

Year-end Report

2020-2021



Development, Mentorship,
Production Awards for
Canadian women screen
directors



2020-2021 WIDC Director Participants pictured above (l-r): top row, Ann Marie Fleming, Esra Çilingir, Jamie Miller, Liz Cairns, Michelle Muldoon, Rachel Beaulieu, Lindsay McIntyre, Mayumi Yoshida, Joy Haskell, Camille Hollett-French, Kim Albright; 2nd row, Jill Riley, Dorothy A. Atabong, Rachel Cairns, ZhiMin Hu, Hayley Gray, Emily Diana Ruth, Panta Mosleh, Rebeka Herron, Tanya Lemke, Gloria Mercer.

Major Changes

Response to COVID-19

This year WIDC programs pivoted to Zoom. Full day sessions were shortened and the number of days per module lengthened. To reduce financial barriers, the Board waived application fees and tuition. Some chose to “pay-what-you-can” towards application fees which are allocated to jury honoraria and the awards fund.

Funding

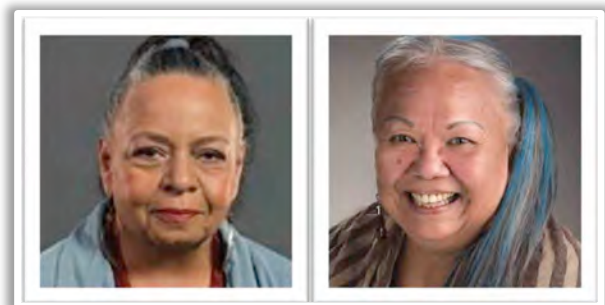
Overall, WIDC sponsorship and self-generated revenues were down by 35% compared to fiscal 2019-20. Despite a one-time COVID Relief top up from Telefilm Canada, to sustain WIDC program offerings, revenue sources need to be restored.

EDI Workshop

Responding to the murder of George Floyd, #BLM, and Canada’s MMIW crisis, the Board commissioned a new Equity, Diversity and Inclusion module which was delivered at the start of each WIDC workshop, fiscal 2020-21.



Our Board: l-r top, Dr. Carol Whiteman (president & CEO), Juanita Peters (alumnae rep), Heather Allin (ACTRA), 2nd row, Rama Rau (alumnae rep.), Mary M. Frymire (sec./treasurer)



EDI Instructors: Dr. Rita Shelton Deverell & Dr. Dorothy Christian Cucw-la7



“Director quote...”

“Meeting my fellow directors was inspiring! Having time with the funders & distributors was ... demystifying.”

Jill Riley

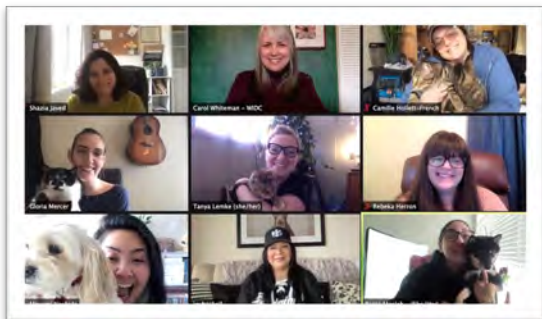
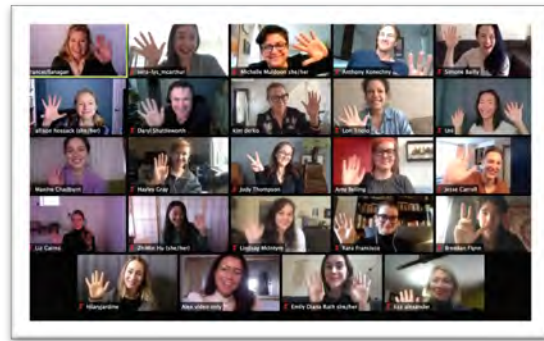
Career Advancement Module, Fall 2020

“Director quote...”

“Achieving gender equality and cultural diversity in the film industry is not a slogan – it’s an action.”

ZhiMin Hu

Story & Leadership



“Director quote...”

“I’m proud to be part of an organization who supports Women and their careers as directors. I truly feel supported and heard as an Indigenous woman.”

Joy Haskell

Career Advancement Module, Spring 2021

“Director quote...”

“I’m excited to complete this final stage of script development with our wonderful team. Production is now truly within reach, thanks to WIDC, CBC Films and the sponsors of the Feature Film Award, all of which I am grateful for.”

Kim Albright

Winner, 2020 WIDC Feature Film Award & CBC Films WIDC Talent Development Award



2020-2021 Participant feedback...

Ranking out of 10...on average, director participants ranked WIDC 9/10 (never below 8/10).

What they liked best...the community and confidence building.

Suggestions for improvement... more time together.

Percentage who would recommend WIDC to other qualified individuals... 100%

WIDC Activity Report as at year-end, March 31, 2021

The Women In the Director's Chair (WIDC) program continues to offer professional leadership and story development, awards, and production support for Canadian women screen directors. Due to COVID-19, WIDC programs have been pivoted online and delivered via Zoom. To mitigate Zoom fatigue while not diminishing curriculum, workshop days have been shortened and the number of days per module lengthened. Recognizing the financial impact to women, caused by the pandemic, the Board waived all application fees and tuition. While travel and lodging were cut, costs for bandwidth, programming and personnel increased. WIDC sponsorship and self-generated revenues were down 35% overall. Without the one-time COVID Relief top up from Telefilm Canada, revenues would have been down 52%. To sustain WIDC program offerings, revenue sources need to be restored, especially as the 2021-2022 fiscal will mark the launch of WIDC's 25th Anniversary.

There are now over 300 women director alumnae from across Canada and around the world. During the 2020-2021 fiscal, 23 Canadian women directors, 15 ACTRA actors and over 30 Industry guests directly participated in WIDC programs.

We wish to recognize the term Woman/Women is in an evolution of language and note that our intention in our use is to be fully inclusive of underrepresented persons who may or may not identify as women and share the goals and values of WIDC to promote these marginalized voices and stories. Further, we gratefully acknowledge that the WIDC program originates from the traditional and unceded lands of the Coast Salish people, including the xmkym (Musqueam), Swxwu7mesh (Squamish), and sliilwta (Tseil-wau-tuth) Nations. We also acknowledge the Indigenous Nations on whose traditional lands our guests and participants live, work and play.

PROGRAMS

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Workshop (EDI) (new):

Now precedes each WIDC workshop. A module specially designed for WIDC by alumna **Dr. Rita Shelton Deverell C.M.** and fellow scholar and filmmaker, Dr. Dorothy Christian Cucw-la7, in this 90-minute session participants discuss articles written by the instructors, engage in anti-racism exercises, investigate micro-aggressions and the importance of self-location and land acknowledgments. Participants are guided in developing their own personalized EDI work pledge.

WFI Summer Film Intensive (new): Still in development

Led by WIDC alumnae **Dr. Shirley Cheechoo C.M.** and **Dr. Rita Shelton Deverell C.M.**, through Dr. Cheechoo's Weengushk Film Institute on Monatoulin Island, Ontario, this new professional development / production award takes Indigenous and Black women filmmakers through the development and production of original shorts (up to 6 directors). Finished films will later screen at the Weengushk International Film Festival. WIDC will provide follow up mentorship. Pending funding.

Working In Episodic (new):

Responding to alumnae feedback, the intension of this module is to support TV directing skills and expertise for WIDC alumnae directors (approx. 20-30 director participants per session). This new WIDC module of Zoom roundtables soft-launched in March 2021 when WIDC alumna, **Winnifred Jong** (*Tokens, Nurses*) met with 8 directors to discuss Managing Prep.

WIDC alumnae will be invited to lead / attend other sessions in summer 2021, including Pitching New Projects; Pitching Yourself; Showrunning; Directing Comedy; More Managing Prep; Talking Tech (the equipment); Talking Camera and Light; Working with VFX; Directing Action; Directing Intimacy; Directing Children; Finding the Right Agent for You, and Navigating On Set Politics.

Up next on May 14, 2021, *Working In Episodic with Amanda Row*, co-executive producer / director, *Nancy Drew, Season 2* will cover the topic of the Producing Director.

WIDC Career Advancement Module (CAM):

The CAM, presented in collaboration with Canada's three major women's film festivals (St John's International Women's Film Festival, Female Eye Film Festival (Toronto) and the Vancouver International Women In Film Festival) was facilitated by WIDC Producer, Dr. Carol Whiteman, with industry guests Lori McCurdy, Melissa Amer (Telefilm Canada), Mehernaz Lentin (CBC Films), John Galway, (Bell Media, Harold Greenberg Fund), Matt Orenstein (Vortex Media), Smita Acharyya (TELUS STORYHIVE), Annelise Larson (Veria Search Media Marketing), Carly McGowan (IPF), and Mentor Directors, **Ruth Lawrence, Karen Lam** and **Sonia Bonspille Boileau**.

The Fall 2020 session of the WIDC CAM program was delivered over 10 days in October 2020 with SJIWFF to 4 director participants (**Dorothy A. Atabong** (ON), **Esra Çilingir** (BC), **Jamie Miller** (NL), **Jill Riley** (ON)) attending via Zoom. The Spring 2021 session ran the entire month of March 2021. Since FeFF and VIWFF now run concurrently, a first-ever combined cohort of 8 director participants (**Joy Haskell** (BC), **Rebeka Herron** (ON), **Camille Hollett-French** (BC), **Shazia Javed** (ON), **Tanya Lemke** (ON), **Gloria Mercer** (BC), **Panta Mosleh** (BC) and **Mayumi Yoshida** (BC), attended the WIDC CAM session via Zoom.

Part 2 of the CAM program includes 3 one-hour coaching sessions for each director to help them advance their career plan strategies. Both cohorts will continue to complete Part 2 through spring 2021, prepping for upcoming funding deadlines.

WIDC Story & Leadership Program:

Honoring the ongoing 24-year relationship between WIDC and ACTRA, at the Opening Session of Story & Leadership, Board member Heather Allin spoke about ACTRA's foresight in seeking equity for performers on screen through supporting equity for women directors, and the resulting benefits of hiring professional performers.

Part 1 was delivered over 22 days via Zoom to 8 director participants (**Rachel Beaulieu** (MB), **Liz Cairns** (BC), **Rachel Cairns** (ON), **Hayley Gray** (BC), ZhiMin Hu (ON), **Lindsay McIntyre** (BC), **Michelle Muldoon** (BC), **Emily Diana Ruth** (ON)) who developed their fiction feature films and series projects. Carol Whiteman facilitated, with lead instructors Dr. Carolyn Mamchur, Linda Coffey, Lori Triolo and Veena Sood. Panel discussions and one-to-one sessions about the Director/DOP relationship, preparing pitch materials and blocking were held with DOP's Amy Belling, CSC and Kim Derko, CSC. A generous acting ensemble including Lizz Alexander, Simone Bailly, Alexandra Castillo-Smith, Jesse Carroll, Maxine Chadburn, Frances Flanagan, Brendan Flynn, Kara Francisco, Allison Hossack, Hilary Jardine, Anthony Konechny, Sera-Lys McArthur, Uni Park, Daryl Shuttleworth, Jody Thompson, workshopped the directors' scripts (2 series and 6 feature films).

Part 2 (WIDC Whistler Film Festival Industry Immersion) was delivered over 20 days, offering the director participants festival passes to attend WFF Industry Summit, screenings and the festival signature Women In Focus series. The directors met in roundtables and on-to-ones with industry experts: producer Trish Dolman (Screen Siren Pictures), Lauren Davis (Telefilm Canada), Mehernaz Lentin (CBC Films), Alan Bacchus (Harold Greenberg Fund), **Smita Acharyya** (TELUS STORYHIVE), distributor Matt Orenstein (Vortex Media) and Annelise Larson (Veria.ca).

Part 3 (one-to-one story development), meetings with Mentor Story Editor, Linda Coffey, ran through January 2021.

Part 4 (career coaching), Directors have completed their 3 hours each career coaching and an additional roundtable with Mentor Director **Gloria Ui Young Kim**, and producer Sonya di Rienzo (Hawkeye Pictures).

AWARDS

WIDC Feature Film Award:

The 2020 award was presented to **Kim Albright** for her debut feature, *With Love and a Major Organ*. She aims for production fall 2021. The award is valued at up to \$200,000 in kind services and rentals and is adjudicated annually by an alumnae peer jury. A mentorship award for the director and her producer is included as a part of the award package. After multi-award-winning festival tours, the 2012, 2016 and 2017 Feature Film Award winners' films were theatrically released during 2020 (**Marie Clements'** *Red Snow*, **Sonia Bonspille Boileau's** *Rustic Oracle*, and **Gloria Ui Young Kim's** *Queen of the Morning Calm*). The 2018 WIDC Feature Film Award winner, **Shelley Thompson** safely completed production on her debut feature, *Dawn, Her Dad and the Tractor*, summer 2020 in Nova Scotia.

WIDC CBC Talent Development Award:

The 2020 recipient was also **Kim Albright** (*With Love and Major Organ*). The award paid for a story consultancy / mentorship with award-winning writer/director **Anita Doron** (*The Breadwinner*). 2019 winners, **Meeshelle Neal** (*Sweet Release*) and **JJ Neepin** (*Luminous*) took their scripts to the next draft with consultants Danishka Esterhazy and Eva Thomas, respectively. JJ has subsequently been named among WIV's Five In Focus.

WIDC Cannes Market Fellowship Award:

Sponsored by Telefilm Canada, one WIDC alumna was awarded a market pass to attend Cannes Film Festival and pitch her projects. **Ann Marie Fleming** (*Window Horses*) was selected and received pre-festival mentorship to prepare her pitch materials.

BANFF Fellowship Award:

Paused this fiscal due to COVID-19. The BANFF Festival pivoted online and opened their master classes and large group sessions for free.

WIDC's Telefilm Canada Talent to Watch Nominee / Mentorship Award:

Telefilm Canada funded:

2019 Recipient, **Ana de Lara**, (*Best Friend Me*, a comedic web series exploring the faces of depression and anxiety told from the POV of a young woman's alter-egos). Production is paused due to COVID-19.

2018 Recipients, **Reem Morsi** (feature film, *Hysteria*) and **Elizabeth Lazebnik** (feature film, *Be Still*) have postponed completion due to COVID-19 considerations.

2017 Recipient, **Winnifred Jong** (web series, *Tokens*) will be launching a season two and won a Best direction CSA award along with multiple other nominations and awards for the series.

Though their projects did not receive Telefilm funding these are receiving mentorship awards provided by WIDC producer Carol Whiteman to further advance their projects to the next level:

2020 Recipients, **Hayley Gray** (feature film *Dry Year*), and **Sarah Deakins** (web series, *Happenstance*)

2018 Recipient, **Leah Cameron's** web series, *The Communist's Daughter*, earned IPF, CMF and Ontario Creates funding, and launched on CBC Gem.

2017 Recipient, **Adelina Suvagau** (feature film, *Box of Freedom*) self-funded and is submitting to festivals.

2016 Recipient, **Kate Green** (web series, *NarcoLeap*) just launched season two of her award-winning series which is nominated for another CSA among other awards and nominations.

ADDITIONAL WIDC ALUMNAE HIGHLIGHTS

During this fiscal, WIDC Alumnae have earned over 190 nominations, awards and other achievements, including 26 Canadian Screen Award nominations and 37 Leo Award nominations. WIDC alumnae (**Karen Lam, Mary M. Frymire, Siobhan Devine**) won Leo Awards for Best Direction. A Best Picture Leo Award went to WIDC Feature Film Award winner, *Rustic Oracle* written and directed by **Sonia Bonspille Boileau**, as well as a Best Lead Actress Leo Award, UBCP/ACTRA Award and CSA nomination to Carmen Moore* for her performance in *Rustic Oracle*. Sonia is now in development with radio-Canada on a limited series, *Pour toi Flora*. **Kathleen Hepburn** and Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers* have gone on to win multiple awards including Best Direction and Best Performances for their feature *The Body Remembers When the World Broke Open*. **Patricia Harris Seeley** completed her thriller feature, *La Llorona*, soon to be released. **Shannon Walsh** completed another feature doc, *Illusions of Control*. Talent to Watch feature, *Little Orphans*, (**Ruth Lawrence**, director, and **Emily Bridger**, writer/ lead actress) premiered at festivals and won the Whistler Film Festival Borsos Prize for Best Picture. **Virginia Abramovich's** debut feature *Between Waves* is touring festivals and was also nominated for the Borsos Prize. **Marie Clements'** feature film *Red Snow* was acquired by Elevation Pictures. Marie is now in development on a new drama series *The Red* for CBC. **Loretta Todd's** much anticipated feature *Monkey Beach* premiered at TIFF20, opened VIFF20 and played at other festivals to sold out crowds online before the film began its run on Crave, and CBC Gem. **Suza Singh's** action feature *Honourable Sins* is touring festivals. WIDC alumnae directed MOW's including **Virginia Abramovich, Sharon Lewis, Annie Bradley, Siobhan Devine, Winnifred Jong, Nimisha Mukerji. Sherry White's** new series *Pretty Hard Cases* launched on CBC.

For more WIDC alumnae highlights visit the WIDC Alumnae Directory (<https://www.widc.ca/directory>)

Note: While Carmen Moore and Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers are UBCP-ACTRA members, they are not WIDC director alumnae.

ADMINISTRATION

At the June 2020 AGM, CWWA welcomed new Board members **Juanita Peters** and **Rama Rau** to our Board of five including **Mary M. Frymire** (sec./treasurer), **Heather Allin** (ACTRA rep.) and Dr. Carol Whiteman (president & CEO). One of the new Board's first undertakings was to mandate a goal that at least 33% of WIDC director participants, peer juries, mentors, and leadership would be from equity seeking communities including Indigenous, Black, Individuals of Colour, and that we remain mindful of LGBTQ2S+ and regional representation. We are pleased to report that this goal was exceeded in all but one category (mentors, 31%) and that 40% of all WIDC director alumnae (1997 to 2021) are from equity seeking communities / groups. The Board continues to self-educate on EDI and is collaborating with industry colleagues on the evolving language of gender and inclusivity.

In Memoriam

WIDC was saddened to lose long-time collaborator, [Michelle \(Mickey\) Mamchur](#). She passed away on January 16, 2021 due to complications from a life-long illness. Mickey assisted her mother, Dr. Carolyn Mamchur at Story & Leadership for 18 years and was a highly valued member of the WIDC instructional team.

Alumnae most cite the enduring relationships they develop as one of WIDC's greatest gifts. We are extremely grateful to our collaborators, sponsors, guests and past alumnae whose support through this challenging fiscal year has contributed to WIDC's ongoing success and the success of WIDC alumnae.

WIDC 25th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS [Launch Event, June 11, 2021.](#)



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