

# being seen

Directives for creating authentic  
and inclusive content

“ I definitely don't think that as creatives we should be limited to the type of stories that we want to tell, because that's what makes us creative. However, I do believe that in some capacity, we need to involve the culture that we're trying to represent in our stories, to be part of developing that story. ”

## TELLING A STORY FROM OUTSIDE YOUR COMMUNITY

### For Creators, Producers

- + Ask who benefits from the story. If the ownership is outside the community, then build pathways to improve capacity through hiring in junior creative and production roles so that community members can gain experience and credits necessary to be able to tell their own stories in the future.
- + Ask yourself why you want to write/produce a story from outside your community. Do you have a connection to the story or the community? If you do, then the research and consultation is more likely to come from a place of empathy. If you are responding to a trend in the marketplace, then the empathy and understanding may not be there and the community may not respond well to you. You also run the risk of telling the story from an outsider perspective which can contribute to 'othering' (i.e., identifying a group as not part of the 'norm').

- + If you are telling a story from outside a community, you can expect that there may be resistance to your involvement, despite the best of intentions. Do not invalidate these points of view. Communicate your point of view clearly. There may be legitimate reasons for an outside perspective, but if you are trying to tell the story as if you are a community member then it will not be authentic.
- + Get involved in the community. Build a direct relationship with the community and understand that no community is monolithic. Check with multiple sources. It's about engagement and involvement but not permission as there is no one person or group who could give it. Consider creating an advisory board that can give feedback throughout development and production. Budget time and money for this engagement. While there are no standards for fees for community consultation, review Writers Guild of Canada IPA rates for Story Consultants or the Canadian Artists Representation/Le Front des Artistes Canadiens for rates for Professional Services fees that include consultation for guidance.
- + There are consultants who can take a community-wide perspective because of their academic research or grassroots community work but be cautious of hiring a consultant just because they are a member of a community. They may only represent one perspective.
- + Do your research to ensure that any organization that you contact is itself representative and well-regarded by the community. For example, Autism Speaks is an Autism awareness and advocacy organization that takes positions that are controversial within the Autism community.
- + If hiring someone from the community, give them authority and the ability to say 'no, that has to be changed'. Co-creation is one way to ensure that authority. One lone voice in a writer's room can be intimidated into silence or acquiescence. Consultation does not require that the person consulted is listened to and can be used as a rubber stamp of approval and then ignored. However, if the concern is not telling a story but including characters from a community that you do not belong to, it may be possible to achieve authenticity through consultation or adding a screenwriter from that community to the writers' room.
- + Engaging a consultant or screenwriter is the beginning and not the end of the process. They have a job to do and expect to do it.
- + Continue engagement and consultation from writing in development through production and post-production to ensure continued authentic portrayal that extends to casting, production design, wardrobe, locations, editing and the whole creative process.

## Quick Fact

23.8% of the Canadian population are first generation (i.e. not born in Canada) - 2016  
Canadian Census

## Further Reading

Rethinking cultural diversity in the UK film sector: Practices in community filmmaking,  
Sarita Malik, Caroline Chapain and Roberta Comunian, SAGE Journals, 2017,  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1350508416689094>

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## Financial Contributors

