evaluating policies and programs designed to cultivate an inclusive, diverse screen-based production industry. However, very little data is currently available.

#### Recommendation 4.1

Key regulatory and funding bodies should report annually on the degree to which public funds support storytelling by under-represented communities.

#### Recommendation 4.2

At minimum this reporting would include data on gender and racialized populations in key creative positions to support evidence-based policy making and industry trends / change over time.

Key public institutions that are well positioned to report on inclusivity and diversity metrics on the various policies and programs that support the Canadian screen-based production industry include the Canadian audio-visual certification office (CAVCO), Telefilm Canada and the Canada Media Fund.

An advanced reporting framework that would capture diversity metrics at the regional level would include the agencies and ministries who administer the provincial film and television tax credits and other industrial development programs.

Such an approach will allow for change to be measured over time. Recording and reporting is one means by which governments can exercise leadership, and demonstrate commitment to inclusivity as a core value, and equality as a foundational principle to a progressive, democratic public sphere.

### *Good practice example*

#### SCREEN AUSTRALIA

Screen Australia regularly reports on levels of gender (in)equality in key creative roles in the Australian film and television industry, including analysis of the gender statistics across occupational categories, age brackets and income levels dating back to 1970. The long history of recording and reporting provides empirical evidence to support action on this portfolio. In 2015 Screen Australia announced their 5-point plan, Gender Matters, to address a long history of gender inequality in the Australian film and television production sector. Furthermore, Screen Australia's federal leadership has been a catalyst for state-based initiatives.<sup>65</sup> In 2015, following the announcement of Gender Matters, state-level film and television development agencies in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland announced initiatives to address gender inequality in their local industries.

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## DGC

The Directors Guild of Canada (DGC) is a national labour organization that represents 4,000 key creative and logistical personnel in the screen-based industry covering all areas of direction, design, production and editing. The DGC negotiates and administers collective agreements and lobbies extensively on issues of concern for members including Canadian content conditions, CRTC regulations and ensuring that funding is maintained for Canadian screen-based programming.



## ACTRA

The Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Arts (ACTRA) is the national union of professional performers working in the English-language recorded media in Canada. ACTRA represents the interests of 23,000 members across Canada – the foundation of Canada’s highly acclaimed professional performing community.



## UDA

Union des artistes (UDA) is a professional union representing professional performers working in French mostly in Quebec and all over Canada. UDA acts in the interests of almost 8 600 full members and around 4 600 stagiaires, all performing artists. UDA negotiates and manages more than fifty collective agreements, signed with producers in various fields like commercial advertisement, film, phonograms, dubbing, live theatre as well as with television and radio broadcasters. It offers numerous services to its members, such as a security fund, vacation fund, collective insurances and Artisti, UDA’s neighbouring rights collective.



## IATSE

The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, Its Territories and Canada (IATSE) was founded in 1893 and today is the largest union representing workers in the entertainment industry, with over 129,000 members. IATSE members work in all forms of live theatre, motion picture and television production, trade shows and exhibitions, television broadcasting, and concerts as well as the equipment and construction shops that support all these areas of the entertainment industry. They represent virtually all the behind the scenes workers in crafts ranging from motion picture animator to theatre usher.

In Canada, IATSE represents 19,000 members in 40 Locals across the country, with 14+ Locals representing motion picture and television production.



## NABET 700-M

UNIFOR represents close to 3000 qualified film, television, and digital media technicians in 15 different departments and has serviced production in the Province of Ontario for over forty years.



## WGC

The Writers Guild of Canada (WGC) represents more than 2,200 professional English-language screenwriters across Canada. These are the creators who write the distinctly Canadian entertainment we enjoy on our televisions, movie screens, and digital platforms.



## Women in View

Women in View is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to strengthening gender and cultural diversity in Canadian media both on screen and behind the scenes. We do this through a range of initiatives that seek to generate awareness, promote talent and spark dialogue across the full spectrum of production, policy and artistic arenas.



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